

“After this, Jesus went about in Galilee; he would not go about in Judea, because the *Judeans* (alternatively) sought to kill him” (7.1).

The translators were, however, *not* consistent in a similar context: “Then after this he said to the disciples, ‘Let us go into Judea again’. The disciples said to him, ‘Rabbi, the *Jews* were but now seeking to stone you, and are you going there again?’ ” (11.7-8). (Why not the “*Judeans*” here, too, in the light of the clear sectional reference in the text?)

In his article “Who were the *Ioudaioi*?”, the Welsh New Testament scholar Malcolm Lowe deals extensively with this sectional terminology in the four Gospels.<sup>8</sup>

Whatever theological or historical explanations may be offered for the polarization between Church and Synagogue and between Jew and Gentile, it must be borne in mind that the New Testament scriptures are derived from a Jewish faith context in great tension with the mainstream of the Jewish people to this very day. This fact requires sensitivity in translation, captioning and study comments without, however, compromising the integrity of the Scriptures themselves.

ROGER L OMANSON

## TRANSLATING THE ANTI-JEWISH BIAS: A REPLY

In my article “Translating the Anti-Jewish Bias of the New Testament” in the July 1992 issue of *The Bible Translator*, I pointed out that many biblical scholars today have come to the conclusion that some writings in the New Testament reflect the strong hostilities between developing Christianity and developing rabbinic Judaism in the latter half of the first century. I further argued that as Bible translators we cannot omit such passages in translation, but neither we should make the texts more anti-Jewish than they are. I maintain, *pace* Mr Benhayim, that some roots of anti-Jewish bias go back to the New Testament writings themselves and not just to a later abuse and misuse of them (though that has happened also). Scholars will continue to debate whether any passages should be called “anti-Jewish.” I also argued that the apostle Paul was not the fierce opponent of Judaism that the church has long understood him to be.

I wish to clarify that I never say that any passage in the New Testament is “anti-Semitic.” That term carries post-holocaust meaning that is inappropriate to ascribe to any New Testament writing because it is anachronistic to do so. Mr Benhayim is concerned that what I say will give freedom for people to use the Bible to defend anti-semitic attitudes. Unfortunately, in referring to my article, Mr Benhayim slides over from my term “anti-Jewish” to “anti-Semitic”, a term that I specifically do not attribute to the New Testament writers. I also wish to state that, though my views differ from Mr Benhayim’s, I do not consider my conclusions to call into question the authority of the New Testament writings for Christians today.

My concern is that if we do not help Christian readers of the New

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<sup>8</sup> Malcolm Lowe, “Who were the *Ioudaioi*?”, *Novum Testamentum* xviii/2 (April 1976).

Testament understand the context in which these writings came to life that these writings will continue to be used to defend anti-semitic attitudes and behaviour. We need to help readers understand that the struggle between developing Judaism and developing Christianity resulted in some pretty harsh statements from both sides.

I agree with the recent statements by Urban C. von Wahlde that: once we have listened to this rhetoric [concerning the Jews in the Gospel of John], we must be careful not to repeat it ourselves, today. What may have been an understandable form of rhetoric in the first century has no place in the twentieth. The situation of persecution and separation from the synagogue with all the perils that that could entail and the very likelihood that many of the Johannine community would not find the strength to confess their convictions in these circumstances called for efforts to identify clearly the issues and the opponents. However to repeat the polemic today would only lead to the very hostility and rejection that the New Testament in its larger dimensions seeks to avoid.<sup>1</sup> (82)

Mr Benhayim says (correctly) that the Old Testament prophets attacked their own people but that does not make them "anti-Jewish." So, he argues, the New Testament writers were Jews attacking Jews, but that doesn't make them anti-Jewish. But there is a marked difference. The prophets who attacked religious practices in their day were not standing in the doorway of a new religion. The New Testament writers were right on the edge of writing as outsiders who belonged to a separate religion (for example, "their synagogue" in Matthew 4.23; 9.35; 10.17; 12.9; 13.54; 23.34 represents this attitude of separate identities). Yes, they may have been Jews, but they were first of all Christians, and Christianity was fast becoming a religion distinct from and separate from Judaism, and a religion dominated by Gentiles and not by Jews.

## REVIEW ARTICLE

LYNELL ZOGBO

### COMMENTARIES ON THE SONG OF SONGS

Dr Zogbo is a UBS translation consultant based in Cote d'Ivoire.

When asked to write linguistic and translation comments on the Song of Songs, I did not even own one commentary on this enigmatic and controversial book. When I began ordering materials, I was immediately struck by the incredibly large number of articles, commentaries, and books which have been written on the subject. Pope was correct in his assessment "No composition of comparable size in world literature has provoked and inspired such a volume and variety of comment and interpretation as the biblical Song of Songs" (17). The questions we need to ask ourselves when beginning a study of the Song are the same as we would ask for other

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<sup>1</sup> "The Gospel of John and the Presentation of Jews and Judaism", in *Within Context: Essays on Jews and Judaism in the New Testament*, ed. by D. P. Efronson et al. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 67-84.