Can the gospel of John continue to function for Christians as a document of faith in the increasing pluralism of American culture?

What problems or resources does it present to believers who live in a pluralistic culture?

Document of faith: text that shapes the character and content of one’s religious beliefs.

# The Theological Challenge

1. The early church did not unanimously accept John the Gospel
   1. Gaius rejected John due to its discrepancies with the synoptic gospels.
   2. Irenaeus persuaded the church to accept John the Gospel
      1. Claims that Polycarp a bishop
      2. Claims he was alive to hear Polycarp

# The Historical Challenge

*The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* was a book published in 1835 that brings into question the gospel’s historical authenticity. Friedrich Strauss hypothesizes that John was written from a later time period than Jesus and that later time period’s theology was written back into the story thus modifying the personality and discourse of Jesus. One piece of evidence is that in the synoptics Jesus speaks in parables, whereas in John he speaks in extended discourses.

* “the discourses of Jesus in John’s gospel are mainly free compositions of the Evangelist”

# The Ethical Challenge

1. Is John anti-Jewish?
   1. Original (WEAK) Arguments against John being anti-Jewish
      1. Reflects a historical period in which there was tension within the synagogue and Jews and Christians were not clearly distinct
      2. Jesus and the disciples were all Jews
      3. John opposes not Jewishness but the response of unbelief
   2. Evidence of Anti-Jewish Thought in the gospel of John
      1. John makes debates between Jesus and the pharisees debates between Jesus and “the Jews.” By lumping all Jews together (even Jewish Christians), John stereotypes Jews as evil people.
      2. *Hoi Ioudaioi* interpretation is usually “the Je*ws”*
         1. “the Jews”
            1. Maybe the context matters. If it says, “they feared the Jews” maybe “the Jews” refers to a special group of Jews who were mentioned a verse earlier (John 7:11-13)
         2. “the Judeans”
2. Does the Gospel have anything to say to the marginalized and the oppressed?
   1. “Hermeneutics of Suspicion”
      1. Who is benefitting from this interpretation?
   2. “p” codes: Search for the following issues in the text to be aware of biases in John
      1. Privileged
      2. Power
      3. Poverty
      4. Persecution
   3. Does John speak to those oppressed or enslaved?
      1. Rensberger
         1. John might not support a theology of liberation since it focuses on Christology
         2. However, John was “product of an oppressed community”
         3. Nicodemus was not oppressed and struggled with whether or not to identify with the oppressed.
      2. Robert J. Karris
         1. The poor and the disabled “people of the land” were persecuted
         2. Johannine community were persecuted for helping lower status people
3. How should we interpret the theological exclusivism of the gospel in a pluralistic culture?
   1. Asian Christians
      1. Many Asian Christians grow up in pagan families that worry about the dead. Asian Christians struggle with accepting that their dead ancestors who didn’t hear the gospel will go to hell.
      2. Yagi
         1. The gospel has two centers: love for each other and faith in Christ
            1. Yagi argues that this is problematic, since there might be people who love other people and live a good life but go to hell since they do not have faith in Christ or vice versa.

# A Hermeneutics of Ethical Accountability