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THE POLEMIC IN Jn 8:31-59 IN THE CONTEXT OF JEWISH
AND CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

The Gospel of John contains many verses in which there is polemic between Jesus and his interlocutors. One of the most polemical dialogue of the Fourth Gospel is Jn 8:31-59. Searching the answer for the source of its polemic we try to investigate it in wider context of Jewish and Christian literature. Among contemporary scholars the question of the polemic in Johannine community is an object of very intensive research and discussion¹. In the present article we want to analyze Jn 8:31-59 in the light of Jewish (Isaiah, Targum of Isaiah) and

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¹ See J. L. M a r t y n, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, New York 1968; O. C u l l m a n n, *The Johannine Circle*, Philadelphia 1976; R. E. B r o w n, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple. The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times*, New York 1979; R. A. W h i t a c r e, *Johannine Polemic. The Role of Tradition and Theology*, Chico 1982; D. R e n s b e r g e r, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community*, Philadelphia 1988; U. C. v o n W a h l d e, *Community in Conflict. The History and Social Context of the Johannine Community*, Interp 49 (1995), p. 379-389; T. N i c k l a s, *Ablösung und Verstrickung. „Juden“ und Jüngergestalten als Charaktere der erzählten Welt des Johannesevangeliums und ihre Wirkung auf den impliziten Leser*, Bern 2001; C. G. L i n g a d, *The Problems of Jewish Christians in the Johannine Community*, Roma 2001; L. D e v i l l e r s, *La fête de l'Envoyé. La section johannique de la fête des Tentés (Jean 7, 1-10, 21) et la christologie*, Paris 2002; M. S. W r ó b e l, *Synagoga a rodzący się Kościół. Studium egzegetyczno-teologiczne Czwartej Ewangelii (J 9, 22; 12, 42; 16, 2)*, Kielce 2002; M. S. W r ó b e l, *Antyjudajizm a Ewangelia według św. Jana. Nowe spojrzenie na relację czwartej Ewangelii do judaizmu*, Lublin 2005; M. S. W r ó b e l, *Who are the father and his children in Jn 8:44? The literary, historical and theological analysis of Jn 8:44 and its context*, Paris 2005.

Christian (Letter to the Galatians, 1 Letter of John) sources. In such a way we will be able to see the conflict presented in Johannine text in wider context of Jewish and Christian literature.

I. Jn 8:31-59 IN THE LIGHT OF ISAIAH AND TARGUM OF ISAIAH

In Jn 8:31-59 the polemic concerns the question of true sonship and true fatherhood. Jesus, Son of God in dialogue with „Jews” reveals them the truth that their father is not God neither Abraham but Devil. In this complex text, where different traditions are combined, we can distinguish two perspectives: 1. the relationship to Abraham (vv. 31-40; vv. 48-59); 2. the relationship to God (vv. 41-47).

Relation to Abraham	Relation to God
The speech of Jesus	
<p>v. 37 <i>I know that <u>you are Abraham's offspring</u>; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.</i></p> <p>v. 39b <i><u>If you are Abraham's children</u>, do the <u>deeds of Abraham</u>.</i></p> <p>v. 40 <i>But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a man who has told you the truth, which I heard from God; this Abraham did not do.</i></p> <p>v. 56 <i><u>Your father Abraham</u> rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.</i></p>	<p>v. 42 <i><u>If God were your Father</u>, you would love Me; for I proceeded forth and have come from God.</i></p> <p>v. 47 <i>He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because <u>you are not of God</u>.</i></p>
The speech of „Jews”	
<p>v. 33 <i><u>We are Abraham's offspring</u>, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone.</i></p> <p>v. 39 <i><u>Abraham is our father</u>.</i></p> <p>v. 53 <i>Surely You are not greater than our <u>father Abraham</u>, who died?</i></p>	<p>v. 41b <i><u>we have one Father, even God</u>.</i></p>

The polemical *Sitz im Leben* of Jn 8:31-59 is better understood in the light of a prophetic text from Isaiah. The importance of this prophet for the Fourth Gospel is stressed by the fact that its first part (*the Book of Signs*, 1-12) begins and ends

by explicitly mentioning this prophet and quoting him (Jn 1:23; 12:38-40)². In fact, in the Book of Isaiah, some texts unveil a polemic within the community and a struggle regarding true identity. In Isa 66:5 the people who tremble (החרדים) are persecuted by their brothers (אחים): (*Hear the word of JHWH you who tremble at His word Your brethren who hate you, who cast you out for my name sake say: 'Let JHWH reveal his glory so that we may see your joy' but it is they who will be put to shame*). Isa 65:13-16 identifies the people who tremble (החרדים) with the servants (עבדים)³. The verb „tremble” (חרד) often occurs in the Old Testament with a religious meaning⁴. In Ezra 9:4 and 10:3 the participle form may indicate a group of people. In the Isaian text they are hated and rejected by the brothers (probably the priests of the Temple) because of their eschatological beliefs⁵. The opposition between the righteous servants and their wicked brothers is well expressed by the text of *Targum of Isaiah 65:13 – Therefore thus says the Lord Elohim, Behold, my servants, the righteous (עבדי צדיקים), shall eat, but you, the wicked (ואהון רשיעיא), shall be hungry: behold, my servants, the righteous, shall drink, but you, the wicked, shall thirst; behold, my servants, the righteous, shall rejoice, but you shall be ashamed. Behold, my servants, the righteous, shall sing praises for joy of heart, but you shall cry out for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for breaking of spirit.*

The concept of a persecuted community could have been used by John to describe the tensions in his time. Jesus and his followers are hated and rejected by their „brothers”. In this polemic the question of the „true” Israel and of a „true” relation to God becomes one of the basic issues.

The fraternal polemic in the Johannine community about true sonship and fatherhood can reflect a perspective already present in text of the prophet Isaiah. In 63:16 the paternity of God is underlined against the background of the paternity of Abraham: *For you are our father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O JHWH, are our father; our Redeemer from of old is your name. In Isa 41:8 (But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend) we find the expression זרע אברהם*

² The theme of the influence of Isaiah on the Fourth Gospel was the object of research of F. W. Young, *A Study of the Relation of Isaiah to the Fourth Gospel*, ZNW 46(1955), p. 215-233; G. Reim, *Jochanan. Erweiterte Studien zum alttestamentlichen Hintergrund des Johannesevangeliums*, Erlangen 1995, p. 162-183. But they did not use the *Targum of Isaiah*.

³ In the Targum of Isa 66:5 those who tremble are called „righteous” (צדיקים). See J. F. Stening, *The Targum of Isaiah*, London 1949, p. 218-219.

⁴ See Ex 19:16; 1 Sam 4:13; 14:15.

⁵ The terms ‘glory’ and ‘joy’ are used by Isaiah in eschatological context.

(σπέρμα Αβρααμ) like in Jn 8:33.37. The paternity of Abraham of the sons of Israel is also underlined in Isa 51:2 – *Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many.*

An analysis of Targum of Isaiah reveals how strongly it is linked to the Johannine perspective. According J. F. Stenning: „though the Targum received its final form in Babylon its contents are essentially Palestinian in origin, and result from a living process of development in the latter country. For the needs for a translation into Aramaic must have arisen in the period between the Return from exile and the first century C.E.”⁶. In this Targum one can detect both similarities in atmosphere and terminological connections with the Johannine text⁷. God as father calls the house of Israel, His sons, to return to a real relationship of love and peace with Him. The language of the Targum is very harsh towards those sons who abandoned God by their sins and by transgressing the commandments: 1:2-6 *The house of Israel is my people, I called them sons, I cherished them and made them glorious, and they have rebelled against my Memra... My people have not considered how to return to my law. Woe to them that were called, A holy people, and yet sinned, A chosen congregation, yet multiplied transgressions... Because of their evil deeds they are turned round and gone backwards... They are perverse and rebellious; 57:4 Are you not children of rebellion, a lying seed who serve idols...*

The evil acts of the sons of Israel are openly expressed by the prophet:

a) Murder (1:15 *your hands are full of innocent blood; 1:21 they are murderers; 9:4 their garment is rolled in blood; 33:15 they shed innocent blood; 59:7 their feet run to do wickedness, and hasten to shed innocent blood).*

b) Lies and falsehood (29:21 *they pervert the cause of the innocent with lying; 30:9 they are lying children; 32:6 for the wicked speak wickedness, and plan violence in their heart, to practice falsehood and to speak apostasy before the Lord; 57:11 you have spoken so many lies; 59:3 your lips speak lies, your tongue meditates deceits).*

c) Adultery and fornication (57:3 *But as for you, draw near hither the people of a generation whose deeds are evil, whose planting was from a holy planting, but they are adulterers and fornicators).*

⁶ J. F. Stenning, *The Targum of Isaiah*, p. VII.

⁷ R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, New York 1984³, vol. I, p. LXI asserts that the passages like 3:14; 4:6. 12; 7:38; 12:41 may be citing the Palestinian Targums (the local Aramaic translations of Scripture) rather than the Hebrew Bible.

d) Service to idols (17:11 *In the place where you were sanctified to be a people, there you corrupted your deeds... you forsook my service, and served idols*).

The opposition between righteous and wicked brothers is often expressed in the *Targum of Isaiah* in the form of a dualistic paradigm (light-darkness; life-death; truth-lie): 26:19 *You bring the dead to life, you raise up the bones of their dead bodies; all that were cast to the dust shall live and sing praises before you; for the dew is a dew of light unto them that observe your law, but the wicked to whom you gave might, but who have transgressed your Memra, shall you deliver unto Gehinnam*; 59:13.15 *We have rebelled, and lied against the Memra of the Lord, and we have turned backwards from the service of our God, and we were speaking falsehood and defection, hastening to bring from our heart words of falsehood... And the doers of truth were hiding themselves, and they that turn aside from evil were being spoiled*.

The harsh words of the prophet are not a message against the house of Israel but rather a message of hope and mercy from God who searches for His children: 1:16 *Return to the law, cleanse you from your transgressions; put away the evil of your deeds from before my Memra; cease to do evil*; 8:18 *Behold, while I am still alive, and the children which the Lord has given me, the signs and wonders which he promised to bring upon Israel shall be established in us, that if they see and repent, the sentence that was decreed against them may be annulled*.

Links with the Johannine text can be seen in these passages of the *Targum of Isaiah* where the fatherhood of Abraham is highlighted⁸.

In this context we can see that the ideas contained in the text of *Isaiah* and *Targum of Isaiah* were presented in the mind of the author of the Fourth Gospel. He used them in order to show that the prophetic words found their fulfillment in his community. The confirmation of this thesis we are able to find by analyzing the text of First Letter of John where strong polemic can be also detected.

⁸ In *Targum* the term Abraham (12 times) occurs more frequently than in the Masoretic text. See J. B. van Zijl, *A Concordance to the Targum of Isaiah*, Missoula 1979, p. 2.

Targum of Isaiah	Gospel of John
<p>5:1-2 <i>The prophet said, I will now sing unto Israel, which is <u>likened to a vineyard</u>, the <u>seed of Abraham</u> (זרעיה דאברהם) my friend, a song of my friend touching his vineyard. My people, my beloved one is Israel, I gave them an inheritance in a lofty mountain, in a fruitful land: and I sanctified them and honored them, and established them like the plant of a chosen vine; and I built my sanctuary among them; yea, I gave them my altar to make atonement for their sins; I said that they would <u>do good deeds</u>, but <u>they did evil deeds</u> דיעבדון עובדון טבין ואינן אבאישו עובדיהון אמריה</i></p>	<p>8:33 <i>We are <u>Abraham's seed</u>.</i> 8:37 <i>I know that you are <u>Abraham's seed</u>.</i> 8:34 <i>Truly, truly, I say to you, <u>everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin</u>.</i> 8:41 <i>You are <u>doing the deeds of your father</u>.</i> 51:1-11 Jesus as True Wine.</p>
<p>29:23 <i>For when they see the mighty acts, which I shall do for their sons, even the kindnesses of <u>Abraham for his seed</u> (טבות אברהם לזרעיה) after them on their land in the midst of them, they shall sanctify my name.</i></p>	<p>8:33 <i>We are <u>Abraham's seed</u>.</i> 8:37 <i>I know that you are <u>Abraham's seed</u>.</i></p>
<p>46:11-12 <i>I who promise to gather the exiles from the east, to bring quickly as a swift bird from a far land <u>the children of Abraham</u> (בני אברהם), my chosen... Hearken unto my Memra, ye stubborn-hearted, that are far from acts of righteousness.</i></p>	<p>8:39 <i>"<u>Abraham is our father</u>." Jesus said to them, "<u>If you are Abraham's children, do the deeds of Abraham</u>.</i> 8:43 <i>"Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.</i> 8:47 <i>for this reason you do not hear ...</i></p>
<p>48:15 <i>I, even I, did make by my Memra a covenant with <u>Abraham your father</u>; (עם אברהם אבוכון). I appointed him: I brought him into the land of the house of my Shekinah, and made his way prosperous.</i></p>	<p>8:53 <i>Surely You are not greater than <u>our father Abraham</u>...</i></p>
<p>51:2 <i>Consider <u>Abraham your father</u> (באברהם אבוכון) and Sarah who conceived you: for when Abraham was alone and solitary in the world I brought him to my service, and blessed him, and made him many.</i></p>	<p>8:56 <i><u>Your father Abraham</u>...</i></p>

II. Jn 8:31-59 IN THE LIGHT OF FIRST LETTER OF JOHN

In First Letter of John the faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God is what divides the community. Just as in the Gospel, the call to faith is stressed in 1 Jn 3:23 (*And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us*)⁹. The purpose of the Gospel summarized in Jn 20:31 and 1 Jn 5:13 contain similar concepts about faith in the Son of God and about life which is a fruit of faith:

Jn 20:31	1 Jn 5:13
<i>But <u>these</u> have been <u>written</u> that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, <u>the Son of God</u>; and that believing you <u>may have life in His name</u>.</i>	<i><u>These things</u> I have <u>written</u> to you who <u>believe</u> in the <u>name of the Son of God</u>, in order that you may know that <u>you have eternal life</u>.</i>

The other point of division in the Johannine community is the attitude toward sin and the question of observing the commandments. In Jn 8:31 Jesus encourages his interlocutors to keep his word and in Jn 8:34 he says that whoever sins is a slave. The same perspective is to be found in 1 Jn 1:8 (*If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us*) and in 1 Jn 2:4 (*The one who says, "I have come to know Him", and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him*).

Many common stylistic features between the Fourth Gospel and First Letter of John enable us to place both writings in a similar perspective¹⁰. I agree with R. E. Brown that „First Letter of John was composed after some stages in the composition of the Gospel of John and before other stages”¹¹. Some common points can be found after analyzing the literary genre and structure of the Fourth Gospel and First Letter of John. We find in these writings the same christological and ethical concepts in the polemic concerning the attitude towards Jesus as Messiah and Son of God and the attitude to the commandments and to sin. The explicit reference to Cain in 1 Jn 3:12 indicates that the author(s) used the *haggada* about Cain-Abel which may also have inspired the redaction of Jn 8:31-59. The strong Aramaic background of our text indicates its Jewish context and

⁹ See also 1 Jn 4:16; 5:1.5.10.

¹⁰ See the overview of opinions about the relation between Gospel and 1 Jn in: R. E. B r o w n, *The Epistles of John*, New York 1982, p. 32-35; R. A. W h i t a c r e, *Johannine Polemic*, p. 153-186.

¹¹ R. E. B r o w n, *The Epistles of John*, p. 32.

a Jewish Christian community. This observation is confirmed by the Patristic tradition which asserts that the Gospel of John was written in order to react to the heresy of Cerinthus¹² and the teaching of the Ebionites¹³. They denied the incarnation and considered Jesus to be only a man¹⁴. The question of the true identity was an important issue in this polemic. The real identity of the children of God was verified by their relationship to Jesus – Son of God. Everyone who does not believe in him as Son of God remained on the way of falsehood and death. The contrast between the children of God and the children of the Devil was well expressed by an opposition between the Son of God and the son of the Devil. The *haggada* about two brothers – Cain and Abel – could have been used by the author(s) of Johannine texts. Cain who reveals himself to be the son of the Devil by murdering his brother is not only the father of the „Jews” but also of all those whose actions are evil. Cain’s followers are under the control of the Devil. The „intra-brothers polemic” detected in First Letter of John can be a key to understanding the situation in the Johannine community. In Jn 8:31-59 the interlocutors of Jesus are identified with the „Jews” who try to arrest Jesus and kill him. Similar outlooks in the Gospel of John as well as in First Letter of John coupled with the fact that the term „Jews” does not appear in the latter writing, allows us to see the conflict between Jesus and the Johannine „Jews” in the wider context of an „intra-brothers polemic”. In this light the description of the „Jews” who had believed in Jesus (J 8:31) can be better understood. A statement in 1 Jn 2:19 confirms that the origin of the adversaries comes from within the Johannine community itself (*They went out from us, but they did not belong to us; for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But by going out they made it plain that none of them belongs to us*). The Jewish-Christian secessionists in 1 Jn and the „Jews” in Jn 8:31-59 had believed in Jesus but their faith was based on their own concept. They understood Jesus as Messiah from the perspective of a long awaited Davidic king, but as Son of God only in the sense in which every Davidic king was considered son or representative of God¹⁵. Gradually they came to deny Jesus as being the Christ and Son of God. In the Gospel of John and the First Letter of John the relation between God and his son Jesus Christ is underlined. The similar ideas can be detected also in Pauline Letter to the Galatians.

¹² See the description of this heresy in R. E. B r o w n, *The Epistles of John*, p. 65-68; 766-771.

¹³ See C. G. L i n g a d, *The Problems of Jewish Christians*, p. 37-45.

¹⁴ I r e n a e u s, *Aversus Haereses*, III, 11:1 (I, 26:1); J e r o m e, *Prologue to the Commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew*, PL 26 col. 19.

¹⁵ See R. E. B r o w n, *The Epistles of John*, p. 53.

III. Jn 8:31-59 IN THE LIGHT OF LETTER TO THE GALATIANS

The relation to Abraham present in the Johannine text has many textual and conceptual connections with the Letter to the Galatians:

Letter to Galatians	Gospel of John
3:28-29 <i>There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither <u>slave</u> nor <u>free man</u>, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are <u>Abraham's offspring</u>, heirs according to promise.</i>	8:32-33 <i>and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall <u>make you free</u>. They answered Him, "<u>We are Abraham's offspring</u>, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You shall become free'?</i>
4:7-8 <i>Therefore you are no longer a <u>slave</u>, but a <u>son</u>; and if a <u>son</u>, then an heir through God.</i> 4:8 <i>However at that time, when you did not know God, <u>you were slaves</u> to those which by nature are no gods.</i>	8:35-37 <i>And <u>the slave</u> does not remain in the house forever; <u>the son</u> does remain forever. "If therefore the Son shall <u>make you free</u>, you shall be free indeed. "I know that <u>you are Abraham's offspring</u>; yet you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you.</i>
5:1 <i>It was for <u>freedom</u> that Christ <u>set us free</u>; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a <u>yoke of slavery</u>.</i>	

The theme of liberty and true sonship are common to both texts. In Gal 4:21-31 we find the concept of the two sons of Abraham – Isaac and Ishmael (4:22 *Abraham had two sons, one by the bondwoman and one by the free woman*). Paul underlined that the son of Sara (Isaac) was born according to the spirit while the son of Hagar (Ishmael) was born according to the flesh. The Galatians like Isaac were the children of the promise who obtained true liberty but their brothers in contrast were like Ishmael the sons of slavery. The tension between the brothers was paradigmatic for the historical situation of the Christian community being persecuted by the brothers (Gal 4:29 – But just as at that time the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also). It is probable that in Gal 4:29 Paul referred to a Jewish interpretation of Gen 21:9 in which Ishmael wanted to kill Isaac¹⁶. The theme of

¹⁶ This tradition is found in Tosephta *Sota* 6:6. It is based on the similarity of the two verbs נָחַק and שָׂחַק: „R. Ishmael says, ‘The word playing, refers only to bloodshed, as it is said, And Abner said to Joab, Let the young men, I pray you, arise and play before us... Then they arose and passed over by number... And each caught his opponent by the head and thrust his sword in his opponent's side; so that they fell down together (2 Sam 2:14-16). This teaches that the matriarch Sarah saw Ishmael taking a bow and arrows and shooting toward Isaac”. See also Midrash *Genesis Rabbah* 53:11 „R. Eleazar said: The term sport refers to bloodshed, as in the verse, Let the young men, I

the Letter to the Galatians could have been used by the author(s) of the Fourth Gospel in the context of a polemic related to true sonship and true fatherhood. In the first perspective the „Jews” openly express their identity as children of Abraham (vv.33.39.53). According to Jesus this identity should be verified by acts. In fact external acts are distinguished by Jesus from their internal intentions. He reproaches the „Jews” because they commit sin (v. 35), they seek to kill him because there is no place in them for His word (v. 37), because he told them the truth heard from God (v. 40), they dishonor him (v. 49), they do not know God (v. 55). In this highly charge atmosphere Jesus promised the „Jews” things related to the observance of his word: a) that they would become His true disciples (v. 31 – *If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine*); b) that they would have eternal life (v. 51 – *if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death*). The apparently harsh speech Jesus directs toward His interlocutors is in fact a message of truth and hope. To be a disciple of Jesus means to be in communion with God by faith and so obtain eternal life. Those who reject Jesus are excluded from God’s paternity and are on the path of death and the lie, just like the Devil and his followers. This is well expressed in the second perspective of our text (vv. 41-47) where God’s paternity of the „Jews” (v. 41b) is denied by Jesus (vv. 42.47). In this context Jesus reproaches the „Jews” because: a) they do not love Him and do not recognize His identity as One who was sent by God (v. 42); b) they do not understand His teaching because they cannot hear His word (v. 43); c) they do not believe Him (v. 45-46). Jesus reveals the true identity of His interlocutors. They are children of the Devil, not because they are „Jews” but because their actions are bad. They want to kill Jesus and at the end of the dialogue they take up stones in order to lapidate Him (Jn 8:59).

Seeing Johannine text in wider context of Jewish and Christian literature we can detect „polemical pattern” which was used by the author of the Fourth Gospel. In Jn 8:31-59 the true identity of the children can be recognized by their actions. The polemical dialogue may reflect a struggle between the brothers in the Johannine community. The conflict between Cain-Abel and Isaac-Ishmael could have been used as a pattern to express the situation in the community. The centre of the polemic is the person of Jesus. Jesus’ relation to his Father who sent him is the paradigm of true sonship and true fatherhood. Jesus’ brothers („Jews”) who do not believe in him and try to kill him are like Cain who has no relationship with God and kills his brother. Jesus is the model for the persecuted community

pray you, arise and sport before us (2 Sam 2:14). R. Azariah said in R. Levi’s name: Ishmael said to Isaac, ‘Let us go and see our portions in the field’; then Ishmael would take a bow and arrows and shoot them in Isaac’s direction, whilst pretending to be playing”.

of believers who suffer different forms of persecution on account of their faith¹⁷. The Johannine writings stress the fact that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God¹⁸. The adversaries deny that He is the Messiah¹⁹ and regard as blasphemy His identification as Son of God²⁰. They try to kill him²¹ and they persecute his followers²². A division can be detected within the group of Jesus' closest disciples. It is confirmed by Judas' behavior²³. In Jn 6:66 many of Jesus' disciples turned back and no longer went about with him. In the Fourth Gospel „division” (σχίσμα) occurs among people (7:43). Pharisees (9:16), and „Jews” (10:16), always with reference to Jesus. The central message of the Gospel is the call to faith in Jesus as Son of God and Messiah. The answer to this call becomes the criterion for division between believers and unbelievers²⁴. In such perspective we can see that „polemical dialogue” between Jesus and „Jews” can be better understood in the context of „polemical pattern” presented in Jewish and Christian literature. Harsh words of Jesus against his interlocutors are not against „Jews” as a nation or religious group but are the word which reveal true sonship and true fatherhood for every human being.

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¹⁷ Jn 9:22; 12:42; 16:2-4.

¹⁸ Jn 4:25.26.29; 7:26-31.41.42; 11:27; 1 Jn 1:3.7; 3:8.23; 4:9.10.15; 5:1.5.9.10.11.12.13.20.

¹⁹ Jn 7:25.41.42; 9:22; 10:24.

²⁰ Jn 10:36; 19:7.

²¹ Jn 7:1.19.25; 8: 37.40.59; 19:6.15.

²² Jn 9:22.34; 12:42; 16:2.

²³ Jn 6:64.70; 12:4ff; 13:10f.18f.

²⁴ See the call to faith in: Jn 1:7; 3:15.16; 6:29.40.47; 8:24; 10:38; 11:15.40.42; 12:36; 13:19; 14:1.11.29; 17:20.21; 19:35b; 20:31 and the answer to this call from the side of believers (Jn 1:12; 2:11.22.23; 3:18a.36a; 4:39.41.50.53; 6:69; 7:31; 8:30.31; 9:38; 10:42; 11:27.45; 12:11.42a; 16:27.30; 17:8b; 20:8) and unbelievers (Jn 3:12.18b; 4:48; 5:38.46; 6:36.64; 7:5; 8:45.46b; 10:25.26.37; 12:37; 16:9).

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POLEMIKA W J 8, 31-59 W KONTEKŚCIE LITERATURY JUDAISTYCZNEJ I CHRZEŚCIJAŃSKIEJ

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Jedną z widocznych cech Ewangelii według św. Jana jest jej „potencjał polemiczny”. Wiele zdań Janowego Jezusa wobec Jego rozmówców (Żydów) ma ostry i polemiczny charakter. W niniejszym artykule autor pragnie wskazać na źródła Janowego konfliktu i polemiki w szerszym kontekście literatury judaistycznej (Izajasz, Targum Izajasza) i chrześcijańskiej (Pierwszy List św. Jana, List do Galatów). Analiza ta umożliwi wydobycie „paradygmatu polemicznego”, który mógł być wykorzystany przez autora czwartej Ewangelii i zaaplikowany do sytuacji końca I w., kiedy szczególnie żywotnym było pytanie o tożsamość „prawdziwego Izraela” w odniesieniu do ojcostwa wobec Boga i Abrahama.

Key words: Gospel of John, Polemic, Fatherhood and Sonship.

Słowa kluczowe: Ewangelia Jana, polemika, ojcostwo i synostwo.