CHAPTER NINE


In discussing the υμολογία formula which lies behind certain Johannine texts and the Sitz im Leben of the same, we came to the conclusion that the Fourth Gospel presents Jewish-Christians as being "cast out" of the Jewish fold by official Judaism on the grounds that they have betrayed the Torah and Moses by "confessing" Jesus. On the other hand, we sought to show that the confession of Christ, while provoking the enmity of the Jews, is not opposed to OT revelation, the Scriptures, faith in Moses and his writings, as the Jews think. On the contrary, it is that to which these realities lead and in which they find their fulfilment and ultimate meaning.

When we considered Jn 9, the man born blind appeared to be a "type" or "figure" of the true disciple—a Jew who courageously confesses Jesus as the Messiah and, as a result, becomes ἀποσωμάτωτος. Yet, the "disciples of Moses", and not the "disciple of Jesus", are shown to be incapable of pronouncing a "just" judgement concerning Jesus, chained down as they are by a false understanding of Jesus and the (Sabbath) Law. We also saw how Nicodemus, like his fellow Pharisees, is shown to be in dire need of instruction. Although in good faith, his knowledge of the Law is incapable of disclosing to him the meaning and truth of what Jesus had to reveal. Jn thus illustrates how supposed ignorance of the Law (Jn 7,49; 9,34) leads to Jesus and how presumed knowledge of the Law militates against

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1 See above, pp. 239f.
2 See above, Chapter Eight, passim; esp. pp. 254-263.
3 See above, pp. 24f; 105-111; 241-253.
4 See above, pp. 22; 24f; 110; 133-138; 146-157.
5 See above, pp. 85-87; 115-117.
6 K. Bornhäuser (Das Johannesevangelium eine Missionsschrift für Israel (Gütersloh, 1928), 25ff) believes Nicodemus represents his colleagues, the Pharisees. This is true, provided one bears in mind that he is also presented as more enlightened and less prejudiced than they.
the acknowledgement of Jesus (Jn 7,48; 9,34.40f; 3,10). Nicodemus, notwithstanding his goodwill, does not become a disciple of Jesus. His colleagues do not even consider becoming disciples of Jesus; it would mean to betray their heritage and their “teacher” Moses (Jn 9,28f). But the opinion of the Pharisees is not that of Jn! Our investigations have furnished evidence that belief in Jesus is not presented as a rejection of Moses or the Torah; those who are unfaithful to Moses and his writings are those who refuse to believe on the one about whom Moses wrote!

It would be wrong to imagine that, for Jn, to be a Jew and to be a Christian represent an aut-aut. True, there are two “blocks”: the “Jews” vs. Jesus and his followers. It is also true that, for the Pharisees (the “Jews”), Jesus and his followers have cut themselves off from Judaism. But, once again, the opinion of the “Jews” is not that of Jn. The disciples of Jesus do not accept to be classified as apostates and enemies of their own people. On the contrary, they consider themselves “true Israelites” and the true heirs of the traditions of the Fathers.

There is a text in Jn which expresses this thought very clearly and therefore comes as a precious complement to Jn 5,37-47: Jn 1,45-49.

The text is related to 5,41-44 because we have a Jew making a “confession” of faith in Jesus; it is related to 5,37-39.45-47 because the confession of faith acclaims Jesus as the one about whom Moses wrote in the Law. As a result, Nathanael the Jew is called a “true Israelite!”

A) Vv. 45f

“Ὁν ἑγατεν Μωϋσῆς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ should be compared with Jn 5,39.46. In view of the strict correspondence between these three texts, it is evident that the presentation of Jesus by Philip as the one about whom Moses wrote means that they have found (ἐφρηκαμεν) the one announced by the Scriptures, the Messiah (cf. 1,41’). Nathanael is supposed to understand the words of Philip in this sense, and he does.8

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7 It is interesting to note that not one of the Pharisees, as opposed to the “leaders” (ἐρχοντες), is said to have believed on Jesus; not even Nicodemus, who was an ἐρχοντα, but also a Pharisee.

8 The objection of Brown (ad 1,46) that “Philip has not told Nathanael that Jesus