Pancaro's volume, 571 pages in length, is an abridgment (!) of a doctoral dissertation done at Münster in 1972 under J. Gnilka. It is surprising that, before Pancaro, no major monograph had been written on the concept of law in the Fourth Gospel. Pancaro's study fills that niche.

Pancaro divides his work into five parts. The first, titled "The Law as a Norm Which Jews Vainly Try to Use against Jesus in order to Judge and Condemn Him," is a close study of the charges against Jesus concerning alleged Sabbath violations, blasphemy, false teaching, and being an enemy of the Jewish nation. In the second, Pancaro focuses on a number of passages to show that, according to John, the law testifies against the Jews and in favor of Jesus. Part Three examines the trial before Pilate as the "dénouement" of the confrontation of Jesus with the Jews and "their" law. In Part Four, Pancaro outlines what he calls the metamorphosis of "nomistic termini" and the transferral to Jesus of symbols for the law -- rather akin in concept to the replacement theme, with respect to "holy space," marked out by W. D. Davies, but now applied to the "nomistic termini." In the last part, Pancaro offers a systematic summary, and relates his conclusions to John 1:17.

The basic thrust of Pancaro's argument is fairly simple. He argues that the Jewish Christians who consitute John's community observe the law, but in a sense quite different from the synagogue Jews. The Jewish Christians hold that the role of the law has changed with the coming of Jesus; but they virtually relate the "law" to the Scriptures and see Jesus as the fulfilment of these Scriptures. The synagogue Jews, by contrast, interpret adherence to the law in terms of the Jamian authorities -- so much so that the Johannine community can disparagingly refer to the law, so interpreted, as "the law of the Jews" or "their law."

Pancaro has mastered the secondary literature and brought together a great deal of useful material. Much of his exegesis is stimulating and suggestive. His over-arching thesis, however, cannot be adequately supported by his exegesis. To picture the Johannine community as so exclusively *Jewish* Christian, to conclude that John is writing exclusively for *Jewish* Christians, is to overlook some immensely important themes in the Fourth Gospel. Not the least concerns the "Greeks" in John 12:20, whom Pancaro takes without proof or discussion to be Greek-speaking Jews of the diaspora. On the face of it, John's Gospel aims in more than one

● ● ● ● ●

The Law in the Fourth Gospel by S. Pancaro.
E. J. Brill, 1975
History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel by J. L. Martyn.
Abingdon, 1979.
Reviewed by Don Carson, Professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

direction; and it is reductionistic to isolate a general theme and treat it as if it were the whole.

Pancaro's volume reflects another problem; but because the same thing occurs in the second book to be discussed, I shall postpone mentioning it.

Martyn's book was first published in 1968. Now, substantially revised and somewhat enlarged, it still takes up a mere 176 pages; but it has exerted an influence out of all proportion to its size.

The title of Martyn's book is the sort of thing likely to grab the attention of those students who have been trying to treat John's Gospel as *both* authentic history *and* distinctive theology. But then it is disconcerting to read in the Preface that by "history" in the title Martyn refers *not* to the history surrounding Jesus of Nazareth, but to the history surrounding the Fourth Evangelist and his community.

Martyn's study is very largely an examination of John 9. He begins with form-critical observations on John 9:1-7. These verses seem at first glance to reflect three elements common to the miracle story: a) description of the illness; b) the sick person healed; and c) the miracle confirms. a) is found in 9:1; b) in 9:6f.; and c) in 9:8f. Closer inspection, however, reveals to Martyn a decided shift in 9:8f.: the original form has been changed to accomodate a dramatic expansion of the story, which runs from vv. 8-41. This entire section, which Martyn divides into five scenes, does not really rerer to Jesus and synagogue conflict in his own day. Rather, under the guise of Jesus it refers to a Christian preacher who performs a healing (Martyn cannot decide whether or not it is a physical healing) on a poor Jew in the Jewish quarter of the city; and in so doing he sparks a controvery between church and synagogue. The controversy lends to the conversion of the Jew, and culminates in a Christiau sermon (John 10). The Jew himself, in the process of becoming a Christian, is excommunicated from the synagogue according to the dictates of Jamnia, the *Birkath ha-Minim.*

The book is attractively written; and no small part of its influence stems from the fact that its main thesis has considerable merit: *viz.*, at least one of John's purposes is to encourage Christians in the ongoing church/synagogue conflict of his own day. The detailed argument, however, is singularly implausible. There are no demonstrable clues that John intends vv. 8-41 to be taken in the way Martyn wants; Martyn's form-critical arguments have serious inconsistencies; and his arguments for identifying the excommunication in John 9 as post-Jamnian are not convincing. I have detailed some of these objections in an article to appear in the Spring of 1980, and will not repeat them here.

Many stimulating and useful things can be learned from Pancaro and Martyn; but both of these scholars betray a too-ready acceptance of one of the foibles of much modern Johannine study. Although they are right to point out that John is speaking to his own day, they systematically overlook the fact that John purports to speak to his own day about events that happened in an earlier day. No evangelist is as careful as John in distinguishing between what the disciples understood in the days of the historical Jesus, and what they came to understand only later.

Any approach to the Fourth Gospel which does not take this persistent distinction seriously is methodologically deficient. There is much more work to be done in his area; but the most profitable lines to pursue are not going to be those which overlook distinctions which John himself insists on.