

# THE FOURTH GOSPEL AND THE EXCLUSION OF CHRISTIANS FROM THE SYNAGOGUES

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## I

**I**N three places the Gospel of John speaks of Christians being excluded from the synagogues by the Jews. The word used, in each of these occasions, is ἀποσυνάγωγος which means “excluded from the sacred assemblies of the Israelites ; excommunicated”. This word, often translated as “put out of the synagogue”, occurs only three times in the New Testament, with all three appearances being in the Fourth Gospel.

Jesus himself, in one place, is pictured as foretelling that his followers would be excluded from the synagogue : “They will exclude you from their synagogues ; why, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing religious service to God” (xvi. 2).<sup>1</sup> The other two appearances of the word are located a few chapters earlier. In ix. 22 there is found “His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already made an agreement that if anyone acknowledged Jesus as the Christ, he should be excluded from the synagogues”. The third occurrence is in xii. 42—“Yet for all that, even among the leading men, many came to believe in him, but on account of the Pharisees they would not acknowledge it, for fear of being excluded from the synagogues.”

It is interesting that nowhere in the synoptic gospels is there found reference to such action on the part of the Jews. Why is it that John alone reports this development when the three earlier gospels apparently know nothing of it? The answer to this question can be found in the late date at which the Fourth Gospel was produced and in the fact that the author, whoever he may have

<sup>1</sup> All biblical quotations are from *The Complete Bible : An American Translation* (Chicago, 1939). The New Testament is translated by Edgar J. Goodspeed.

been, was a gentile. John, the latest of the gospels to appear, was written at the beginning of the second century. It was not until the last quarter of the first century that official Judaism really recognized the danger from Christianity. Then the Jewish leaders apparently felt the greatest challenge was from the *Minim*,<sup>1</sup> or Jewish Christians—the enemy within their midst. And so the bitterest assault upon these Jewish Christians took place from the turn of the first century to the middle of the second century.

## II

Judaism fought the *Minim*, i.e. the Jewish Christians, who were the enemy within her gate. Of the enemy outside, growing in power with every century, she apparently took no notice but “went on her own way, and on the line she chose for herself worked out her own salvation through centuries of noble and most tragic history. In like manner, though on other lines, Christianity went on its own way and forgot its Jewish origin.”<sup>2</sup> Among the people who had furnished the first disciples, and in the land of its birth, Christianity was represented by a dwindling and discredited sect, which claimed kinship with Jews and Christians and which was disowned by both.

*Minim* (sectaries) is a term used generally as a designation for Judeo-Christians.<sup>3</sup> These Jewish Christians characterized by the name *Minim* perhaps held a Christology similar to that of the Epistle to the Hebrews.<sup>4</sup> To a Jew, the *Minim* were false at heart but did not necessarily proclaim their apostasy. They were judged to be more dangerous because they were more secret. Since they did not withdraw from the community of Israel, they had to be cast out. This end was to be obtained by the various devices for the detection of the *Minim*—the Formula against the

<sup>1</sup> R. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London, 1903), pp. 380-81. Harris Hirschberg, “Once Again—The Minim”, *The Journal of Biblical Literature*, lxxvii (1948), 305 ff., holds that the term *Minim* denotes adherents of Pauline Christianity. This writer, after much study, concludes that the term *Minim* is used in the Mishnah and Talmud to identify Jewish Christians.

<sup>2</sup> Herford, *op. cit.* p. 397.

<sup>3</sup> See Hirschberg, *op. cit.* pp. 305-18.

<sup>4</sup> Herford, *op. cit.* pp. 380-1.

*Minim* and the references to liturgical and ritual variations, which are met in the Talmud and Mishnah.

Jerome speaks of the *Minim* out of his own personal knowledge. They are, he says, a sect of Jews claiming to be both Christians and Jews, but they are in fact neither. Since they are in all the Eastern synagogues they have to be detected by such devices as the "formula against the *Minim*".<sup>1</sup>

Herford ascerts that the *Minim* are "secretly unfaithful Jews, claiming to be Christians, but yet remaining in communion with Jews. Hence they were objects of suspicion and hatred to the Jews, while not acknowledged by the great body of non-Jewish Christians."<sup>2</sup>

The first official recognition of the existence of the *Minim* is the composition of the formula against them, known as the *Birchath ha-Minim*. This liturgical addition was introduced when R. Gamaliel II was president of the assembly at Jamnia. There were three factors which determined why the *Birchath ha-Minim* was produced at this specific time, around 90, and not earlier or later : first, the presidency of R. Gamaliel who ordered the formula ; second, the death of Shemuel ha-Qaton, who composed it and lived at least a year afterwards ; and, third, the destruction of the Temple and the desolation of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.<sup>3</sup> The first two factors are sufficient to fix the date approximately. The third is necessary to explain why a formula against the *Minim* was necessary.

The cessation of the Temple services and all connected with it was an event of profound significance to the Jewish Christians as well as to the Jews. While they appear to have formed a community to some extent separate from the Jews, the Jewish Christians appeared to take part in the ritual observances equally with the non-Christian Jews as long as the Temple remained. With the destruction of the Temple, the ceremonial law became a dead letter, and there was ground for a divergence of opinion as to the real meaning of that event and the lesson to be drawn from it.

The symbolic interpretation of the ceremonial law opened the way for a Christology more highly developed than that of the

<sup>1</sup> Jerome, Epistle 89 to Augustine. Quoted by Herford, op. cit. p. 378.

<sup>2</sup> Herford, op. cit. p. 378.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 382.

original Jewish Christians. Herford writes that the Epistle to the Hebrews, " whenever it may have been written and to whom-ever addressed, reflects the change by which the original Jewish Christians became the *Minim* ".<sup>1</sup> He feels that it is beyond question that there was a very close connection between the Epistle to the Hebrews and the *Minim*, who did not sever themselves from Judaism but claimed to be Jews no less than Christians.

The destruction of the Temple appeared to the rabbinical leaders as a punishment for the sins of the people. The Christians, going further, interpreted this as a " final departure of the sceptre from Israel ". The Law, then, was the only thing left as a basis for the continued existence of Israel. Had the Jewish Christians been the only members of the new faith it is quite possible that the breach between the two groups might have been healed, since the Jewish Christians also desired to observe the Law. However, says Parkes, the rabbis knew of the teaching of Paul and condemned it thoroughly. Thus it was only a step " from this condemnation to the refusal to accept as orthodox the conformity of the Jewish Christians ".<sup>2</sup>

### III

The *Birchath ha-Minim*, composed about A.D. 90 by Shemuel ha-Qaton, " represents the official condemnation by the Rabbis of the spurious Judaism which was growing in their midst, and at the same time furnished a means of detection ".<sup>3</sup> This declaration about heretics, which was inserted into the Blessings recited daily, was so worded that Jewish Christians could not repeat it. We can not be certain of the actual wording of the original malediction ; later forms only contain the word *Minim* (heretics). According to Jerome, however, it contained the express condemnation of " Nazarenes ".<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Herford, op. cit., pp. 383-4.

<sup>2</sup> James Parkes, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue* (London, 1934), p. 77.

<sup>3</sup> Herford, op. cit. pp. 384-5.

<sup>4</sup> Jerome, *On Isaiah*, v. 18. This is found in Migne, *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*, xxiv. 87.

The purpose of this malediction was to make possible the detection of the *Minim* who would inevitably omit this particular paragraph when invited to pronounce the *Eighteen Benedictions* "The very fact that this addition was made to the synagogue service shows that the Jewish Christians were still frequenting the synagogue service, since it needed the introduction of the formula to detect them."<sup>1</sup> In other words, the Jewish Christians still regarded themselves as Jews at this time—no matter how much they disagreed with other Jews on the subject of whether or not the Messiah had already come.

By the end of the first century all of the synagogues of the diaspora had probably been informed of the new malediction and warned not to have any dealing with the Christians—through letters and emissaries sent out by the Jewish Patriarch of Palestine. Christians were to be excommunicated, and Jews were to avoid discussions of all kinds with the Christians.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly these letters contained a copy of the *Birchath ha-Minim* with instructions that it was to be included in the *Eighteen Benedictions*, for the daily cursing of Christians in the synagogues is very closely associated with these letters.<sup>3</sup> Jerome, Origen, and Justin all three "insist on the official character of these letters, and on their wide dispersion".<sup>4</sup>

At the time that Christianity and Judaism were parting company, faithful Jews were warned not to read the gospels. This shows that the Christian writings were sufficiently popular among Jewish readers to necessitate such a warning against perusing them.<sup>5</sup> This in turn illustrates how very Jewish the movement of Jesus was at this time. In the great dialogue between Justin Martyr, the Christian philosopher, and a party of Jews, the Jewish spokesman, Trypho, admits that he has studied the gospels.

In the Mishnah, compiled about A.D. 219 by Judas the Patriarch, there is found a passage where Akiba, the great sage

<sup>1</sup> Parkes, op. cit. pp. 384-5.

<sup>2</sup> Justin Martyr, *The Dialogue with Trypho* (New York, 1930), XXXVIII.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. XVI, XLVII, XCV, CXXXIII.

<sup>4</sup> Parkes, op. cit. p. 80.

<sup>5</sup> F. J. Foakes-Jackson, *The Rise of Gentile Christianity* (New York, 1927), p. 60; Herford, op. cit. p. 90.

and saint, who was martyred by the Romans about 135 after having proclaimed Bar Cochba the Messiah, mentions "heretical" books :

All Israelites have a share in the world to come, for it is written, *Thy people also shall be all righteous, they that shall inherit the land for ever ; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands that I may be glorified.* And these are they that have no share in the world to come : he that says that there is no resurrection of the dead prescribed in the Law, and (he that says) that the Law is not from Heaven, and an Epicurean. R. Akiba says : Also he that reads the heretical books, or that utters a charm over a wound. . . .<sup>1</sup>

This term "heretical books" may point to just the extra-canonical apocrypha and pseudepigrapha of Judaism and the wild theories that some people drew from them. Ideas of the Messiah, of the Kingdom, and others which were of so much interest to the Christians, were developed there. One, 4 Maccabees, became popular in Syriac Christianity, and its seven martyred sons and their parents became "saints" of that church. This might be a ban to cut off from the Jews those works which the Christians had "ruined" or made doctrinally dangerous. These books were popular at this time with ordinary Jews, if not now. Would the rabbis attempt to change this? Perhaps. In other cases it is seen that they did try to revise or reinterpret versus Christians even canonical books (the basis of Oral Law) which they could not cast out. Of course, the term may refer to Christian gospels, apocalypses, and epistles which had in them Jewish-sounding language and ideas.

The word "Epicurean" in this passage may point to the Christians. It does not, for the rabbis refer to the philosophical Epicurean of the Roman World. It had a bad sound to the Jews, probably from its sounding similar to the Hebrew *paḳar* ("to be unrestrained").<sup>2</sup> Christians, similar to Paul and the Fourth Gospel type, who gave up Jewish laws for "illumination", may be meant. How far some "libertine" Christians went can be seen by the attacks upon them in Jude.

The use of this passage quoted in *Sanhedrin* X, 1 from Isaiah (lx. 12) may be significant not only as a typical rabbinic "proof"

<sup>1</sup> *Sanhedrin* X, 1. All quotations from the Mishnah are from the English translation by Danby.

<sup>2</sup> Mishnah, p. 397, n.<sup>o</sup> 4.

of resurrection or immortality but also as a *Jewish* reassertion of *their* claim to the Isaiah which Christians had been taking over. Isaiah had been used to prove Jesus the Messiah and Christians the chosen people. Acts xiii. 47 quotes Isaiah about Israel (for Christians this is the ecclesia, the "True Israel") and the "orders the Lord has given us". Obviously, in the Old Testament *Adonai* (Lord) is the pious way to avoid pronouncing the sacred יהוה. Of course, Christians seized this title, which was already a cult title for Serapis *et al.*, as generally referring to the Christ in the ecclesia. Thus did the Christians usurp the Jewish Scriptures and the Covenant with God. The rabbis were bound to react.

Another passage which apparently is aimed at the Christians is the following :

If a man said, "I will not go before the Ark in coloured raiment", he may not even go before it in white raiment. (If he said), "I will not go before it in sandals", he may not even go before it barefoot. If a man made his phylacteries round, it is a danger and is no fulfilling of the commandment. If he put them on his forehead or the palm of his hand, this is the way of heresy. If he overlaid them with gold or put them over his sleeve this is the way of the sectaries.<sup>1</sup>

The Jew was supposed to honour the Sabbath with his best (coloured) clothes. The "pure" Christian, however, would wear white and show humility by going barefoot in the Presence in the synagogue. These would, it seems, be Jewish Christians. Whenever a person in the synagogue got up to lead congregational prayers ("before the Ark"), after having made such statements as those quoted above, the rabbis decided he was shown to be unorthodox—and probably Christian. After all, no other group was so likely to get into the synagogue as the Christians. Jewish rabbis at an early date evidently gave this interpretation to this passage, for the Gemara remarks to this Mishnaic injunction that the reason for this is that such a one might belong to the Christians.<sup>2</sup>

Trying to use the ancient phylacteries in his own way or showily (like the gold crosses some still wear) was to be condemned. Either as magic or show it would be wrong. But here is a rabbinic law condemning this as heresy, not merely as ignorance or poor taste. It must point to a serious situation.

<sup>1</sup> *Megillah* IV, 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Megillah* XXIV b.

When the early Christians took over as the “ecclesia of God”, they appropriated also the Hebrew Scriptures, synagogues, etc. Jewish Christians were, of course, at home in these. Some gentile Christians also, I feel sure, hoped to escape persecution by hiding within their “Judaism”—since the Romans tolerated Judaism itself. Therefore, to take over the phylacteries (along with any “magic” in them) was to take over something the Romans and Greeks recognized as sacred to the Jews.

It is important to note the quotation against the phylactery on the forehead—where they were supposed to be and were worn by custom. Someone the rabbis distrusted was using the phylactery in the right place for the “wrong” reason. Even if they had to change custom and make them worn elsewhere they would. To reinterpret the Biblical law on *totafot* or phylacteries where they were “frontlets between the eyes” was to face a problem like that suggested.<sup>1</sup>

Another Mishnah passage which is closely associated with the one just discussed reads as follows :

Greater stringency applies to (the observance of) the words of the Scribes than to (the observance of) the words of the (written) Law. If a man said, “There is no obligation to wear phylacteries” so that he transgresses the words of the Law, he is not culpable ; (but if he said), “There should be in them five partitions”, so that he adds to the words of the Scribes, he is culpable.<sup>2</sup>

This might be interpreted to mean that what is in the Bible should be clear to the sensible person if he is interested enough to check—no matter whether or not someone may try to fool him. However, it is easier to confuse a man about the Oral Law. Therefore, the guilt of causing a man to sin against rabbinic law rests upon the one who misrepresents it.

Phylacteries lie almost totally within the latter area, since the Bible tells of them and their wearing—but does not specify their size or contents. These were the growth of tradition. The customary “box” has four parts, each with a Biblical quotation in it. These cubes, on leather bands, were now, at this particular moment, worn high on the head and on the high inside of the left arm.

<sup>1</sup> See Deut. vi. 8 concerning the proper way to wear these phylacteries.

<sup>2</sup> *Sanhedrine* XI, 3.



The phylacteries (*tefillin* or *totafoṭ*), if and when picked up by Christians, would normally start with the four partitions. The Christian addition would—if we judge by their scriptural exegesis—probably contain some Old Testament “prophecy” of the Messiah or a “saying” of the Lord or something about the Passion. All of these were important to the Christian faith. Jewish Christians may have started the fashion, but others would have taken it up.

It has been suggested by some scholars that the Decalogue was originally contained in the scriptural verses in the phylacteries. Thus it is proposed that the “fifth compartment” in the above passage would contain the Decalogue.<sup>1</sup>

Another curious example of the necessity which the Jews felt of protesting against the Christians is the following :

The inhabitants of Jericho were in the habit of repeating, each to himself, in a low voice, the words : “Blessed be the name of the glory of His Kingdom forever and ever” after the words “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord” had been recited aloud. But, says Rabbi Abbahu, it was enacted that these words should be repeated in a loud voice, on account of the troubles occasioned by the minim, but at Nehardea, where there are no minim, they repeat it to this day in a subdued voice.<sup>2</sup>

With the above passage from the Babylonian Talmud should be studied a related section from the Mishnah :

At the close of every Benediction in the Temple they used to say, “For everlasting”, but after the heretics had taught corruptly and said that there is but one world, it was ordained that they should say, “From everlasting to everlasting”. And it was ordained that a man should salute his fellow with (the use of) the Name (of God). . . .<sup>3</sup>

This may point to Christians of one school of thought—those who believed that they were already in God’s one age or eternity once they were in the ecclesia. This is the view of the ecclesia in the Gospel of John. Such a view would shut out non-members from the present enjoyment of eternity. This last emphasis upon eternity points to the word translated above as “world”. It is the Hebrew עוֹלָם, generally meaning “eternity” or “universe”. This helps support the view that this passage is versus the Christian doctrine of a churchly eternity, while the Jews held to the idea of a future entrance into eternity through resurrection.

<sup>1</sup> Hirschberg, op. cit. p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> *Pesachim* LVI a.

<sup>3</sup> *Berakoth* IX, 5.

The last sentence quoted is pregnant with meaning. Here the rabbis cast off the old taboo against using the sacred יהוה instead of the customary circumlocution אֲדֹנָי or *κύριος*. Why? Was it because Christians had seized the word "Lord" to mean Jesus Christ? To get the pious Jew to speak the Name was to combat something like that.

Another Mishnah passage which illustrates the close connection of the Christians with the Jews says :

If a witness was not known (to the judges) another was sent with him to testify of him. Beforetime they used to admit evidence about the new moon from any man, but after the evil doings of the heretics they enacted that evidence should be admitted only from them that they knew.<sup>1</sup>

In the *Didache* the Christians are advised to set up fasts on days different from those of the Jews. They made Sunday their Sabbath. But in some places—notably Antioch and Palestine—Christians followed Jewish dating. Between East and West in the church of the second century a conflict arose over such things. This, coming to a crisis c. 190, was the famous "Quartodeciman Controversy". Rome, under Victor, decided that Easter should always end on a Sunday. He excommunicated the Asian bishops.

In the East Easter followed the Jewish dating of Passover. Jewish Christians kept the Jewish feasts, reading into them a Christian meaning and connecting with Passover and Pentecost the death of Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit. According to the Gospels, Jesus was crucified on a Friday and rose again on the Sunday following. Likewise the first Christian Pentecost was on a Sunday.

According to the Jewish custom the day of Passover (the fourteenth day of Nisan) might occur on any day of the week. It was only natural that the Jewish Christians would prefer that it should fall on a Friday, in order that the fast and feast days might correspond with those of the original Passion-week and the following Pentecost. Jewish Christians could give evidence as well as others, since it was the Jewish usage to fix the appearance of the new moon according to the evidence of eye-witnesses and thereby determine the days of the month.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Rosh Ha-Shanah* II, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Herford, op. cit. pp. 330-1.

The final passage to be discussed from the Mishnah appears to point towards the Christians' prayer and liturgy :

If a man said (in his prayer) : " To a bird's nest do thy mercies extend ", or " May thy name be remembered for the good (which thou hast wrought) ", or " We give thanks, we give thanks ", they put him in silence. If a man went before the Ark and fell into error, another must take his place : none may decline at such a time. Where does he begin ? At the beginning of the Benediction in which the other fell into error.<sup>1</sup>

The Jews, for all their ceremonial and social laws, have always been lacking in creedal theology. In these days it is likely that their *Shema* (Deut. vi. 4-9, xi. 13-21 ; Num. xv. 37-41), recited morning and night, served the purpose of creed or confession. Another portion of liturgy that has served as creed is the *Benedictions* (*Berakoth*), which form the chief part of the prayer-service (*Tefillah*). These blessings of the Name of a ruling God of Israel and the world were one of the most important parts of synagogue worship. These *Benedictions* and the *Shema* complement each other in the powers and mercies that they ascribe to God.

From the first century A.D. Christians have had the germ of all prayer and liturgy in the Lord's Prayer, behind which ancient tradition Matthew ascribes to Jesus himself. A good case for its verbal origin in the *Eighteen Benedictions* and the *Shema* can be made. The Lord's Prayer, as given to us, may be a definite prayer of Jesus or a Christian construction of a prayer on a well-known Jewish basis. In any case some connection between the Lord's Prayer and the *Benedictions* and *Shema* seems to be indicated. Certainly, Jewish leaders would recognize any similarity, and there would be bound to be reactions by the rabbis against the Christians. This mishnah on *Benedictions* may point to such a development. If any man in public prayer tampered with the order or language of the *Benedictions*, he would be suspected of heresy. Someone orthodox would have to replace him immediately to prevent the wrecking of the chief part of worship. Even a person's mistake in the prayer—or simplifying of it (as does the Lord's Prayer)—would seem doubtful. This was serious to real believers in the worship of one God where so many other peoples varied. Therefore great care was taken

<sup>1</sup> *Berakoth* V, 3. *Megillah* IV, 9 contains the same idea.

that the prayers contained not the least sign of Christian phraseology. The section here, "as thy mercies extend even to birds' nests" probably reminded them too much of Matt. x. 29.

With the influence of Christianity being felt more and more, the Jews changed another one of their ancient customs. In the Babylonian Talmud there is found, "And they read the Ten Words and the Shema. . . . Rab Jehudad said, and Shemuel said, In the provinces also they sought to read them, but they had already stopped them because of the murmuring of the heretics (*Minim*)."<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested that the recitation of the Decalogue, which formed part of the liturgical recitation of the *Shema*, was later discontinued for anti-Christian reasons.<sup>2</sup> It was perhaps feared that the Christians would thus be induced to believe that they, the Jews, were in a similar plight to themselves, and only pledged to the observance of the Ten Commandments (*i.e.* the moral law). It is very probable that the daily recitation of the Decalogue was omitted because it gave the *Minim* the opportunity to misrepresent the Jewish religion in order that their own "heretical" views might be set forth.

Paul's frontal attack on the Law had "led his anti-nomistic followers to a distinction between the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Pentateuch, accepting only the former as authentic which rejecting the legal parts of the books of Moses".<sup>3</sup> As has been stated in the discussion of the passages dealing with the use and form of phylacteries, it has been suggested that the Decalogue originally was contained in the scriptural verses and that this section would be in the "fifth compartment" mentioned in *Sanhedrin* XI, 3.

Although the *Birchath ha-Minim* appeared thirty or forty years before the events surrounding Bar Cochba, there is no direct information concerning any Jewish persecution of Christians from the time of James to the beginning of the revolt in the time of Trajan. It would appear that the relations between the *Minim* and the Jews were in all probability most hostile at the end

<sup>1</sup> *Berakoth* I h.

<sup>2</sup> W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy* (Oxford, 1925), pp. 81-2.

<sup>3</sup> Hirschberg, *op. cit.* p. 307. See also Herford, *op. cit.* pp. 308-11.

of the first century and at the beginning of the second. Even at the close of the first century, when the *Minim* were officially condemned, "it was not evident to the Jews that the development of the Christian Church would proceed on Gentile lines, and would leave the *Minim*, i.e., the Jewish Christians, behind".<sup>1</sup> Of Gentile Christianity, the rabbinical literature scarcely takes any notice—"for there was obviously less danger to Judaism from a mainly Gentile Christianity than from a Jewish form of it connected at so many points with pure Judaism."<sup>2</sup>

## IV

It is generally agreed that the author of the Fourth Gospel was a gentile. His method of writing was that of the Greeks rather than that of the Jews. He was not giving a verbatim report; rather, he was putting "into the mouth of the speaker not the *ipsissima verba* spoken on a given occasion, but the sentiments which seemed to the writer to be proper on the occasion".<sup>3</sup> Such an attitude makes it very easy for the writer of the Fourth Gospel, doing his work in A.D. 100-110, to read back the "excluding" of Christians from the synagogues of his day to the very time of Jesus.

Starting in the last quarter of the first century, as we have seen, there was this forceful attempt on the part of the Jews to rid their synagogues of Christians. This is the Jewish policy toward

<sup>1</sup> Herford, *op. cit.* p. 393.

<sup>2</sup> *Loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> G. H. C. MacGregor, *The Gospel of John* (New York, 1928), p. xxiii. He continues: "John's practice indeed is not unlike that of Thucydides, who in a famous passage (i. 22) frankly admits that this is his method. But we have a better parallel still in Plato who, admitting that he owed his inspiration to the teaching of Socrates, never claims to reproduce the *ipsissima verba* of his Master, but rather puts into the mouth of Socrates philosophical theories which, though in germ Socratic, are in their full development, those of Plato himself. As in the Platonic Dialogues the speeches of Socrates owe not only style and language but also most of their matter to Plato himself, so in the case of the Fourth Gospel" (pp. xxiii-xxiv). See also (p. xxiv): "Indeed so little careful is the author to distinguish between his own thoughts and those he puts in the mouths of his characters, that it is sometimes impossible to tell where the speech he is reporting ends and his own comment upon it begins."

Christians which the author of the Gospel of John<sup>1</sup> knows—a measure which operated well into the last half of the second century. It is this late development which is in John's mind as he writes his gospel. He has projected this attitude and action, in reality much later than the time of Jesus, back into the period of Christian beginnings—even having Jesus himself predict the Jewish exclusion of Christians from the synagogues.

<sup>1</sup> All three of the synoptic gospels were, it appears, already in existence by the time the *Birchath ha-Minim* was produced.