

THE STRUCTURE AND MESSAGE OF JOHN 15.1-16.3

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I—Introduction

The structure and message of John 13.1-17.26 continue to occupy interpreters. However, some unanimity of opinion seems to be indicated by Fernando F. Segovia who recently wrote: "Nowadays, hardly any exegete would maintain that these chapters constitute a literary unity in their present form".¹

There can be no doubt that the last discourse in the Fourth Gospel, as we now have it, is the result of a long literary and faith journey of a given community in the early Church.² Modern redactional studies of the last discourse have discovered important traces of that faith journey, as it is reflected in its literary expression.³

However, there is a danger that an important principle of interpretation be lost in this exciting rediscovery of the faith experience of an early Christian community. At some stage in the history of the community's expression of its faith, the text *as we now have it* was formed. Given this fact, the study of John 15.1-16.3 which follows does not deny the obviously complicated literary history which stands behind the present shape of the Johannine text, but it asks seriously just what literary and theological persuasions produced that "present shape".⁴

II—John 15.1-16.3 as a Literary Unit

Whatever may have been the history of the traditions which eventually formed John 15.1-16.3, is it possible to argue that the section can be read as a unit in itself? While there is little doubt among scholars that the allegory on the vine in 15.1 marks a beginning, almost all commentators would close the section at 16.4a.⁵ There are good internal indications that the passage should be read as a unit, concluding with 16.3.

(a) There appears to be a link between 15.21 and 16.3 which shows all the signs of being an inclusion:

15.21: "But all this they will do to you on my account, because they do not know him who sent me."

16.3: "And they will do this because they have not known the Father, nor me."

(b) There is also a close link between expressions used towards the end of the allegory on the vine and at the end of the section on hatred.⁶ The Greek is identical:

15.11: "These things I have spoken to you that . . ."

16.1: "These things I have spoken to you that . . ."

This same expression is also found in 16.4a, and is generally understood as the formula closing the section. However, it is important to notice that in 16.4a it is preceded by a strong adversative *alla*.⁷ This expression sets 16.4a apart from 16.3, and enables us to look towards the conclusion of chapter 16 for the link with v. 4a. It can be found in 16.33. We now find that there is a close link between:
16.4a: "These things I have spoken to you that . . ."
16.33: "These things I have spoken to you that . . ."

(c) As well as these important literary links, there is a shift in content between 16.3 and 4. Throughout 15.1-16.3 the themes of abiding, love and hatred have been developed. The rest of chapter 16 centres upon the themes of speaking, memory and sorrow which leads to joy (see 16.4,6,13,18,21-24,25,29,33). They begin in v. 4: "But I have *said* these thing to you so that when their hour comes you may *remember* that I *told* you of them".

(d) It has long been noticed that there are many close parallels between 13.31-14.31 and 16.4-33.⁸ An interesting consequence of these many parallels is that 15.1-16.3 is left standing at the centre of the whole discourse, *without any apparent parallels*.

Given these indications in the text itself, and without having recourse to any hypotheses concerning the *Sitz im Leben* of the material, it appears at least possible that the final arrangement of the last discourse was planned around a central statement, running from 15.1-16.3, and that this section of the discourse is to be regarded as a literary unit. Hopefully, a more detailed analysis of the structure and message of the single parts and of the whole will add further weight to this claim.

III—The determination of internal units and subunits

The internal units

The first unit appears to run from vv. 1-11. This section is dominated by the allegory of the vine. However, the key concept in this section is not the allegory itself; it is the use of the term "to abide". This is important, as many scholars, fascinated by the allegory, make a major division at v. 8. However, the verb "to abide" is used in the imperative in v. 4 and v. 9. This is a hint that vv. 1-8 and vv. 9-11 should be kept closely together. We will return to this in our discussion of the subunits.⁹ The expression "to abide" is thus found throughout the first unit, until it is solemnly concluded in v. 11 with the expression "these things I have spoken to you that . . .".

The central unit is very clearly delineated, and need not delay us at this stage. There is a deliberately contrived inclusion formed by the command to love one another:

15.12: "This is my commandment, that you love one another".

15.17: "This I command you, to love one another".

The whole of this central section will stress the theme of mutual love, but it will focus upon the theme stated in v. 16a: “You did not choose me, but I chose you”.

The final section must, therefore, run from 15.18-16.3. Although the *literary* links between the opening and the closing statements of the unit are not so clear, there is a very powerful link at the level of theme: they both deal with the hatred of the world. In 15.18-21 it is spelt out in general terms, while in 16.1-3 there is a specific application of these general terms to the Johannine community’s experience of violence and hatred: the exclusion from the synagogue and killings which are regarded as a service to God.¹⁰ Our later study of the internal subunits to this passage will indicate the careful structure of the passage as a whole.

We can claim that there are three clear major units to 15.1-16.3:

- (a) 15.1-11 dedicated to the theme of the need and the results of remaining or not remaining in Jesus.
- (b) 15.12-17 dedicated to Jesus’ command that the disciples must love one another.
- (c) 15.18-16.3 dedicated to the theme of the causes and results of the hatred which those who abide in Jesus will generate.

In general terms, one can claim that around the central argument of love there is the positive theme of abiding in Jesus, and its exact opposite, the negative theme of the hatred which such abiding will create.

The internal subunits

Once we accept 16.3 as the lower limit for the literary unity of our passage, the identification of the larger units within that section has not been difficult.

The subunits of 15.1-11

In the section which runs from 15.1-11, the unit dominated by the allegory of the vine should be seen as unfolding between:

- v. 1: “I am the true vine
and my Father is the vinedresser”.
- v. 5a: “I am the vine,
you are the branches”.

Although the language of branches and bearing fruit continues into 5b-11, there is no further reference to “the vine” as such. It appears that this first subsection is constructed around v. 4a: “Abide in me”, and that it can be delineated in the following fashion:

- (a) vv. 1-3: Jesus as the vine and the disciples as the branches.
- (b) v. 4a: The need to remain in Jesus.
- (c) vv. 4b-5a: Jesus as the vine and the disciples as the branches.

We can then turn to a second subunit, and find that a similar method has been used in its composition. It is contained within an inclusion:

- v. 5b: "He who abides in me".
- v. 7 "If you abide in me".

The section then unfolds as follows:

- (a) v.5b: Remain in Jesus to bear fruit.
- (b) v. 6: The disastrous results of not remaining in Jesus:
no fruit, death and destruction.
- (c) v. 7: Remaining in Jesus so that all prayers and requests
will be heard.

One can sense here a progression between the two subunits which we have analysed so far. While the first subunit (vv. 1-5a) was devoted to the allegory of the vine, spelling out the need to remain in Jesus, the second (vv. 5b-7) indicates the ensuing results of remaining or not remaining in Jesus.¹¹

The final subsection (vv. 8-11) is not so clearly defined. There is a very loose statement and restatement between

- v. 9: "Just as the Father has loved me".
- v. 10: "Just as I have kept the commandments".

However, the tight internal structure which we have found in our other units and subunits is not found here. Instead, one can read through this subunit three arguments which in many ways restate and recapitulate the points made so far.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| (a) By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. | } | The glory of the Father: bearing of fruit as disciples of Jesus. |
| (b) As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. | | |
| (c) If you keep my commandments you will abide in my love. As I have kept my Father's com- mandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. | } | Keep the commandments of Jesus as he kept those of the Father. |

What we have here is a second set of reasons for abiding in the love of Jesus through the observance of his commandments: the bearing of much fruit and the sharing in the fullness of the joy of Jesus.

The whole of this first unit (vv. 1-11) can now be seen as a carefully written presentation of a central statement (vv. 5b-7) dealing with the results of abiding or not abiding in Jesus. Before the central statement one finds the allegory

of the vine and the branches (vv. 1-5a) giving a first set of reasons for abiding in Jesus: the bearing of much fruit. After the central statement there is a final subunit (vv. 8-11) again providing a set of motives and reasons for abiding in Jesus: the bearing of much fruit and sharing in the joy of Jesus. The centrality of the theme of “abiding” is obvious. It is important to all three subunits. It forms the heart of the central section (repeated four times in vv. 5b, 6 and 7), but is linked to the allegory on the vine through the imperative “abide in me” at its centre in v. 4a. It is also linked to the third subunit as the same desire is expressed at the centre of vv. 8-11: “You will abide in my love” (v. 10a).

The subunits of 15.12-17

The second (and central) subsection is also very clearly delineated by means of an inclusion:

- | | | | |
|---------|--|---|----|
| v. 12: | This is my commandment <i>that you love one another</i> | } | A |
| v. 14: | WHAT I COMMAND YOU | | |
| v. 17a: | This I COMMAND YOU <i>that you love one another</i> | } | A1 |

At the centre of this section there is a concept that is only found here. While the various other themes stated in vv. 12-17 are stated and restated somewhere in the subunit, the theme of v. 16a is only found once: “You did not choose me, but I chose you”. Given the clear indications of an inclusion, and the suggestion that v. 16b stands at the centre, vv. 12-17 can be seen as unfolding in the following chiasmic fashion:

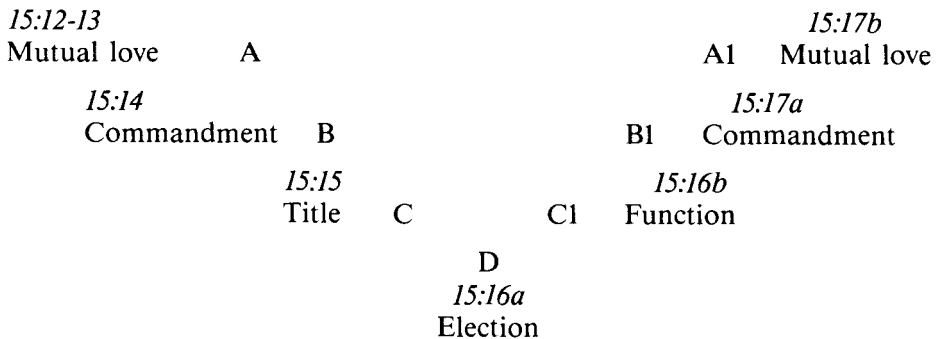
- | | | | |
|--------|---|---|---|
| v. 12 | This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you | } | A |
| v. 13 | Greater love has no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends | | |
| v. 14 | You are my friends if you do what I command you. | } | B |
| v. 15 | No longer do I call you servants for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. | | |
| v. 16a | You did not choose me, but I chose you | } | D |

- | | | |
|----------|--|------|
| v. 16bcd | And I appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide so that whatever you ask the Father in my name he may give it to you. | } C1 |
| v. 17a | This I command you | } B1 |
| v. 17b | that you love one another. | } A1 |

A synthetic statement of the content of this carefully written passage could be framed in terms of a three tiered argument:

- (a) the commandment to mutual love and the supreme quality of that love is given (vv. 12-13).
- (b) The central section of the passage is devoted to three essential issues:
 - (i) The basic reason for such a commandment: a new union of love which exists between Jesus and his disciples because he has revealed the Father to them (vv. 14-15).
 - (ii) The ultimate source of that union and that revelation: ELECTION. The disciples have been chosen because of the extraordinary initiative of God who has chosen to reveal himself to them through Jesus (v. 16a).
 - (iii) The reason for such an election: that the disciples should bear fruit, and obtain all that they ask of the Father in the name of Jesus (v. 16bcd).
- (c) A final repetition of the command to mutual love, now grounded in and motivated by all that has been spelt out in the central section (v. 17).

This gathering of the argument around the central statement on Jesus' choice of his disciples allows us to see that the whole argument of 15.12-17 can be structured around a chiasm in the following fashion:



While the skill of a careful writer is so much in evidence here, we must not lose sight of the profound Johannine message which is being conveyed through this medium.¹² The commandment of Jesus that his disciples must love one another is based upon his prior loving and entirely unsolicited choice of them (v. 16a). What they are called to be: friends and not servants (v. 15) and the tasks that they are to perform: to bear abundant fruit and to ask successfully for the gifts of the Father (v. 16b) is to be understood only in terms of the prior love of Jesus for his own. It is this love which must shine forth in the mutual love of his disciples, prepared to lay down their lives in love for one another (vv. 12-14 and v. 17). Such a synthesis is in perfect accord with the whole of Johannine christology and ecclesiology.

The subunits of 15.18-16.3

We come now to a consideration of the final unit of our passage, dealing with the theme of hatred. . .the exact opposite to the theme of “remaining in Jesus”, which dominated the first of our three major units. In order to catch fully this theme, I will begin my analysis with the central subunit, where the theme of hatred is spelt out most clearly in both theological and literary terms.

This central section runs from vv. 22-25, and is structured around two conditional and principal clauses. These clauses are centred around the major theological statement of v. 23. This is best grasped through a structured reading of the text:

- v. 22: *If I had not come and spoken to them*
THEY WOULD NOT HAVE SIN.
Now they have no excuse for their sin.
- v. 23: He who hates me, hates my Father also.
- v. 24: *If I had not done the works which no one else did*
THEY WOULD NOT HAVE SIN.
Now they have seen and hated both me and my Father.
- v. 25: It is to fulfill the word that is written in the law:
“They hated me without cause”.

Given the perfect balance of the passage, the quotation from the Old Testament could appear to be an intrusion. There is, however, a slight inclusion involved in the reference to the “word” of Jesus referred to in v. 22 (Jesus has “spoken”: Greek *legein*) and the “word” (Greek *logos*) of the law. For the Fourth Evangelist, there was also a close link with the central statement of v. 23, as the hatred of Jesus being a hatred of the Father is to be understood as a fulfillment of Scripture: “They hated me without cause”.

For this evangelist and his community it was important to see and understand that the experience of hatred and violence (especially as it will be described later in 16:1-3) was part of the experience of Jesus and is also part of the experience of his disciples. In both cases, such suffering is “without cause”. Yet, even more important from a theological point of view, is the belief that such senseless suffering is the fulfillment of Scripture, somehow a part of God’s way and God’s plan. One can see the link which the Fourth Evangelist makes with

the betrayal of Judas, which is also explained as the fulfillment of Scripture (see 13:18). As it is a part of his design, somehow God makes sense out of this nonsense. In perfect accord with Christian tradition, one does not find the Fourth Evangelist meeting hatred with hatred. He simply states the fact that hatred of Jesus and hatred against Jesus are acts of hatred against the Father of Jesus. Yet, such has been the plan of God, revealed in the words of the law itself.

Turning to an examination of the subunits which flank this central statement on hatred, we find that the section of vv. 18-21 presents very clear stylistic and formal indications of its being a self-contained unit. Again there is a central statement, found in v. 20a: "Remember the word I said to you 'A servant is not greater than his master' ". The section is then completed by means of a carefully balanced use of causal, conditional and principal clauses.¹³ It is best seen through the following structured presentation of the text itself:

- v. 18: *If* the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. [CONDITIONAL + PRINCIPAL]
 - v. 19a: *If* you were of the world, the world would love its own. [CONDITIONAL + PRINCIPAL]
 - v. 19b: But *because* you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. [CAUSAL + PRINCIPAL]
 - v. 20a: Remember the word that I said to you, "A servant is not greater than his master". [CENTRAL STATEMENT]
 - v. 20b: *If* they persecuted me, they will persecute you. [CONDITIONAL + PRINCIPAL]
 - v. 20c: *If* they kept my word, they will keep yours also. [CONDITIONAL + PRINCIPAL]
 - v. 21: But all this they will do to you on my account, *because* they do not know him who sent me. [PRINCIPAL + CAUSAL]
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We are dealing with a clearly devised and written unit, leading in to the central statement on hatred, and linking the experience of the disciples with the experience of Jesus.¹⁴ The remaining subunit (15:26-16:3) is not marked by the same clear indications, but has been compiled through a repetition of the themes which are found in 15:18-21, the first subunit of the section (15:18-16:3). Basing ourselves on what we have seen in vv. 18-21, we can see that 15:26-16:3 can be structured around the following parallel with that subunit:

- | <i>15:18-21</i> | <i>15:26-16:3</i> |
|---|---|
| v. 19b: "because you are not of the world". | v. 27b: "because you have been with me from the beginning". |
| v. 20a: "Remember the word that I said to you". | 16:1: "I have said all this to . . .". |

v. 21: "Because they do not know him who sent me". 16:3: "Because they have not known neither the Father, nor me".

Further indications of the internal structure of the whole of the unit can be gathered from a consideration of the interplay between the subunits in the following schematic presentation of its argument: the explanation of the hatred against Jesus, and subsequently against his disciples:

| | | | |
|--------------|--|-----|---|
| 1—vv. 18-21 | The world—disciples (vv. 18-19) The word of Jesus (v. 20a) The world—disciples (v. 20b) Cause: Ignorance (v. 20) | } = | The first explanation of the hatred of the world. |
| 2—vv. 22-25 | Jesus and his word shows sin (v. 22) Hatred of Jesus=hatred of the Father (v. 23) Jesus and his works show sin (vv. 24-25) | } = | Results of the hatred. |
| 3—15:26-16:3 | Paraclete—disciples (vv. 26-27) The word of Jesus (16:1) World—disciples (16:2) Cause: Ignorance | } = | Second explanation of the hatred of the world. |

The Paraclete passage of 15.26 has always caused difficulties for scholars. It has frequently been regarded as a later insertion into the text.¹⁵ However, once the relationship that exists between vv. 18-21 (the hatred of the world for the disciples because they have been "chosen" by Jesus [v. 19]) and 15.26-16.3 (the hatred of the world to the witness of Jesus alive in his disciples because of the Paraclete who will be "sent" by Jesus [v. 26]) has been established, the problem disappears. Bultmann has understood this well:

After Jesus' departure, the situation on earth will remain unchanged inasmuch as the offence which Jesus' work offered the world will not disappear.¹⁶

As 16.1-3 indicates, this final subsection of 15.1-16.3 is deeply rooted in the concrete experience of the Johannine community. For this experience to be understood as a repetition in their lives of the experience of hatred described by Jesus to "his own" in vv. 18-21, the sending of the Paraclete is essential.

Before closing this study of the subunits which have been fashioned to carry the argument of this section of John 15.1-16.3, I would like to show the relationship which exists between the themes of abiding (15.1-11) and hatred (15.18-16.3) which flank the central section of the discourse (15.12-17). We appear to be dealing with two contrasting messages. The first section (15.1-11), in close association with the allegory on the vine, speaks of the reasons and results of remaining in Jesus. The final section (15.18-16.3) speaks of the hatred of the world, and of the reasons for and the results of such a hatred. There is a clear parallel—in a deliberately arranged contrast—between the first and third units. It can be described in the following fashion:

*The need and reasons
for remaining in Jesus
(15:1-11)*

1. The first reason for abiding in Jesus (vv. 1-5a).
2. The results of abiding and not abiding (vv. 5b-7).
3. The second reason for abiding in Jesus (vv. 8-11).

*The explanation of the
hatred of the world
(15:18-16:3)*

1. The first explanation of the hatred of the world (vv. 18-21).
2. The results of the hatred (vv. 22-25).
3. The second explanation of the hatred of the world (15:28-16:3).

The Evangelist gathers the contrasting themes of abiding and hatred around the central statement on mutual love.

IV—The Structure of John 15.1-16.3

An overall structure of the whole section can be best understood through the following scheme:

THE STRUCTURE OF JOHN 15.1-16.3

15:1-11

15:1-5a:
To abide in Jesus, the vine. The Father is the vine-dresser.

15:5b-7:
The results of abiding or not abiding in Jesus.

15:8-11:
To abide in the love of Jesus.

15:12-17

15:12-17:
The commandment to mutual love.
The basis of that love: disciples—Jesus—the Father. “I chose you”: ELECTION.
The results of being chosen: bear fruit and obtain all from the Father.
The commandment to mutual love.

15:18-16:4a

15:18-21:
To hate—to persecute through not knowing the one who sent Jesus.

15:22-25:
The results of the hatred of Jesus.

15:26-16:3:
To exclude and to kill through not knowing the Father and Jesus.

V—Some Theological Conclusions

The section of the last discourse which we have just examined forms the very centre of the whole of the discourse in the shape in which we now find it in the Fourth Gospel.¹⁷ We have seen that it is formed by two powerful contrasts: the mutuality of “abiding” which should exist between Jesus and the disciples (15.1-11) and the hatred and violent separation which exists between “the world” and both Jesus and his disciples. Ultimately, both the abiding and the hatred are grounded in the recognition or the non-recognition of the one who sent Jesus, the Father (see vv. 1, 8-11 and 21, 23 and 16.3). They are positive and negative statements of the same truths.

This contrast between abiding in Jesus and hatred for him and his disciples has led many scholars to see behind the Fourth Gospel a highly sectarian group, understanding itself as specially privileged, enjoying a unique oneness with Jesus and among one another, set apart from the rest of “the world” and in severe opposition to it.¹⁸

We must not lose sight of the fact that the two contrasting positions have a mediating centre in 15.12-17. A purely redactional approach to the text will separate 15.1-17 from 15.18-16.3. These passages may well have had independent origins, but they are together in the text as we have it now.

The central section of our passage develops the theme of the mutual love of the disciples. Yet, at the very centre of the central passage stands an all important message: all that touches the essence of being a disciple of Jesus — union with him, mutual love and sharing his experience of persecution and death — has its source in the disciple’s being chosen by Jesus. The initiative stands wholly with him. The disciple is a disciple only because of a gratuitous act of love on the part of Jesus himself. This is the reality which must be shown to the world.

In fact, this message stands behind the whole of John 13-17. The central position of a command to love one another because of the prior love of God for the world in Jesus (see especially 3.16-17) becomes particularly significant at the heart of this traditionally admired text. It begins with a statement of Jesus’ loving to perfection (13.1: *eis telos*) and it ends with a prayer that such love will be communicated to his disciples (17.26). The incredible love of a strange God, revealed in the gift of his only Son unto death as the ultimate gesture of such love (see 3.16; 13.1; 15.13; 19.30), is also seen in Jesus’ choosing the disciples.

Is it possible to explain all this in terms of the love-hate conflicts which are so typical of sectarian groups? I think not; the question needs more nuancing. The sectarian systems work on the premise: “Whoever hates me — I hate him”. This approach to life and death would block the whole of salvation history as in such a situation men and women make themselves into gods, deciding for themselves who is to be loved and how that love is to be shown. In such a system the gratuitous loving of the Father of Jesus in and through his Son, so central to the christology of the Fourth Gospel, would necessarily come to a halt. Without neglecting the call to an ever-deepening commitment to true faith,¹⁹ the Fourth evangelist continues the strange but profoundly biblical message of a God who continues to choose and to love a sinful people. This is dramatically indicated in John 13, where Jesus chooses and loves those who betray him (see esp. 13.18-20) . . . but even here we are told that this event leads to the

glorification of the Son of Man: light shines in the darkness (see 13.31-32 and 1.5).²⁰ It is within this profoundly biblical and Johannine vision of things that 15.1-16.3 is best understood, as this is the saving love which the members of the Johannine community must reveal (see especially 13.34-35; 17.18,21,26).

No doubt the Fourth evangelist was writing out of his own ecclesial experience, and the exclusion of the Christians from the synagogue was an important part of this experience. The use of the term *aposunagōgos* in 16.2 indicates that this is the case.²¹ Thus, the explicit reference to the hatred which leads to exclusion and persecution in 16.1-3 seems to be linked with Israel. However, the use of the allegory of the vine at the beginning of the section could also be a powerful allusion to the true Israel.²² If this is the case, then an important question arises: how is it that the vine-synagogue hates, persecutes and excludes (16.1-3) the vine-Jesus (15.1-5a)? How is it that Israel is in conflict with Israel?

The evangelist does *not* make a judgement on this issue. He refuses to judge people or nation. He has described the situation in such a way that the reader must pose another question: who is persecuting whom? Who is really excluding whom? By hating, the persecutor and the executioner fall into sin, and they do not bear the fruit which one would expect from a branch of the *true* vine. They cut themselves off from the community which belongs to the Father, the vinedresser (15.1). Judgement, for the Fourth evangelist, is something which flows from the free decision of belief or non-belief in the way, truth and light which Jesus has come to reveal (see 1.9-13; 3.16-21; 5.19-30; 12.44-50; 14.6-7).²³

At the centres of the two passages which deal respectively with “abiding” (15.6) and “hatred” (15.23) we are told that to hate Jesus means to “not abide” in the true vine and to hate the Father. However, *nothing* is said about the Father’s love for such a one. What must be granted – for the continuation of God’s saving history in the world – is the sovereign freedom for both Jesus and his Father to love the world. Coherent with the message of the rest of the Gospel, and especially with John 13, the Fourth evangelist again instructs that God loves both Jew and Christian, both Synagogue and Church, no matter how they behave.

To exclude this possibility through a piecemeal approach to the text which produces a portrait of the Johannine community behind the Gospel as an “other-worldly” sectarian group, and to read its christology and ecclesiology in that light is methodologically unsound and theologically unsatisfactory. Such an approach would necessarily lead us to reconsider what is meant in 13.1 by the perfection of love and what is meant by the crucified Jesus’ proclamation in 19.30 claiming that he has perfected the task which his Father gave him (see also 4.34).

Notes

- ¹ F.F. Segovia, "The Theology and Provenance of John 15.1-17", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (1982), p. 115. Segovia, who has been publishing steadily on the last discourse since 1981, makes a similar remark in his doctoral thesis. See, Idem, *Love Relationships in the Johannine Tradition. Agapē/Agapan in I John and the Fourth Gospel* (Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation series 58; Chicago: Scholars Press, 1982), p. 82.
- ² The recognition of this fact, and its analysis, is at the heart of a great deal of contemporary Johannine scholarship. I can only mention some of the major contributions here. See, J.L. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1979; Idem, *The Gospel of John in Christian History* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978); R.E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1979); W. Langbrandtner, *Weltferner Gott oder Gott der Liebe. Der Ketzerstreit in der Johanneischen Kirche* (Beiträge zur biblischen Exegese und Theologie 6; Frankfurt: Lang, 1977). For a survey, see F.J. Moloney, "Revisiting John", *Scripture Bulletin* 11 (Summer 1980), pp. 9-15. Segovia's studies are dependent upon this approach to the Fourth Gospel. For the sake of completeness, it should be mentioned that some scholars refuse to accept such an approach. See especially J.A.T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* (London: SCM Press, 1985) and the simpler study of P.S. Minear, *John. The Martyr's Gospel* (New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1984).
- ³ See, for example, the important contributions of R. Borig, *Der wahre Weinstock. Untersuchungen zu Jo 15.1-10* (Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 16; Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1967); M. Lattke, *Einheit im Wort: Die spezifische Bedeutung von agapē/agapan und philein im Johannesevangelium* (Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 41; Munich: Kösel Verlag, 1975); J. Painter, "The Farewell Discourse and the History of Johannine Christianity", *New Testament Studies* 27 (1980-81), pp. 525-543; G. Richter, *Die Fusswaschung im Johannesevangelium: Geschichte ihrer Deutung* (Biblische Untersuchungen 1; Regensburg: Pustet Verlag, 1967). Recent commentaries, especially those of R.E. Brown, R. Schnackenburg, B. Lindars and E. Haenchen, make major contributions to this discussion.
- ⁴ The analysis of John 15.1-16.3 which follows lays no claim to originality. I am heavily dependent upon Y. Simoens, *Le gloire d'aimer. Structures stylistiques et interprétatives dans la Discours de la Cène* (Analecta Biblica 90; Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), pp. 130-150. It amazes me that this important study is never cited by the redaction critics.
- ⁵ See, for example, the division of the text in such widely used texts as the United Bible Society's *The Greek New Testament*, and the *Revised Standard Version*. An exception to this is J. Becker, "Die Abschiedsreden Jesu im Johannesevangelium", *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 61 (1970), pp. 215-246. Becker links 16.4b-15 with 15.18-16.4a because of the use of the Paraclete in both sections. See the similar suggestions in B. Lindars, "Persecution of Christians", pp. 54-55. For a discussion of this issue, see F.F. Segovia, "John 15.18-16.4a: A First Addition to the Original Farewell Discourse", *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45 (1983), p. 217, note 37.
- ⁶ These features have been noticed by R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St. John* (London, New York: Burns & Oates/Crossroad, 1968-1982) vol. 3, pp. 91-93. However, he makes no link between 16.4,6 and 16.33, as I believe a study of 16.4-33 should. See, for example, the more satisfactory treatment of Y. Simoens, *La gloire d'aimer*, pp. 152-158.
- ⁷ B. Lindars, "The Persecution of Christians in John 15:18-16:4a", in W. Hornbury-B. McNeill (eds.), *Suffering and Martyrdom in the New Testament* (Cambridge, University Press, 1981), pp. 64-65 sees the importance of the adversative, but still links it back to 16.1 and regards this use of *alla* as "exceptional".

- ⁸ For an excellent survey by means of a synoptic chart, see R.E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John xiii-xxi* (The Anchor Bible 29a; New York: Doubleday, 1970), pp. 589-591.
- ⁹ This has been appreciated by R. Schnackenburg, *St. John*, vol. 3, pp. 96-104. See his discussion for further references.
- ¹⁰ The exact nature of the slaying of members of the Johannine community which would be regarded as a service to God is difficult to pinpoint. Most scholars have naturally linked this with Roman persecution. Recently J.L. Martyn has suggested that it may be a memory of some form of persecution which took place while the community was still a Jewish-Christian sect. See J.L. Martyn, "Persecution and Martyrdom. A Dark and Difficult Chapter in the History of Johannine Christianity", in *The Gospel of John in Christian History. Essays for Interpreters* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 55-89. See also R. Schnackenburg, *St. John*, vol. 3, pp. 121-122. B. Lindars, "Persecution of Christians", p. 66, stresses the future tense of the verbs, and (with reference to attacks on Christians in the Bar Cochba rebellion referred to in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*) writes of an "alarming possibility" (see note 32).
- ¹¹ This pattern of strong teaching on the centrality of Jesus for the disciple, followed by an indication of the positive and negative results of its acceptance or refusal is common in the Fourth Gospel. See, for example, 3.11-21 and 31-36. On this, see F.J. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man* (Biblioteca di Scienze Religiose 14; Rome: LAS, 1978), pp. 44-51.
- ¹² If I am correct in suggesting that the last discourse as we now have it is the result of a very careful composition leading to a literary unit, then I would suggest that 15.12-17 is not only the centre of 15.1-16.3, but also the centre of the whole discourse. The command to mutual love at the centre of the discourse, based upon the loving initiative of God in Jesus, looks back to the love theme so central to the opening of the discourse in 13.1, and forward to its repetition in the conclusion of 17.24-26. For some reflections on the structure and message of the discourse as a whole, see F.J. Moloney, *The Living Voice of the Gospel. The Gospels Today* (Melbourne: Collins Dove, 1987), pp. 190-193.
- ¹³ This has been noticed and used by B. Lindars, "Persecution of Christians", pp. 55-62, but with different results.
- ¹⁴ See, on this relationship between Jesus and the disciples, the excellent reflections of B. Lindars, "Persecution of Christians", pp. 59-62.
- ¹⁵ See, for example, W. Bauer, *Das Johannesevangelium* (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament 6; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1933), p. 195; J. Becker, "Abschiedsreden", pp. 237-238; E. Haenchen, *John* (Hermeneia, Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), vol. 2, p. 138.
- ¹⁶ R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Oxford: Blackwells, 1971), p. 552. See pp. 552-554. On p. 552 Bultmann sees the link between vv. 18-20 and vv. 26-27. See also R. Schnackenburg, *St. John*, vol. 3, pp. 117-120; R.E. Brown, *John*, pp. 698-701.
- ¹⁷ For this case, see the work of Simoens (above, note 9) and my own more popular study of the general structure and message of the whole discourse (see note 17).
- ¹⁸ See, for example, W.A. Meeks, "The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism", *Journal of Biblical Literature* 91 (1972), pp. 44-72; D.M. Smith, "Johannine Christianity: Some Reflections on Its Character and Delineation", *New Testament Studies* 21 (1974-1975), pp. 224-248; B. Lindars, "Persecution of Christians", p. 67; F.F. Segovia, *Love Relationships*, pp. 204-213; Idem, "'Peace I Leave with You; My Peace I Give to You': Discipleship in the Fourth Gospel", in F.F. Segovia (ed.), *Discipleship in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), pp. 76-102. This position is graphically presented by J.T. Sanders, *Ethics in the New Testament: Change and Development* (London: SCM Press, 1975), p. 100: " 'If you believe you will have eternal life', promises the Johannine Christian, while the dying man's blood stains the ground".

- ¹⁹ Throughout the Fourth Gospel the evangelist uses various “examples” of faith to show the journey from no faith to partial faith to complete faith. For a consideration of two important moments where this technique is used, see F.J. Moloney, “From Cana to Cana (Jn 2.1-4.54), and the Fourth evangelist’s Concept of Correct (and Incorrect) Faith”, in E.A. Livingston (ed.), *Studia Biblica II. Papers on the Gospels. Sixth International Congress on Biblical Studies. Oxford 3-7 April 1978* (Sheffield, JSOT Press, 1980), pp. 185-213. See also Idem, *The Living Voice of the Gospel*, pp. 203-220. See also Idem, “John 20: A Journey Completed”, *Australasian Catholic Record* 59 (1982), pp. 417-432. This article should now be read in the light of the further suggestions of B.J. Byrne, “The Faith of the Beloved Disciple and the Community in John 20”, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 23 (1985), pp. 83-97.
- ²⁰ See, on this, the further indications of the centrality of this theme in F.J. Moloney, “The Structure and Message of John 13.1-38”, *Australian Biblical Review* 34 (1986), pp. 11-13. The article, which runs from pp. 1-16, has been so poorly edited and published that it is almost incomprehensible. Chiastic structures (see pp. 6-7,8-9 and 10) have simply been printed straight down the page, even though they were corrected in the proofs.
- ²¹ For the magisterial and most influential work on this question, see J.L. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 24-62. For a reflection which links the situation of the break with the synagogue directly to John 15.18-16.4a, see B. Lindars, “Persecution of Christians”, pp. 48-51.
- ²² On this issue, see the excellent survey of R.E. Brown, *John*, pp. 669-674.
- ²³ For a summary of the Johannine concept of judgement, see F.J. Moloney, *The Word Became Flesh* (Theology Today Series 14; Dublin/Cork: Mercier Press, 1977), pp. 24-27. See especially, J. Blank, *Krisis. Untersuchungen zur johanneischen Christologie und Eschatologie* (Freiburg: Lambertus-Verlag, 1964).