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Title: **“Children of the Devil’: John 8:44 and its Patristic Reception”**

Panel: Bible, Christianity and Anti-Semitism

From the point of view of Jewish-Christian relations, one of the most problematic New Testament passages is John 8:44, in which Jesus tells a group of Jews: “You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” In its context in the Gospel of John, this passage reflects a pervasive rhetoric of binary opposition – life/death, light/darkness, spirit/flesh, above/below, God/Satan – in which believers in Jesus are positioned on the positive side and the Jews on the negative side of each of these dichotomies. In the history of Christianity, however, the designation of Jews as children of the Devil became a mainstay of Christian anti-Judaism and from there into anti-Semitic discourse to this very day. In this paper I will provide a brief introduction to the passage in its Johannine context and then examine patristic use and development of this imagery as the next step in its journey from John to contemporary anti-Semitism.