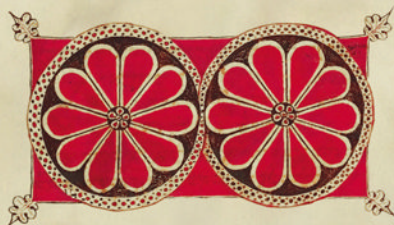




*Aposynagōgos and
the Historical Jesus in John*

RETHINKING THE HISTORICITY OF
THE JOHANNINE EXPULSION PASSAGES



JONATHAN BERNIER

BRILL

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Rethinking the Historicity of the
Johannine Expulsion Passages

By

Jonathan Bernier



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This book is printed on acid-free paper.

For my students

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 AN INITIAL ORIENTATION

In a 2011 article on what this study will designate collectively the Johannean *apospynagōgos* passages (John 9:22, 12:42, 16:2), John Kloppenborg offers several “grounds for supposing that a time later than the early 1st century CE is reflected by John 9:22.”¹ The first of these grounds, Kloppenborg suggests, is that “it is quite unthinkable that in Jesus’ day such a decision had already been taken.”² Kloppenborg refers here to the report, in 9:22, that συνετέθειντο οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἵνα ἐάν τις αὐτὸν ὁμολογήσῃ χριστὸν, ἀποσυνάγωγος γένηται (“the [Judeans] had already agreed that if anyone confessed Jesus to be the Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue”).³ Surprisingly, given that this is his initial ground for supposing that a later date is reflected by 9:22, Kloppenborg makes no effort to substantiate the claim.⁴

¹ John S. Kloppenborg, “Disaffiliation in Associations and the ἀποσυναγωγός of John,” *HTS Teologise Studies/Theological Studies* 61/1, article 962 (2011), p. 1.

² Kloppenborg, “Disaffiliation,” 1.

³ Translations here and elsewhere in the study following the New Revised Standard Version, with modification. Note that the *apospynagōgos* verses proper (9:22, 12:42, and 16:2) are in italics. *Ioudaioi* is here modified from the more typical translation, “Jew,” to “Judean,” following Steve Mason, “Jews, Judaeans, Judaizing, Judaism: Problems of Categorization in Ancient History,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period* 38 (2007): 457–512.

⁴ Kloppenborg, “Disaffiliation,” 1, offers three further “grounds for supposing that a time later than the early 1st century CE is reflected by John 9:22.” None fare any better than the first. The second, that “the Pharisees, who are depicted as the interrogators in vv. 13, 15, 16, and 40, were scarcely in a position to police membership in the synagogues,” would be relevant only if οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι mentioned in 9:22 are in fact the Pharisees mentioned elsewhere. As will be argued more fully in this study, it is not self-evident that the individuals who carry out the interrogation in vv. 13, 15, 16, and 40, are the same as those who made the decision referenced in 9:22. Kloppenborg’s third ground is two-fold: first, that 9:22 focuses upon a Christological confession never made by the blind man whose healing triggered the interrogation; second, that this confession is inconceivable during Jesus’ lifetime. The first part of this ground is irrelevant, as the matter under discussion in 9:22 is the blind man’s parents’ fear that they might be thought to confess Jesus. The blind man’s confession is thus not an issue at all. The second part of this third ground is, as with the first ground, stated without support. As for the fourth ground, “the alleged decision concerns expulsion from a *synagogue* but the story itself is set in the shadow of the Temple,” it is not at all

Kloppenborg might be a particularly recent voice stating without argument that the decision attested in 9:22 cannot refer to events of Jesus' life, but he is hardly the first. Raymond Brown assures us that "the description of Jesus' followers in v. 22 as those who acknowledged that he was the Messiah is too formal for the ministry of Jesus."⁵ C.K. Barrett writes "[t]hat the synagogue had already at that time applied a test of Christian heresy is unthinkable."⁶ Andrew Lincoln writes that "[a]ll the elements of this assertion [in 9:22] are anachronistic."⁷ Yet, how do these scholars know their statements to be true?

When few if any of a discipline's finest practitioners consider it necessary to support a particular historical claim with adequate argumentation, then the time has come to re-evaluate that claim. That is the purpose of this study. All its questions are subordinated to, and aimed at facilitating, an answer to but one larger question, namely "Could the *apodynamōgōs* passages describe events that happened during Jesus' lifetime?" In the face of numerous scholars who say that they cannot possibly do so, it would be an advance in our knowledge to demonstrate even that such events are plausible. The present author aims to go further, however, and demonstrate that a judgment of probability on the matter of these passages' historicity is the best-warranted by conscientious investigation of the data.

John's *apodynamōgōs* passages contain the earliest extant uses of the word ἀποσυνάγωγος, an adjective that might be most woodenly translated as "from-synagogue." Within the extant literature from antiquity, the word subsequently appears only in texts referring to these passages. 9:22 and 12:42 report that during Jesus' lifetime some of those who confessed him as messiah were afraid of being put out of the synagogue, and 16:2 reports that Jesus anticipated that such expulsions would occur after his death. Including also a broader literary context, these passages read as follows.

9:13 Ἄγουσιν αὐτὸν πρὸς τοὺς Φαρισαίους τὸν ποτε τυφλόν. 14 ἦν δὲ σάββατον ἐν ᾗ ἡμέρα τὸν πηλὸν ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἀνέωξεν αὐτοῦ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς. 15 πάλιν οὖν ἠρώτων αὐτὸν καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι πῶς ἀνέβλεψεν. ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· πηλὸν ἐπέθηκέν μου ἐπὶ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς καὶ ἐνιψάμην καὶ βλέπω. 16 ἔλεγον οὖν

clear why this would stand against thinking that John intends to report events of the early first-century, and, indeed, if anything, the significance of the temple should incline us towards the idea that John intends to refer to events prior to its destruction in 70 CE.

⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1966), 1:380.

⁶ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 361.

⁷ Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (London: Continuum, 2005), 284.

ἐκ τῶν Φαρισαίων τινές· οὐκ ἔστιν οὗτος παρά θεοῦ ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ὅτι τὸ σάββατον οὐ τηρεῖ. ἄλλοι [δὲ] ἔλεγον· πῶς δύναται ἄνθρωπος ἀμαρτωλὸς τοιαῦτα σημεῖα ποιεῖν; καὶ σχίσμα ἦν ἐν αὐτοῖς. 17 λέγουσιν οὖν τῷ τυφλῷ πάλιν· τί σὺ λέγεις περὶ αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἠνέφξεν σου τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς; ὁ δὲ εἶπεν ὅτι προφήτης ἐστίν. 18 Οὐκ ἐπίστευσαν οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι περὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἦν τυφλὸς καὶ ἀνέβλεψεν ἕως ὅτου ἐφώνησαν τοὺς γονεῖς αὐτοῦ τοῦ ἀναβλέψαντος 19 καὶ ἠρώτησαν αὐτοὺς λέγοντες· οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς ὑμῶν, ὃν ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι τυφλὸς ἐγεννήθη; πῶς οὖν βλέπει ἄρτι; 20 ἀπεκρίθησαν οὖν οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ εἶπαν· οἶδαμεν ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱὸς ἡμῶν καὶ ὅτι τυφλὸς ἐγεννήθη· 21 πῶς δὲ νῦν βλέπει οὐκ οἶδαμεν, ἢ τίς ἤνοιξεν αὐτοῦ τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς ἡμεῖς οὐκ οἶδαμεν· αὐτὸν ἐρωτήσατε, ἡλικίαν ἔχει, αὐτὸς περὶ ἑαυτοῦ καλῆσει. 22 ταῦτα εἶπαν οἱ γονεῖς αὐτοῦ ὅτι ἐφοβοῦντο τοὺς Ἰουδαίους· ἤδη γὰρ συνετέθειντο οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἵνα ἐάν τις αὐτὸν ὁμολογήσῃ χριστόν, ἀποσυνάγωγος γένηται.

9:13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. 14 Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." 16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. 17 So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet." 18 The Judeans did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight 19 and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" 20 His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." 22 *His parents said this because they were afraid of the Judeans; for the Judeans had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue.*

12:37 Τοσαῦτα δὲ αὐτοῦ σημεῖα πεποιηκότες ἔμπροσθεν αὐτῶν οὐκ ἐπίστευον εἰς αὐτόν, 38 ἵνα ὁ λόγος Ἡσαΐου τοῦ προφήτου πληρωθῇ ὃν εἶπεν· κύριε, τίς ἐπίστευσεν τῇ ἀκοῇ ἡμῶν; καὶ ὁ βραχίον κυρίου τίνι ἀπεκαλύφθη; 39 διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἠδύναντο πιστεῦειν, ὅτι πάλιν εἶπεν Ἡσαΐας· 40 τετύφλωκεν αὐτῶν τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς καὶ ἐπώρρωσεν αὐτῶν τὴν καρδίαν, ἵνα μὴ ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς καὶ νοήσωσιν τῇ καρδίᾳ καὶ στραφῶσιν, καὶ ἰάσομαι αὐτούς. 41 ταῦτα εἶπεν Ἡσαΐας ὅτι εἶδεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐλάλησεν περὶ αὐτοῦ. 42 ὅμως μέντοι καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἀρχόντων πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτόν, ἀλλὰ διὰ τοὺς Φαρισαίους οὐκ ὡμολόγουν ἵνα μὴ ἀποσυνάγωγοι γένωνται· 43 ἠγάπησαν γὰρ τὴν δόξαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων μάλλον ἢπερ τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ.

12:37 Although he had performed so many signs in their presence, they did not believe in him. 38 This was to fulfill the word spoken by the prophet Isaiah: "Lord, who has believed our message, and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" 39 And so they could not believe, because Isaiah also said, 40 "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, so that

they might not look with their eyes, and understand with their heart and turn—and I would heal them.”⁴¹ Isaiah said this because he saw his glory and spoke about him. ⁴² *Nevertheless many, even of the authorities, believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue;* ⁴³ for they loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God.

16:1 Ταῦτα λελάληκα ὑμῖν ἵνα μὴ σκανδαλισθῆτε. 2 ἀποσυναγωγούς ποιήσουσιν ὑμᾶς· ἀλλ’ ἔρχεται ὥρα ἵνα πᾶς ὁ ἀποκτείνας ὑμᾶς δόξῃ λατρεῖαν προσφέρειν τῷ θεῷ. 3 καὶ ταῦτα ποιήσουσιν ὅτι οὐκ ἔγνωσαν τὸν πατέρα οὐδὲ ἐμέ.

16:1 I have said these things to you to keep you from stumbling. 2 *They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, an hour is coming when those who kill you will think that by doing so they are offering worship to God.* 3 And they will do this because they have not known the Father or me.

It seems little, if any, exaggeration to state that cumulatively these three passages, or more precisely a particular way of reading them, have exerted more influence upon Johannine scholarship over the last four decades than any other passages in John’s Gospel. J. Louis Martyn, in his *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, first published in 1968 and now in its third (2003) edition,⁸ argued that the *apodynamōgōs* passages describe not events that took place during Jesus’ life, but rather events experienced decades later by the so-called Johannine community. As such, argued Martyn, they tell a story on two levels, *viz.* that of Jesus’ life as well as that of the Johannine community. Adele Reinhartz later described Martyn’s two levels as the “historical” and the “ecclesiological” tales: the former, a tale about the historical Jesus c. 30 CE; the latter, a tale set in the life of the Johannine community c. 70–100.⁹

Martyn proceeded to generalize this two-level reading strategy to the entirety of John’s Gospel. His work pioneered within Johannine studies what might be called “community criticism,”¹⁰ *i.e.* criticism that supposes

⁸ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (3rd ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

⁹ Cf. Adele Reinhartz, *Word in the World: The Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1992), 1–3.

¹⁰ On Martyn’s influence in this regard, cf. Adele Reinhartz, “The Johannine Community and its Jewish Neighbors: A Reappraisal,” in *“What is John?” Volume II: Literary and Social Readings of the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Fernando Segovia; Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1998), 111–138; Adele Reinhartz, “Reading History in the Fourth Gospel,” in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies* (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 190–194; D. Moody Smith, “The Contribution of J. Louis Martyn to the Understanding of the Fourth Gospel,” in Martyn, *History and Theology*, 1–23.

programmatically that proper interpretation of any given Gospel entails reconstruction of the communities from which they were written.¹¹ Through the 1970s to the late 1990s, community criticism reigned as the default hermeneutical framework by which scholars read John's Gospel. Although more recent New Testament scholarship has challenged community criticism's hermeneutical validity, beginning with Richard Bauckham's 1998 edited volume, *The Gospel for All Christians*,¹² section 1.2.

¹¹ For Matthean community criticism, cf. J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990); Anthony Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: Chicago, 1994); David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); Graham Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992). For Markan, cf. Howard Clark Kee, *Community of the New Age: Studies in Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977); Willi Marxsen, *Mark The Evangelist: Studies on the Redaction History of the Gospel* (trans. by J. Boyce, D. Juel, W. Poehlmann and R.A. Harrisville; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1969); Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1994); Theodore J. Weeden, Sr., *Mark: Traditions in Conflict* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971). For Lukan, cf. Philip Francis Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1987). For examples of Johannine community criticism in addition to Martyn, cf. Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); Oscar Cullmann, *The Johannine Circle* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976); R. Alan Culpepper, *The Johannine School: An Evaluation of the Johannine-School Hypothesis Based on a Investigation of the Nature of Ancient Schools* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1975); Wes Howard-Brook, *Becoming Children of God: John's Gospel and Radical Discipleship* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1994); David Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988); Lance Byron Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2007).

¹² Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. Richard Bauckham; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998). Cf. more recently the work of Bauckham's student, Edward Klink, who has sought to advance his teacher's alternative perspective to the Gospel audiences, in Edward W. Klink III, ed., *The Audience of the Gospels: The Origin and Functions of the Gospels in Early Christianity* (London: T&T Clark, 2010); Edward W. Klink III, *The Sheep of the Fold: The Audience and Origin of the Gospel of John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). Cf. also the critiques of Bauckham in Philip F. Esler, "A Response to Richard Bauckham's *Gospels for All Christians*," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 51 (1998): 235–248; Thomas Kazen, "Sectarian Gospels for Some Christians? Intention and Mirror Reading in the Light of Extra-Canonical Texts," *New Testament Studies* 51 (2005): 561–578; Margaret M. Mitchell, "Patristic Counter-Evidence to the Claim that the 'Gospels Were Written for All Christians,'" *New Testament Studies* 51 (2005): 36–79; David C. Sim, "The Gospels for All Christians? A Response to Richard Bauckham," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 84 (2001): 3–27. Each of these critiques focuses primarily upon the question of whether the Gospels were written for a general Christian audience, as per Bauckham, or a more circumscribed community, as per community criticism. Whilst an interesting question, they tend to neglect what seems to be Bauckham's more significant contribution to Gospel scholarship, namely his wholesale rejection of the

of the present study will demonstrate that community criticism remains the regnant framework through which John's Gospel and more specifically the *apospynagōgos* passages are read.

1.2 HISTORY OF SCHOLARSHIP

This section begins with a general overview of how modern scholarship has construed the relationship between John's Gospel and the historical Jesus, then develops a scheme for describing scholarship on the *apospynagōgos* passages published subsequent to Martyn's *History and Theology*. This scheme will identify within contemporary Johannine scholarship what will be called the "classic Martynian" and "neo-Martynian" traditions. The aim overall is to provide the reader with an understanding not only of what has been and what is still being argued about these passages, but also where these arguments fit into broader scholarly discussions.

1.2.1 *The De-Historicization of John and the De-Johannification of Jesus*

The title for this section comes from the Society of Biblical Literature's "John, Jesus, and History Group," which has already produced two volumes and plans at least one more.¹³ Most immediately relevant to the current discussion is the first of these volumes, in which various contributors discuss how, throughout the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, John's Gospel was increasingly judged to be irrelevant to historical Jesus studies.¹⁴ The last two decades has witnessed a significant reevaluation of this older judgment.¹⁵ The discussion has ranged widely, focusing

hermeneutical supposition that, if one is to properly construe the canonical and potentially also certain extra-canonical Gospels (cf. Kazen, "Sectarian Gospels"), then one must reconstruct a hypothetical local community situation.

¹³ Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher, eds., *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 1: Critical Appraisals of Critical Views* (Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007); Anderson, Paul N., Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher, eds., *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 2: Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).

¹⁴ Cf. esp. Robert Kysar, "The Dehistoricizing of the Gospel of John," in Anderson, Just, and Thatcher, *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 1*, 75–101; Mark Allen Powell, "The De-Johannification of Jesus: The Twentieth Century and Beyond," in Anderson, Just, and Thatcher, *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 1*, 121–132; Jack Verheyden, "The De-Johannification of Jesus: The Revisionist Contribution of Some Nineteenth century German Scholarship," in Anderson, Just, and Thatcher, *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 1*, 109–120.

¹⁵ In addition to the volumes published by the John, Jesus, and History Group, other contributions to this reassessment include Paul N. Anderson, "Aspects of Historicity in the Gospel of John: Implications for Investigations of Jesus and Archaeology," in *Jesus and*

upon such disparate, albeit related, issues as follows: the hermeneutical and historiographical suppositions that are typically shared by those who consider John's Gospel less relevant to historical Jesus studies than the Synoptic Gospels and perhaps other texts; the intellectual genealogy of such suppositions; the authorship of John's Gospel; and the relationship between John's theology and his historiography. Less attention has been directed towards the historical reliability of individual events reported in John's Gospel, and those contributions¹⁶ that do focus upon individual events tend to be articles or book chapters, rather than monograph-length studies. The present study aims to help fill this lacuna.

The Martyrian traditions, to be discussed more fully below, and particularly their readings of the *aposynagōgos* passages, should be understood within these broader processes of dehistoricization and de-Johannification, by which these passages were removed from the early first-century historical context in which John's Gospel sets them explicitly, and then re-contextualized in novel, late first-century contexts crafted by contemporary exegetes. The post-Martyrian alternative advanced in this study should in its turn be understood as an exercise in both re-historicizing John and re-Johannifying Jesus.

Albert Schweitzer described the decision to favour "either [the] Synoptic or [the] Johannine" traditions as the second "great alternative which the study of the life of Jesus had to meet," the first being "either purely historical or purely supernatural," and the third "either eschatological or

Archaeology (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006), 587–618; Paul N. Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered* (London: T&T Clark, 2006); Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2007), 93–112, 173–189; Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001); Urban C. von Wahlde, "Archaeology and John's Gospel," in Charlesworth, *Jesus and Archaeology*, 523–586; Cf. also C.H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge, 1963), which predates the recent spate of scholarship on John and history, but remains nonetheless a classic on the matter.

¹⁶ Examples include Bauckham, *Testimony*, 173–189, reprinted as Richard Bauckham, "The Bethany Family in John 11–12: History or Fiction?", in Anderson, Just and Thatcher, *John, Jesus, and History*, Volume 2, 185–201; Paula Fredriksen, "The Historical Jesus, the Scene in the Temple, and the Gospel of John," in Anderson, Just and Thatcher, *John, Jesus, and History*, Volume 1, 249–276; Edward W. Klink III, "Expulsion from the Synagogue? Rethinking a Johannine Anachronism," *Tyndale Bulletin* 59/1 (2008): 99–118; Edward W. Klink III, "The Overrealized Expulsion in the Gospel of John," in Anderson, Just and Thatcher, *John, Jesus, and History*, Volume 2, 175–184; Mark A. Matson, "The Historical Plausibility of John's Passion Dating," in Anderson, Just and Thatcher, *John, Jesus, and History*, Volume 2, 291–312.

non-eschatological.”¹⁷ The first two of these great alternatives are of most immediate relevance to the present discussion, with both deriving to a large extent from the work of David Friedrich Strauss. Schweitzer argued explicitly that Strauss had laid down the first alternative, that between purely historical or purely supernatural.¹⁸ Opting for the purely historical, Strauss considered all the “supernatural” aspects of the four gospels to be instances of myth.¹⁹

Although Schweitzer suggests that the second alternative—that between a Synoptic or a Johannine Jesus—was “worked out by the Tübingen school and Holtzmann,”²⁰ Strauss had already argued vigorously that one cannot reasonably reconcile the Synoptic portrayals with the Johannine. This argument was in part a consequence of Strauss’s judgment that, with its incarnate God-man, John’s Gospel is the most supernatural and thus the most myth-laden of the gospels. Since Strauss defined myth as a fundamentally ahistorical mode of thought that can develop only in the absence of eyewitnesses,²¹ by hermeneutical necessity he had to conclude that John was the latest of the canonical gospels written, and consequently the most removed temporally and theologically from actual eyewitnesses to Jesus’ life.²²

F.C. Baur, doyen of the Tübingen school, argued likewise that John’s Gospel must be set to one side in favour of the Synoptics, at least for those interested in the historical Jesus, for in John’s Gospel “[t]he history is so determined and absorbed by the element of miracle [*viz.* the Incarnation],

¹⁷ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (trans. unknown; New York: Macmillan, 1968), 238.

¹⁸ Schweitzer, *Quest*, 238. For Schweitzer’s discussion of Strauss, cf. the same volume, pp. 68–120.

¹⁹ Cf. David Friedrich Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critical Examined* (trans. George Eliot; London: SCM Press, 1973), 47–92. Mention here should be made of the recent, magisterial work on miracles, which is also a critique of “anti-supernaturalism” in New Testament studies, by Craig S. Keener, *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts* (2 vols.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011). For a recent argument in favour of anti-supernaturalism, cf. Zeba Crook, “On the Treatment of Miracles in New Testament Scholarship,” *Studies in Religion* 40/4 (2011): 461–478.

²⁰ Schweitzer, *Quest*, 238. Schweitzer refers here to Heinrich Holtzmann, *Lehrbuch der Historisch-Kritischen Einleitung in das Neue Testament* (Freiburg: Mohr Siebeck, 1892).

²¹ Cf. Strauss, *Life of Jesus*, 47–92.

²² Cf. Strauss, *Life of Jesus*, 52–92; David Friedrich Strauss, *The Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History: A Critique of Schleiermacher’s Life of Jesus* (trans. Leander E. Keck; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 41–47.

as nowhere to afford any firm footing for the scientific inquirer.”²³ For both Strauss and Baur, as well as those influenced by them, John’s Gospel contained what we might call the most “derived” Christology, which is to say the least primitive and thus least genuinely historical, among the canonical gospels.²⁴ Given Schweitzer’s own influence, it is likely that he contributed as much as Strauss, Baur, and Holtzmann to solidify the bias towards the Synoptic Gospels and against John’s in historical Jesus studies. This bias was followed by the majority of subsequent historical Jesus scholars, resulting in a Johannine Gospel that was thought to bear little upon the various quests for the historical Jesus, and a Jesus who was thought to bear little resemblance to his Johannine representation.

In his study of the historical Jesus, Bultmann dismissed John’s Gospel in a single sentence, *viz.* “The Gospel of John cannot be taken into account at all as a source for the teaching of Jesus.”²⁵ When dealing with the alternative between a Synoptic and a Johannine Jesus, Bultmann opted unconditionally for the Synoptic. Yet even *vis-à-vis* the Synoptic Gospels, he argues that “[w]hat the sources [i.e. the Synoptic Gospels] offer us is first of all the message of the early Christian community, which for the most part the church freely attributed to Jesus.”²⁶ This view, elaborated more fully in Bultmann’s form critical classic, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*,²⁷ became the hermeneutical basis for community criticism in general, and the Martynian tradition in particular.

1.2.2 Aposynagōgos and the Martynian Tradition

In what amounts to a synopsis of his exegetical technique, Martyn argues that “in the two-level drama of John 9, the man born blind plays not only the part of a Jew in Jerusalem healed by Jesus of Nazareth, but also the part of Jews known to John who have become members of the separated

²³ Ferdinand Christian Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries* (3rd ed.; 2 vols.; trans. Allan Menzies; London: Williams and Norgate, 1878), 1:25.

²⁴ Cf. Strauss, *Life of Jesus*, 52–92. One of the strongest champions for conceiving John’s theology as “primitive,” rather than derived, is John A.T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* (ed. J.F. Coakley; London: SCM Press, 1985).

²⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (trans. Louise Pettibone Smith and Erminie Huntress Lantero; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1958), 12.

²⁶ Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, 12.

²⁷ Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (2nd ed.; trans. John Marsh; New York: Harper and Row, 1968).

church because of their messianic faith.”²⁸ In this reading, Jesus is allegorically identified, or “doubled,” with a late first century, anonymous, Johannine preacher.²⁹ In constructing his two-level reading strategy, Martyn argued the following key propositions.

1. The *aposynagōgos* passages narrate formal expulsions of Christians from the synagogue.³⁰
2. Prior to 70 CE, there were no mechanisms for formally expelling anyone from the synagogue.³¹
3. Such mechanisms did exist in the immediate post-70 era, namely the Rabbinic prayer known as the *Birkat ha-Minim*.³²
4. In the post-70 era, the Rabbis used the *Birkat ha-Minim* to expel at least some members of the Johannine community from at least one synagogue.³³
5. The *aposynagōgos* passages narrate such expulsions allegorically.³⁴
6. Consequently, John’s Gospel is a two-level drama, which upon one level narrates the life of Jesus, and upon the other the life of the Johannine community.³⁵

Chapter Two will consider in greater detail the above claims about the synagogue and the *Birkat ha-Minim*. Here it is sufficient for us to recognize that most Rabbinic scholars, including Ruth Langer, in her 2012 monograph on the *Birkat ha-Minim*, maintain that Martyn’s construal of

²⁸ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 66.

²⁹ Cf. Martyn, *History and Theology*, 38–45. Cf. Francis Watson, “Towards a Literal Reading of the Gospels,” in Bauckham, *Gospels for All Christians*, 195–217, and subsequent discussion throughout this study, for a critique of the allegorical hermeneutics frequently employed by those interested in reconstructing the communities that supposedly either wrote or received the gospels. Cf. also Tobias Hägerland, “John’s Gospel: A Two-Level Drama?”, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25/3 (2003): 309–322, who argues that, if John is to be read as Martyn suggests, it would be entirely without precedent in the ancient world; and William M. Wright, IV, *Rhetoric and Theology: Figural Reading of John 9* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), who argues that whilst pre-modern exegetes engaged in figural readings of John 9, it was not in the service of historical reconstruction. Wright’s own solution, that John 9 ought to be read as a form of *chreia* about Jesus is a salutary move, as it directs attention away from a putative Johannine community to the actual object of John’s narrative, namely Jesus.

³⁰ Cf. Martyn, *History and Theology*, 46–66.

³¹ Cf. Martyn, *History and Theology*, 46–56.

³² Cf. Martyn, *History and Theology*, 56–66.

³³ Cf. Martyn, *History and Theology*, 65–66.

³⁴ Cf. Martyn, *History and Theology*, 65–66.

³⁵ Cf. Martyn, *History and Theology*, 38–40.

the *Birkat ha-Minim* is insupportable for various reasons.³⁶ Yet, the two-level strategy remains for many if not most Johannine scholars a hermeneutical fundament. Thus we can speak of a broadly Martynian tradition that has dominated Johannine studies since at least the mid-1970s.

Recently, however, this broader tradition has splintered into two distinct but closely related interpretative traditions, what one might call the classic Martynian³⁷ and the neo-Martynian.³⁸ Both traditions agree that the *aposynagōgos* passages cannot plausibly refer to events that happened during Jesus' life and that, consequently, we should read this passage as a two-level drama. Where they differ is that, whilst classic Martynian scholars hold that the *aposynagōgos* passages plausibly describe late first-century expulsions from the synagogue, neo-Martynian scholars hold that the *aposynagōgos* passages cannot plausibly describe any historical events, either c. 30 CE or in the late first-century milieu.

³⁶ Ruth Langer, *Cursing the Christians? A History of the Birkat Haminim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 26–33. Cf. also Stephen Asher Finkel, “Yavneh’s Liturgy and Early Christianity,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 18/2 (1981): 231–250; Stephen T. Katz, “Issues in the Separation of Judaism and Christianity after 70 CE: A Reconsideration,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103/1 (1984): 43–76, esp. 64ff.; Reuven Kimelman, “*Birkat Ha-Minim* and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity,” in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, Volume II: Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period* (ed. E.P. Sanders, A.I. Baumgarten, and Alan Mendelssohn; London: SCM Press, 1981), 226–244; Ephraim E. Urbach, “Self-Isolation or Self-Affirmation in Judaism in the First Three Centuries: Theory and Practice,” in Sanders, Baumgarten, and Mendelson, eds., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition II*, 269–298; Burton Visotzky, “Methodological Considerations in the Study of John’s Interaction with First-Century Judaism,” in *Life in Abundance: Studies of John’s Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown* (ed. John R. Donahue; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2005), 91–107.

³⁷ Representatives of which include Anderson, *Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus*; John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford, 2007); Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple*; Marius Heemstra, *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Joel Marcus, “*Birkat ha-Minim* Revisited,” *New Testament Studies* 55 (2009): 523–551; Kloppenborg, “Disaffiliation”; Rensberger, *Johannine Faith*; Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology*. One could argue that Yaakov Y. Tepler, *Birkat haMinim: Jews and Christians in Conflict in the Ancient World* (trans. Susan Weingarten; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 353–355, should also be included in the classic Martynian tradition. The present author has opted not to do so, as, even though Tepler remains open to the possibility that John knew the *Birkat ha-Minim*, he remains undecided on the matter.

³⁸ Representatives of which include Warren Carter, *John and Empire: Initial Explorations* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008); Raimo Hakola, *Identity Matters: John, The Jews, and Jewishness* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Raimo Hakola and Adele Reinhartz, “John’s Pharisees,” in *In Quest of the Historical Pharisees* (ed. Jacob Neusner and Bruce D. Chilton; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 131–147; Reinhartz, “Reading History”; Tom Thatcher, *Greater Than Caesar: Christology and Empire in the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009); Tom Thatcher, *Why John Wrote a Gospel: Jesus, Memory, History* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

Thus, if the classic Martynian tradition maintains the six propositions argued by Martyn and articulated above, then the neo-Martynian tradition would reformulate these as follows.

1. The *aposynagōgos* passages narrate formal expulsions of Christians from the synagogue.
2. Prior to 70 CE, there were no mechanisms for formally expelling anyone from the synagogue.
3. Such mechanisms did not exist either in the immediate post-70 era.
4. Thus, no members of the Johannine community were expelled from the synagogue.
5. The *aposynagōgos* passages consequently do not refer to these expulsions that never happened.
6. Nonetheless, John's Gospel is a two-level drama, which upon one level narrates the life of Jesus, and upon the other narrates how the community either perceives itself or how the authors believe the community should perceive itself.

Against both traditions this study will argue in favour of an interpretation that reads John's narrative on just one level, namely that of Jesus' life. This is not to deny that John's initial and subsequent readers could both interpret John's Gospel through their own experiences, and their own experiences through John's Gospel. It is to argue that John wrote the *aposynagōgos* passages in order to describe actions taken against Christians c. 30 CE.

For schematic purposes, the present author has divided contributions to the discussion as follows. It must be noted that there is considerable diversity within each of the traditions enumerated below. For instance, Paul N. Anderson, whose work most properly falls into the "Classic Martynian Tradition," insofar as it supposes that the Johannine community experienced expulsion in the late first-century and that the *Birkat ha-Minim* was instrumental in said expulsion, advocates what might be described as a "dialectical Martynian" position. Building upon source- and redaction- critical work on John's Gospel, and integrating this with James Fowler's developmental theory of faith,³⁹ Anderson argues that the Johannine Gospel represents in part the experiences of a community and an author that have gone through a succession of crises; the *Birkat*

³⁹ James Fowler, *Stages of Faith* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1981); James Fowler, *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984).

ha-Minim, argues Anderson, was instrumental in the third of these crises.⁴⁰ This creates a significantly more nuanced reading of the Johannine text, but nonetheless one that remains susceptible to the same basic hermeneutical critique of any Martynian reading, namely that the second-level reading is exegetically superfluous and thus unnecessary.

The Classic Martynian Tradition

(Two-Level with Expulsion)

J. Louis Martyn
 Raymond E. Brown
 David Rensberger
 John Ashton
 Lance Byron Richey
 Joel Marcus
 Paul N. Anderson
 Marius Heemstra
 John Kloppenborg

The Neo-Martynian Tradition

(Two-Level without Expulsion)

Adele Reinhartz
 Raimo Hakola
 Warren Carter
 Tom Thatcher

*The Post-Martynian Alternative*⁴¹

(One-Level)

Edward W. Klink⁴²
 This Study

Let us now consider more closely these traditions and alternative.

⁴⁰ Cf. the discussions in Anderson, *Christology of the Fourth Gospel*, 218; Anderson, *Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus*, 65.

⁴¹ Although certainly far more exegetes throughout the history of Johannine interpretation have supposed that the *aposynagōgos* passages tell us first and foremost about events of Jesus' life, it would be anachronistic to refer to these as "one-level" readings. Only with the development of a tradition of reading allegorically a community history in John's Gospel can it become meaningful to argue against such a reading. For an extended effort to develop what might be characterized as a one-level approach to John's Gospel, although not to the *aposynagōgos* passages specifically, cf. Klink III, *Sheep of the Fold*, esp. pp. 185–246.

⁴² Edward Klink, in Klink, "Expulsion from the Synagogue," and Klink, "Overrealized Expulsion," focuses his attention upon a critique of what this study calls the classic Martynian tradition and its effects upon the study of John's Gospel, with relatively little effort devoted to building an alternative, post-Martynian historical reconstruction. Nonetheless, his general approach, both in this article and in Klink, *Sheep of the Fold*, certainly anticipates much of the argumentation in this study, and thus this work warrants inclusion within the category of "post-Martynian."

1.2.2.1 *Two-Level Reading, with Expulsion: The Classic Martynian Tradition*

The classic Martynian tradition builds upon the work of J. Louis Martyn, and can also be described as the “two level with expulsion” reading of the *aposynagōgos* passages. The classic Martynian tradition argues that the *aposynagōgos* passages allegorically describe the late first-century expulsion of at least part of the Johannine community, in most (although not all) articulations due to implementation of the *Birkat ha-Minim* (or “Benediction of the Heretics,” an alternate name for the Twelfth of the Eighteen Benedictions).

Raymond E. Brown, writing in the 1970s, David Rensberger in the 1980s, and John Ashton in the 1990s, and John Kloppenborg in the 2010s, registered some doubt regarding whether or not the *Birkat ha-Minim* was the efficient cause of the Johannine community’s expulsion, primarily due to certain objections that rabbinic scholars had raised against Martyn’s scenario.⁴³ Nonetheless, their respective interpretations of the *aposynagōgos* passages are in most other respects classic Martynian. In particular, they each suppose that the experience of expulsion reported by the *aposynagōgos* passages happened decades after Jesus’ life and was integral to the formation of the Johannine community, such that proper understanding of the Johannine community is a hermeneutical necessity for reading 9:22, 12:42, and 16:2. These scholars all hold to a two-level with expulsion reading of these passages. Indeed, Brown so fully adopted and popularized the classic Martynian scenario that it is sometimes referred to as the “Martyn-Brown hypothesis.”⁴⁴ Moreover, their doubts about the *Birkat ha-Minim* have been eschewed in the more recent classic Martynian scholarship, represented by Paul N. Anderson, Lance Byron Richey, Joel Marcus, and Marius Heemstra.⁴⁵

Although Anderson leaves open the possibility that these passages might refer at least in part to events of Jesus’ life, nonetheless he maintains the two-level reading, continuing to read the *aposynagōgos* passages as evidence for expulsions experienced by the Johannine community in the last third of the first-century, and moreover explicitly linking the

⁴³ Cf. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, 22–33, 100–135; Brown, *Community*, 22; Kloppenborg, “Disaffiliation,” 1; Rensberger, *Johannine Faith*, 25–26. These objections will be considered at greater length in Chapter Two.

⁴⁴ Cf. Warren Carter, review of Lance Byron Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John*, *Review of Biblical Literature* (2008).

⁴⁵ Cf. bibliographic information already provided.

expulsion with the *Birkat ha-Minim*.⁴⁶ Lance Byron Richey supposes the classic Martynian scenario, and argues for a link between the *Birkat ha-Minim*, the *apostynagōgos* passages, and conflict between the Johannine community and the Roman imperial authorities.⁴⁷ As suggested by the title of his 2009 article, “*Birkat Ha-Minim* Revisited,” Joel Marcus revisits Martyn’s interpretation of the Twelfth Benediction, and offers essentially a recapitulation of the classic Martynian tradition, along with a doctrinaire response to that tradition’s critics. Although Marius Heemstra’s study *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways*⁴⁸ is concerned primarily with the Jewish tax, the penultimate chapter is devoted to “The issue of Jewish identity: *fiscus Judaicus*, *birkat ha-minim* and the Gospel of John.”⁴⁹ According to Heemstra, “‘the expulsion from the synagogue’ was felt to be the first and necessary step to a setting in which Jewish Christians could be executed for their beliefs.”⁵⁰ The recent scholarship of Anderson, Richey, Marcus, and Heemstra demonstrate that Martyn’s basic suppositions remain current in certain sectors of Johannine scholarship.

Until recently the classic Martynian tradition was the entirety of the Martynian tradition. As noted above, however, this broader tradition has recently splintered, thus producing a neo-Martynian tradition alongside the classic Martynian. Whilst classic Martynian scholars continue to hold that the *apostynagōgos* passages plausibly describe late first-century expulsions from the synagogue, neo-Martynian scholars hold that the *apostynagōgos* passages cannot plausibly describe any historical events.

1.2.2.2 *Two-Level Reading, without Expulsion: The Neo-Martynian Tradition*

Although not concerned primarily with the interpretation of John’s Gospel, Reuven Kimelman’s 1981 article on “*Birkat Ha-Minim* and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity”⁵¹ can nonetheless be said to at least anticipate if not inaugurate the neo-Martynian tradition. In addition to his critique of Martyn’s use of the *Birkat ha-Minim*, Kimelman represents an early instance of the “turn to

⁴⁶ Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel*, 34, 65, 197.

⁴⁷ Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology*, 51–64.

⁴⁸ Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*.

⁴⁹ Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*, 159–189.

⁵⁰ Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*, 187.

⁵¹ Reuven Kimelman, “*Birkat Ha-Minim*,” 226–244.

identity” that would come to characterize the neo-Martynian tradition proper. Kimelman argues that the *aposynagōgos* passages do not recall hostile acts carried out by any sort of Jewish group against the Johannine community, but rather represent efforts by the Johannine community to articulate their own identity and negotiate their relationship with Judaism more broadly.

The neo-Martynian tradition’s turn to identify is exemplified by Raimo Hakola and Adele Reinhartz, who, in their 2007 article on “John’s Pharisees,”⁵² argue that we should “see in John’s portrayal of the Jews and Jewishness a more prolonged and gradual process of separation from what was regarded as distinctive to Jewishness than a traumatic expulsion from the synagogue.”⁵³ Like the classic Martynian tradition, such a statement necessarily presupposes that the Gospel of John tells at least two stories simultaneously, *viz.* that of Jesus’ life, and that of the Johannine community. *Contra* the classic Martynian tradition, however, Hakola and Reinhartz hold that the community story does not include any actual expulsion of Johannine Christians from the late first-century synagogue.⁵⁴

In his monograph, *John and Empire*, Warran Carter states that he “significantly modifies aspects of conventional explanations for the development of Johannine traditions between the time of Jesus and the writing of the Gospel,” and that he has “also identified a tendency in Johannine studies to jump from the time of Jesus to the post-70 world and to synagogal separation, ignoring pre-70 and imperial events such as Gaius’s action in 40.”⁵⁵ On closer examination, however, Carter’s modifications to the conventional narrative do not in fact appear that significant. As with other Martynian scholarship, Carter’s study focuses upon the period “[b]etween the time of Jesus and the writing of the Gospel,” the life of Jesus not included therein. Against the idea that John’s Gospel, including the *aposynagōgos* passages, retrojects on to Jesus’ life events from the 70s

⁵² Hakola and Reinhartz, “John’s Pharisees,” 131–147.

⁵³ Hakola and Reinhartz, “John’s Pharisees,” 143.

⁵⁴ As noted above, Reinhartz, *Word in the World*, expands upon Martyn’s notion of a two-level drama to incorporate the historical and ecclesiological tales—terms which she herself coined to describe Martyn’s two levels—into a third tale, that of the cosmos. The monograph’s title is a quite precise description of Reinhartz’s understanding of the *narratives* contained within John’s Gospel: the Word is depicted historically as present in the world c. 30 CE in Palestine, whilst the Word as the risen Christ is depicted as ecclesiastically present in the world c. 80 CE within the Johannine community.

⁵⁵ Carter, *John and Empire*, 381.

or 80s, Carter argues that it retrojects events from the 40s. He never considers the possibility that there is no retrojection at all.

Similar to Hakola and Reinhartz, in his monograph on *John and Empire*, Carter argues that the *aposynagōgos* passages “do not reflect a separation that has already occurred.”⁵⁶ Instead, “since there is no historically convincing and sustainable scenario for a separation of the Jesus-believers from the rest of the synagogue having already taken place, these three references to synagogue expulsion exist in the narrative as texts consequential rather than descriptive, as performative rather than reflective.”⁵⁷ According to Carter, the *aposynagōgos* passages were intended as cause rather than effect of a separation from the synagogue; moreover, the impetus for this separation came from John and like-minded Christians.

Tom Thatcher has not analyzed the *aposynagōgos* passages at length. Nonetheless, he has considered “why John wrote a gospel,” this phrase being the title of his recent monograph on (to quote also the sub-title) “Jesus—Memory—History.”⁵⁸ Thatcher argues that John wrote his Gospel not as an archive of Jesus tradition but rather to “freeze” a more fluid, oral, Johannine tradition within the relative stability of text.⁵⁹ This was done in order to counter both an “AntiChristian countermemory” and an “AntiChristian mystical memory,” which had each developed within John’s community.⁶⁰ Insofar as Johannine memories of Jesus were inextricably linked with Johannine identity, argues Thatcher, these struggles over memory, and particularly the writing of the Gospel itself, were by necessity also a struggle to define the community.⁶¹

The neo-Martynian tradition is characterized primarily by a denial that the *aposynagōgos* passages refer to any sort of actual expulsion, and a commitment to read these passages primarily if not exclusively as efforts to construct Johannine identity. It thus engages in an example of what David Hackett Fischer has described as “the fallacy of counterquestions,” which “is an attempt at a revision which becomes merely a[n] . . . inversion of an earlier interpretation and a reiteration of its fundamental assumptions.”⁶² It maintains the supposition that John is most interested

⁵⁶ Carter, *John and Empire*, 26.

⁵⁷ Carter, *John and Empire*, 26.

⁵⁸ Thatcher, *Why John Wrote*.

⁵⁹ Thatcher, *Why John Wrote*, 155.

⁶⁰ Thatcher, *Why John Wrote*, 69–81, 93–102.

⁶¹ Thatcher, *Why John Wrote*, 105–124.

⁶² David Hackett Fischer, *Historians’ Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Perennial, 1970), 28.

in his community's experience, with that experience defined so as to exclude any substantive interest in the actual events of Jesus' life. Yet, says Fischer, "[a] fight between wild-eyed exponents of *X* and *Y* will help not at all if *Z* was in fact the case."⁶³ The post-Martynian alternative developed in this study aims to promote *Z* over and against the classic Martynian's *X* and the neo-Martynian's *Y*.

1.3 TOWARD A POST-MARTYNIAN ALTERNATIVE: READING JOHN'S GOSPEL ON ONE LEVEL

This section begins by discussing briefly the fundamental problems with the two-level reading strategy which both the classic and neo-Martynian traditions utilize. Problems with more specific aspects particular to either of the two traditions will be discussed in Chapters Two through Five. At least three fundamental problems with the two-level strategy can be discerned. Adele Reinhartz identifies and discusses these fundamental problems quite adroitly.⁶⁴ The first is that "there is no indication within the gospel itself that it is meant to be read as anything but a story of Jesus, set within the context of the story of the cosmos."⁶⁵ Second, "the two-level strategy is circular, for it reads the text as a reflection of the history of the community and then uses that history as a way of accounting for the features of the text itself."⁶⁶ Third, reflecting upon the previously cited articles on "The Johannine Community and Its Jewish Neighbors" and "Women in the Johannine Community," Reinhartz writes, "the [two-level reading] method should be applicable to the entire Gospel, but my own experiments with a more comprehensive application have led to an incoherent, even contradictory, set of results, with limited usefulness for historical reconstruction."⁶⁷

⁶³ Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*, 29.

⁶⁴ Reinhartz, "Women." Cf. her earlier discussion in Reinhartz, "Johannine Community."

⁶⁵ Reinhartz, "Women," 16.

⁶⁶ Reinhartz, "Women," 17.

⁶⁷ Reinhartz, "Reading History," 193. That the two-level reading strategy should be applicable to the entirety of the Gospel is a necessary corollary of the claim, advanced in Martyn, *History and Theology*, 143, that from John's perspective, "[t]he two-level drama makes clear that the Word's dwelling among us and our beholding his glory are not events which transpired only in the past. . . . These events to which John bears witness transpire on both the *einmalig* and the contemporary levels of the drama, or they do not happen at all." Throughout his Gospel, says Martyn, John witnesses to both the events of Jesus's life, and those of the Johannine community's history. If this is the case, then it should indeed be consistently the case, and the more instances in which one must grant that any given

Yet, says Reinhartz, with regards specifically to the first two of these difficulties, Reinhartz argues that they “do not militate against the use of the two-level reading.”⁶⁸ Reinhartz supports this surprising assertion by arguing that

[r]ather, they emphasize the need for both caution and humility. They remind us that as we engage in the historical enterprise of constructing the Johannine community . . . we must not lose sight of the hypothetical nature of our results. The very existence of a Johannine community, while it is obvious to Johannine scholars and has taken on a solid reality, is itself hypothetical. The letters of John seem to demand the existence of such a community, as does our understanding of the Fourth Gospel as being addressed to a specific audience.⁶⁹

Reinhartz here advances two arguments in support of a Johannine community: first, that the letters attest to such a community; second, that since John’s Gospel was written to a specific audience, there must have been a community. We can reject the latter of these arguments as a tautology, for it simply says that, granted that John’s Gospel was written to a tightly circumscribed audience, we can conclude that there was a tightly circumscribed audience to which John’s Gospel was written. Yet, it is precisely whether the Gospels were written to such an audience that Bauckham has challenged, and thus the notion that it was written to such an audience cannot be taken for granted.

The first argument, however, merits more attention. It is not self-evident that the letters demand the existence of a Johannine community, at least not in the sense of a community that can be reconstructed from community critical readings of the Gospel. Trebilco argues that “2 and 3 Jn were written to outlying house churches (or groups of house churches) some distance from the elder (who we think is in Ephesus),” and that as such they “testify to events in the wider movement of which the center is (we believe) the Ephesian Johannine community”;⁷⁰ yet, he also insists that when he speaks of the Johannine community, he means “the house churches addressed in 1–3 Jn, not a community read from the Gospel.”⁷¹

passage lacks an *einmalig* level, the more one must concede that the two-level reading fails to make consistent and coherent sense of the Gospel.

⁶⁸ Reinhartz, “Women,” 17.

⁶⁹ Reinhartz, “Women,” 17.

⁷⁰ Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 270.

⁷¹ Trebilco, *Early Christians*, 271.

Trebilco's recognition that we are dealing with groups at some geographical remove from one another (which the very genre of letter writing would tend to suggest) is a salutary move, and forces us to remember that whatever the Johannine community might have been, it was almost certainly not limited to a single location. Yet, even here, it is questionable to what extent we need suppose that an Ephesus-based Elder could only have written to churches in the Ephesian region. If Paul could write a letter from Corinth to believers in Rome, then it is unclear why the Elder could not similarly write letters destined to travel such distance.

Moreover, the Epistles themselves furnish good reason to think this "Ephesian Johannine community," if we might call it such, was not as isolated as the Martynian tradition has tended to suppose.⁷² Of particular interest is 3 John 5–8, wherein the Elder states that he has received word of how Gaius supports believers who sojourn with him. Notably, the Elder states that such support makes people such as Gaius and himself *συνεργοὶ . . . τῆ ἀληθείᾳ* ("co-workers . . . of the truth"). This would suggest

⁷² Among contemporary scholarship, perhaps the best known articulation of this isolation is Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 81–88, who insisted that the Johannine Christians were distinct from what he termed the "Apostolic" churches, i.e. those associated with the Twelve; but cf. earlier articulations in Barrett, *St. John*, 131, who argues that the Gospel's "early disuse by orthodox writers and use by gnostics show that it originated in circles that were either gnostic or obscure, or perhaps more probably, both"; and J.N. Sanders, *The Fourth Gospel in the Early Church: Its Origin and Influence on Christian Theology up to Irenaeus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1943), whom Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 15 describes as the "chief architect of the current paradigm on orthodox Johannophobia," by which Hill means the widespread supposition that John's Gospel was favoured by Gnostic Christians and thus studiously avoided by orthodox Christians throughout much of the second-century. Tuomas Rasimus, "Introduction," in *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (ed. Tuomas Rasimus; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 1–16, p. 9, sums up well the problems with this "the old paradigm," as he calls it, when he suggests that "[f]irst, it relies on the division between orthodoxy and heresy that did not yet clearly exist in the second century. . . . Second, there are signs that the 'catholic' authors also knew and used the Fourth Gospel in the first half of the second century." If one accepts the arguments of scholars such as Mark Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2009), and Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways: Early Jewish-Christian Relations* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), that the various early second-century Christians known as docetists and Gnostics were in fact active members of the same Christian communities as such scions of orthodoxy as Ignatius of Antioch and Justin Martyr, then the argument that John's Gospel or Epistles came from groups outside the ecclesiastical mainstream becomes, if not impossible, certainly less likely. The more that one emphasizes the connections that seem to have existed between churches throughout the Mediterranean, and the earlier that one dates the reception of John's Gospel and Epistles by Christians—Gnostic or otherwise—who gathered in these churches, the less persuasive will be any theory of an isolated Johannine community.

that these believers are engaged in some sort of missionary journey,⁷³ and probably should lead us to think less in terms of an isolated community and more in terms of a group of churches participating in the larger missionary expansion of the early Jesus movement. Such an understanding of the Johannine community could well begin to look remarkably like what we see developing in the Pauline letters, wherein we have churches scattered throughout a wide region, all with some sort of association with Paul; should we then speak of all the churches founded by Paul as a singular “Pauline community”?

Reinhartz’s reasons for considering detrimental to the two-level reading strategy neither an absence of evidence for the existence of a second level nor a circularity of argumentation must be rejected on the bases of inadequate evidence and tautologous argument. This leads us to the third difficulty with the two-level reading that Reinhartz identifies. The two-level reading strategy was developed to provide a coherent reconstruction of the Johannine community. If it cannot do so, then its utility and ultimately its hermeneutical and historiographical validity must be called into question. If Reinhartz’s application of Martyn’s method to 2:1–11, 4:1–42, 11:1–44, 12:1–8 and 20:1–18 results in a reconstruction of the Johannine community that contradicts Martyn’s reconstruction of the Johannine community based upon the *apostynagōgos* and other passages, then whose reconstruction do we prefer? Unless we detect substantive procedural differences in how Martyn and Reinhartz respectively employ the two-level reading strategy (and none seem to be present), then it seems necessary to conclude that, insofar as the second, community, level is an intrinsic part of the Johannine narrative, the narrative is fundamentally incoherent.

This study will argue that whilst the neo-Martynian tradition rightly rejects the classic Martynian interpretation of the *apostynagōgos* passages, the failure to reject also the hermeneutical suppositions upon which that interpretation is predicated leaves the neo-Martynian tradition unable to

⁷³ That these are missionaries appears a virtual consensus in scholarship on 3 John; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles: A Commentary on the Johannine Epistles* (trans. R. Philip O’Hara, Lane C. McGaughey, and Robert W. Funk; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973); cf. John Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 369–372; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Johannine Epistles: Introduction and Commentary* (trans. Reginald and Ilse Fuller; New York: Crossroad, 1992), 293–296; Georg Strecker, *The Johannine Epistles: A Commentary on 1, 2, and 3 John* (trans. Linda M. Maloney; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996), 258–260; Robert W. Yarbrough, *1–3 John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 370–376.

recognize John's Gospel fully for what it is, namely, as Reinhartz aptly says, "a story of Jesus, set within the context of the story of the cosmos."⁷⁴ Against Reinhartz, who has argued for up to three levels in John's Gospel—the historical, the ecclesiological, and the cosmological⁷⁵—the post-Martynian alternative advances the hypothesis that there is just one level, that of "The Word in the World."⁷⁶ The Word creates the world, as Jesus of Nazareth becomes flesh in the world, following the crucifixion departs from the world, and after his departure sends the Paraclete into the world. The cosmos serves as the frame for Jesus' story, but this frame does not constitute another level, in the sense of a distinct tale encoded within another. The frame that is the cosmos is right there, on the surface. Any hypothetical second or third level, allegorically embedded within the level that is Jesus' story told within the frame of the cosmos, is superfluous.

Rather, the historian should focus attention first and foremost on that level which is often called the literal,⁷⁷ which, according to the famous distich commonly attributed to Nicholas of Lyra, is the sense of scripture that teaches events.⁷⁸ Although the critical historian is well aware that there is hardly a direct relationship between the letter of the text and the events about which the letter teaches, and that consequently judgments regarding the literal sense are not *ipso facto* judgments regarding what we might call the historical referent, interpretation of the literal sense is nonetheless necessary for proper construal of the historical referent. Not necessary is interpretation of an allegorical sense whose very presence in the text is far from certain.

Reviewers of this work in its original form as a dissertation suggested that it remains possible to read the Johannine Gospel on two levels. This response was repeated frequently enough that the present author feels constrained to address the matter directly. Yes, I acknowledge, it is possible to do so. One can indeed use a late first-century expulsion from the synagogue, instrumentalized by the *Birkat ha-Minim*, as the hermeneutical key for an allegorical re-writing of the *apostynagōgos* passages. The question, however, is not whether one can, but rather whether one should. The

⁷⁴ Reinhartz, "Women," 16.

⁷⁵ Reinhartz, *Word in the World*, *passim*.

⁷⁶ A term borrowed from the title of Reinhartz, *Word in the World*.

⁷⁷ On reading the canonical Gospels, including John's, in terms of the literal sense, cf. Watson, "A Literal Reading of the Gospels."

⁷⁸ Cf. the discussion of the distich, and of its compositional history, in Henri de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, Volume 1* (trans. Mark Sebanc; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 1–4.

contention of the present author is such a re-writing is simply unnecessary. The text as it stands is entirely coherent without employing such drastic exegetical procedure. I am employing, quite rigorously, Ockham's Razor, parsing out that which is superfluous from our exegesis so as to produce a clearer vision of both the Johannine literature and the historical Jesus. I recognize of course that among my fellow exegetes there will be those who will not consider the second level unnecessary, and object that my razor is removing the wheat with the chaff; with such exegetes, I must simply agree to disagree.

Fundamental to the present study are the hermeneutical and historiographic contributions of Ben F. Meyer, as well as, less directly, those of Bernard Lonergan, whose critical realist philosophy greatly influenced Meyer's thinking.⁷⁹ Of particular significance are what Meyer calls the oblique and direct patterns of inference. These are deliberately adopted over that philosophical morass of procedures known cumulatively as the "criteria of authenticity." Chris Keith has recently suggested that the contemporary study of the historical Jesus needs to be divided between what he designates "The Criteria Approach," and "The Jesus-Memory Approach."⁸⁰ With regards to the notion of criteria, the present author is in general agreement with Meyer's suggestion that

"[c]riterion," as the term has been used in discussion of this topic [i.e. the study of the historical Jesus], specifies what is universally requisite that a gospel tradition be acknowledged as historical. But, in fact, no factor proposed by the critics as a "criterion" is invariably requisite to the inference of historicity. . . . Since what is really at stake in the so-called criterion is not what is uniquely sufficient and so invariably *necessary* to establish historicity but rather what tends to make historicity more likely than non-historicity,

⁷⁹ On the significance of Lonergan for Meyer's thinking, cf. especially the chapters on "Locating Lonerganian Hermeneutics" and "Lonergan's Breakthrough and the Aims of Jesus," in Ben F. Meyer, *Critical Realism and the New Testament* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 1989), 1–16, 147–156. For Lonergan's thought on horizons, cf. Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (2nd ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), 235–237, and his article on "The Subject," in Bernard J.F. Lonergan, *A Second Collection* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 69–86.

⁸⁰ Chris Keith, *Jesus' Literacy: Scribal Culture and the Teacher from Galilee* (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 29–70. Cf. the overviews of the so-called criteria of authenticity in Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne, eds., *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* (London: T&T Clark, 2012); John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (4 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1991–2009), 1167–195; Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria of Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). Cf. Chapter Five of the present study for further discussion of the "Jesus-memory approach."

I would prefer to drop the term “criterion” altogether in favour of the more modest term “index.”⁸¹

Indices, as Meyer further elaborates, differ from criteria, in that “their presence favours historicity but their absence does not of itself imply a verdict of non-historicity.”⁸²

Meyer describes such indices as oblique patterns of inference,⁸³ and contrasts these to the direct pattern of inference, which is that “[i]f the intention of the writer can be defined to include factuality and if the writer is plausibly knowledgeable on the matter and free of the suspicion of fraud, historicity can be inferred.”⁸⁴ Contrary to the direct pattern of inference, oblique patterns “are oblique inasmuch as they approach the narrative indirectly, neither ambitioning nor depending on definition of its intention.”⁸⁵ Chapters Two through Four will utilize such oblique patterns, considering, respectively, the ancient synagogue, Christology, and the imperial context, with specific respect to the *aposynagōgos* passages. The purpose of these chapters is to demonstrate, via oblique patterns of inference, that the *aposynagōgos* passages could plausibly refer to events that happened during Jesus’ lifetime.

Meyer correctly states that “[t]he usefulness of the direct pattern of inference, however, is limited in biblical criticism because of the frequent indefinability of the factor of intention.”⁸⁶ Yet, the intended sense is markedly explicit in John’s Gospel. That intention will be discussed at greatest length in Chapter Five, wherein, via the direct pattern of inference, we will consider whether John intended factuality, and whether he was plausibly knowledgeable on the events reported in the *aposynagōgos* passages. If it can be shown that these are the cases, and if it has already been shown by oblique inference that the narratives are historically plausible, then we have sufficient warrant to render a judgment of probability with regard to the historicity of the *aposynagōgos* passages.

A word must be given regarding what is meant in this study by an author’s intention, lest the reader think that the present author has fallen prey to what is sometimes called the “intentional fallacy,” a term coined

⁸¹ Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2002), 86.

⁸² Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 87.

⁸³ Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 85ff.

⁸⁴ Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 85.

⁸⁵ Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 85.

⁸⁶ Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 85.

by literary critics W.K. Wimsatt Jr. and M.C. Beardsley.⁸⁷ The intentional fallacy is the belief that the author's intent, as something extrinsic to the text and existing only in the mind of the author, is determinative for constructing the meaning of the text. Wimsatt and Beardsley are indeed correct to label this a fallacy. Yet, Meyer correctly observes that "the definers of the so-called intentional fallacy overlooked the far more basic issue of intention precisely as *intrinsic to the text*."⁸⁸ If intention is something intrinsic to the text, then the text, not the author's mind, provides the primary data to be interpreted.⁸⁹ Thus does Meyer argue that the author's intention, or, as he also calls it, the "intended meaning," is "intrinsic to the text insofar as the text objectifies or incorporates or encodes or expresses the writer's message."⁹⁰

Of course, through interpreting the text, we might learn a great deal about the author and the author's mind, but we do so through a procedure precisely opposite to that of the intentional fallacy, for whereas the intentional fallacy tries to understand the author in order to understand the text, intentionality analysis as advocated by Meyer tries to understand the text in order to understand the author. That such analysis can be done is demonstrated by the fact that Meyer can, along with any other competent reader of Wimsatt and Beardsley's article on the intentional fallacy, judge that they intend in that article to critique something that they call the intentional fallacy.

Cumulatively, the present study aims to demonstrate that, *contra* Martyn,⁹¹ the *apostynagōgos* passages describe events that historically are at least plausible if not probable. Further, it aims to demonstrate that,

⁸⁷ W.K. Wimsatt, Jr., and M.C. Beardsley, "The Intentional Fallacy," *The Sewanee Review* 54/3 (1946): 468–488.

⁸⁸ Ben F. Meyer, *Reality and Illusion in New Testament Scholarship: A Primer in Critical Realist Hermeneutics* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1994), 97.

⁸⁹ Such a definition also allows the exegete to sidestep, at least initially, interminable debates regarding who is best defined as the author or writer of John's Gospel. Is it the person who wrote the hypothetical "first edition" of John's Gospel, which is thought to have existed without chapter 21 and perhaps also the Prologue? Is it the hypothetical "final redactor," who added such passages? For a brief overview of the critical issues with regards to "author" as a category, see Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (ed. Francis J. Moloney; New York: Doubleday, 2003), 42–62; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Books, 2003), 1:100–114. For the purpose of the present discussion, it is sufficient to recognize that "the author" is whoever has encoded their intentions into the text. Chapter Five will consider more closely who, exactly, this author might have been.

⁹⁰ Meyer, *Critical Realism*, 19.

⁹¹ Cf. Martyn, *History and Theology*, 46–66.

in dispensing with the two-level reading strategy, one does not thereby dispense with historical questions about the Johannine *Sitz im Leben*. It will be argued that early Christ-believing communities did indeed have a collective interest in their communal history. Yet, they understood that history to have begun with Jesus. Early Christ-believing communities understood themselves as standing in some sort of continuity with the history of Israel, as this was remembered in the Jewish scriptures, yet also understood that their own chapter in this history began with Jesus, whose life, death, and after-death, had inalterably renovated the cosmos. Necessarily, the acts of remembering and telling that collective history were social acts, certain products of which—notably but not exclusively the canonical gospels—remain available for the historian to consult.

Each of chapters Two through Five will consider an issue of relevance to the interpretation of the *aposynagōgos* passages, respectively synagogue studies, Christology, empire criticism and memory. Chapters Two through Four will employ primarily oblique patterns of inference, with the aim of demonstrating that what the *aposynagōgos* passages report is plausible. Employing the direct pattern of inference, Chapter Five will aim to convert the plausibility inferred in the previous chapters into probability. Finally, Chapter Six will summarize the study.

CHAPTER TWO

APOSYNAGŌGOS, THE BIRKAT HA-MINIM, AND CONTEMPORARY SYNAGOGUE STUDIES

2.1 AN INITIAL ORIENTATION

This chapter will examine how the classic and neo- Martynian traditions have approached, as well as consider how a post-Martynian alternative might approach, the ancient synagogue. Employing what Meyer calls an oblique pattern of inference,¹ this chapter argues that the *aposynagōgos* passages are historically plausible *vis-à-vis* the matter of the ancient synagogue. If it can also be established via what Meyer calls the direct pattern of inference that John intended factuality and was plausibly knowledgeable on what he reports, then this plausibility (as well as plausibilities established on other matters, namely Christology and empire, in Chapters Three and Four) can be converted reasonably into probability, if not certainty, as it will have been demonstrated that John did intend to report factually about events of which he was plausibly knowledgeable. The implementation of this direct pattern of inference is reserved for Chapter Five.

2.2 SYNAGOGUE IN ALLEGORY: THE MARTYNIAN TRADITIONS

As seen in Chapter One, the Martynian tradition was pioneered by J. Louis Martyn's *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, originally published in 1968 and now in its third (2003) edition.² In *History and Theology*, Martyn argues for both the two-level reading strategy,³ and the integral position of the *Birkat ha-Minim* in the interpretation that issues from his implementation of this strategy.⁴ Section 2.2., and its sub-sections, will engage not

¹ On patterns of inference, cf. Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2002), 85ff, and the discussion in Chapter One of this study.

² J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (3rd ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

³ Cf. Martyn, *History and Theology*, esp. pp. 30–45 and 124–143.

⁴ Cf. Martyn, *History and Theology*, esp. pp. 46–66. Cf. also the later formulation in J. Louis Martyn, *The Gospel of John in Christian History: Essays for Interpreters* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 90–121, now reprinted in Martyn, *History and Theology*, 145–167.

only with Martyn's seminal presentation of the two-level reading strategy in *History and Theology* and the work of several classic Martynian scholars such as Raymond E. Brown (1979),⁵ John Ashton (1991 and 2007),⁶ Paul N. Anderson (2006),⁷ Lance Byron Richey (2007),⁸ Joel Marcus (2009),⁹ and Marius Heemstra (2010),¹⁰ but also, and more importantly, critically evaluate and judge the relevance of the *Birkat ha-Minim* to the study of the *aposynagōgos* passages. It will also consider whether the neo-Martynian tradition offers a more adequate account of the *aposynagōgos* passages. It will be judged that neither tradition adequately accounts for the data of these passages.

2.2.1 *Allegory and History: The Classic Martynian Tradition*

Insofar as the *Birkat ha-Minim* was, and remains, central to the Martynian tradition, any post-Martynian alternative for reading the *aposynagōgos* passages must critically evaluate Martynian understandings of the *Birkat ha-Minim*. As such, our task here is not to render judgment on all matters relevant to the *Birkat ha-Minim*, but only on those matters that relate most immediately to the interpretation and analysis of the *aposynagōgos* passages. Given that the final judgment will be that the *Birkat ha-Minim* is wholly irrelevant for the proper interpretation and analysis of the *aposynagōgos* passages, it will be sufficient for us to demonstrate reasonable grounds for acceding to any of the following propositions: that the *Birkat ha-Minim* likely did not exist in the first century; that it did not function to exclude people from the synagogue; or, that it is insufficiently analogous to the *aposynagōgos* passages to warrant the conclusion that each stems from the same situation.

⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979).

⁶ John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford, 2007). Unless indicated otherwise, all citations from Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*, will be from the second edition.

⁷ Paul N. Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered* (London: T&T Clark, 2006).

⁸ Lance Byron Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2007).

⁹ Joel Marcus, "Birkat ha-Minim Revisited," *New Testament Studies* 55 (2009): 523–551.

¹⁰ Marius Heemstra, *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

In developing a critique of Martyn's scenario, attention is here focused upon the arguments advanced by Reuven Kimelman and Ruth Langer.¹¹ Kimelman and Langer are certainly not the only scholars to write about the *Birkat ha-Minim* in the wake of Martyn's work,¹² but the focus upon Kimelman reflects what the present author judges a particular influence of Kimelman's critique in the literature on the *aposynagōgos* passages, whilst the focus upon Ruth Langer reflects that her critique is embedded within a recent, comprehensive, treatment of the *Birkat ha-Minim*. This focus is strategic, and aimed at reducing the discussion of the voluminous literature on the *Birkat ha-Minim* to a manageable level. In discussing the major issues raised by Kimelman and Langer, we will have considered most of the major matters relevant to the *Birkat ha-Minim vis-à-vis* the *aposynagōgos* passages.

Before we commence it is necessary to address Ruth Langer's recent claim that "this interpretation of John [i.e. that the *aposynagōgos* passages report expulsions via the *Birkat ha-Minim*] is no longer accepted by scholars,"¹³ for, if this were indeed the case, then there would be little

¹¹ In Reuven Kimelman, "Birkat Ha-Minim and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition, Volume II: Aspects of Judaism in the Graeco-Roman Period* (ed. E.P. Sanders, A.I. Baumgarten, and Alan Mendelsohn; London: SCM Press, 1981), 226–244; and Langer, *Cursing the Christians?*

¹² Cf. Stephen T. Katz, "Issues in the Separation of Judaism and Christianity after 70 CE: A Reconsideration," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103/1 (1984): 43–76, esp. 64ff; William Horbury, "The Benediction of the *Minim* and Early Jewish-Christian Controversy," *Journal of Theological Studies* 33/1 (1982): 19–61; Lawrence Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew? Rabbinic and Halakhic Perspectives on the Jewish Christian Schism* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1985), 57; Ephraim E. Urbach, "Self-Isolation or Self-Affirmation in Judaism in the First Three Centuries: Theory and Practice," in Sanders, Baumgarten, and Mendelson, eds., *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition II*, 269–298; Burton Visotzky, "Methodological Considerations in the Study of John's Interaction with First-Century Judaism," in *Life in Abundance: Studies of John's Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown* (ed. John R. Donahue; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2005), 91–107. Also in 1981, the same year as Kimelman and Urbach published their articles in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition II*, Asher Finkel, "Yavneh's Liturgy and Early Christianity," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 18/2 (1981): 231–250, responded to the treatment of the *Birkat ha-Minim vis-à-vis* the Gospel of Matthew by W.D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964). Finkel's arguments generally mirror those of Kimelman and Urbach, and reflect a dominant perspective among rabbinic scholars regarding the interpretation of the *Birkat ha-Minim* represented by both Davies and Martyn. This perspective was adopted by some but certainly not all Johannine scholars, as indicated by the discussion of the classic Martynian tradition above. For an example of a prominent New Testament scholar following rabbinic scholars on the *Birkat ha-Minim*, cf. Pieter Van der Horst, "The *Birkat ha-Minim* in Recent Research," *Expository Times* 105/12 (1994): 363–368.

¹³ Ruth Langer, *Cursing the Christians? A History of the Birkat Haminim* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 17.

warrant in devoting so much space to the *Birkat ha-Minim* in a study of the *aposynagōgos* passages. On this matter we might cite Langer against Langer. Elsewhere, she writes of Martyn's reading of the *aposynagōgos* passages that, "many, particularly in the English-speaking world, continue to consider this the definitive interpretation of the New Testament text [i.e. the *aposynagōgos* passages]."14 Langer cites no evidence in support of her earlier contention that this interpretation is no longer accepted by contemporary scholars, whilst providing extensive documentation in support of her later contention that it is still considered definitive. Langer herself quite handily refutes her own earlier contention, and demonstrates that the *Birkat ha-Minim* remains integral to much contemporary scholarly discourse regarding the *aposynagōgos* passages. As such, this study cannot avoid but rather must consider the matter of the *Birkat ha-Minim*.

The *Birkat ha-Minim* is an alternate name for the Twelfth of the Eighteen Benedictions (the 'amidah). Crucial to Martyn's reading of the *aposynagōgos* passages is a version of the Twelfth Benediction found in the Cairo Genizah, and published by Solomon Schechter and Israel Abrahams in 1898.15 This version contains a previously unknown variant that referred to נצרים (*nozerim*), typically read as a reference to Christians, perhaps more specifically Jewish Christians.16 In full, the Twelfth Benediction of what will henceforth be called the "Genizah recension"17 of the 'amidah, reads as follows.18

1. For the apostates let there not be hope
2. And let the arrogant government
3. be speedily uprooted in our day.
4. Let the Nazarenes [Christians] and the Minim [heretics] be destroyed in a minute.

¹⁴ Langer, *Cursing the Christians?*, 28.

¹⁵ Solomon Schechter and Israel Abrahams, "Genizah Specimens," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 10 (1898): 654–661.

¹⁶ The variant appears on Schechter and Abrahams, "Genizah Specimens," 657. Since this particular section of the article was written specifically by Schechter, he is often cited without Abrahams as the scholar who published this variant.

¹⁷ Marcus, "*Birkat ha-Minim*," 524, rightly points out that the term "Genizah recension" is misleading. However, given the need for a convenient appellation, it seems adequate for the task.

¹⁸ Translation following Martyn, *History and Theology*, 62–63. Cf. also the treatment of the Genizah material in David Instone-Brewer, "The Eighteen Benedictions and the *Minim* Before 70 C.E.," *Journal of Theological Studies* NS, 54/1 (2003): 25–44; Langer, *Cursing the Christians?*, 187–195.

5. And let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous.
6. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the proud.

Regarding the *Birkat ha-Minim*, Martyn argued a number of closely-related hypotheses: that the text was fixed by the Rabbinic academy at Yavneh, sometime around 80–85 CE; that the reading found in the Genizah recension, quoted above, closely approximates this Yavnean form; that the purpose of this benediction was to detect Christians and possibly other heretics, and to expel them from the synagogue; and, that the *aposynagōgos* passages represent the experiences of certain Jewish Christians who were thus expelled from the synagogue and became attached to the Johannine community.¹⁹ Each of these matters will be addressed in turn, in the following sections.

2.2.1.1 *The Date of the Birkat ha-Minim*

As support for dating the *Birkat ha-Minim* to 80–85 CE, Martyn cites *B. Ber.* 28b–29a of the Babylonian Talmud, which he reads as a report that the *Birkat ha-Minim* was formulated in the Yavnean academy by Samuel the Small at the instigation of Gamaliel II.²⁰

Our Rabbis taught: Simeon the cotton dealer arranged the eighteen benedictions in order in the presence of Rabban Gamaliel in Yavneh. Rabban Gamaliel said to the sages: “Is there one among you who can word a benediction relating to the Minim [heretics]?” Samuel the Small stood and composed it.²¹

Martyn argues that Gamaliel II held leadership of the Yavnean academy from 80 to 115 CE, and, citing Herford’s argument that Samuel the Small died sometime around 80 CE,²² that we should date Samuel’s definitive, Yavnean, arrangement of the *Birkat ha-Minim* to the earlier end of this range.²³ Martyn thus holds that the *Birkat ha-Minim* was written in the form of the Genizah recension c. 80–85 CE, in the Rabbinic academy at Yavneh.

¹⁹ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 56–66; Martyn, *Gospel of John*, 90–121.

²⁰ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 58–63.

²¹ Translation following Martyn, *History and Theology*, 58–59.

²² R. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1903), 128–135.

²³ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 61.

Against such a dating, Langer argues that

[w]e know very little about the early history of the *birkat haminim*... The earliest indisputable reference to the blessing is in the Tosefta, followed by Epiphanius in the mid-370s and Jerome in the early years of the fifth century, the last two more or less contemporaneous with the redaction of the Jerusalem Talmud.²⁴

The Toseftan reference mentioned here is found in *Tosefta Berakhot* 3:25, and is embedded in a larger discussion of the *'amidah*. Given this reference, we can be quite certain that sometime around the third century the *Birkat ha-Minim* existed as part of the *'amidah*.

Scholars have argued that Justin Martyr makes reference to the *Birkat ha-Minim* in his *Dialogue with Trypho* 16, 35, 47, 93, 95, 108, 123, 133, wherein he reports that some Jewish groups were cursing Christians.²⁵ If Justin does indeed refer to the *Birkat ha-Minim*, then we have a reference to the prayer within a century of when Martyn argues that the events of his scenario took place. Yet, as Langer notes, none of these passages refer to specific liturgical activity in a synagogue context, and in the one passage in which Justin does refer to statements taking place within a liturgical context (*Dial.* 137) he reports that it is Jesus who is blasphemed, and not Christians.²⁶ Similarly, whilst Justin does mention Jewish curses directed at Christians within a synagogue context, he does not explicitly relate them to any sort of liturgy.

Yet, Langer perhaps too quickly dismisses the possibility that there are among these passages references to the *Birkat ha-Minim*, for *Dial.* 16 and 47 do state that in their synagogues Jews curse those who believe in Christ. Even if these passages do not mention liturgy explicitly, it is possible that Justin refers, in at least some of these passages, to the *Birkat ha-Minim*. It should also be noted, in light of Langer's argument that there is no indisputable reference to the *Birkat ha-Minim* prior to the Tosefta, that Judith Hauptman has argued at length that the Tosefta pre-dates the Mishnah, which could make it roughly coeval with Justin.²⁷ Even without

²⁴ Langer, *Cursing the Christians?*, 38–39.

²⁵ Cf. Horbury, "Benediction of the *Minim*"; William Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 67–70; Schiffman, *Who Was a Jew*, 57; Yaakov Y. Teppler, *Birkat haMinim: Jews and Christians in Conflict in the Ancient World* (trans. Susan Weingarten; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 348–359.

²⁶ Langer, *Cursing the Christians?*, 29–30.

²⁷ Judith Hauptman, *Rereading the Mishnah: A New Approach to Ancient Jewish Texts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 17–24. Hauptman argues that although the Tosefta is presented as a commentary on the Mishnah, given that the comments at times do not

Hauptman's earlier dating, it is the case that Justin wrote *Dialogue* within a century of when most would date the Tosefta, and thus it is conceivable that the *Birkat ha-Minim* existed in the middle of the second century. This would make Martyn's late first century dating more plausible.

Yet, the possibility that the *Birkat ha-Minim* was formulated at Yavneh in the late first century does not necessitate the judgment that it was. That said, it should be noted that there are those who would date the *Birkat ha-Minim* earlier than does even Martyn, and if they can be shown to be correct on this matter, then we can upgrade our judgment regarding the late first-century existence of the Twelfth Benediction from possible to certain. We will here consider two such recent proposals, those of Instone-Brewer and Joel Marcus.²⁸

Instone-Brewer has argued that the *Birkat ha-Minim* was formulated pre-70, at the instigation of Gamaliel I, and later promulgated at Yavneh by Gamaliel II.²⁹ Given that Gamaliel I flourished during and in the years immediately following Jesus' life, if Instone-Brewer's argument is correct, then it is conceivable that the *Birkat ha-Minim* was formulated perhaps even prior to Jesus' death, and thus, although in such a case it might well not have been originally an anti-Christian prayer, it could have been pressed into such service later in the first century. Indeed, it could conceivably be related to events of Jesus' life.

Instone-Brewer's argument is less than compelling, however. Writing on the matter of *b. Ber.* 28–29a, he argues that

follow the order of the Mishnah, and further that it offers no commentary on Mishnaic texts that seem particularly problematic, the Tosefta must in fact be commenting upon an Ur-Mishnah. This Ur-Mishnah would then be older than both the Tosefta and the Mishnah, and indeed the Mishnah would be an amalgam of the Ur-Mishnah and the Tosefta. Although Hauptman's view represents a minority perspective within Rabbinic scholarship, if it were to be accepted, it would incline us towards an earlier *terminus post quem* for the *Birkat ha-Minim*.

²⁸ Instone-Brewer and Marcus are not the first scholars to suggest a pre-70 date for the *Birkat ha-Minim*, but as they have advanced such an argument most recently they are singled out for treatment. Cf. previously Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (trans. Richard S. Sarason; Berlin: De Gruyter, 1977), 224, who argues, similar to Marcus, that Yavneh reformulated a pre-existing body of prayer. Heinemann's argument must be situated within his broader theory that the rabbis typically and gradually regularized a variety of disparate prayers, some of which originated within rabbinic circles and some did not. Heinemann's argument is susceptible to many of the same critiques as Marcus': that there might have been prayers that bore similarities to the *Birkat ha-Minim* prior to Yavneh does not necessitate the conclusion that there were any genealogical relationships, and could at least as reasonably suggest merely the existence of a common discourse that generated texts bearing formal and substantive similarities.

²⁹ Instone-Brewer, "Eighteen Benedictions," 39–44.

“in Jabneh” and “to the sages” also appear to have been added later, because they are entirely superfluous to the text and out of place. If they had been in the original version, one would expect “in Jabneh” immediately after “Gamaliel” and one would expect “to the sages” in place of “to them” (לָהֶם). These phrases have probably been added in order to link the tradition with Gamaliel II and Jabneh. Without these additional phrases, the tradition could refer to Gamaliel I who lived in the last generation of the temple.³⁰

If we grant that “‘in Jabneh’ and ‘to the sages’ . . . are entirely superfluous to the text and out of place”—and it is not immediately that they are—it would not necessarily follow that they were added later. It could rather be indicative of clumsy construction on the part of the author. Even if we accede that they were added later, it would not necessarily follow from that conclusion that the tradition originally referred to Gamaliel I. It rather could be the case that the tradition always referred to Gamaliel II, and the phrases were added in order to obviate any possible confusion with Gamaliel I. Indeed, the addition of these words, if such addition ever happened, might at least as plausibly argue against Instone-Brewer’s thesis as it might argue in its favour.

Instone-Brewer further cites Song of Songs Rabbah 8.13, in which Samuel the Small is said to be a student of Hillel. From this Instone-Brewer argues that we should situate Samuel as a contemporary of Gamaliel I rather than as a contemporary of Gamaliel II and the Yavnean sages. Yet, SongR 8.13 provides at best dubious support for Instone-Brewer’s argument, for whilst it does explicitly identify Samuel as a disciple of Hillel, it also explicitly states that he was present at Yavneh. If the text is historically reliable on Samuel’s relationship to Hillel, why is it not historically reliable on his presence at Yavneh? Moreover, Instone-Brewer himself observes that Samuel’s “title as ‘a worthy disciple of Hillel’ may not indicate a direct discipleship, because in the tradition cited just immediately before this, Hillel is called ‘a worthy disciple of Ezra.’”³¹ Given the data presented by Instone-Brewer himself, the best reading of this tradition would likely be, on the one hand that Samuel the Small was among those gathered at Yavneh, and, on the other, that he stood in relation to Hillel much as Hillel stood in relation to Ezra.

Instone-Brewer’s argument fails to persuade, precisely due to a number of unsubstantiated supporting hypotheses. Equally unpersuasive is Joel Marcus’s argument that the *Birkat ha-Minim* was re-formulated from one

³⁰ Instone-Brewer, “Eighteen Benedictions,” 39.

³¹ Instone-Brewer, “Eighteen Benedictions,” 40.

or more pre-existing prayers, and that it would thus pre-date Yavneh.³² Marcus argues that when, in *b. Ber.* 28b–29a, Gamaliel asks for someone לַתְּקַן בְּרַכַּת הַמִּינִים, he is asking someone not “to arrange the Benediction against the Heretics,” but rather “to correct the Benediction belonging to the heretics.”³³ Against this suggestion, one might object that, given that the content of the *Birkat ha-Minim* is clearly directed against heretics, the traditional translation seems preferable. Moreover, Marcus’s argument does not adequately account for why Gamaliel would have any interest in adopting the heretics’ benediction in the first place. Although Marcus adduces examples of Qumran texts with similar phrasing as the *Birkat ha-Minim*,³⁴ such parallels do not necessarily establish that the latter constitutes a corrected version of the former. It is at least as likely that such language was characteristic of certain groups in the later Second Temple period, and thus possibly indicative of a broader genre into which the *Birkat ha-Minim* might fall.

Thus neither Instone-Brewer nor Marcus provide sufficient warrant to date the *Birkat ha-Minim*, or any hypothetical ur-text, earlier than does Martyn. We should thus consider more directly the matter of the traditions that associate the *Birkat ha-Minim* with Yavneh, and this for two reasons. First, these traditions constitute the major data in favour of a late first-century date for the *Birkat ha-Minim*. Second, these are indispensable to the classic Martynian tradition, as the *Birkat ha-Minim* on its own makes no mention of any sort of exclusion; it is only from these traditions that we have any reason at all to associate this prayer with the *aposynagōgos*.

Although scholars were once willing to take for granted the basic historicity of rabbinic reports regarding what happened at Yavneh, contemporary scholarship is less sanguine on the matter. This older view was rooted in what Langer has described as a “‘positivistic’ reading of the rabbinic texts... [that] presumes that these late antique texts in their manifest content accurately preserve facts and it is the historians’ task to discern and interpret them.”³⁵ It makes good procedural sense to begin by evaluating the validity of this older positivistic historiography, as well as recent and contemporary responses thereto.

³² Marcus, “*Birkat Ha-Minim*,” 540–548.

³³ Marcus, “*Birkat Ha-Minim*,” 540.

³⁴ Marcus, “*Birkat Ha-Minim*,” 542–546.

³⁵ Langer, *Cursing the Christians?*, 16.

Perhaps the version of such positivist historiography most relevant to the current discussion is that which Catherine Heszer describes as the political-historical approach, the “founding father” of which she identifies as Heinrich Graetz.³⁶ Suggests Heszer, “[i]n this paradigm the rabbis are seen as the members of the sanhedrin and as the administrative and religious leaders of local Jewish communities.”³⁷ Graetz argues that immediately following the destruction of the temple, Yoḥanan b. Zakkai founded an academy that set about restoring Jewish life; and following his death, Gamaliel II was appointed as *ha-nasi*, i.e. the prince and patriarch, and, seeking an end to quarrels that threatened the unity and perhaps even the survival of this newly restored Judaism, arrogated to himself the power of excommunication.³⁸

As already suggested, contemporary rabbinic scholarship is deeply suspicious, if not outright derisive, of such scholarship. Yet, even though Martyn identifies the *Birkat ha-Minim* rather than the *niddui* as the mechanism by which Johannine Christians were excommunicated, his understanding of Yavneh and its significance in Jewish history has more in common with Graetz’s scholarship from the 1890s than with recent and contemporary rabbinic scholarship. It behooves us then to inquire into why rabbinic scholars today offer such notably different accounts of rabbinic origins.

Since this recent scholarship is concerned with much the same data as was Graetz, the difference presumably lies in how that data is now interpreted. That is to say, the difference is one of hermeneutics, not data. This difference is reflected well by Boyarin, who argues that

there is every reason to doubt that the so-called curse of the heretics was formulated under Gamaliel II at Yavneh or that it existed at all before the end of the second century. The only source we have for this “Yavnean” institution is a Babylonian Talmudic story from the fourth or fifth century of Rabban Gamaliel asking Samuel the Small to formulate such a blessing—“blessing” means curse here—the latter forgetting it a year later and meditating for two or three hours in order to remember it (BT Berakhot 28b–29a). This hardly constitutes reliable evidence, or indeed evidence at

³⁶ Catherine Heszer, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 1–9; cf. Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews, Volume 2: From the Reign of Hyrcanus (135 B.C.E.) to the Completion of the Babylonian Talmud* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1893). According to Heszer, *Social Structure*, 1, “[a]lmost all the subsequent histories of rabbinic Judaism follow Graetz’ model.”

³⁷ Heszer, *Social Structure*, 5.

³⁸ Graetz, *History of the Jews, Volume 2*, 321–340.

all. The aroma of legend hovers over this entire account. This supposition is strongly confirmed by a parallel passage in the Palestinian Talmud which remarks on the “forgetting” of a prayer by this Samuel but not precisely *birkat hamminim* (PT Berakhot 9c). . . . One might as well attempt to write the history of early Britain on the basis of King Lear or of colonial America using James Fenimore Cooper as one’s only source.³⁹

Boyarin here demonstrates, in an admittedly extreme fashion, the primary hermeneutical basis for the differences between the scholarship of Graetz and that of more recent and contemporary rabbinic scholars, namely that texts once treated as more or less historical are now treated as more or less legendary.

In her description of such historiographical practice as “positivistic,” Langer explicitly follows terminology employed by R.G. Collingwood, in his classic work on the philosophy of history, *The Idea of History*.⁴⁰ Against the positivistic philosophy of history, Collingwood writes that,

The fact that in the second century the legions began to be recruited wholly outside Italy is not immediately given. It is to be arrived at inferentially by a process of interpreting data according to a complicated system of rules and assumptions. A theory of historical knowledge would discover what these rules and assumptions are, and would ask how far they are necessary and legitimate. All this was entirely neglected by the positivistic historians, who thus never asked themselves the difficult question: How is historical knowledge possible? How and under what conditions can the historian know facts which, being now gone without recall or repetition, cannot be for him objects of perception?⁴¹

Put more succinctly, the positivistic historians, Graetz included, neglected the epistemological work necessary to develop any adequate historiography.

In turning its attention to such work, the present study draws largely upon the scholarship of Ben Meyer, in particular his ideas about direct and oblique patterns of knowledge.⁴² If “[t]he components of the direct pattern of inference are intention, knowledgeability, and veracity,” such that “[i]f the intention of the writer can be defined to include factuality

³⁹ Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press), 200469.

⁴⁰ R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (ed. Jan van Dussen; rev. ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 126–133.

⁴¹ Collingwood, *Idea of History*, 133.

⁴² Meyer himself was significantly influenced by Collingwood; cf. Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 84–94.

and if the writer is plausibly knowledgeable on the matter and free of the suspicion of fraud, historicity may be inferred,⁴³ then we must recognize that since, in the matter of rabbinic literature, we are frequently unable to define the writer's (or *writers'*) intention *vis-à-vis* factuality, knowledgeability or veracity. This is a consequence of what Martin Jaffee describes as a "refusal of responsibility for authorship" in the rabbinic literature.⁴⁴ As such, frequently in the case of rabbinic literature we must reckon with Ben Meyer's warning that "[t]he usefulness of the direct pattern of inference, however, is limited in biblical [or, one might add, rabbinic] criticism because of the frequent indefinability of the factor of intention."⁴⁵

This would seem indeed to be the case with the traditions regarding the Yavnean origin of the *Birkat ha-Minim*. Thus we must turn to oblique patterns of inference. The primary pattern to be employed here relates specifically to the matter raised by Boyarin, namely the historicity of Yavneh itself, and procedurally entails what Le Donne calls "memory refraction." By this, Le Donne means the processes whereby memories are "localized" or "refracted" via specific typologies.⁴⁶ Le Donne's signal example of such a typology is the son of David tradition. Likewise one might suggest that, in the rabbinic corpus, Yavneh has become a typology through which rabbinic memories are frequently refracted. This leads to the question, from whence this typology? Given the sheer frequency of rabbinic memory refraction through what we might describe as a Yavnean lens, it seems reasonable to conclude that the very existence of this typology furnishes evidence that Yavneh was the location of certain events foundational to the subsequent rabbinic tradition, and that the production of the *Birkat ha-Minim* might have been among those events.

Yet, even having granted that the Yavnean academy contributed meaningfully and significantly to the development of the subsequent rabbinic tradition, it does not follow necessarily that rabbinic Judaism was yet "mainstream" or "orthodox" Judaism. Martyn, and the classic Martynian scholars who follow him, quite commonly assume this to be the case. At the very least, they suppose that rabbinic Judaism was the dominant form of Judaism in the region wherein the Johannine community existed.

⁴³ Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 85.

⁴⁴ Martin S. Jaffee, "Rabbinic Authorship as a Collective Enterprise," in *Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 17–37, here p. 21.

⁴⁵ Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 85.

⁴⁶ Anthony Le Donne, *The Historiographical Jesus: Memory, Typology, and the Son of David* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2009), 65–92.

Yet, such suppositions are hardly taken for granted among contemporary rabbinic scholars, a fact of which classic Martynian Joel Marcus evinces awareness but to which he offers no adequate response. Although Marcus does not think that “radical skepticism about the existence of synagogues, their use for worship, and the importance of the rabbis seem[s] to be warranted,”⁴⁷ he neither cites a single example of such radically skeptical scholars and scholarship, nor explains why their arguments lack warrant. As such, it is difficult to know exactly which positions, and whose, are being rejected, or on what grounds.

Yet, Marcus’s description would seem to describe well a rabbinic scholarship that Seth Schwartz elsewhere describes as “firmly situated in the Neusnerian penumbra, because it does not assume the dominance of the rabbis and is skeptical about (though not invariably dismissive of) the historicity of rabbinic sources.”⁴⁸ Schwartz proceeds to locate within this penumbra such scholars as Shaye Cohen, David Goodblatt, Catherine Hezser, Hayim Lapin, Lee Levine, and himself.⁴⁹ This list reads as a veritable who’s-who of contemporary rabbinic studies, and thus cannot be simply dismissed under the heading “radical skepticism.”

If we might sketch a general picture of the rabbinic Judaism that emerges from such scholarship, it would be one of groups of students that would gather around specific teachers; such groups we might call “schools,” and such teachers we might call “rabbis.” In any given school, the rabbi was very much what held the school together, such that, as Levine suggests, “[w]hen the sage died, his students either dispersed or went to study elsewhere.”⁵⁰ Thus, into the third century, “[t]he educational ambience of the sages was in the framework of disciple circles rather than permanent

⁴⁷ Marcus, “*Birkat ha-Minim*,” 530.

⁴⁸ Seth Schwartz, “The Political Geography of Rabbinic Texts,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Talmud and Rabbinic Literature* (ed. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert and Martin S. Jaffee; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 75–96, here p. 87.

⁴⁹ Schwartz, “Political Geography,” 87, cites the following studies as evidence for these scholars’ “Neusnerian” skepticism: Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); David Goodblatt, *The Monarchic Principle: Studies in Jewish Self-Government in Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994); Martin Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee, 132–212* (Totowa, NJ: Roman and Allanheld, 1993); Catherine Hezser, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997); Hayim Lapin, *Economy, Geography, and Provincial History in Later Roman Palestine* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); Lee I. Levine, *The Rabbinic Class of Roman Palestine in Late Antiquity* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1989); Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

⁵⁰ Levine, *Rabbinic Class*, 28.

institutions.”⁵¹ Such impermanent schools appear to have frequently met in spaces not originally intended for Torah instruction and study, such as the famed vineyard at Yavneh⁵² or the homes of Gamaliel II, R. Shimon b. Gamaliel, and R. Chananiah.⁵³

Yavneh might very well have been a relatively early example of such a school, centred first upon R. Yoḥanan b. Zakkai and later upon Gamaliel II. Yet, if with Heszer we envision the various rabbinic schools as linked together in some sort of informal network, it is not clear to what extent Yavneh might have held influence over other rabbinic schools.⁵⁴ Moreover, whether any of these rabbinic schools had much influence beyond rabbinic circles remains an open question.⁵⁵ Certainly, rabbinic literature reports that some rabbis were approached by people other than their students with queries on religious matters, but, as Goodman has observed, the same literature suggests that it was entirely up to discretion of the inquirer whether to accept or reject the rabbis’ opinion.⁵⁶

The picture that emerges from more recent and contemporary scholarship is a rabbinic Judaism that had significant influence only within its very limited circles, and a Yavneh whose influence within those circles was much less than previous scholarship supposed. Schwartz seems to sum up well how many of the most prominent Rabbinic scholars construe Jewish life after the events of 70–135 when he argues that

some Jews, probably a very small number (among them were the rabbis) still insisted on the importance of Torah, of Judaism, in their symbolic world, and these Jews, convinced of their elite status, tried to insinuate their way into general Palestinian society. Although marginal and to some extent turned in on themselves, the rabbis and their congeners nevertheless played a role, peripheral and weak though it was, in sustaining among some Jews some sense of separation.⁵⁷

If such a picture of rabbinic influence in the post-70 period is more or less accurate, then whilst it would indeed be possible that the *Birkat ha-Minim* both existed in the first-century and was a product of Yavneh, it would be improbable that either the rabbi or the Yavnean sages had

⁵¹ Levine, *Rabbinic Class*, 28–29.

⁵² Cf. the discussion in Goodblatt, *Monarchic Principle*, 241ff.; Heszer, *Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement*, 174.

⁵³ Cf. the discussion in Heszer, *Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement*, 308–315.

⁵⁴ Heszer, *Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement*, *passim*, esp. 240–255.

⁵⁵ Cf. the discussion especially in Goodblatt, *Monarchic Principle*, 232–276.

⁵⁶ Goodman, *State and Society*, 101–111.

⁵⁷ Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 103.

significant influence to expel members of the Johannine community from public synagogues.⁵⁸

Only if we conclude that the Johannine community, or at least those members who experienced expulsion from the synagogue, existed in those limited circles in which the rabbis did have influence, might we reasonably argue that they were subject to the *Birkat ha-Minim*. Yet, if the rabbis' influence was limited effectively to their own circles, then such a conclusion would lead to the further conclusion that those of the Johannine community who were expelled via the *Birkat ha-Minim* were members of the rabbinic movement. To the best of this author's knowledge, no scholar has thus argued that this was the case, and with good reason, for one cannot help but feel that the idea that some Johannine Christians were rabbis or students of rabbis expelled by rabbis from their limited rabbinic circles would constitute nought but a rearguard effort to defend a two-level reading routed by the data.

Thus, much like Langer in her recent monograph, the present author can be agnostic on the matter of the date of the *Birkat ha-Minim*, and more specifically whether it existed in the late first century, for it seems highly probable that even if such a text did exist in rabbinic circles at this early date, those circles were so tightly circumscribed that most likely they could not have asserted much if any influence upon any members of the Johannine community. There is thus already very good reason to doubt the understanding of the *Birkat ha-Minim* held by Martyn and those who follow him on the matter. More reason will be found when one considers more closely the actual texts of the *Birkat ha-Minim* and the *aposynagōgos* passages.

2.2.1.2 *The Birkat ha-Minim and the Aposynagōgos Passages: Texts at Cross-Purposes*

Martyn argues that “[t]he Benediction is intended . . . to weld the whole of Judaism into a monolithic structure by *culling out* those elements which

⁵⁸ One might read the possible references to the *Birkat ha-Minim* in Justin Martyr as indicative of widespread rabbinic influence. This, however, would simply beg the question, as the very argument that Justin refers to the *Birkat ha-Minim* is already dependent upon the supposition that rabbinic influence was sufficiently widespread that one can plausibly identify within patristic literature references to rabbinic practice. Thus, the argument would proceed as follows: since rabbinic influence was widespread, we can reasonably suppose that Justin might be referring to rabbinic practice; thus when he refers to Jews cursing Christians in a synagogue context, we can reasonably conclude that Justin is referring to the *Birkat ha-Minim*; therefore we can reasonably conclude that rabbinic influence was widespread. Such argumentation should be rejected as fallacious.

do not conform to the Pharisaic image of orthodoxy.”⁵⁹ Martyn bases this argument primarily upon his reading of the following text from *b. Ber.* 28b–29a:

The next year he [Samuel] forgot it and tried for two or three hours to recall it, and they did not remove him [from his post as Delegate of the Congregation]. Why did they not remove him, seeing that Rab Judah has said in the name of Rab: If a reader made a mistake in any of the other benedictions, they do not remove him, but if in the benediction of the Minim, he is removed, because we suspect him of being a Min?—Samuel the Lesser is different, because he composed it.⁶⁰

Martyn reconstructs a scenario in which that, “[a] member of the synagogue does something to arouse suspicion regarding his orthodoxy. . . . The president instructs the overseer to appoint this man to . . . lead in the praying of the Eighteen Benedictions. . . . If he falters on number twelve, the Benediction Against Heretics, he is removed from his praying. . . . [and] presumably, ‘drummed’ out of the synagogue fellowship.”⁶¹

Kimelman argues that the *Birkat ha-Minim* could not have functioned as Martyn argued. Kimelman argues that “[t]he difficulty with this position is that it assumes that *min* has a denotation more limited than ‘heretic.’ A condemnation of heretics in general without a specific reference to which heresy was meant would have a limited effect, since it is unlikely that a theological dissident would see himself included in the term ‘heretic.’”⁶² Only if the reader thought himself one of the *minim* would he not want to curse them. Yet it does not follow that those whom the rabbis thought to be *minim* would have thought of themselves in the same way. If they did not, however, then, Kimelman argues, “the benediction would lose its purpose.”⁶³ Kimelman’s critique calls seriously into question Martyn’s case for the *Birkat ha-Minim*’s relevance to the *aposynagōgos* passages, although we should note that it supposes the absence of *nozerim* in the earliest version of the Benediction.

Here we should pause to consider when *nozerim* entered the text of the *Birkat ha-Minim*, for surely this word rather than *minim* is most

⁵⁹ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 63. Note that this argument is virtually identical to what Graetz argued was the purpose of the *niddui*.

⁶⁰ Again following Martyn, *History and Theology*, 59. Square brackets are retained from Martyn’s translation.

⁶¹ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 64.

⁶² Kimelman, “*Birkat Ha-Minim*,” 227.

⁶³ Kimelman, “*Birkat Ha-Minim*,” 227.

clearly indicative of anti-Christian intent. As documented in both Ehrlich and Langer's article on the matter⁶⁴ and in Langer's more recent monograph, the textual history of the *Birkat ha-Minim* is quite complicated, in large part due to Christian censorship of what was perceived as an anti-Christian prayer. Langer herself adopts an agnostic stance on the matter, arguing that the state of the evidence is such that "[w]e can neither fully reconstruct what motivated the institution of the *birkat haminim* nor can we know its original text, if there was one."⁶⁵

For his part, Kimelman argued that *nozerim* entered into the Benediction centuries after Yavneh,⁶⁶ reasoning that "if the term were a part of the statutory liturgy from the first century onwards, the term *nošrim* should have become a common term in Rabbinic literature. In fact, *nošrim* does not appear in tannaitic literature. Indeed, in that form, it appears unambiguously only once in amoraic literature."⁶⁷ Moreover, he argues that, "[i]f *nošrim* were present *ab initio* the talmudic nomenclature would likely have been *birkat ha-nošrim*," rather than *Birkat ha-Minim*.⁶⁸ Kimelman argues that *nozerim* was added sometime in the fourth or fifth centuries, and referred specifically to the Jewish Christian sect known as the Nazoreans.⁶⁹

If Kimelman is correct, this would constitute a significant, although not necessarily insurmountable, difficulty for establishing that the *Birkat ha-Minim* was in the first century a specifically anti-Christian rather than generally anti-heretical prayer. Yet, the classic Martynian scholar might in response adduce the argument advanced by Ehrlich and Langer, namely that since "the geniza is extremely stable, always placing *nošrim* before *minim* . . . it is logical to conclude that the word *nošrim* is not a later addition to this phrase . . . but rather an integral part of its original formulation."⁷⁰

Let us grant, for the sake of argument, that Kimelman is correct in dating the *Birkat ha-Minim* to the late first century, and that Ehrlich and Langer are correct in judging that *nozerim* was original to the text. It would

⁶⁴ Uri Ehrlich, and Ruth Langer, "The Earliest Texts of the *Birkat Haminim*," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 76 (2005): 63–112.

⁶⁵ Langer, *Birkat ha-Minim*, 16.

⁶⁶ Kimelman, "*Birkat Ha-Minim*," 233–234.

⁶⁷ Kimelman, "*Birkat Ha-Minim*," 233.

⁶⁸ Kimelman, "*Birkat Ha-Minim*," 233.

⁶⁹ Kimelman, "*Birkat Ha-Minim*," 243.

⁷⁰ Ehrlich and Langer, "Earliest Texts," 96–97. Ehrlich and Langer's arguments and data are incorporated now into Langer, *Cursing the Christians?*, esp. pp. 16–101.

still remain to be considered what the term *nozerim* might have meant in the first century context.⁷¹ Here, Langer's recent treatment of the *Birkat ha-Minim* is remarkably deficient, failing to consider any first century evidence on the matter. The closest she gets is to cite Joan E. Taylor's statement that "Nazorean" was used frequently to refer to Christians, and not just those of a particular sect, in Syria,⁷² and to note correctly that Taylor fails to provide supporting data. Yet Langer herself fails to engage with Acts 24:5, which reads, εὐρόντες γὰρ τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦτον λοιμὸν καὶ κινουόντα στάσεις πᾶσιν τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις τοῖς κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην πρωτοστάτην τε τῆς τῶν Ναζωραίων αἰρέσεως ("for having found this man [Paul] a pestilence, and one causing strife among all the Jews throughout all the world, and a leader of the sect of the Nazoreans"). Depending upon the scholar, Acts is said to have been written in a range from c. 60 through to c. 120,⁷³ and thus if we assume that Ναζωραῖοι is the Greek equivalent of *nozerim*,⁷⁴

⁷¹ The history of meaning for *nozerim* throughout the late antique and early medieval periods is quite interesting, and the reader should now consult Langer, *Cursing the Christians?*, 16–102, as the most current, comprehensive treatment. Langer has demonstrated beyond any reasonable dispute that medieval Christian censors believed that *nozerim* referred to Christians, and also that *nozerim* was a standard term for "Christian" in Geonic texts. Yet this takes us back only to the early Middle Ages, c. 600 at the outset. Moving slightly earlier, Jerome and Epiphanius, seem not only to have known of the *Birkat ha-Minim*, but also the presence of the word *nozerim* in its text. Jerome (in *Letters of Augustine* 75.4.13.) and Epiphanius (*Panarion* 29.9.) both indicate that it refers not to Christians but to rather the Nazoreans, of whom Jerome wrote to Augustine that, due to their desire to be both Jewish and Christian, they were consequently neither. Yet elsewhere, in what seems to demonstrate clear knowledge of the *Birkat ha-Minim*, Jerome (in *Comm. In Amos*, Lib. I, on Amos 1:11–12; *Comm. In Esaiam*, Lib. II, on Isaiah 5:18–19; *Comm. In Esaiam*, Lib. XIII, on Isaiah 49:7; *Comm. In Esaiam*, Lib. XIV, on Isaiah 52:5) states that under the name Nazoreans the Christians are cursed thrice daily in the synagogue liturgy.

⁷² Joan E. Taylor, "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish-Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention?" *Vigiliae Christianae* 44 (1990): 313–334, p. 326.

⁷³ On the earlier end of the spectrum, there is John A.T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1976), 86–92, who dated Acts to c. 62 CE, and on the other end, Richard I. Pervo, *Acts: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2009), 5, who dates it to c. 115 CE. For a succinct discussion of the matters related to dating, cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 52–55. Both extreme ends of this spectrum represent minority positions, with the majority of scholars subscribing to dates in the 70s or 80s.

⁷⁴ C.K. Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; London: T&T Clark, 1994–1998), 2: 1098, not only notes the possibility of this etymological relationship, but also suggests that it might not be mere coincidence that in Acts 24:5 Ναζωραῖοι is closely associated with αἵρεσις, the latter a frequently Greek rendering of *minim*; might 24:5 not reflect the wording of the *Birkat ha-Minim*, with its reference to והנצרים והמנינים? Indeed, this cannot be dismissed out of hand, especially as the words appear in 24:5 in the same order as they do in the *Birkat ha-Minim*. Yet, Acts 24:5 refers not to sectarians and Nazoreans (as does the *Birkat ha-Minim*), but rather to sectarians who are Nazoreans; this seems a not insignificant difference. Moreover, even were Acts 24:5 to be alluding to the text of the *Birkat ha-Minim*,

then there is good reason to judge that the word could refer to at least Jewish Christians in the later first or early second century. Such a conclusion would significantly bolster Martyn's claims.

It would not, however, obviate the matter of rabbinic marginality, nor other difficulties with the rabbinic understanding of the *Birkat ha-Minim*'s purpose still to be discussed. For their part, the *aposynagōgos* passages make no mention of either prayer or benediction. Noting that there is no clear reference in the *aposynagōgos* passages to the act of reading the Eighteen Benedictions or their role in confirming heresy, Martyn argues that "John 9:22 would seem to be a case of ellipsis," in which only the initial condition (suspicion) and the final result (expulsion) are described, but not the process by which the former leads to the latter.⁷⁵ It should also be noted that, on Martyn's hypothesis, the *Birkat ha-Minim* must also be a case of ellipsis, for it says nothing about expelling the faltering reader from the synagogue.⁷⁶

Thus we are left on the one hand with a benediction that makes no reference to expulsion and that within the first century, if it existed that early at all, likely had a very limited sphere of influence, and on the other hand with passages manifestly written in the first century that do

and thus establishing not only its existence at least when Acts was written, if not already during Paul's lifetime, and also allowing one to more reasonably argue that at least some early Christians existed in circles affected by the *Birkat ha-Minim*, one would need still to reckon with the fact that Acts does not associate this allusion with any sort of expulsion from the synagogue. Ultimately, although the verbal similarity is impressive, the verbal difference is equally impressive, and thus the possibility that Acts is making some sort of allusion to the *Birkat ha-Minim* must remain simply that, a possibility.

⁷⁵ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 65.

⁷⁶ Göran Forkman, *The Limits of the Religious Community: Expulsion from the Religious Community within the Qumran Sect, with Rabbinic Judaism, and within Primitive Christianity* (Lund: Gleerup, 1972), 92, argues that since the *Birkat ha-Minim* "had to be read every morning, and just this must have been resulted in the deviator leaving the Jewish community. *Birkat ha-Minim* therefore acted as a total, definite expulsion." This operates on the supposition that "[i]t was impossible from now on for someone who knew himself to be a Christian or who in any other way deviated from the normative Judaism, to read the Eighteen Benedictions aloud or to respond with an 'amen' when they were read" (p. 91). This supposes that we know how persons who "deviated from the normative Judaism" would have operated. Persons in such a situation might have opted for an alternative strategy, wherein perhaps they uttered the prayer but did not think themselves referenced by either *minim* or *nozerim*, or wherein even though they did think these as references to themselves they found ways to mitigate the impact of these prayers. Moreover, even if we grant that they were likely to have withdrawn from the community, it is not clear that such withdrawal would be best described as an expulsion. A voluntary withdrawal from a community the practices of which one cannot give moral assent is not the same as involuntary exclusion. The textual fact remains that the Talmudic passages with respect to the *Birkat ha-Minim* do not speak of expulsion from the synagogue or the Jewish community.

contain references to expulsions but make no mention of a benediction. The association between the *Birkat ha-Minim* and the *aposynagōgos* passages begins to look increasingly tenuous. No matter how tenuous, however, Martyn's scenario came rapidly to dominate the study of John's Gospel, such that Adele Reinhartz has identified Martyn's work as foundational for the thinking of an entire generation of Johannine scholars.⁷⁷

Due to the various difficulties enumerated above, Raymond E. Brown and Günther Stemberger writing in the 1970s, David Rensberger in the 80s, and John Ashton and Stephen G. Wilson in the 90s, began to register some doubt regarding whether or not the *Birkat ha-Minim* was the efficient cause of the Johannine community's expulsion.⁷⁸ Nonetheless, all agree that the *aposynagōgos* passages describe the expulsion of Christians from synagogues sometime subsequent to c. 80. As such, their respective interpretations of the *aposynagōgos* passages can nonetheless be defined as classic Martynian. Indeed, Brown so fully adopted and actively promoted the classic Martynian scenario that it is sometimes referred to as the "Martyn-Brown hypothesis."⁷⁹ Moreover, these misgivings have been eschewed in more recent classic Martynian scholarship, as represented here by Anderson, Richey, Heemstra and Marcus.

2.2.1.3 *Recent Classic Martynian Scholarship*

The classic Martynian interpretation is still held widely among Johannine scholars. In *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus*, Paul N. Anderson, one of the co-chairs of the Society of Biblical Literature's John, Jesus, and History Group, argues at length that John's Gospel contains more historically reliable data of relevance to reconstructing Jesus' life than scholars frequently suppose. Argues Anderson,

⁷⁷ Adele Reinhartz, "Reading History in the Fourth Gospel," in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning* (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 191–194, here p. 191. Cf. J. Louis Martyn, "The Johannine Community Among Jewish and Other Early Christian Communities," in Thatcher, *What We Have Heard*, 183–190, for his reflections upon Bultmann's influence on his thinking.

⁷⁸ Cf. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*; Brown, *Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 22; David Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988), 25–26; Claudia Setzer, *Jewish Responses to Early Christians: History and Polemics, 30–150 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994); Günther Stemberger, "Die sogenannte 'Synode von Jabne' und das frühhe Christentum," *Kairos* (1977): 14–21; Tepler, *Birkat HaMinim*, 353–355; Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70–170 C.E.* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 176–183.

⁷⁹ Cf. Warren Carter, review of Lance Byron Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John*, *Review of Biblical Literature* (2008).

as J. Louis Martyn and others have shown, John 9 becomes something of a historical representation of the situation involving Johannine Christians engaged in a set of dialectical relationships with their Jewish family and friends, and the three passages reflecting Synagogue [*sic*] expulsion “then and now” (Jn 9:22; 12:42; 16:2) undoubtedly reflect real tensions in the middle period of the history of the Johannine situation (esp. 70–85 CE). What cannot be said, however, is that the “then” level of the history never existed, or that *einmalig* narration (“once upon a time . . .”) discounts a narrative’s historical origins. Jesus indeed was killed in Jerusalem, and several waves of Jewish persecution of the Jesus movement are reported in Acts, including the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7) and Saul’s actions before his conversion and name changes in Acts 9.⁸⁰

Although Anderson allows that the *aposynagōgos* passages might contain reliable data regarding Jesus’ life, he maintains the two-level reading; thus does he continue to read these passages as evidence for expulsions experienced by the Johannine community in the last third of the first century. Moreover, elsewhere he explicitly links the expulsion with the *Birkat ha-Minim*.⁸¹ Certainly, Anderson presents a more nuanced argument than previous scholarship, such as that represented by Martyn and Brown, in which he suggests that its promulgation at Yavneh might have been codifying pre-existing expulsionary practices that had been suffered by, among others, certain members of the Johannine community.⁸² Yet, Anderson gives the reader little reason to think that the association between the *Birkat ha-Minim* and the *aposynagōgos* passages is controversial, and thus his work on the matter fits into the classic Martynian tradition.

In his 2005 study of *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John*, Lance Byron Richey presupposes the classic Martynian scenario, and argues for a link between the *Birkat ha-Minim*, the *aposynagōgos* passages, and conflict between the Johannine community and the Roman imperial authorities.⁸³ Richey argues that, once the Jewish members of the Johannine community were expelled from the synagogue via the *Birkat ha-Minim*, they no longer had the special privileges that had previously exempted them from participation in the imperial cult.⁸⁴ Richey acknowledges and responds to critiques of the classic Martynian tradition only in a long footnote in the first chapter.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel*, 167.

⁸¹ Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel*, 34, 65, 197.

⁸² Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel*, 34, 65.

⁸³ Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology*, 51–64.

⁸⁴ Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology*, 51–64.

⁸⁵ Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology*, 7 n. 19.

Even though Richey describes what this study calls the classic Martynian tradition as “the *recent* theories of Raymond E. Brown and J. Louis Martyn concerning the history and development of the Johannine community,”⁸⁶ Warren Carter identifies in Richey’s study a “neglect of recent trends in Johannine studies,”⁸⁷ not least a failure to even mention the debates about the very validity of community criticism that Richard Bauckham initiated with his edited volume, *The Gospels for All Christians*.

Whilst Anderson and Richey provide little hint that the classic Martynian reading of the *Birkat ha-Minim* might be controversial, Joel Marcus’s 2009 article, “*Birkat Ha-Minim Revisited*” responds to the challenges raised by, *inter alia*, Kimelman and Katz. Marcus argues that these challenges notwithstanding, the classic Martynian scenario remains the most cogent reading of both the *Birkat ha-Minim* and the *apostynagōgos* passages. As discussed above, he argues further that the *Birkat ha-Minim* was not formulated but rather reformulated at Yavneh. Apart from this novel interpretation of the *Birkat ha-Minim*’s origin, Marcus’s study is effectively a doctrinaire classic Martynian response to critics of that tradition.

Although Marius Heemstra’s *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways* is concerned primarily with the Jewish tax, the penultimate chapter is devoted to “[t]he issue of Jewish identity: *fiscus Judaicus*, *birkat ha-minim* and the Gospel of John.”⁸⁸ Much like Richey, Heemstra assumes that the expulsion from the synagogue is inextricably linked to Roman definitions of Jewishness. Heemstra argues that the *fiscus Judaicus* “resulted in a specific interest in classifying and defining heretical movements as perceived by mainstream Judaism, partly in contrast to the definition of ‘Jew’ that the Romans were using. The traditional link between the origins of the *birkat ha-minim*, Yavneh, and Gamaliel II, could thus be supported by these specific historical circumstances under Domitian.”⁸⁹

According to Heemstra, what he describes as “mainstream” Judaism (a term he uses prolifically to describe rabbinic Judaism as represented by the Talmudic literature) produced the *Birkat ha-Minim* as part of an effort to define Jewishness and Judaism over and against Domitian’s own definition, and that John 9:22 and 12:42 reflect the experiences of Jewish Christians thus excluded.⁹⁰ Regarding 16:2, Heemstra argues that when

⁸⁶ Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology*, xv. Emphasis mine.

⁸⁷ Carter, review of Richey.

⁸⁸ Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*, 159–189.

⁸⁹ Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*, 174.

⁹⁰ Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*, 160–174, 176–187.

Nerva succeeded Domitian in 96, “Jewish Christians (and apostate Jews) were now officially exempted from the tax, but also lost their legal status as ‘Jews’ within the empire,”⁹¹ and thus “‘the expulsion from the synagogue’ was felt to be the first and necessary step to a setting in which Jewish Christians could be executed for their beliefs.”⁹²

Thus we see both senior and more junior scholars adopting and defending the basic suppositions of the classic Martynian tradition, complete with its treatment of the *Birkat ha-Minim*. It is evident that the classic Martynian tradition is still current, even if it is not as close to a consensus position as it might have once been. Yet, the collective misgivings about the *Birkat ha-Minim* that did emerge among classic Martynian scholars intimate the emergence of what this study characterizes as the neo-Martynian tradition. The paradigm has been forced to shift as scholars have found themselves unable to reconcile it with certain key pieces of data. The neo-Martynian tradition should be seen as a symptom of this shift, even if a further shift might be necessary.

2.2.2 *Allegory and the Turn to Identity: The Neo-Martynian Tradition*

Critical response to the classic Martynian tradition has led to the development of what is here described as a neo-Martynian tradition, which is defined as an interpretation of John’s Gospel that on the one hand rejects the classic Martynian construal of the *Birkat ha-Minim* and its relationship to the *aposynagōgos* passages, but on the other hand continues to labour under the two-level hermeneutics developed by Martyn. The basic working hypothesis of the neo-Martynian tradition is perhaps summed up best by Kimelman’s statement that “[i]t is possible that the whole charge [that synagogues were expelling Christians] was concocted to persuade Christians to stay away from the synagogue by making them believe that they would be received with hostility.”⁹³ Kimelman here formulates a turn to identity that is characteristic of the neo-Martynian tradition as a whole.

Exemplary of the neo-Martynian tradition in this regard is Raimo Hakola and Adele Reinhartz’s 2007 article on “John’s Pharisees,”⁹⁴ wherein the authors argue that we should “see in John’s portrayal of the Jews and

⁹¹ Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*, 175.

⁹² Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*, 187.

⁹³ Kimelman, “*Birkat Ha-Minim*,” 234–235.

⁹⁴ Raimo Hakola and Adele Reinhartz, “John’s Pharisees,” in *In Quest of the Historical Pharisees* (ed. Jacob Neusner and Bruce D. Chilton; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 131–147.

Jewishness a more prolonged and gradual process of separation from what was regarded as distinctive to Jewishness than a traumatic expulsion from the synagogue.”⁹⁵ This statement supposes the two major propositions of the neo-Martynian tradition: first, in agreement with the classic Martynian tradition, that the Gospel of John tells at least two stories, one of which is that of the Johannine community; second, against the classic Martynian tradition, that the community story does not include the actual expulsion of Johannine Christians from the late first-century synagogue.

Hakola and Reinhartz advocate what they call “The Social Identity Approach,” one which “views stereotyping as being closely connected to social categorization, which in turn, is a fundamental aspect of social behavior.”⁹⁶ “Because categorization tends to amplify similarities within groups and differences between groups, it helps to define groups as distinct entities.”⁹⁷ The *aposynagōgos* passages are thus about giving “entitativity” to both the Johannine community and its Jewish interlocutors.⁹⁸

Seeking a place for the *aposynagōgos* passage within what Reinhartz has termed the “ecclesiological” (i.e. the “community”) tale,⁹⁹ Hakola and Reinhartz suggest that “John’s extreme and stereotyped portrayal of the Pharisees reflects the process of early Christian self-understanding rather than the real-life policy of the Pharisees or the early rabbis.”¹⁰⁰ Reinhartz sums up this position elsewhere,

[i]f we place ourselves in the position of the implied audience of the Gospel, and if we listen with the ears of an implied group or community, what messages might we hear? . . . [W]e might hear in the Fourth Gospel a story not of our *historical* experience but of our *emotional* experience. Although our current separation from the synagogue may have resulted from forcible expulsion or from more subtle modes of exclusion, it may also have come about through our own sense that the “synagogue,” which as an entity did not embrace Jesus as messiah, was no longer the appropriate community and liturgical context for our own developing identity that takes faith in Jesus as its center point. Strong feelings of exclusion do not only arise only or necessarily from overt acts of exclusion or persecution.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Hakola and Reinhartz, “John’s Pharisees,” 143.

⁹⁶ Hakola and Reinhartz, “John’s Pharisees,” 144.

⁹⁷ Hakola and Reinhartz, “John’s Pharisees,” 144.

⁹⁸ Hakola and Reinhartz, “John’s Pharisees,” 144–147.

⁹⁹ Cf. Adele Reinhartz, *The Word in the World: The Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1992), 1–15.

¹⁰⁰ Hakola and Reinhartz, “John’s Pharisees,” 147.

¹⁰¹ Reinhartz, “Reading History,” 193.

The recurrent use of the word “might” hints at the difficulty with this imagined scenario, which is remarkably similar to that advanced by Warren Carter, in his 2008 monograph on *John and Empire*.¹⁰² Like Hakola and Reinhartz, Carter holds that the *aposynagōgos* passages “do not reflect a separation that has already occurred.”¹⁰³ Instead, “these three references to synagogue expulsion exist in the narrative as texts consequential rather than descriptive, as performative rather than reflective.”¹⁰⁴ According to Carter, then, the *aposynagōgos* passages were meant as cause rather than effect of a separation from the synagogue, and the impetus for this separation came from John and like-minded Christians. Carter’s reading of the *aposynagōgos* passages is thus virtually identical to those of Kimelman, Hakola, and Reinhartz.

The neo-Martynian tradition is well-justified in judging the *Birkat ha-Minim* of dubious relevance to the *aposynagōgos* passages. Yet, by insisting upon a place for the *aposynagōgos* passages within a hermeneutically Martynian two-level strategy, the neo-Martynian tradition must read more against the grain than does even the classic Martynian, for at least the latter recognizes what seems clearly the intended sense of John’s Gospel, namely that the *aposynagōgos* passages claim to report actual historical events. Thus, the neo-Martynian tradition is both stronger and weaker than the classic Martynian tradition: stronger in terms of how it handles the data extrinsic to biblical text, but weaker in terms of how it handles the data intrinsic to the text.

Although the post-Martynian reading developed in this study agrees with the neo-Martynian tradition’s negative judgment regarding not only the relevance of the *Birkat ha-Minim* and the more basic idea that the *aposynagōgos* passages provide evidence for an expulsion of Johannine Christians in the late first century, it argues against the neo-Martynian tradition for a more radical break from the classic Martynian tradition than disagreement regarding the treatment of the *Birkat ha-Minim* and Martyn’s late first-century expulsion scenario. A hermeneutical break is also required, in which John’s Gospel is read on one level, i.e. as Reinhartz’s “story of Jesus, set within the context of the story of the cosmos.” In the next section, we begin to develop the post-Martynian alternative

¹⁰² Warren Carter, *John and Empire: Initial Explorations* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008).

¹⁰³ Carter, *John and Empire*, 26.

¹⁰⁴ Carter, *John and Empire*, 26.

alternative more fully, with special attention to contemporary synagogue studies.

2.3 HISTORY AND IDENTITY WITHOUT ALLEGORY: A POST-MARTYNIAN ALTERNATIVE

Contemporary synagogue scholarship has advanced significantly over the past three decades. Particularly demonstrative of these advances is that Lee I. Levine's magisterial monograph, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, first published in 2000,¹⁰⁵ was re-issued in a second edition only five years later,¹⁰⁶ in order to incorporate the significant scholarly output over that single half-decade. Of this second edition, Levine writes,

Yale University Press has graciously agreed to republish *The Ancient Synagogue* in a revised, paperback edition. Such a revision has become a desideratum owing to the deluge of synagogue-related material that has been published since the submission of my original manuscript to the Press in 1998. Over the past six years, studies addressing every conceivable aspect of the synagogue have appeared, ranging from excavation reports and monographs to articles in edited volumes and a plethora of journals. Thus, updating the volume is appropriate.¹⁰⁷

In the face of this deluge, currently working classic and neo-Martynian scholars are collectively and significantly vulnerable on their engagement (or lack thereof) with contemporary synagogue scholarship. For instance, despite a chapter entitled "Synagogues, Jesus-Believers, and Rome's Empire"¹⁰⁸ in *John and Empire*, Carter makes almost no reference to recent and current synagogue scholarship. Indeed, his most recent citation from Levine—who might legitimately be described as the "dean" of contemporary synagogue studies—is a 1998 article,¹⁰⁹ which pre-dates and is indeed largely incorporated into the first edition of *The Ancient Synagogue*, which by the publication of *John and Empire* in 2008 had itself been superseded

¹⁰⁵ Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2000).

¹⁰⁶ Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (2nd ed.; New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005). Unless stated otherwise, all citations abbreviated Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, are from the second edition.

¹⁰⁷ Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, ix.

¹⁰⁸ Carter, *John and Empire*, 19–51.

¹⁰⁹ Lee I. Levine, "Synagogue Leadership: The Case of the *Archisynagōgoi*," in *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World* (ed. Martin Goodman; Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 195–213.

by a second edition. In a 2011 publication, “Matthew: Empire, Synagogues, and Horizontal Violence,” Carter cites synagogue scholarship from as recent as 1999, specifically, Donald Binder’s *Into the Temple Courts*.¹¹⁰ The failure to engage with synagogue studies more recent than 1999 is surprising, as Carter’s 2011 study appears in a volume co-edited by Anders Runesson, who has contributed significantly to the study of synagogue origins and institutional form, and has in addition written on the relationship of synagogues to empire as well as the Gospel of Matthew.¹¹¹ Moreover, Binder and Runesson have co-edited, with Birger Olsson, a 2008 sourcebook for synagogue studies.¹¹² Even though Carter demonstrably knows of the major scholars in Second Temple synagogue research, he engages little with their scholarly output.

To Carter’s credit, though, he does engage with recent synagogue research more fully than perhaps any other scholar currently working within the Martynian tradition. For instance, consider Marcus’s already cited dismissal of “radical skepticism about the existence of synagogues, their use for worship, and the importance of the rabbis.”¹¹³ As already noted, Marcus fails to cite a single example of such radical skepticism, and thus fails to engage substantively with not only contemporary rabbinic but also contemporary synagogue scholarship. Such failure to engage with synagogue scholarship seems almost programmatic to the classic and neo-Martynian traditions. This failure constitutes a major lacuna, for as we might expect, and will see throughout the next section, synagogue scholarship is very much relevant to our understanding of the *aposynagōgos* passages. Indeed, one wonders how it could be otherwise. In the next section, then, we consider the current state of synagogue scholarship, and how it might relate to the matter of these passages.

¹¹⁰ Warren Carter, “Matthew: Empire, Synagogues, and Horizontal Violence,” in *Mark and Matthew I* (ed. Eve-Marie Becker and Anders Runesson; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 285–308, esp. p. 291, n. 22. Cf. Donald D. Binder, *Into the Temple Courts: The Place of the Synagogues in the Second Temple Period* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1999).

¹¹¹ Anders Runesson, *Origins of the Synagogue: A Socio-Historical Study* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 2001); Anders Runesson, “Persian Imperial Politics, the Beginnings of Public Torah Readings, and the Origins of the Synagogue,” in *The Ancient Synagogue from its Origins until 200 C.E.* (ed. Birger Olsson and Magnus Zetterholm; Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 2003), 63–89; Anders Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127/1 (2008): 95–132.

¹¹² Anders Runesson, Donald D. Binder, and Birger Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue from its Origins Until 200 C.E.: A Sourcebook* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 7–9.

¹¹³ Marcus, “*Birkat ha-Minim*,” 530.

2.3.1 *The Aposynagōgos Passages in Light of Contemporary Synagogue Studies*

Runesson, Binder and Olsson, in the introduction to their *The Ancient Synagogue from its Origins to 200 C.E.: A Sourcebook*,¹¹⁴ suggest that recent advances in our understanding of the ancient synagogue may be categorized according to four broad aspects: spatial aspects, such as architecture, art and iconography;¹¹⁵ liturgical aspects, such as Torah reading, prayers, feasts and fasts, and other, less obvious concerns, such as magic and mysticism, as these relate to the synagogue;¹¹⁶ non-liturgical (or social) aspects,

¹¹⁴ Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 7–9, following Runesson, *Origins*, 28–37.

¹¹⁵ Following Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 7–9, studies since 1990 which have contributed to the study of the spatial aspect include: Binder, *Into the Temple Courts*; Stephen K. Catto, *Reconstructing the First Century Synagogue: A Critical Analysis of Current Research* (London: T&T Clark, 2007); Steven Fine, *This Holy Place: On the Sanctity of the Synagogue during the Greco-Roman Period* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997); Gideon Foerster, “The Ancient Synagogues of the Galilee,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity* (ed. Lee I. Levine; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 289–319; Joseph Gutmann, “Ancient Synagogues: Archaeological Facts and Scholarly Assumption,” *Bulletin of Asia Institute* 9 (1997): 226–227; Rachel Hachlili, *Ancient Jewish Art and Archaeology in the Diaspora* (Leiden: Brill, 1998); John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, “Dating Theodotos (CIJ II 1404),” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 51:2 (2000): 243–280; Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*; Jodi Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Zvi Uri Ma’oz, “Synagogue at Capernaum: A Radical Solution,” in *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research* (ed. J.H. Humphrey; Portsmouth, R.I.: Journal of Roman Archaeology, 1999), 137–148; Eric M. Meyers, “The Torah Shrine in the Ancient Synagogue: Another Look at the Evidence,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 4 (1997): 303–338; Ehud Netzer, “A Synagogue from the Hasmonean Period Recently Exposed in the Western Plain of Jericho,” *Israel Exploration Journal* 49 (1999): 203–221; Peter Richardson, *Building Jewish in the Roman East* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2004); Runesson, *Origins*; Leonard Victor Rutgers, “Diaspora Synagogues: Synagogue Archaeology in the Greco-Roman World,” in *Sacred Realm: The Emergence of the Synagogue in the Ancient World* (ed. Steven Fine; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 67–94; James F. Strange, “The First Century CE Synagogue in Historical Perspective,” in *The Ancient Synagogue: From its Origin Until 200 C.E.: Papers Presented at an International Conference at Lund University, October 14–17, 2001* (ed. Birger Olsson and Magnus Zetterholm; Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 2003), 37–62; Monika Trümper, “The Oldest Original Synagogue Building in the Diaspora: The Delos Synagogue Reconsidered,” *Hesperia* 73 (2004): 513–598; L. Michael White, *The Social Origins of Christian Architecture* (2 vols.; Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1996–1997).

¹¹⁶ Following Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 7–9, studies since 1990 which have contributed to the study of the liturgical aspect include: Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman, eds., *The Making of Jewish and Christian Worship* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991); Esther G. Chazon, ed., *Prayer and Poetry in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Related Literature, 19–23 January, 2000* (Leiden: Brill, 2003); Ismar Elbogen, *Jewish Liturgy: A Comprehensive History* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1993); Daniel K. Falk, *Daily, Sabbath, and Festival Prayers*

such as the use of synagogues as council halls, law courts, schools, treasures and public archives;¹¹⁷ and institutional aspects, such as leadership and operations.¹¹⁸ Martynian discussions of the *aposynagōgos* passages have tended to focus upon the liturgical aspects (the classic Martynian defending and the neo-Martynian contesting the association with the *Birkat ha-Minim*) as well as the institutional (each assuming that the *aposynagōgos* passages must, if they have any historical validity at all, report formal synagogue proceedings).

The post-Martynian alternative developed in this study will articulate positions on all four of these aspects, although not in a schematic fashion. Regarding the spatial aspect, it will be argued that it was specifically the public assembly in Jerusalem from which certain people feared being made *aposynagōgoi*. Regarding the liturgical aspect, it agrees with the neo-Martynian tradition that there is no relationship between the *aposynagōgos* passages and the *Birkat ha-Minim*, and indeed that these passages have nothing to do with the liturgical functions of the ancient synagogue. Regarding the non-liturgical aspect, against the Martynian tradition as a whole, it will be argued that certain individuals were, already during Jesus' lifetime, afraid of being made *aposynagōgoi*, for being made so would exclude them from the vital social functions carried out within

in the Dead Sea Scrolls (Leiden: Brill, 1998); Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*; Daniel K. Falk, Florentino García Martínez, and Eileen Schuller, eds., *Sapiential, Liturgical and Poetical Texts from Qumran: Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Oslo, 1998* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Heather A. McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue: The Question of Sabbath Worship in Ancient Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1994); Runesson, *Origins*; Runesson, "Persian Imperial Politics"; Pieter van der Horst, "Was the Ancient Synagogue a Place of Sabbath Worship?", in *Jews, Christians and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue* (ed. Steven Fine; London: Routledge, 1999), 8–43.

¹¹⁷ Following Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 7–9, studies since 1990 which have contributed to the study of the non-liturgical aspect include: Binder, *Into the Temple Courts*; Philip A. Harland, *Associations, Synagogues and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); Richard A. Horsley, "Synagogues in Galilee and the Gospels," in *Evolution of the Synagogue: Problems and Progress* (ed. Howard Clark Kee and Lynn H. Cohick; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1999), 46–69; Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*.

¹¹⁸ Following Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 7–9, studies since 1990 which have contributed to the study of the institutional aspect include: Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*; John S. Kloppenborg, "Collegia and Thiasoi: Issues in Function, Taxonomy and Membership," in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson; London: Routledge, 1996), 16–30; Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*; Peter Richardson, "Early Synagogues as Collegia in the Diaspora and Palestine," in *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (ed. John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson; London: Routledge, 1996), 90–109; Runesson, *Origins*.

a municipal institution, namely the public assembly of Jerusalem. Regarding the institutional aspect, it will be argued that the *apostynagōgos* passages report upon non-formal actions undertaken by an *ad hoc* coalition of certain Pharisees and priests.

The immediate point of departure will be an inquiry into the form(s) of the ancient synagogue. It is surprising, really, that more scholarly work on the ancient synagogue does not pause to first consider the question, “What was a synagogue in the first-century?” Yet, this is necessary, not least of all because it has been questioned whether we should think properly of the ancient synagogue as a building, an assembly (or congregation), or both. Howard Clark Kee, for instance, has argued that, at least prior to 70 CE, synagogues were not purpose-built buildings, and that moreover the word *συναγωγή* referred properly to the people who assembled rather than the place of assembly.¹¹⁹ On this, he has been followed by scholars such as Carsten Claußen, Richard Horsley, Heather McKay, and L. Michael White.¹²⁰ At the very least, we need to establish whether, when we discuss first-century synagogues, we are properly discussing buildings, assemblies, or both.

¹¹⁹ Cf. Howard Clark Kee, “Defining the First century CE. Synagogue: Problems and Progress,” in *Evolution of the Synagogue* (ed. Howard Clark Kee and Lynn H. Cohick; Harrisburg, Penn.: Trinity Press, 1999), 7–26. For secondary literature responding specifically to Kee, cf. Kenneth Atkinson, “On Further Defining the First century CE. Synagogue: Fact or Fiction? A Rejoinder to H.C. Kee,” *New Testament Studies* 43 (1997): 491–502; Binder, *Temple Courts*, 13–18, 92–111; Catto, *Reconstructing the First century Synagogue*, *passim*; Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 47–48; Richard E. Oster, “Supposed Anachronism in Luke-Acts’ Use of ΣΥΝΑΓΩΓΗ: A Response to H.C. Kee,” *New Testament Studies* 39 (1993): 178–208.

¹²⁰ Carsten Claußen, *Versammlung, Gemeinde, Synagoge: Das hellenistisch-jüdische Umfeld der frühchristlichen Gemeinden* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2002); Carsten Claußen, “Meeting, Community, Synagogue—Different Frameworks of Ancient Jewish Congregations in the Diaspora,” in *The Ancient Synagogue: From its Origins until 200 C.E.* (ed. Birger Olsson and Magnus Zetterholm; Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell, 2003), 144–167; Richard A. Horsley, *Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1996), 222–237; McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue*; L. Michael White, “Reading the Ostia Synagogue: A Reply to A. Runesson,” *Harvard Theological Review* 92 (1992): 435–464; White, *Social Origins*; L. Michael White, “Synagogue and Society in Imperial Ostia: Archaeology and Epigraphic Evidence,” *Harvard Theological Review* 90 (1997): 23–58. Note that White, “Reading,” is a response to Anders Runesson, “The Oldest Original Synagogue Building in the Diaspora: A Response to L. Michael White,” *Harvard Theological Review* 92 (1999): 409–433. Of course, the scholars cited above do not necessarily agree on all matters related to the first-century synagogue. Whereas Kee, for instance, argues that the assemblies were informal and generally apolitical, Horsley argues that they had a significant political role in Judea. Such matters regarding the nature of the assemblies, however, are incidental to the specific question addressed at the moment, which is namely to what extent we can talk about synagogue *buildings* in the first-century.

Josephus, in *J.W.* 2.289 and *Ant.* 14. 259–261, 19.300–305, and Philo, in *Flaccus*, 48, each refer at times to one or more pre-70 synagogues in such a way that they must have had buildings in mind. Thus, Kee himself has conceded that “[i]n the first half of the first of the first century CE, Philo does use the term for places where the Jews gather to study the scriptures (‘places called synagogues’).”¹²¹ Moreover, for the purposes of the present discussion, it matters little whether these spaces were purpose-built structures or not, and thus it is sufficient to recognize that συναγωγή and cognate terms can refer to buildings of some sort. Yet, the word might also, at times, refer clearly to the people who assembled in such buildings. Thus, we probably ought to follow Catto, who suggests that that the term συναγωγή carried a multivalence similar to that of English “church,” in that it could refer not only to a space but also to the people who gathered within that space.¹²²

Yet, how should we define this institution that we here call the synagogue? If, as Runesson, Binder, and Olsson suggest, any adequate definition of the ancient synagogue must take into account four aspects, namely the institutional, the liturgical, the non-liturgical, and the spatial,¹²³ then we must judge as inadequate such definitions as those advanced by Finkelstein or Schürer, which privilege the liturgical aspect (respectively, prayer and Torah reading),¹²⁴ or that advanced by Zeitlin, which privileges the non-liturgical.¹²⁵ These definitions are inadequate not because either the liturgical or non-liturgical aspects are irrelevant to the discussion of the ancient synagogue, but rather because, in the very act of privileging one such aspect, the scholar runs the risk of minimizing if not outright denying the significance of the other aspects.

Recent discussion regarding the form(s) of the ancient synagogue has clustered around the question of whether we should construe these in

¹²¹ Howard Clark Kee, “The Changing Meaning of the Synagogue: A Response to Richard Oster,” *New Testament Studies* 40 (1994): 281–283. Cf. discussion of Kee’s concession in Catto, *Reconstructing the First century Synagogue*, 26–27.

¹²² Catto, *First Century Synagogue*, 162.

¹²³ Cf. the discussion above.

¹²⁴ Runesson, *Origins*, 30–31. Cf. Louis Finkelstein, “The Origin of the Synagogue,” in *The Synagogue: Studies in Origins, Archaeology, and Architecture* (ed. Joseph Gutman; New York: Ktav), 3–13; Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)* (ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black; 2 vols.; rev. ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1973–1986), 2:245.

¹²⁵ Solomon Zeitlin, “The Origin of the Synagogue: A Study in the Development of Jewish Institutions,” in *The Synagogue: Studies in Origins, Archaeology, and Architecture* (ed. Joseph Gutman; New York: Ktav, 1975), 14–26.

terms of a Graeco-Roman voluntary association, or alternatively a municipal, public institution.¹²⁶ Perhaps the single most significant contribution to the former position is the volume edited by John S. Kloppenborg and Stephen G. Wilson,¹²⁷ with Peter Richardson's contribution of particular relevance to the present discussion.¹²⁸ Richardson argues that the ancient synagogue is best defined as the Jewish form of the ancient Graeco-Roman association.¹²⁹ Philip Harland, in a dissertation supervised by Kloppenborg, subsequently presented a five-fold schema by which to distinguish among associations, using as a primary criterion the major social connections that unite their members, whether these are household connections, ethnic/geographic connections, neighbourhood/locational connections, occupational connections, or cult/temple connections.¹³⁰ Harland, following and elaborating the perspective on the synagogue developed by Kloppenborg and Richardson, identifies the Jewish synagogue as a Jewish cultic association.¹³¹

Lee I. Levine has emerged as highly critical of the idea that the synagogue is best defined as a Jewish voluntary association.¹³² Rather than define the ancient synagogue as either association or temple, he suggests that we understand the ancient synagogue as a Jewish municipal centre, in which not only religious and cultic but also various other civic and

¹²⁶ An alternative view, advocated by Paul Virgil McCracken Flesher, "Prolegomenon to a Theory of Early Synagogue Development," in *Judaism in Late Antiquity* Vol. 4 (ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck and Jacob Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 121–153, *viz.* that the synagogue is best understood as a Jewish equivalent to a Graeco-Roman temple, has found little support in the contemporary discussions. Ancient Judaism did have an institution properly analogous to Greek and Roman temples, namely the Jerusalem temple. Insofar as the Jerusalem temple is analogous to Greek temples, and insofar as Jewish synagogues are to distinguished from the Jerusalem temple, the analogy between Jewish synagogue and Greek temples is less than compelling.

¹²⁷ John S. Kloppenborg, and Stephen G. Wilson, eds., *Voluntary Associations in the Graeco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 1996). Cf. now also Richard S. Ascough, Philip A. Harland, and John S. Kloppenborg, *Associations in the Greco-Roman World: A Sourcebook* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2012), which treats synagogue inscriptions as data on the voluntary association.

¹²⁸ Peter Richardson, "Early Synagogues as *Collegia*." Cf. Richardson, *Building Jewish*, 111–133, 207–221.

¹²⁹ Cf. also Kloppenborg's own contribution to this volume: Kloppenborg, "*Collegia* and *Thiasoi*."

¹³⁰ Harland, *Associations*, 28–53.

¹³¹ Although Harland seems to make little distinction between synagogues in the land of Israel on the one hand and synagogues in the Diaspora on the other, his focus is very much upon, and most of his data drawn from, the latter.

¹³² Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue*, 130–134.

political activities took place.¹³³ Levine's synagogue can be perhaps best summarized as "a community center with a religious component," or perhaps as a sort of town hall with Torah.¹³⁴

The association versus municipal debate seems predicated upon a false premise, namely, that there can be only one "model" that adequately describes the ancient synagogue, and that all ancient synagogues will be described adequately once that model is found. Levine intimates that this premise is false, when he argues that "[t]here is little to be gained in arguing whether the synagogue originated in Judaea or the Diaspora. In fact, the institution evolved in both places more or less simultaneously, under varying circumstances and for very different reasons."¹³⁵ By drawing attention to the simultaneous evolution of the synagogue in both the land of Israel and the Diaspora, Levine opens the possibility that we can distinguish between an institutional form characteristic of the land of Israel on the one hand and an institutional form characteristic of the Diaspora on the other.

Embracing this possibility, and recognizing that Richardson, Kloppenborg, and Harland have made a strong case for the existence of association synagogues in the Diaspora, and also that Levine has made a strong case for the existence of municipal synagogues in the land of Israel, Runesson has offered a mediating solution, *viz.* that the ancient synagogue existed in two distinct forms, with two distinct origins, namely the public or municipal synagogue, which originated in the land of Israel, and, the association synagogue, which originated in the Diaspora.¹³⁶ Runesson's solution allows him to integrate into a coherent narrative Levine's understanding of the synagogue as municipal centre on the one hand, and Richardson, Kloppenborg, and Harland's understanding of the synagogue as voluntary association on the other.¹³⁷

¹³³ Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 130–134.

¹³⁴ Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 130–134.

¹³⁵ Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 4.

¹³⁶ Runesson, *Origins, passim*; Runesson, "Persian Imperial Politics." Runesson typically speaks of a public synagogue, which he describes as municipal. The present author will use the terms "public synagogue" and "municipal synagogue" interchangeably, although he does find the latter more precise. With reference specifically to Jerusalem's public synagogue, the term "public assembly" will typically be employed.

¹³⁷ Runesson's narrative also allows us to envision the association synagogue as a primary locus for the diversity of ancient Judaism. The association system allowed for discrete groups within a broader Judaism to form their own synagogues. On diversity in Judaism, cf. James D.G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (2nd ed.; London: SCM Press, 2006),

As articulated by Runesson, the key distinction between the municipal and the association synagogue is that the former had official administrative status, whereas the latter did not. The municipal synagogue functioned formally as part of the state apparatus, whereas the association synagogue, as a voluntary association, did not. Focusing upon the matter of administrative status, Runesson can ask whether the municipal synagogue ever spread to the Diaspora, or the association synagogue to the land of Israel.¹³⁸ Whereas Runesson concludes that the municipal synagogue never spread beyond Israel, for the simple reason that outside of Judea the Jewish people did not have control over city administration, he argues that, “[t]owards the end of the third century BCE, we find evidence of the first non-official institutions [in the land of Israel] concerned with the teaching of Torah. . . . These non-official semi-public assemblies are to be defined as denominations and, as witnessed by the later Qumran community, sects.”¹³⁹ Israel never exported the municipal synagogue, but it did import the association synagogue.

The following table summarizes Runesson’s terminology for the various institutional forms of the ancient synagogue as distinguished by the geography of institution on the one hand and administrative status on the other.

Administrative status	Geography of institution	
	Land of Israel	Diaspora
Official	Municipal (i.e. Public) Synagogue	N/A
Non-official	Association Synagogue	Association Synagogue

24–48; Martin Hengel and Roland Deines, “E.P. Sanders’ ‘Common Judaism,’ Jesus, and the Pharisees,” *Journal of Theological Studies* 46 (1995): 1–70; Stuart S. Miller, *Sages and Commoners in Late Antique Erez Israel: A Philological Inquiry into Local Traditions in Talmud Yerushalmi* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 21–28; Jacob Neusner, *Three Questions of Formative Judaism: History, Literature, and Religion* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 2–8; Anders Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127/1 (2008): 95–132; E.P. Sanders, “The Dead Sea Sect and Other Jews: Commonalities, Overlaps and Differences,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in their Historical Context* (ed. Timothy H. Lim; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 7–43; E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM Press, 1991); Morton Smith, “Palestinian Judaism in the First Century,” in *Israel: Its Role in Civilization* (ed. Moshe Davis; New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1956), 67–81.

¹³⁸ Runesson, *Origins*, 237–476.

¹³⁹ Runesson, *Origins*, 398.

This “dual institution” understanding of the synagogue will be supposed as we develop the post-Martynian argument within this study.

John 9:22 and 12:42 explicitly localize in and around Jerusalem the events during which people feared being made *aposynagōgos*. Given that this study has already given reason to scrupulously avoid the two-level reading strategy that might allow us to allegorically transform either Jerusalem into another locale, or c. 30 CE into the late first century, the Johannine text constrains the present author to state that, if there is any historicity to these passages, they refer to events that happened in and around Jerusalem, sometime circa 30 CE. As such, 9:22 and 12:42 could refer to either association or municipal synagogues. 16:2 is a slightly different matter, for, pointing towards the narrative future, it could refer to events that happened in a locale beyond Jerusalem. Yet, given that John’s Gospel typically displays little interest in events beyond the land of Israel, it is not unreasonable to think that John intends to refer to events within that land.¹⁴⁰

There is much to commend the hypothesis that the *aposynagōgos* passages refer to association synagogues. We know of at least one, probably several, possibly even hundreds, of association synagogues in Jerusalem,

¹⁴⁰ It is worth noting that Martyn does not specify the city in which he supposes Johannine community to be located, referring at various times simply to “John’s city.” Presumably, this is because, once he cut his narrative free from the constraints of the text, which relentlessly situate the described events in Israel, he would have no warrant to locate the events elsewhere. This is at least hermeneutically consistent use of the two-level strategy, and can be favourably compared to Carter, *John and Empire*, who insists upon locating in Ephesus both the Johannine community and the voluntary withdrawal that he sees attested in the *aposynagōgos* passages. Yet, Carter equivocates on the matter, stating that he is “not trying to prove this location, or even insisting that John was *written* here. Rather, it is sufficient to recognize that in all likelihood John was *read* in Ephesus. I am, then, interested in how John negotiates an imperial context such as that of Ephesus, capital city of the province of Asia” (Carter, *John and Empire*, ix). Yet, if the definitive matter for Carter’s procedure is who was reading the Gospel, and if “[i]t would be interesting . . . to undertake a similar project of reading John in Alexandria, another important imperial center” (Carter, *John and Empire*, ix), thus suggesting that a different hypothetical readership would yield a different interpretation of the text, then Carter cannot be committed primarily to determining the intended meaning of John’s Gospel. Yet, how can Carter be concerned with anything other than the intended meaning if he is investigating “how *John* negotiates an imperial context such as that of Ephesus” (italics added)? Carter’s equivocation, the present author suggests, is a direct result of the two-level strategy. Having abandoned the textual moorings that locate the narrative in the land of Israel, and the *aposynagōgos* passages more specifically in and around Jerusalem, Carter finds himself constructing a narrative without a place. Nonetheless desiring a place for his narrative, Carter turns, without any supporting argument, to the traditional place of John’s origin, namely Ephesus. Yet, desiring his narrative to speak to empire in general, he resists tying it specifically to that place.

prior to 70, and we also know that voluntary associations had legal mechanisms for excluding members from their ranks. Regarding the presence of association synagogues in Jerusalem, of signal importance is the data regarding the synagogue(s) of the Freedmen, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and those from Cilicia and Asia mentioned in Acts 6:9–10. Whether the passage refers to one synagogue or as many as five is a matter of some dispute,¹⁴¹ but regardless of the number, given that the synagogue(s) was (or were) designated by the ethnic and class background of its (or their) membership, Runesson, Binder, and Olsson are well justified in describing this synagogue or these synagogues as “reminiscent of the Graeco-Roman voluntary associations.”¹⁴²

Nearly as significant is the synagogue known from the Theodotos inscription.¹⁴³ According to the inscription, Theodotos’ synagogue was built in part to shelter those coming to Jerusalem from abroad. This suggests a connection with the Diaspora that should, like the synagogue(s) mentioned in Acts 6:9–10, incline us towards thinking of Theodotos’ synagogue in terms of an association rather than a municipal synagogue. Thus can we reasonably conclude that there were association synagogues in Jerusalem at that time.

These were potentially quite numerous. Various rabbinic texts refer to 400–500 synagogues in Jerusalem at this time. On this matter, Levine writes that “[t]hese numbers . . . appear to be highly exaggerated . . . What such traditions do evidence, however, is the assumption by later generations

¹⁴¹ Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 52–54, argues that there are five synagogues referenced, such that there is referenced a synagogue of the Freedmen, a synagogue of the Cyrenians, etc., whereas Barrett, *Acts*, 1:323, whilst recognizing this possibility, suggests that it more likely that Luke intends to reference but one. Given that συναγωγης is in the singular, it does indeed seem more likely the case that Luke is referring to but one synagogue. Nonetheless, Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *Ancient Synagogue*, 45, rightly suggest that “[w]hatever the final verdict on this question, Luke clearly believed that there were several synagogues in Jerusalem during Paul’s time (Acts 24:1; 26:9–11).”

¹⁴² Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *Ancient Synagogue*, 45.

¹⁴³ Cf. the discussion of the critical matters related to the Theodotos inscription, cf. Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *Ancient Synagogue*, 52–54. The most significant is the question of its date, and whilst Howard Clark Kee, “The Transformation of the Synagogue after 70 CE: Its Import for Early Christianity,” *New Testament Studies* 36 (1990): 1–24, argues that the inscription must date from the third century at the earliest, John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, “Dating Theodotos,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 51/2 (2000): 243–280; John S. Kloppenborg, “The Theodotos Synagogue Inscription and the Problem of First-Century Synagogue Buildings,” in *Jesus and Archaeology* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 236–282; and Rainer Riesner, “Synagogues in Jerusalem,” in *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting* (ed. Richard Bauckham; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1995), 179–211, esp. pp. 192–200, quite ably demonstrate that it very likely comes from the pre-70 period.

that late Second Temple Jerusalem abounded in such institutions.”¹⁴⁴ Whilst it is difficult to disagree with Levine’s reasoning regarding the suppositions of later generations, there is in fact very little data that would suggest that these numbers cannot represent a reasonable estimate of the number of synagogues that existed in or around Jerusalem at the time of Jesus’ life. The numbers might very well be exaggerated, but they also might not, and if these were association synagogues, many of which perhaps met in peoples’ homes or other informal locations, the number might actually be fairly accurate. Although one wonders how anyone could have carried out an accurate census of informal and unofficial association synagogues, nonetheless the rabbinic estimates do tend to confirm what we might otherwise suspect already, namely that there were a considerable number of association synagogues in late Second Temple Jerusalem.

Regarding the matter of legal means by which voluntary associations excluded members from their ranks, Harland has discussed some of these in relation to associations of *Iobacchoi* in Athens, who had a set of rules that included conditions under which members might be expelled.¹⁴⁵ More recently, Kloppenborg has argued for a connection between such rules and the *aposynagōgos* passages.¹⁴⁶ Kloppenborg considers the data relevant to what he calls “disaffiliation in associations,” and concludes that members of associations could be forcibly disaffiliated for engaging in disruptive behaviour, but not simply due to disputed doctrine, such as depicted in the *aposynagōgos* passages. Therefore, concludes Kloppenborg, the dispute could not have centred upon Jesus’ messianic identity, as the passages themselves indicate.

Thus does Kloppenborg argue: the *aposynagōgos* passages describe a situation like disaffiliation in voluntary associations; yet, the *aposynagōgos* passages describe a situation not exactly like disaffiliation in voluntary associations; therefore, the *aposynagōgos* passages do not accurately describe what happened when the Johannine Christians were expelled. The Johannine Christians, says Kloppenborg, were expelled for deviant behavior, and only subsequently came to explain this expulsion in terms of doctrinal dispute. This seems a textbook example of what Fischer

¹⁴⁴ Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 61. Cf. also the discussion in Stuart S. Miller, “On the Number of Synagogues in the Cities of ‘Erez Israel,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 49/1 (1998): 51–66.

¹⁴⁵ Harland, *Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations*, 75–76.

¹⁴⁶ John S. Kloppenborg, “Disaffiliation in Associations and the ἀποσυναγωγός of John,” *HTS Teologise Studies/Theological Studies* 61/1 (2011), article 962.

calls “the fallacy of the perfect analogy,” which “consists in reasoning from a partial resemblance between two entities to an entire and exact correspondence.”¹⁴⁷ If the events described in the *apostynagōgos* passages are sufficiently distinct from disaffiliation that one must suppose that John is inaccurately describing what happened, then perhaps it would be better simply to concede that the analogy is imperfect. Indeed, insofar as Kloppenborg emphasizes the differences between disaffiliation and what is reported in the *apostynagōgos* passages, precisely to that extent he calls into question whether these are in fact analogues in the first place.

As suggested already in the above discussion of Kloppenborg’s argument *vis-à-vis* disaffiliation, conceiving of the *apostynagōgos* passages in terms of association synagogues produces significant difficulties. In particular, why should either the blind man’s parents or the covertly believing rulers fear being put out of any particular association synagogue? If there were multiple association synagogues in any given city, as does seem to be the case, and if the parents were expelled from one, then could they not go to another? Given the degree of fear ascribed to these individuals, it seems more plausible that at stake was exclusion from a space central to and somehow unique in Jewish life within and around Jerusalem. One such space meets this criterion, namely the municipal institution that most likely assembled within the temple precincts.

Combined with this are the suggestions, replete throughout the Gospel tradition, that the movement that centred around Jesus was less sectarian than other movements during the Second Temple period, in the sense of being less separatist than, for instance, the Qumran community. Of particular interest in this regard is John 18:20, in which Jesus states that he spoke openly in the synagogues and the temple.¹⁴⁸ Combined with the Synoptic stories of Jesus teaching and reading publicly in Galilean synagogues (cf. Matt. 4:23, 13:54–58; Mark 1:21–28, 39, 6:1–6; Luke 4:16–30, 44), we have well-attested traditions that situate Jesus’ ministry and work in a more public setting. Moreover, each of the Synoptic Gospels records that Jesus experienced opposition in these public settings (cf. Matt. 13:57–58; Mark 6:3–6; Luke 4:24–30); indeed, Luke 4:29 tells us that the response in Nazareth to his synagogue teaching was so strong he was driven out

¹⁴⁷ Fischer, *Historians’ Fallacies*, 247.

¹⁴⁸ On John 18:20, with specific respect to synagogue studies, cf. Birger Olsson, “‘All my Teaching was Done in Synagogues’ (John 18:20),” in *Theology and Christology in the Fourth Gospel: Essays by the Members of the SNTS Johannine Writings Seminar* (ed. Gilbert van Belle, J.G. van der Watt, and P.J. Maritz; Leuven: Peeters, 2005), 203–224.

of the town. Although one should always be careful not to suppose too quickly that passages in different texts refer to same or similar events, these are nonetheless tantalizing parallels to the *aposynagōgos* passages. Most importantly for our purposes, these passages suggest that the clearest early memories of Jesus or his followers entering into conflict in synagogue settings occur within settings that Runesson would describe as municipal or public.

Levine has argued that what Runesson calls the public synagogue was the architectural and institutional successor to the city-gate,¹⁴⁹ which Tina Blomquist has demonstrated was a space for Israelite cultic activity as far back as Iron Age II,¹⁵⁰ and which Frick has shown had a crucial political and social role in Israelite urban life just as long.¹⁵¹ Levine is here building upon the work of earlier scholars, notably Löw, Silber, and Hoenig.¹⁵² Levine's major contribution in this regard is to move the discussion from a focus upon the liturgical to the non-liturgical aspects. He observes that many of the non-liturgical, social, and political functions later associated with the public synagogue were previously localized within and around the city-gates. Frick highlights the importance of the city-gate and its vicinity as a social space when he states that

[a]nother feature associated with the gate, at least in some larger cities, which made the gate a multi-functional structure, was the *rēḥōb*, which is defined [by Brown, Driver, Briggs, 932] as "a broad open place or plaza in a city (usually near the gate), for various private and public uses." In cities where there is little or no evidence of city planning, such as was often the case in the pre-Hellenistic city of Palestine, this *rēḥōb* was the only extensive free space in the otherwise highly congested city.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Lee I. Levine, "The Nature and Origin of the Palestinian Synagogue Reconsidered," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115/3 (1996): 425–448; Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 28–44. Note that the latter contribution is largely an updated version of the former.

¹⁵⁰ Tina Haettner Blomquist, *Gates and Gods: Cults in the City Gates of Iron Age Palestine. An Investigation of the Archaeological and Biblical Sources* (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1999), *passim*.

¹⁵¹ Frank S. Frick, *The City in Ancient Israel* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars Press, 1977), 83–84.

¹⁵² Sidney B. Hoenig, "The Ancient City-Square: The Fore-runner of the Synagogue," *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung* 19.1:448–476; Leopold Löw, "Der synagogale ritus," *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* 33 (1884): 97–114, 161–171, 215–224, 305–326, 364–374, 458–466; Mendel Silber, *The Origins of the Synagogue* (New Orleans: Steeg, 1915). For an assessment of this earlier scholarship, cf. Runesson, *Origins*, 87–97.

¹⁵³ Frick, *City in Ancient Israel*, 84.

As Blomquist has shown, the city-gate was also part of the city's religious life. Thus, we can perceive in the city-gate and its vicinity much the same connection between the liturgical and non-liturgical life of Israelite cities as one finds later in the municipal synagogue.

Levine argues that, during the Hellenistic period, these functions moved away from the city-gates, and toward civic centres. Binder builds upon Levine's argument, suggesting that, "during the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the Temple courts came to function as the main civic center of Jerusalem, adopting the role that had previously been held by the areas adjoining one or more of the city gates."¹⁵⁴ Levine further argues in favour of "[t]he scholarly consensus regarding the existence of a Jerusalem *polis*," or more precisely the idea that Jerusalem was organized municipally as a *polis*, and against the challenge to this consensus issued by no less weighty a scholar as Tcherikover.¹⁵⁵

Poleis typically included *ekklēsiai*, or popular assemblies of the citizen body. Samuel Rocca has suggested that the popular assembly of the Herodian period "continued performing the tasks and functions of the *megale ekklesia* ['Great Assembly'] mentioned in the *First Book of Maccabees* [5:16]."¹⁵⁶ This was presumably also the assembly before which was read the letter to the Spartans, according to 1 Macc. 14:19. In a slightly earlier period, Jesus Ben Sira indicates that one should be ashamed of *anomia* in front of the *synagōgē* (cf. Sirach 41:18).¹⁵⁷ The present author would

¹⁵⁴ Binder, *Into the Temple Courts*, 220.

¹⁵⁵ Lee I. Levine, *Jerusalem: Portrait of the City in the Second Temple Period (538 B.C.E.–70 C.E.)* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 266; cf. Victor Tcherikover, "Was Jerusalem a 'Polis'?", *Israel Exploration Journal* 14 (1964): 61–78. Tcherikover argued that Jerusalem does not display the diagnostic features of the ancient *polis*. Against this argumentation, Levine, *Jerusalem*, 267, responds that "[t]he most problematic link in Tcherikover's argument . . . lies in his methodology. Implicit in his analysis is an assumption that one measures the evidence for city government in the first century on the basis of what is known of the Classical Greek *polis*. The fact remains, however, that by the first century CE few, if any, *poleis* resembled the classical Greek model." In short, says Levine, Tcherikover builds his argument from a false analogy. Through consideration of the *polis* of the first century, Levine, *Jerusalem*, 267, concludes that concludes that the references to various institutions associated with the *polis* cumulatively suggest that "[i]n Roman eyes . . . [Jerusalem] seems to have resembled other contemporary Greek *poleis*."

¹⁵⁶ Rocca, *Herod's Judaea*, 266.

¹⁵⁷ It has become virtually an axiom of scholarship that Sirach does not refer to synagogues. Yet, it does use the term *synagōgē* some ten times, and the related term *ekklēsia* thirteen. Three, possibly four, uses of *synagōgē* (cf. 1:30, 4:7, 41:18, and possibly 24:23), and nine uses of *ekklēsia* (cf. 15:5, 21:17, 23:24, 24:2, 31:11, 33:19, 38:33, 39:10, 44:15), seem to refer to some sort of institution contemporaneous with the author. Cf. the discussion of this matter in Runesson, *Origins*, 311–312. With the exception of 24:23, Runesson considers only the usage of *ekklēsia*, and his argument, *viz.* that Sirach is here referring to Jerusalem's

argue that all these passages refer to the same institution, *viz.* a popular assembly, much like those found in the Greek *polis*, in which were carried out crucial religious and political functions, and to which both the words *ekklēsia* and *synagōgē* could refer.

The existence of such an assembly in Jerusalem, and also its specific association with the temple by about the second-century BCE, is supported further by Josephus. It is in the temple, Josephus informs us, that Hyrcanus and Aristobolus reconcile publicly (*JW* 1.122), and that Archelaus was publicly proclaimed as ethnarch (*JW* 2.1–5; *Ant.* 17.200–201). These are exceptional events, however. Even more compelling are the routine administrative functions assumed by the temple, such as trials (*BJ* 4.336) and the posting of public notifications (*Ant.* 13.128; cf. 1 Macc. 11:37). Jerusalem's public assembly, which had emerged in the city-gate, now met within the temple complex.¹⁵⁸

The above argument would be stronger if we could find texts that refer to portions of the temple using explicit synagogue terminology. Two rabbinic texts—*m. Yom* 7:1, *m. Sotah* 7:7–8—furnish such data. Both describe the high priest reading the Torah in the temple, with the assistance of the *hazzan ha-kneset* and the *rosh ha-kneset*. Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, note that these passages are frequently used to support the idea that a synagogue existed on the temple mount.¹⁵⁹ Hoenig argued that these passages do not support the notion that there was a synagogue on the temple mount, noting that whilst there are references to a *kneset*, the absence of reference to a *Bet Kneset* indicates that the passages refer to assemblies rather than places, that temple courts are not synagogue spaces, and that, in any case, the synagogue only developed subsequent to the temple's destruction in 70.¹⁶⁰

As Runesson observes, however, Hoenig's definition of the synagogue is much too narrow.¹⁶¹ Moreover, even though the passages make no reference to a *Bet Kneset*, they do make unequivocal reference to a *kneset*

public assembly, would only be that much the stronger if he considered also the usage of *synagōgē*.

¹⁵⁸ The most classic treatment of the spatial aspects of the Jerusalem temple remains Th. A. Busink, *Der Tempel von Jerusalem von Salomo bis Herodes: eine archäologisch-historische Studie unter Berücksichtigung des westsemitischen Tempelbaus* (2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1980).

¹⁵⁹ Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *Ancient Synagogue*, 51. Cf. also the discussion in Runesson, *Origins*, 207–12, 365; Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 415–427.

¹⁶⁰ Sidney B. Hoenig, "The Supposititious Temple-Synagogue," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 54 (1963): 115–131.

¹⁶¹ Runesson, *Origins*, 365. Cf. also Runesson, Binder, and Olsson, *Ancient Synagogue*, 51.

associated with Torah reading, thus referring to the temple courts terms typically used of synagogues and practices that typically occur within the synagogue. These passages might thus be construed as memories of a time when the public assembly of the people of Jerusalem, which had previously met in the city gates, now met in the temple courts. Although it is certainly not impossible that *m. Yom* 7:1 and *m. Sotah* 7:7–8 represent a retrojection of later rabbinic synagogue practices on to the temple, nonetheless this data does cohere well with that which we have already seen in Ben Sira, Josephus and 1 Maccabees.

Against the argument that some sort of synagogue institution met specifically in the temple precincts, Levine observes that “a synagogue is never mentioned in several important descriptions of the site,”¹⁶² such as Josephus in *JW* 5.184–237. This is of course an argument from silence, and thus of only limited strength. More to the point, the argument advanced here is not that there was a distinct synagogue *building* on the Temple Mount, but rather that the temple courts became the site for the functions typically carried out within the confines of a municipal or public synagogue. Such an argument is consistent with the contention advanced by Mogens Herman Hansen, *viz.* that “[o]nly a few *poleis* had a special assembly place (*ekklesiasterion*); assemblies of the people took place in the Archaic Period in the market-place (*agora*), and in the Classical and Hellenistic periods in the theatre.”¹⁶³ The argument advanced here is that due to Jerusalem’s own particular history, the public assembly met in the temple precincts during the late Second Temple period.

2.3.2 *The Mechanisms of Aposynagōgos*

The Martynian understanding of the *aposynagōgos* passages, the *Birkat ha-Minim*, and more basically the synagogue, is predicated upon the supposition that expulsion from the synagogue would have required legislation passed by a sovereign authority. Without such an essentially juridical understanding of power, the classic Martynian focus upon the *Birkat ha-Minim* makes little sense, nor does the neo-Martynian conclusion that, in the absence of evidence for such a mechanism by which to expel Christians in the first century, we must render a judgment of non-historicity *vis-à-vis* the *aposynagōgos* passages.

¹⁶² Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 61.

¹⁶³ Mogens Herman Hansen, *Polis: An Introduction to the Ancient Greek City-State* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 103.

Such an understanding of the *aposynagōgos* passages comes largely from Martyn's reading of John 9:22. Martyn argues that ἡδὴ γὰρ . . . συνετέθειντο and οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι "show[s] us clearly that the subject under discussion is a formal agreement or *decision* reached by some *authoritative Jewish group*."¹⁶⁴ Martyn's definition of formal agreement is made clear elsewhere, when he notes, correctly, that "one hears no hint in Acts of a formal agreement lying back of the synagogue's hostility to Paul. On the contrary, such events as are narrated in Acts appear to be *ad hoc* measures taken in one city after another."¹⁶⁵ For Martyn, then, a formal agreement is never *ad hoc*. Thus, if it is the case that the use of συντίθημι in 9:22 "show[s] us clearly that the subject under discussion is a formal agreement or *decision*," then it follows that συντίθημι can never refer to *ad hoc* measures. For Martyn the "authoritative Jewish group" involved in making people *aposynagōgos* is without question the Yavnean sages.

Martyn defends his understanding of συντίθημι by reconstructing the Semitic background of the verb, for which he proposes יקח.¹⁶⁶ Defining the word as "to introduce a custom" or "to ordain," Martyn here produces exegetical warrant for thinking in terms of a formal agreement. This seems a somewhat questionable procedure, however. Given that συντίθημι is a Greek word, used in a Greek text, the use of συντίθημι in cognate Greek literature would seem more immediately relevant to the discussion than putative Semitic backgrounds.¹⁶⁷ Turning first to contemporaneous texts written by Christians, one finds that συντίθημι occurs only two other times in New Testament usage. In each case, however, it refers unambiguously to measures taken informally rather than formally. Certainly, no legislation seems to be in mind.

In Luke 22:5 the chief priests and officers of the temple police συνέθεντο to pay Judas to betray Jesus. Here συντίθημι surely refers to an *ad hoc*, informal, measure taken against a Galilean rabble-rouser who had been stirring up the crowds and had at least once disrupted the normal

¹⁶⁴ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 47. Italics original. On this matter, he seems to follow Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 335, who identifies *hoi Ioudaioi* as "the authorities," and argues that "the *formal* correctness with which they act does not protect them from actual misuse of the *law*" (italics added by present author). On Bultmann's influence on Martyn, cf. Martyn, "Johannine Community," 183–190, p. 183.

¹⁶⁵ Martyn, *History as Theology*, 56.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. Martyn, *History and Theology*, 56–57.

¹⁶⁷ The LSJ is only of limited help here, providing "to put together," as a basic meaning for the verb, and offering "to agree upon" as a specific meaning of the middle voice. This does not resolve whether such agreements are formal or *ad hoc* in character.

proceedings of the temple (cf. Luke 19:45–46). In Acts 23:20, Paul's nephew informs a centurion that οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι συνέθεντο to ask him to bring Paul to the Sanhedrin (τὸ συνέδριον), on the pretense of judging him; however, they in fact plan to ambush and kill him on his way. A clandestine plot to trick a Roman centurion into being an unwitting accomplice to assassination seems unlikely to have been encoded via legislation.

The usage of συντίθημι throughout the New Testament is strong evidence against the necessity, although not the possibility, of reading συντίθημι in John 9:22 as a reference to formal, legislative, agreement. This tentative conclusion is strengthened when one considers the way in which Josephus uses the word: roughly half the c. 80 uses would seem to refer to formal agreements as defined by Martyn, and roughly half to informal agreements. This is particularly telling, for Josephus' background was at least as Palestinian and Semitic as John's. If Josephus could use συντίθημι to describe such informal agreements, then it is difficult to see why John could not. Thus it is not necessary to interpret John's use of συντίθημι in 9:22 as a reference to legislative agreement, and rather quite licit to see in this text a reference to an informal measure taken to discourage people from affirming that Jesus was the messiah.

Close readings of 9:22 and 12:42 would seem to suggest that John does intend to describe neither a formal agreement nor a formal authority. The crucial datum lies in 12:42. Here John indicates that it is not the rulers¹⁶⁸ but rather the Pharisees who seek to make people *apосynagōgoi*. Many of the rulers themselves fear this fate. If it is not the rulers who seek to make people *apосynagōgoi* then it would not seem likely that we are dealing

¹⁶⁸ It is unclear whether John assumes that these rulers were members of a formal ruling body, such as a permanent Sanhedrin, as per Barrett, *St. John*, 204; Raymond E. Brown; *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1966), 1:487; Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (trans. John Vriend; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), *Gospel of John*, 446, n. 220; or a less formal group of elites, as Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Books, 2003), 1:731. Since John recognizes that there were Pharisees among the rulers (cf. 3:1), it is also unclear whether the Pharisees were a group external to and exerting influence upon the rulers, or whether certain of the rulers who were Pharisees were exerting influence upon other rulers who were not, or whether there were both Pharisees among and Pharisees external to the rulers. Yet, regardless of how one defines either the rulers or how this group relates to the Pharisees, the text itself indicates that the impetus to make people *apосynagōgoi* did not come from the rulers of Israel as a group but rather from the Pharisees. The rulers as a whole acceded to the Pharisees' impetus lest they themselves be made *apосynagōgoi*.

with a formal agreement by a formal authority.¹⁶⁹ For such reason, Ridderbos quite reasonably argues that συντίθημι “suggests a much more informal decision,”¹⁷⁰ and that as such “the reference here is to an incidental measure adopted by mutual agreement.”¹⁷¹

In 9:22, it is οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, not the Pharisees, who agree to make *aposynagōgoi* those who confess Jesus as the messiah.¹⁷² Who are these Ἰουδαῖοι, and how do they relate to the Pharisees? An initial clue comes from the shift in 9:18 to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, when previously it had been the Pharisees who had been investigating the healing of the blind man.¹⁷³ The present author would suggest that this shift was necessary because, starting at v. 18, it is not just the Pharisees who are interrogating Jesus, but a broader coalition of individuals who are other than sympathetic to Jesus’ activities. Thus, when we are told in v. 22 that οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι συνέθεντο, we are to interpret this as an agreement between members of different influential interest groups, among whom were certain Pharisees. The case for the existence of such an alliance against Jesus and his followers is strengthened by John 11:47–53, where the Pharisees and the chief priests together express concern not simply regarding Jesus’ miraculous signs, but also regarding the popularity that he has gained; together they resolve to bring an end to Jesus’ life, with the ultimate aim of terminating the movement that was growing around him. Here we see the Pharisees and another group of prominent Jewish individuals entering into alliance against Jesus.

¹⁶⁹ Commentators seem almost entirely to have missed the significance of this verse in this regard, instead focusing upon how the passage critiques these rulers’ silence on Jesus’ identity (as do Brown, *John* 1:487–488; Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 454; Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:885–886). Ridderbos, *Gospel of John*, 446, n. 220, however, does recognize clearly that the Pharisees rather than the rulers are here the impetus for making people *aposynagōgoi*, and moreover that their cooperation in other places of John’s Gospel with the chief priests speaks against the hypothesis that in the matter of Second Temple politics the text anachronistically retrojects post-70 conditions into the pre-70 period.

¹⁷⁰ Ridderbos, *Gospel of John*, 343–344, n. 281.

¹⁷¹ Ridderbos, *Gospel of John*, 343.

¹⁷² *Contra* Kloppenborg, “Disaffiliation,” 1.

¹⁷³ Commentators seem generally unable to account for this shift. The suggestion made by Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 335, n. 1, that this shift is due simply to the Evangelist’s editorial work, constitutes but a refusal to interpret the text as it stands. The argument, in Barrett, *St. John*, 360, that “John speaks indiscriminately of ‘the Jews’ and the ‘Pharisees’” does not adequately account for the way that John refers consistently to the Pharisees from 9:13–16, but from v. 18 consistently refers to οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι, only to reintroduce the Pharisees in 9:40. Brown, *John*, 1:377, seems to suppose something similar to Barrett, when he refers to “the Pharisees or ‘the Jews,’” as if these terms are semantic equivalents.

One might object: is this not to advert to the now discredited view, articulated well in the revised edition of Emil Schürer, that “[d]uring the ages that followed, amid all the changes of government, under the Romans and the Herodians, the Pharisees maintained their leadership in spiritual matters. . . . The Pharisees had the masses for their allies. . . . They held the greatest authority over the congregations, so that everything to do with worship, prayer, and sacrificed took place according to their instructions”?¹⁷⁴ Yes, but only insofar as such a view is supported by the *apostynagōgos* passages, and it should be noted that these passages hardly are sufficient to demonstrate that the Pharisees controlled everything that happened in pre-70 synagogues, either in the land of Israel or beyond. Rather, these passages are sufficient only to demonstrate the considerably more modest claim that the Pharisees asserted sufficient influence over some individuals in leading positions that they were able to engineer an exclusion from some sort of synagogue context, which this study argues was the public assembly of Jerusalem that met in the temple precincts. Whether they had influence in excess of that attested by the *apostynagōgos* passages is a matter beyond the scope of the current study.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 2:402.

¹⁷⁵ That said, however, the reading articulated above correlates remarkably well with Josephus’ statement about the Sadducees in *Ant.* 18.17: ὁπότε γὰρ ἐπ’ ἀρχὰς παρέλθοιεν, ἀκουσίως μὲν καὶ κατ’ ἀνάγκας, προσχωροῦσι δ’ οὖν οἷς ὁ Φαρισαῖος λέγει διὰ τὸ μὴ ἄλλως ἀνεκτοῦς γενέσθαι τοῖς πλήθεσιν (“for whenever they might become rulers, [they do so] unwillingly and by force, [and] at the same time concede invariably to whatever the Pharisee says, because otherwise they would be unbearable to the multitude”). Says Josephus, if you want to govern in Judea, you had best toe the Pharisaic line, at least in public. This fits quite well with Josephus’ biographical statement in *Life* 12b, wherein Josephus reports that ἔνεακαιδέκατον δ’ ἔτος ἔχων ἠρξάμην τε πολιτεύεσθαι τῇ Φαρισαίων αἰρέσει κατακολουθῶν, which, following Steve Mason, *Life of Josephus: Translation and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 20–21, might be translated as, “Being now in my nineteenth year I began to involve myself in public life, deferring to the philosophical school of the Pharisees, which is rather like the one called the Stoic.” This translation is notably different from the more familiar one represented by H. St. J. Thackeray in the Loeb edition, who offered the following, quite influential, rendering: “But being now in my nineteenth year I began to govern my life by the rule of the Pharisees.” Interpretation of this passage turns upon how one construes πολιτεύεσθαι, the middle infinitive of πολιτεύω. Thackeray construes this apparently in a direct-reflexive sense, such that Josephus is saying something like “I began to govern myself.” This is a not unreasonable reading. Yet, argues Mason, πολιτεύω most commonly refers to participating in government, a task expected of all citizens once they reached their nineteenth year. That is precisely the year in which Josephus said he began πολιτεύεσθαι. Mason suggests that Josephus is not discussing how he governed himself, but rather to how he governed, and that in this he tended to follow Pharisaic policies. This reading is closer to an indirect-reflexive meaning of the middle voice, and thus quite defensible, grammatically. More to the historiographical point, a non-Pharisaic Josephus

It remains to be considered how a person was actually made *aposynagōgos*. 16:2 provides the crucial datum. Here, Jesus tells his disciples that ἀποσυναγώγους ποιήσουσιν ὑμᾶς. ἀλλ' ἔρχεται ὦρα ἵνα πᾶς ὁ ἀποκτείνας ὑμᾶς δόξῃ λατρεῖαν προσφέρειν τῷ θεῷ (“they will make you *aposynagōgos*. Indeed, a time comes when everyone killing you will think [themselves] to be presenting service to God”).¹⁷⁶ The Johannine Jesus seems to associate being made *aposynagōgos* with physical, even lethal, violence. The present author would thus suggest that a person was made to be *aposynagōgos* through violence, or at least the threat thereof, coordinated by the Pharisees, in collusion with other influential persons.¹⁷⁷

who tended to go along with the Pharisees for reasons of *Realpolitik* makes better sense of Josephus' overall ambivalence towards the Pharisees than does a Pharisaic Josephus who enthusiastically embraced Pharisaic practices and beliefs. Cf. also the discussion in Steve Mason, “Josephus' Pharisees: The Narratives,” in Neusner and Chilton, *In Quest of the Historical Pharisees*, 3–40.

¹⁷⁶ The language of “service to God” suggests that this lethal violence was understood to be religiously motivated. This is quite interesting in light of ancient notions of moral purity (cf. the treatment of this matter in Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001)). It is altogether conceivable that in seeking to make persons *aposynagōgoi* there was an effort to purify the land of Israel and its cities. In this regard, we should consider also Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 94–103, who discusses how in early Greek religion persons deemed morally impure might be stripped of their citizenship; also, the discussion of Parker in relation to Jewish religion in Eyal Regev, “Moral Impurity and the Temple in Early Christianity in Light of Early Greek Practice and Qumran Ideology,” *Harvard Theological Review* 97 (2004): 383–411, esp. pp. 393–394. Although the potential relevance of such notions of purity is tantalizing, we need to remain cognizant that the *aposynagōgos* passages demonstrate no clear association with purity concerns; it might be the case that purity is viewed as an issue by the Christians's opponents of Jesus' followers, and equally it might not.

¹⁷⁷ Such violence is remarkably similar to the historical reminiscences embedded in Acts 7:58, 8:1–3, 9:1–2, 26:9–11, which report that Saul the Pharisee incited violence against fellow Jews who happened to follow Jesus of Nazareth, often in a synagogue context (cf. Acts 7:58, 8:1–3, 26:11). Most interesting, given the Pharisaic-priestly alliance attested in John's Gospel 11:47–53, Saul the Pharisee forms a partnership of sorts with the high priest (Acts 9:1–2). Of John 16:2, Ben Witherington, *John's Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 262, comments that “[i]f the language seems extreme when it argues that those who kill the disciples will see it as an act of worship, remember that Paul himself before his conversion seems to have seen such actions as a religious duty and a way of showing zeal for God and God's law.” Indeed, the similarities between what Jesus predicts in 16:2 and the violence which Luke presents in Acts are sufficiently strong that Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 2001), 211, concludes that, “[i]f even just one of these three references [i.e. the *aposynagōgos* passages], therefore, were authentic, it would be this one.” It seems not at all unreasonable, although not central to my argument, to judge the violence attested in Acts attests to the post-Easter expansion and intensification of the pre-Easter violence to which John 9:22 and 12:42 attest.

In part, such violence might be described as “mob violence,” or perhaps “police violence” (cf., for instance, John 7:32, where temple police are sent to arrest Jesus). Such violence could, conceivably, have followed from a formal decree, although it must be stressed that the data is insufficient to affirm that it did.¹⁷⁸ Violence has a remarkable capacity to exclude individuals, even when that violence fails to conform to the rule of law.

It might be objected that, since we are dealing with a formal assembly, any exclusion there from must also be formal. That would be a valid objection if institutions always functioned in practice precisely as they ought in principle. Yet, it would seem a basic axiom of any adequate social analysis that frequently institutions fail to function as they ought. All an exclusion from an assembly requires is that the excluded do not feel safe entering the assembly, and the present author argues here that this is likely what was happening to certain people sympathetic to Jesus c. 30 CE. Here we might consider again the Synoptic tradition: when Jesus is driven out from the synagogue and indeed even Nazareth itself in Luke 4:29–30, no formal declaration is issued; rather, the mechanism of expulsion is mob violence; and one can certainly imagine that Jesus would not have felt particularly welcome in that synagogue following his expulsion. This, the present author suggests, was the case also with those of Jesus’ sympathizers who either feared being or actually were expelled from the synagogue.

One potential difficulty, though, is that, if the present author is correct in arguing that at the very least 9:22 and 12:42 refer to Jerusalem’s public assembly, and if the synagogues mentioned in Acts 7:58, 8:1–3, 9:1–2, 26:9–11 are association synagogues, as would seem to be the case, then it is questionable whether 16:2 would be referring to the same events; yet, we should be careful not to be overly schematic in our thinking. There is another event, reported in the early chapters of Acts, that is quite attractive when thinking about 16:2, however, and that is when Peter and John are dragged before the council in 5:27ff. This, too, led to physical violence, and a command not to speak in the name of Jesus. Although here we have censure rather than outright exclusion, nonetheless there does seem to have been some sort of effort under way to marginalize the Christians. That this is then followed shortly by Stephen’s martyrdom is perhaps not a coincidence. Of course, we should not be overly hasty in expecting that what is reported in 16:2 must be reported elsewhere. Yet, neither should we consider as warrant for a negative judgment of historicity any inability to clearly identify external references to the events reported in 16:2.

¹⁷⁸ Possibilities, in addition to the *Birkat ha-Minim*, advanced by commentators include the *neziphah*, the *nidduy* and the *herem*; cf. the discussions in Barrett, *St. John*, 361–362, and Brown, 1:374. None of these possibilities is excluded by the *apostynagōgos* passages, yet neither is any required by it.

2.4 CONCLUSION

Chapter Two undertook a survey of classic Martynian and neo-Martynian perspectives on whether or not people were expelled from the ancient synagogue, and the understandings of the ancient synagogue either implicit or explicit in these respective positions. It was noted that classic Martynian readings typically suppose that the *aposynagōgos* passages report events wherein Jewish Christians who at some point joined the Johannine community were expelled from the synagogue. Most typically the *Birkat ha-Minim* is understood as the legislative mechanism by which such expulsion occurred. Against this, neo-Martynian readings typically suppose that no such expulsions ever occurred, and that the *aposynagōgos* passages are primarily about identity-formation. Both are identified as Martynian because each fundamentally assumes that the *aposynagōgos* passages refer to events occurring within the Johannine community's life rather than, as the narrative clearly wants to locate them, during Jesus' lifetime.

The chapter also advanced a post-Martynian perspective that breaks explicitly with the hermeneutical supposition that, *contra* the Johannine narrative, the *aposynagōgos* passages refer to events that occurred within the Johannine community's life. Instead, this post-Martynian reading supposes that John means what his narrative *prima facie* tells the reader, namely that individuals who confessed Jesus as the messiah feared expulsion during (according to 9:22 and 12:42) and sometime after (according to 16:2) his lifetime. Although agreeing that the data supports the neo-Martynian rejection of the classic Martynian understanding of the *Birkat ha-Minim*, the post-Martynian alternative breaks hermeneutically with the entirety of the Martynian tradition, arguing that by maintaining the Martyn's two-level strategy the neo-Martynian tradition is no more able than the classic Martynian tradition to give an adequate account of the *aposynagōgos* passages.

Runesson's dual institution understanding of the synagogue, which incorporates Levine's and Binder's focus upon the public or municipal synagogue on the one hand, and Richardson and Harland's focus upon the association synagogue on the other, was adopted. It was argued that in the *aposynagōgos* passages John seems to have in mind Jerusalem's public assembly that had moved from the city gates to the temple mount. It was further argued that certain Pharisees were the main impetus behind the drive to make *aposynagōgos* those who confessed Jesus, but that these Pharisees acted not alone, but as part of a broader coalition. This coalition

effected or at least threatened the exclusion of Jesus' followers via violence or at least the threats of violence, regardless of whether there was a formal decree of exclusion. As such, we are well-justified in rendering a positive judgment on the plausibility of the *aposynagōgos vis-à-vis* the specific matter of the synagogue as an institution.

The above leads one to wonder why anyone would want to expel Jesus' followers from the public assembly. In Chapter Three, it will be argued that many in Jerusalem considered Jesus to be the messiah, which some in authority saw as a threat to the religious status quo, whilst in Chapter Four it will be argued that the messianic discourse that surrounded Jesus was also seen as a threat to the political status quo. Cumulatively, these two chapters present an argument that the conflict reported in the *aposynagōgos* passages is most properly described as religio-political in character. Fearing the consequences of these threats, certain Pharisees and certain members of the Judean elite took steps to terminate the Jesus movement, steps that culminated in the termination of Jesus himself.

CHAPTER THREE

APOSYNAGŌGOS AND JESUS' MESSIANIC IDENTITY

3.1 AN INITIAL ORIENTATION

Each of the *aposynagōgos* passages attests to conflicts of some sort, and indicates unequivocally that Jesus' identity was integral to those conflicts. In 9:22, we are informed that the blind man's parents feared being made *aposynagōgoi*, and this because *hoi Ioudaioi* had decided that this should be the fate of any who confessed that Jesus was the messiah. 12:42 tells us that whilst many of the rulers believed in Jesus, they remained silent because they feared being made *aposynagōgoi*. In 16:2 we are told that Jesus' followers would be made *aposynagōgoi* in the future, relative to the narrative, because others do not know either him or the Father. The *aposynagōgos* passages represent Jesus' *identity* as the primary issue under contention, with 9:22 suggesting that the issue is more specifically Jesus' *messianic* identity. Employing what Meyer calls an oblique pattern of inference,¹ this chapter argues *contra* the Martynian tradition that the *aposynagōgos* passages' accounts of conflict over Jesus' messianic identity during his lifetime are plausible.

3.2 BULTMANNIANISM TODAY: THE MARTYNIAN TRADITIONS

The argument that the *aposynagōgos* passages could represent actual conflicts over Jesus' messianic identity during his lifetime is made over and against the Martynian tradition, which supposes that most if not all such conflicts depicted by John's Gospel are properly construed as evidence for Christological controversies within the life of the Johannine community rather than as evidence for Christological controversies during the lifetime of Jesus.

¹ On the oblique and direct patterns of inference, cf. Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2002), 85ff.

The Martynian traditions formulated this conviction as part of broader Bultmannian commitments. In a recent discussion of the influences upon his work and thinking, Martyn has described how Bultmann's "both enormously impressive . . . and seriously inadequate" commentary on John was the primary impetus for his own *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*.² Bultmann was convinced that belief in Jesus as the messiah emerged only in the post-Easter period. In *Jesus and the Word*, after arguing stridently that we can know nothing about the personality of Jesus, in part because we cannot conclude with any confidence whether Jesus thought himself to be the messiah, Bultmann states that he is "personally of the opinion that Jesus did not believe himself to be the messiah."³ Elsewhere, in a more extended discussion of Jesus' "messianic self-consciousness" in his *Theology of the New Testament*, Bultmann argues from Acts 2:36, Philippians 2:6–11, and Romans 1:4, that Jesus was construed as messiah only subsequent to his death and resurrection.⁴ Thus does Bultmann conclude that there was no messianic discourse surrounding Jesus during his own lifetime. The present study contests Bultmann's conclusion.

Consequent to Bultmann's conviction that Jesus was recognized as messiah only subsequent to Easter, he must suppose that any messianic discourse present within the Jesus tradition was necessarily and anachronistically retrojected from the beliefs and experiences of later Christ-believing communities on to the life of Jesus.⁵ Moreover, Bultmann and his disciples suppose the existence, already in the first century, of multiple "Christianities," each with its own distinctive and at times antagonistic theology (including Christology).⁶ Bultmann draws a distinction between

² J. Louis Martyn, "The Johannine Community among Jewish and Other Early Christian Community," in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies* (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 183–190, esp. pp. 183–184.

³ Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (trans. Louise Pettibone Smith and Erminie Huntress Lantero; New York: Scribners, 1958), 9.

⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (2 vols.; trans. Kendrick Grobel; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 1:26–27. Bultmann was heavily indebted to William Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (trans. J.C.G. Greig; Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971), 215–225 for this reading of these passages.

⁵ Cf. Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, 12–13; Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:26–27.

⁶ Particularly influential upon Bultmann's thinking in this regard was Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (trans. Philadelphia Seminar on Christian Origins; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); cf. esp. the excursus on the "Bauer thesis" in Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:137. The influence of the Bauer thesis upon not only Bultmann but also Martyn and the Martynian traditions of Johannine scholarship in addition to other Gospel community criticism is an aspect of modern gospels studies that begs for closer

a “Palestinian Christianity” on the one hand and a “Hellenistic Christianity” on the other, and even within the latter he draws distinctions between a “pre-Pauline Hellenistic Christianity,” a “Pauline Hellenistic Christianity,” and a “Johannine Hellenistic Christianity.”⁷

More recent scholarship has added a multiplicity of other Christianities, under such names as the “Matthean community,” “the Markan community,” “the Lukan community,” “the Q community,” and “the Thomas community.” Scholars such as Neusner would later develop a similar understanding of Judaism more broadly, wherein particular corpora or individual texts became representative of particular Jewish communities.⁸ Adopting Bultmann’s suppositions, the Martyrnic traditions construe John’s presentation of Jesus’ identity not simply as retrojections of their own experiences, but more specifically of their experiences in relation to other Jewish and/or Christ-believing communities. The history of Johannine Christology became the history of one community’s Christology, rather than an integral part of a dynamic, widespread, and still expanding Jesus movement.

Bultmann, of course, was hardly the only twentieth-century scholar who supposed that Jesus neither thought himself the messiah nor acted in ways that could have been construed as messianic during his lifetime. One need think only of the work and the majority of the fellows of the Jesus Seminar for more recent examples.⁹ Our interest, however, is in how

analysis, such as that represented by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Michael J. Kruger, *The Heresy of Orthodoxy: How Contemporary Culture’s Fascination with Diversity has Reshaped our Understanding of Early Christianity* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2010). Köstenberger and Kruger prefer to describe the “Bauer thesis” as the “Bauer-Ehrman thesis,” in recognition of Ehrman’s efforts in such works as Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths we Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) and Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures: Books that Did Not Make it into the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), to update Bauer’s thesis in light of more recent scholarship, particularly that regarding the Nag Hammadi finds. Probably the most definitive English-language critique of the Bauer hypothesis remains Thomas A. Robinson, *The Bauer Thesis Examined: The Geography of Heresy in the Early Christian Church* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1988). Cf. also Robinson’s more recent monograph, Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways: Early Jewish-Christian Relations* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009).

⁷ Cf. esp. Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:33–183, wherein he distinguishes clearly between the *kerygmata* of the Palestinian and Hellenistic churches; cf. also Bultmann, *Theology*, 2:3–92, for his specific comments on Johannine Christianity.

⁸ Cf. Jacob Neusner, *Studying Classical Judaism: A Primer* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 27–36, for a succinct history of research of the shift of scholarly focus (in Neusner’s words) “from Judaism to Judaisms.”

⁹ Cf. Robert W. Funk, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper, 1998); Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover,

Bultmann serves as an immediate precursor to what this study calls the Martynian tradition. This will be the focus of the next section.

3.2.1 *Continuing Bultmann's Legacy: The Classic Martynian Tradition*

Given Martyn's essentially Bultmannian understanding of John's Gospel, the operative supposition for not only Martyn but also the classical Martynian tradition is that any controversies over Jesus' identity that John reports must have occurred in the life of the Johannine community rather than during the lifetime of Jesus. This is evident in *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, wherein Martyn transposes the entirety of the debates between the Johannine Jesus and various Jewish interlocutors into his hypothetical second, "ecclesiological," level.¹⁰

In one of the few passages wherein Martyn defends rather than simply performs this transposition, he quotes John 9:28b, in which the Judeans say to the formerly blind man *σὺ μαθητῆς εἶ ἐκείνου, ἡμεῖς δὲ τοῦ Μωϋσῆως ἐσμὲν μαθηταί* ("you are a disciple of that one [i.e. Jesus], but we are disciples of Moses"). Martyn argues that

[t]his statement is scarcely conceivable in Jesus' lifetime, since it recognizes discipleship to Jesus not only as antithetical, but also as somehow comparable, to discipleship to Moses. It is, on the other hand, easily understood under circumstances in which the synagogue has begun to view the Christian movement as an essential and more or less clearly distinguishable rival.¹¹

Like Bultmann, Martyn supposes that this passage reports conflict over Jesus' identity that could not have occurred within Jesus' lifetime. Consequently, Martyn supposes, these statements and conflicts must be later Christology retrojected on to Jesus' life, and as such the exegete has hermeneutical license to read events and statements set within the context of Jesus' life as evidence for the experiences of a later Christ-believing community. Yet, absent from Martyn's discussion of John 9:28b is an account of *why* the Jesus-Moses antithesis is inconceivable during Jesus' lifetime.

and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: MacMillan, 1993).

¹⁰ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (3rd ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2003), *passim*. The designation of this second level as the "ecclesiological," and the first level as the "historical," follows Adele Reinhartz, *The Word in the World: The Cosmological Tale in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1992), 2–3.

¹¹ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 47.

More recently, Lincoln has written of this passage that “[t]he contrast . . . goes to the heart of the conflicting claims operative in the narrative and already anticipated in the prologue’s contrast between Jesus and Moses (cf. 1:17).” Lincoln seems here to be claiming 1:17 as support that 9:28b represents Johannine theology. However, Lincoln also points out correctly that “[f]rom the evangelist’s perspective, being a disciple of Moses is only incompatible with being a disciple of Jesus if the former is thought to entail rejection of Jesus’ claims.”¹² 1:17 can reasonably be read less as positing a Jesus-Moses antithesis and moreover as suggesting that Jesus fulfills or completes the Law by bringing grace and truth. Blomberg is probably correct in arguing that in 1:17 the contrast between Moses and Jesus is relative rather than absolute, and that for John it is a matter of placing them in proper relation to one another.¹³ Keener describes that proper relation, as John understands it, quite well, when he suggests of 1:17 that “what was an incomplete revelation of grace and truth through Moses was completed through Christ.”¹⁴ Moses pointed to Jesus, and Jesus completed what Moses had already begun.

Such a reading of 1:17 is supported by 1:45 and 5:45–46, both of which suggest that John did not think one had either to reject Jesus in order to follow Moses or reject Moses in order to follow Jesus. Rather, these passages suggest that John understands Moses as a witness to Jesus’ identity, such that the one who believes in what Moses wrote will necessarily also believe in Jesus. 5:46 goes insofar as to intimate that failure to believe in Jesus indicates a prior failure to believe in Moses. Bultmann himself puts it well, when he states that, from the perspective of 5:46, “had they [i.e. Jesus’ Jewish interlocutors] been open to the words of Moses they would also have been open to the words of Jesus.”¹⁵ In light of such passages, it seems unlikely that John 9:28 represents a Johannine conviction that belief in Moses is antithetical to belief in Jesus, for John elsewhere espouses the contrary belief, *viz.* that belief in Moses is in fact sufficient cause for belief in Jesus (although it is not clear whether John considers

¹² Andrew Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 285.

¹³ Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historicity of John’s Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 75. Cf. also Blomberg’s quite interesting comparison of John’s notion of the law with that presented in Matt. 5:17.

¹⁴ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 1:417.

¹⁵ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 272.

it a necessary cause); consequently, 9:28 is probably better read as the rhetoric of people opposed to Jesus, who argued that loyalty to Jesus meant rejection of Moses.

Read thus, it is difficult to understand why such rhetoric could not have emerged already during Jesus' lifetime, unless one supposes *a priori* that it must represent the rhetoric of a period later than the narrative ostensibly claims; that would be simply to beg the question. Martyn conceives the Christology of the Johannine community passing through numerous phases, each one evident in the Gospel as a stratum in an archaeological tell: first, the community constituted a "messianic group within the community of the synagogue,"¹⁶ for whom Jesus is "God's long-awaited, eschatological prophet-messiah";¹⁷ second, part of what would become the Johannine community was excommunicated from the synagogue and suffered martyrdom, thus generating the so-called "Johannine dualism";¹⁸ third, a Johannine community emerged that was wholly separate from the synagogue, and which held to the "highest" Christology found within John's Gospel.¹⁹ In each of these phases, argues Martyn, John's Gospel was re-written to reflect more recent developments, so that the community was constantly retrojecting its current Christology on to the story of Jesus. Such is what Martyn supposes is occurring in 9:28b. Martyn seems altogether indifferent to the possibility that some or all of the phases that he detects might contain data useful for reconstructing Jesus' life.

The classic Martynian tradition follows Martyn in conceiving Johannine community and Christology in terms of a mutually entailed developmental history. Raymond Brown's reconstruction of the Johannine community supposes a historical development from a lower to a higher Christology, that this development took place within the Johannine community, that it was precisely the major impetus for the community's conflict with the synagogue, and that the Gospel was written and re-written to reflect these developments.²⁰ David Rensberger similarly locates the development of a "higher" Johannine Christology in the context of the community's conflict with (other) Jewish groups.²¹ Brown and Rensberger, just as much as

¹⁶ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 147.

¹⁷ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 153.

¹⁸ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 154–157.

¹⁹ Martyn, *History and Theology*, 157–167.

²⁰ Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 34–54.

²¹ David Rensberger, *Johannine Faith and Liberating Community* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988), 28.

Martyn, assume hermeneutical license to transpose narratives that manifestly intend to report messianic conflict within the context of Jesus' life to a situation decades later.

Richey likewise supposes that conflicts over Jesus' identity within John's Gospel represent Christological development within the history of the Johannine community. He further locates this development in the context of the community's conflict with both the synagogue and imperial authority, with the prologue emerging as a "counter-ideology" to imperial theology.²² Yet, like all Martynians, Richey supposes that these narratives, although set within Jesus' lifetime, in fact describe conflicts that occurred within a post-Easter milieu. For his part, Heemstra suggests that the *Birkat ha-Minim* was at first directed only at those Christians who held a "high" Christology and rejected Torah (he seems to suppose that high Christology and rejection of the Law were necessary correlates, a contestable supposition in and of itself).²³

The classic Martynian scholars surveyed above each assume that most if not all conflict over Jesus' messianic identity reported in John's Gospel must allegorically encode conflicts between the Johannine community and other communities, Jewish, Christian, or imperial. Consistent with the hermeneutical suppositions of the broader Bultmannian tradition in which Martynian scholarship is embedded, classic Martynian scholars typically ignore the very real possibility that some if not most or all conflict reported in John's Gospel may be indicative of the author's intention to first and foremost tell the story of Jesus within Jesus' own lifetime. Consequently, the classic Martynian tradition typically operates under the working supposition that the *aposynagōgos* passages, and especially 9:22, cannot witness to conflicts over Jesus' messianic identity that happened during his lifetime.

One notable exception to the above characterization of the classic Martynian tradition is Anderson, who argues against "the fallacy of assuming that because John's narration shows signs of later developments, it cannot have represented anything historical about the events in Jesus' ministry. The inference of a history of tradition does not demonstrate the absence

²² Cf. Lance Byron Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2007), 51–64, 113–151.

²³ Marius Heemstra, *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 170–171.

of originative history.”²⁴ It is difficult to object to such an argument. Nonetheless, Anderson retains the two-level reading of many passages, not least of all 9:22, 12:42, and 16:2. Such an attempt to read on both the first and the second levels is certainly an advance over scholarship that aims functionally to read on only the second. Yet, to say that John’s Gospel demonstrates a history of tradition is not the same as to say that John’s Gospel ought to be read on two levels, nor does it account for how the same narrative tells two stories simultaneously. Such difficulties lie at the heart of both classic and neo-Martynian scholarship.

3.2.2 *Bultmann’s Legacy, Still: The Neo-Martynian Tradition*

Although the neo-Martynian tradition alters certain aspects of the broader tradition which it inherited from classic Martynian scholarship, it has left in place its central, ultimately Bultmannian hermeneutics. The classic Martynian tradition supposes that no Johannine depiction of conflict over Jesus’ messianic identity could plausibly describe events of Jesus’ lifetime, but rather must retroject events and conditions back from the late first century. The neo-Martynian tradition supposes likewise, simply defining those events and conditions differently. That this is the case is quite evident in its treatment of Johannine depictions of conflict over Jesus’ identity.

In her 1987 monograph, *The Word in the World*, pioneer neo-Martynian Adele Reinhartz argues that within John’s Gospel there are

three levels of story told by the gospel narrative . . . The first level or primary tale is the historical tale, which describes the life and times of the “historical” Jesus, that is, the one who, according to the gospel, lived at a particular time and place in human history. The second level is the ecclesiological level. The presence of this tale is discerned by real readers who find anachronisms and other oddities in the gospel narrative which in their view pertain to the life and times of the Johannine community. This tale we have labelled the sub-tale. . . . The third level is the cosmological tale, which, we have argued, is the meta-tale.²⁵

At first one might get the impression that Reinhartz is making room for the Jesus who “lived at a particular time and place in human history,”

²⁴ Paul N. Anderson, *The Fourth Gospel and the Quest for Jesus: Modern Foundations Reconsidered* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 67.

²⁵ Reinhartz, *Word in the World*, 100.

and thus is breaking with the Bultmannian and classic Martynian supposition that John's Gospel has little if anything to contribute to our knowledge of the historical Jesus. Yet, argues Reinhartz in the same study, "This 'historical Jesus' is not to be equated with THE historical Jesus, whom historical critics aim to construct or reconstruct from the historical tales told by the four gospels and whatever other material they define as having evidential value."²⁶ Although such a statement does not necessarily obviate interest in the historical Jesus, Reinhartz also states that the historical tale is sufficiently riddled with "anachronisms and other oddities" that the exegete must discern the presence of an ecclesiological tale. In Reinhartz's view, the historical unreliability of the Johannine text, *vis-à-vis* Jesus' life, furnishes warrant for the existence of the ecclesiological tale.

The non-relevance of Jesus' life for reading Johannine Christology is evident in Carter's *John and Empire*,²⁷ wherein he discusses briefly seven common theories that have been advanced to account for John's "high" Christology.²⁸ As Carter describes these seven theories, only one, which he calls "organic development," even considers the possibility that Johannine Christology might have had some sort of historical origin in and relationship to Jesus' activities. According to Carter

[t]his organic category does not deny outside influence [upon the development of Christology within the Johannine community] but emphasizes more an internal development process, in which later affirmations do not introduce new claims from external sources but unfold what was already implicit in Jesus' own claims and impact. But such an approach does not explain why some three to four hundred years were needed until the councils of Nicaea (325) and Chalcedon (451) drew out these implications, nor does it account for the role of considerable debate and dispute through the process.²⁹

²⁶ Reinhartz, *Word in the World*, 100, n. 1.

²⁷ Carter, *John and Empire*.

²⁸ Carter, *John and Empire*, 349–350. These seven are social setting, Gnostic influences, Samaritan influences, apocalyptic influences, wisdom influences, organic development, and authorial genius.

²⁹ Carter, *John and Empire*, 350. It is worth noting, although Carter neglects to do so, that both apocalyptic and wisdom influences upon John could have had roots in the life and teaching of the historical Jesus. That is, if Jesus conducted himself as, for instance, an apocalyptic prophet, then it would hardly be surprising if John developed his account of Jesus along apocalyptic lines. As such, theses of organic development can at least in theory be combined with theses of apocalyptic or wisdom influence. Nonetheless, Carter does represent well a deeply held scholarly conviction that goes back to Bultmann and beyond him to Baur and Strauss, which holds that any apocalyptic or wisdom influence

Given that Carter is addressing the Christology of John's Gospel *qua* John's Gospel (and thus not as received by later generations), the debates and disputes represented by and at Nicaea and Chalcedon are irrelevant to the discussion. Nonetheless, the statement is revealing of Carter's understanding of John's Gospel, insofar as, if true, it would lead necessarily to the conclusion that the historical Jesus had little if any influence upon Johannine Christology. John's Christology developed through the experiences of the Johannine community, argues Carter, with little if any room allowed for any "organic development" originating with Jesus' earthly activities. In a fashion consistent entirely with Bultmann and the classic Martynian tradition, this posited disjuncture between Jesus and Johannine Christology allows Carter to envision that any messianic discourse and conflict within John's narrative is necessarily a retrojection of later Johannine beliefs on to Jesus' lifetime.

The neo-Martynian tradition thus emerges, along with the classic Martynian tradition, as essentially Bultmannian on the matter of John's presentation of Jesus, and more specifically on the matter of conflicts over Jesus' identity. Thus its own *a priori* judgments regarding what conflicts were possible during Jesus' lifetime constrain the range of possible interpretations of the *aposynagōgos* passages. No less than the classic Martynian tradition, the neo-Martynian tradition finds it quite literally inconceivable that conflicts over Jesus' identity could have led to synagogue exclusions or expulsions during his lifetime. The next section asks what might result if such conflicts are not deemed inconceivable *a priori*.

3.3 THE POST-MARTYNIAN ALTERNATIVE

At the outset of developing this post-Martynian alternative, we must clarify our objective. Since we are concerned with explicating the *aposynagōgos* passages and given that 9:22 states that those who confessed that Jesus was the messiah would be made *aposynagōgos*, our objective here lies not in determining what Bultmann termed Jesus' messianic self-consciousness (i.e. whether Jesus plausibly thought of himself in messianic terms),³⁰ but

within the Johannine tradition necessarily had its genesis from a source other than Jesus. Carter, *John and Empire*, 35off., simply perpetuates this conviction, when he argues that imperial negotiation should be adopted as an eighth and ultimately superior theory for the development of John's higher Christology.

³⁰ Bultmann, *Theology*, 1:26–32.

rather in determining whether Jesus was likely interpreted by others during his own lifetime as either the messiah or a messiah-pretender, both of which interpretations may be included within a broader category that we might call “messianic discourse.” Thus one could very well affirm with Nils Dahl that Jesus suffered “crucifixion as the Messiah despite the fact that he never made an express messianic claim,”³¹ and nonetheless argue that the *aposynagōgos* passages describe actual conflicts present during Jesus’ lifetime.

One could conceivably argue that something like the conflict depicted in 9:22 could have occurred within Jesus’ lifetime by reading the verse in relation to figures sometimes construed as messianic in contemporary scholarship,³² such as an anonymous Samaritan,³³ Theudas,³⁴ an anonymous Jewish Egyptian,³⁵ and an anonymous “impostor” in the early 60s,³⁶ Judas, son of Hezekiah the brigand,³⁷ Simon of Perea,³⁸ Athronges,³⁹ Judas the Galilean (or Gaulanite),⁴⁰ and his son or grandson Menahem.⁴¹ Yet, it is debatable whether these figures were construed either as the messiah or as messiah-pretenders by their contemporaries.⁴² Uncertainty surrounding the messianic interpretation of these figures significantly reduces their evidentiary value. Nonetheless, they do suggest a general readiness in Roman-occupied Judea to violently suppress dissident movements.

³¹ Nils Alstrup Dahl, *The Crucified Messiah and Other Essays* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Augsburg Publishing House, 1974), 34.

³² Cf. the discussions in John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), 215–237; Craig A. Evans, *Ancient Texts for New Testament Studies: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 439–441; Richard A. Horsley, “‘Messianic’ Figures and Movements in First-Century Palestine,” in *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1987), 276–295.

³³ *Ant.* 18.85–87.

³⁴ Acts 5:36, *Ant.* 20.97–99.

³⁵ Acts 21:38, *Ant.* 20.167–172, and *J.W.* 2.261.263.

³⁶ *Ant.* 20.185.188.

³⁷ *Ant.* 17.271–285, *J.W.* 2.55–65

³⁸ *Ant.* 17.271–285, *J.W.* 2.55–65.

³⁹ *Ant.* 17.271–285, *J.W.* 2.55–65.

⁴⁰ Acts 5:37, *Ant.* 18.1–10.

⁴¹ *J.W.* 2.433–448.

⁴² Cf. the discussions in Collins, *Scepter and the Star*, 222; Martin Goodman, “Messianism and Politics in the Land of Israel, 66–135 C.E.,” in Markus Bockmuehl and James Carleton Paget, eds., *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 149–157; Tessa Rajak, “Jewish Millenarian Expectations,” in *The First Jewish Revolt: Archaeology, History, and Ideology* (ed. Andrea M. Berlin and J. Andrew Overman; London: Routledge, 2002), 164–188.

The situation, however, is less ambiguous when we turn to the traditions surrounding Bar Kokhba, which indicate clearly that his followers recognized him as the messiah during his lifetime.⁴³ The case of Bar Kokhba does show that it was altogether conceivable for a Jewish man to be considered the messiah during his lifetime. Yet, we cannot forget that Bar Kokhba lived a century after Jesus. Thus, his relevance to the discussion is necessarily limited. It would certainly not be sufficient to establish that already in the Second Temple period individuals could be considered the messiah during their lifetime. Given such, a more fruitful line of inquiry is required. The broader Second Temple messianic discourse might furnish just such a line.

More specifically, we might consider how such discourse appears in the Jesus tradition itself. Although the history-of-religions school, exemplified in this regard by Wilhelm Bousset⁴⁴ and followed in large part by the Bultmannian tradition,⁴⁵ attempted to demonstrate that many of the earliest Christological motifs entered into Christ-belief from non-Jewish Hellenistic traditions, such a position has been thoroughly refuted by more recent scholarship.⁴⁶ Against such older understandings, Judaism is now properly understood as the well from which the earliest Christians drew the majority of their Christological motifs, or what Le Donne has more recently described as “typologies.”⁴⁷

⁴³ For recent discussions on Bar Kokhba, cf. Goodman, “Messianism and Politics,” and the articles assembled in Peter Schäfer, ed., *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt Against Rome* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). Goodman, “Messianism and Politics,” has raised a number of objections to the view that Bar Kokhba was construed as the messiah during his lifetime. Collins, *The Star and the Scepter*, 227, and Peter Schäfer, “Bar Kokhba and the Rabbis,” in Schäfer, *Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered*, 1–22, address such objections quite convincingly.

⁴⁴ Wilhelm Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus* (trans. John E. Steely; Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1970).

⁴⁵ The influence of Bousset upon Bultmann was sufficiently great that in 1964 Bultmann wrote the “Introductory Word to the Fifth Edition” of *Kyrios Christos*.

⁴⁶ Cf. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008); Martin Hengel, *The Son of God: The Origin of Christology and the History of Jewish Hellenistic Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1976); Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003); Cary C. Newman, James R. Davila, and Gladys S. Lewis, eds., *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

⁴⁷ Anthony Le Donne, *The Historiographical Jesus: Memory, Typology, and the Son of David* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2009, *passim*).

Le Donne has advanced as a means by which to read the Jesus tradition what he calls “memory refraction,” wherein memories are “localized” via specific typologies.⁴⁸ Le Donne’s signal example is what he describes as the Son of David typology, by which particular memories of Jesus are refracted or localized, with such localization in turn transforming the typology itself. Thus, along with the Son of David typology, we also see in the earliest Christological expressions a host of typologies drawn from Second Temple Judaism, such as a Priestly typology, an Eschatological Prophet typology, a Son of God typology, a Son of Man typology, and a Suffering Servant typology.⁴⁹ Messianism, both within and without the Jesus movement, might well be defined by the interrelationship of these various typologies.

When one consults the Jesus tradition as a whole, one is struck by the extent to which memories of Jesus are assimilated to each of these typologies. One could then frame the question in terms of whether Jesus was interpreted by others, and perhaps also understood himself, as either a son of David, *or* a priest, *or* an eschatological prophet, *or* a son of God, *or* a son of man, *or* a suffering servant, as if these were mutually exclusive options. In light of the work of the Jesus Seminar and its fellows,⁵⁰ one might also add the possibility that Jesus was interpreted as, or understood himself as, a wisdom teacher or cynic (the latter of course being drawn from outside the Jewish tradition proper).⁵¹ Yet, as Hurtado has observed,

⁴⁸ Le Donne, *Historiographical Jesus*, 65–92.

⁴⁹ The most definitive and up-to-date account of what is here described as the inter-related typologies of Second Temple messianism is John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010). Cf. also Bockmuehl and Carleton Paget, *Redemption and Resistance*; Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008); William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1998); Jacob Neusner, William S. Green, Ernest Frerichs, eds., *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Gerbern S. Oegema, *The Anointed and his People: Messianic Expectations from the Maccabees to the Bar Kochba* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

⁵⁰ Funk and Hoover, *Five Gospels*; Funk, *The Acts of Jesus: The Search for the Authentic Deeds of Jesus*.

⁵¹ Cf. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); F. Gerald Downing, “Cynics and Christians, Oedipus and Thyestes,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 44 (1993): 1–10; Burton L. Mack, “Q and a Cynic-Like Jesus,” in *Whose Historical Jesus?* (ed. William E. Arnal and Michel Desjardins; Waterloo, ON.: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1997), 25–36; Leif Vaage, *Galilean Upstarts: Jesus’ First Followers According to Q* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1994).

such approaches achieve their results “by merely playing off one ‘variant’ in the Jesus tradition against another,”⁵² frequently by developing techniques by which to dismiss the non-privileged variants as inauthentic.

Against such privileging, Hurtado has suggested that instead “we take all these variants as valuable evidence in the reconstruction effort, and attempt a reconstruction that can explain the variants in light of what we know about the transmission process, thus producing a proposed reconstruction.”⁵³ That is, it is not sufficient to say that datum X about Jesus is inauthentic and must be discarded, but rather one must account for how datum X about Jesus came to be a datum *about Jesus* in the first place. If one sees a significant number of data that construe Jesus through the prism of Jewish messianism, or perhaps more precisely assimilate his memory to various typologies to which Jewish messianism was related, then one has good reason to accept as probable the thesis that such data came to be data about Jesus precisely because Jesus was someone whose life was conducive to such messianic interpretations. Through such a procedure the variety of ways by which Jesus was remembered constitute not barriers but in fact the only possible windows to understanding how Jesus actually lived his life.⁵⁴

Yet, precisely because one can conceivably, if not prudently, play variants within the tradition against each other, thus producing an impoverished Jesus truncated greatly of the wealth that resides within the tradition, one seeks what might function as a more secure point—a more certain criterion, to use that old, worn, term—by which to interpret the data. Such a more secure point is the body of traditions surrounding the crucifixion of Jesus. J.P. Meier has made much the same point, consequently formulating what he calls “The Criterion of Rejection and Execution.”⁵⁵ Along similar lines, Sanders has argued that any persuasive interpretation of the historical Jesus must explain “[t]he almost indisputable facts” of Jesus’ life, among which Sanders lists the fact that Jesus was crucified by the Roman authorities.⁵⁶

⁵² Larry W. Hurtado, “A Taxonomy of Recent Historical-Jesus Work,” in Arnal and Desjardins, *Whose Historical Jesus*, 272–295, here p. 295.

⁵³ Hurtado, “Taxonomy,” 295.

⁵⁴ This being the central thesis of Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*.

⁵⁵ John P. Meier, *Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (4 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1991–2009), 1:177. Cf. the discussion of this criterion in Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 110–113.

⁵⁶ E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 11.

The question of whether Jesus was the messiah or “King of the Jews” looms large in the various accounts of Jesus’ appearances before his Jewish opponents⁵⁷ and Pilate (cf. Matt. 26:63, 27:11; Mark 14:61, 15:2; Luke 22:67, 23:2–3; John 18:33). Later, Pilate questions the crowds regarding whether he should crucify the people’s king or messiah (cf. Matthew 27:17–22; Mark 15:9; John 19:14–15). Later still various bystanders mock Jesus for being unable to save himself, despite his claims to be a messiah or a king (Matt. 27:39–44; Mark 15:17–20, 15:32; Luke 23:35, 39).⁵⁸ Even more significant are the reports of the *titulus*, i.e. the sign that was placed over Jesus’ head, indicating that he was “King of the Jews” (Matt. 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19). Matthew and Mark go as far as to indicate that this was the αἰτία of Jesus’ execution. Bammel makes a compelling case for concluding that a *titulus* indicating that Jesus was convicted as a royal pretender was indeed affixed to his cross, just as the tradition reports, but that this should not be taken as being identical with the legal charge brought against him.⁵⁹ That is to say, the *titulus* was propaganda, a means of informing the public as to the reason for the execution, and thus also effectively a warning against other men with royal aspirations. It would seem more probable that the tradition remembers that Jesus was put to death as a messianic claimant because he lived in a way conducive to such a construal of his life, than that the tradition remembers that Jesus was put to death as a messianic claimant despite the fact that he did not live in a way conducive to such a construal of his life.

Earlier in this discussion, reference was made to Dahl’s argument that Jesus was crucified as the messiah, even though he did not utter any explicit messianic claims. Dahl developed this argument in order to account for the memories of Jesus’ death on the one hand, and such

⁵⁷ Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus*, has disputed whether the Judean leadership was at all involved in Jesus’ trial and death. This is an important question, and one that will be considered at greater length in the next chapter.

⁵⁸ Cf. the classic treatments of the trial in S.G.F. Brandon, *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1968); Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1: 315–877; John Dominic Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996); Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 294–318; Gerald S. Sloyan, *Crucifixion of Jesus: History, Myth, Faith* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1995), 9–44; Gerald S. Sloyan, *Jesus on Trial: A Study of the Gospels* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2006); Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1961).

⁵⁹ Ernst Bammel, *Jesus and the Politics of his Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 353–364.

peculiarities as the Markan messianic secret on the other.⁶⁰ Why is it that Jesus is remembered on one hand as one who was executed as the “King of the Jews,” yet on the other as one who actively sought to restrict rumours that he was the messiah? One could take the perspective that the messianic death was a wholesale invention, but then how does one account for that invention, or for the origin of the very idea that Jesus was the messiah (an idea, incidentally, upon which the messianic secret is predicated, for only if Jesus is understood to be the messiah can he keep that fact secret)?

Dahl seems to offer the best answer to his own question: “Jesus was crucified as a messianic pretender, but did not himself claim to be the Messiah, at least not publicly.”⁶¹ If this argument is granted, then a situation is recognized in which the messianic conflict reported by the *apospynagōgos* passages, especially 9:22, is markedly more plausible. If Jesus’ death was the ultimate result of a perception that he claimed to be the messiah, then it is not unreasonable to suppose that there were other, earlier moments of opposition to the messianic construal of Jesus’ person and activities. John 9:22 and 12:42 could plausibly be read as such earlier moments.

Yet, if the crucifixion was intended to put an end to the messianic discourse surrounding Jesus of Nazareth, then the available data suggests that it failed to achieve its objective. Belief in Jesus as the messiah flour-

⁶⁰ Cf. Dahl, *Crucified Messiah*, 28–33.

⁶¹ Dahl, *Crucified Messiah*, 32. Dahl argues that, although Jesus did not expressly claim to be the messiah, neither did he deny it. In particular, he points at the trial before Pilate as a definitive moment in Jesus’ expression of his self-understanding. Argues Dahl, *Crucified Messiah*, 33, “The claim to be the Messiah was thus extorted from Jesus. He did not raise it on his own initiative—at least not expressly and directly. However, before the accusation made in the face of impending death, he did not deny he was the Messiah. . . . Jesus could not deny the charge that he was the Messiah without thereby putting in question the final, eschatological validity of his whole message and ministry.” Thus, ultimately, argues Dahl, did Jesus understand himself in such a way that the messianic interpretation was a reasonable development of his thought. It is perhaps not without significance that according to Matthew 27:11–14, Mark 15:1–5, and Luke 23:1–3, Jesus’ non-denials were made in the presence of the chief priests and other leaders who turned him over to Pilate, thus opening the possibility that these denials were reported by one or more of those among the rulers (attested to in John 12:42) who were sympathetic to Jesus. John 18:33–37, however, records that Jesus’ non-denials were made before Pilate in private, for his accusers would not enter the *praetorium* due to purity concerns. This renders more problematic the matter of how these events were known to the Evangelists. Yet, although the accounts might ultimately be incommensurable on the relatively peripheral question of whether the chief priests and elders were present at the questioning, it is quite conceivable that there were individuals who were with Pilate both outside and inside the *praetorium*, such as perhaps Pilate’s own guards and retainers. Moreover, one can hardly rule out the possibility that some questioning took place inside and some outside the *praetorium*.

ished following his death. Under such conditions it would be unsurprising if many of those who opposed Jesus as a messianic pretender prior to his death would not also oppose those who believed he was the messiah after his execution. In particular, it is not at all inconceivable that 16:2 refers, at least in part, to attempts to prevent the earliest believers from preaching Jesus' name in and around the Jerusalem city assembly.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Chapter Three began with a survey of classic Martynian and neo-Martynian perspectives on whether or not the messianic discourse depicted in the *aposynagōgos* passages is historically plausible. It was argued that the Martynian traditions typically suppose that the messianic discourse depicted in the *aposynagōgos* passages is implausible and thus should be construed as a retrojection from the post-Easter Christological context. It was further argued that this Martynian supposition is rooted in Bultmann's tendency to suppose that all messianic discourse within John's Gospel are in fact Johannine Christology retrojected anachronistically on to the life of Jesus. A post-Martynian perspective was developed, which argued that the messianic interpretation of Jesus' life and actions could plausibly have contributed to the conflict depicted in the *aposynagōgos* passages. The next chapter will consider more fully why such messianic interpretation might have led to the sort of expulsions described in these passages.

CHAPTER FOUR

APOSYNAGŌGOS AND EMPIRE

4.1 AN INITIAL ORIENTATION

This chapter aims to consider the *aposynagōgos* passages within the broader Roman imperial context in which John's Gospel was written and its narrative is set. The chapter will ask whether the emerging sub-field of Biblical criticism known as "empire criticism" might assist in efforts to situate within Jesus' lifetime the events depicted in the *aposynagōgos* passages. It will be argued that although empire-critical study of John's Gospel has focused upon the experience of the Johannine community living under the Roman empire, proper historiographical focus should rest upon the ways in which the imperial context structured the events of and surrounding Jesus' life.

The broader context for this chapter is that emerging sub-field of biblical criticism known as empire criticism. Empire criticism is closely related to what is also sometimes called "postcolonial criticism," and, indeed, this latter term is sometimes used as a synonym for the former. Following Anna Runesson's recent study of postcolonial exegesis, the present author would distinguish between "postcolonial analysis within the historical critical paradigm," on the one hand, and "postcolonial methodological approaches beyond Western historical critical discourse," on the other.¹ What is in this study termed empire criticism should be considered more or less synonymous with the former of these two categories. Thus the category of empire criticism would include efforts to contextualize biblical texts within the ancient imperial contexts in which they were produced and first received, and exclude efforts to construe biblical texts within the contemporary imperial and post-imperial contexts in which they are received and read today.² This is not to deny the potential value of these

¹ Anna Runesson, *Exegesis in the Making: Postcolonialism and New Testament Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 89–125.

² Examples of empire criticism, as here conceived, would thus include, in a hardly exhaustive list, Jon L. Berquist, *Judaism in Persia's Shadow: A Social and Historical Approach* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995); Warren Carter, *John and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 2008); Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations*

latter efforts, nor to assume that there exists a non-porous line between these two approaches to what we might define more broadly as “political exegesis,”³ but rather to recognize that one cannot do everything in any one study.

(Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 2001); Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008); Norman K. Gottwald, *The Politics of Ancient Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001); Norman K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250–1050 B.C.E.* (repr. ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Marius Heemstra, *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993); Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 1997); Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press, 2004); Richard A. Horsley, *The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001); Richard A. Horsley, *Revolt of the Scribes: Resistance and Apocalyptic Origins* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010); Richard A. Horsley, *Scribes, Visionaries, and the Politics of Second Temple Judea* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007); Davina C. Lopez, *Apostle to the Conquered* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008); Lance Byron Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John* (Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2007); Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Tom Thatcher, *Greater Than Caesar: Christology and Empire in the Fourth Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2009); Kazuhiko Yamazaki-Ransom, *The Roman Empire in Luke's Narrative* (London: T&T Clark, 2010). Not included would be such approaches as, *inter alia*, Dhvani, Dalit, or Minjung exegesis, discussed in Runesson, *Exegesis in the Making*, 108–118, which employ non-Western exegetical practices.

³ A term that the present author finds immensely superior to “ideological criticism.” “Ideological criticism” tends to encourage the fallacious supposition that one can find a non-ideological criticism. Historical criticism itself is embedded in the ideologies of the *bourgeois* revolution, a point made quite well by, *inter alia*, Ward Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins: Philosophy, Secularity, and the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), and the various contributions to Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd Penner, eds., *Her Master's Tools? Feminist and Postcolonial Engagements of Historical-Critical Discourse* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005). Of course, the term “political exegesis” introduces the potential risk of assuming that there is such a thing as a-political exegesis, when in fact one must remember, with Jorge Pixley, “The Political Dimension of Biblical Hermeneutics,” in *God's Economy: Biblical Studies from Latin America* (ed. Ross Kinsler and Gloria Kinsler; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), 18–33, here p. 32, that “every biblical reading has a political dimension.” Nonetheless, the present author would define “political exegesis” as any exegesis that is explicitly and intentionally concerned with either the political dimensions of the text under discussion, or the political situation of the exegete. One could conceivably offer a similar definition of “ideological criticism,” such that the term “ideological” indicates not that the exegete is motivated by ideology, but rather than she or he is concerned with investigating matters of ideology. Yet, “ideology” and “ideological” are typically freighted terms, which Biblical critics frequently utter in an intellectually unacceptable pejorative fashion. Thus it seems best to prefer the somewhat less inflammatory term, “political.” Another possible pitfall of the term political exegesis is that it has become, at times, more or less synonymous with “Marxist Biblical criticism,” which should be seen as a distinct sub-field of political exegesis, rather than political exegesis *en toto*. This pitfall must be conscientiously avoided, for of course one can quite conceivably have

The present chapter will argue that much Johannine empire criticism, particularly that operating within an explicitly Martynian framework, lacks adequate hermeneutical or exegetical warrant. Lest this argument be misunderstood, let it be stated, unequivocally, that this chapter will argue not that John's Gospel is unrelated to matters of empire, but rather that, precisely because it contains no allegorical, second, community level, the search for statements about empire must occur first and foremost on the level of the literal. Given that, as Warren Carter states, "at its heart, the Gospel [of John] tells the story of the crucifixion of its main character, Jesus, in a distinctly Roman form of execution,"⁴ the literal sense is already quite political as it is.⁵ With this in mind, employing what Meyer calls an oblique pattern of inference, this chapter argues that the *apосynagōgos*

non-Marxist political criticisms, operating from within political traditions as diverse as the liberal, or conservative, or anarchist, or from within distinct religious traditions as Catholic social doctrine and any variety of liberation theology (many, but not all, of the latter being informed by the Marxist tradition).

⁴ Carter, *John and Empire*, 11.

⁵ This does not obviate the possibility of performing hermeneutical and exegetical operations similar to those of Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1982), 29ff, who reformulates in modernist terms the four senses typically recognized by medieval exegetes (the literal, the allegorical, the moral, and the anagogical), as an initial step towards developing his own technique of reading texts through three political horizons (which Jameson, *Political Unconscious*, 76, describes as respectively, the "text," "the social order," and the "modes of production," with the first of these roughly corresponding to the literal sense, the second to both the allegorical and the moral, and the third to the anagogical). Jameson has contributed significantly towards developing techniques that allow us to integrate and coordinate a remarkable range of differing exegetical techniques. In Jonathan Bernier, "The Consciousness of John's Gospel: a Prolegomenon to a Jaynesian-Jamesonian Approach," *Bible and Critical Theory* 6/2 (2010): 20.1–20.11, the present author himself has utilized Jameson in order to explore in his studies of the John's Gospel the tantalizing theory regarding the origins of myth, religion, and philosophy, advanced in Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976). Yet, Jameson's hermeneutics are not without difficulty, perhaps most of all that identified by Roland Boer, "A Level Playing Field? Metacommentary and Marxism," in *On Jameson: From Postmodernism to Globalism* (ed. Caren Irr and Ian Buchanan; Albany, NY: State University of New York, 2006), 51–69, namely a contradiction between, on the one hand, Jameson's laudable success in integrating a remarkable range of disparate exegetical techniques and traditions, and on the other hand, his insistence that Marxist thought is the master code that can best coordinate such integration. Such a contradiction is not without potential resolution, but perhaps because Jameson's notion of the dialectic renders him disinclined to resolve contradictions, he makes little effort to do so. As such, he is at least as vulnerable to the critiques frequently leveled at Christian and other religious interpreters, namely that they base their exegetical first principles upon unsubstantiated faith claims. This is almost inevitable, however, as any master code, whether it might be Christian or Marxist or other, will, absent adequate apologetics to warrant why one chose this particular code rather than another, be somewhat arbitrary in character.

passages can be plausibly associated with matters of empire, specifically within a c. 30 CE Judean context.

4.2 EMPIRE AND SHOE-HORNS: THE MARTYNIAN TRADITION

The neo-Martynian tradition explored in this study was developed at a time when what we might call the “imperial turn” within the social sciences and humanities began to encourage scholars to focus upon the imperial context of the New Testament texts. Such is the case also with the post-Martynian alternative that this study advances. In contrast, the classic Martynian tradition emerged, and its major suppositions were formulated, prior to this imperial turn, and thus questions about the imperial context have tended to remain peripheral to the classical Martynian tradition. As a consequence, the following discussion of the classic Martynian tradition *vis-à-vis* matter of empire will be unavoidably brief, whereas the subsequent discussion of the neo-Martynian tradition on the same matter will be comparably more extended.

4.2.1 *Empire as Afterthought: The Classic Martynian Tradition*

If the classic Martynian tradition has tended to neglect the matter of empire, two recent studies, Lance Byron Richey’s *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John*⁶ and Marius Heemstra’s *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways*,⁷ have aimed to redress this lacuna. Richey develops a narrative in which Jewish members of the Johannine community were expelled from the synagogue via the *Birkat ha-Minim*, and thus would no longer be exempt from participation in the imperial cult.⁸ Thus, argues Richey, although Jews “were normally spared from the persecutions that Christians endured in the first three centuries,”⁹ Jewish, Johannine, Christians were not, and were expelled from the synagogue via the *Birkat ha-Minim* and thus liable to imperial persecution.

Heemstra sees the *Birkat ha-Minim* and thus, given his classic Martynian suppositions, the *aposynagōgos* passages, as more indissolubly imbricated with matters of empire.¹⁰ According to Heemstra, the *Birkat ha-Minim*

⁶ Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology*.

⁷ Heemstra, *The Fiscus Judaicus and the Parting of the Ways*.

⁸ Cf. Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology*, 51–64.

⁹ Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology*, 57.

¹⁰ Cf. Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*, 159–189.

constituted resistance to the definition of Jewishness used to levy the *fiscus Judaicus* under Domitian.¹¹ Heemstra argues that via the *Birkat ha-Minim* “mainstream Judaism” (by which he means “rabbinic Judaism”) asserted its own self-definition of Jewishness over and against Domitian’s insistence that for tax purposes anyone born a Jew is a Jew.¹² According to Heemstra, the *Birkat ha-Minim* allowed the Jewish community to exclude from Jewishness those whom “mainstream Judaism” considered heretics.¹³ Heemstra argues that, after Nerva reformed the *fiscus Judaicus* in 96 CE, Jews needed only to pay the *fiscus Judaicus* “if they wanted to practice their religion following the customs of their forefathers as members of their synagogues.”¹⁴ As Jewish Christians had already been expelled and thus were no longer members of the synagogues, according to Heemstra, they were unable to avail themselves of this opportunity to pay a Jewish tax in order to secure freedom of practice, and thus “they ran the same risk of persecution by Roman authorities as Gentile Christians, because they were now also illegal ‘atheists.’”¹⁵ The *apostynagōgos* passages reflect Johannine memories of these events, Heemstra concludes.

According to both Richey and Heemstra, John encoded memories that the Johannine community was expelled from the synagogue through the mechanism of the *Birkat ha-Minim*; this expulsion was caused by (according to Heemstra) and led or contributed to (according to both Richey and Heemstra) state persecution. Classic Martynian empire criticism might be defined as the expansion of community-critical allegorization, such that it allots greater space to the Roman empire within its re-telling of John’s Gospel. Consequently, classic Martynian empire criticism is only as strong as classic Martynian scholarship’s allegorical hermeneutics.

Yet, as this study has argued, the Martynian tradition’s allegorical hermeneutics lack warrant. If the allegorical move is indispensable to the Martynian tradition, and if the allegorical move lacks warrant, then it follows that any effort to incorporate empire critical readings into the Martynian tradition must be judged historically implausible. The next section will demonstrate at greater length that this is the case, through engagement with the neo-Martynian tradition.

¹¹ For Heemstra’s understanding of the “Domitian definition,” cf. Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*, 24–66.

¹² Cf. Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*, 160–174.

¹³ Cf. Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*, 160–174.

¹⁴ Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*, 83.

¹⁵ Heemstra, *Fiscus Judaicus*, 83.

4.2.2 *Empire and Intention: The Neo-Martynian Tradition*

In this section, discussion will focus upon two recent neo-Martynian studies, *viz.* Warren Carter's *John and Empire: Initial Explorations*¹⁶ and Tom Thatcher's *Greater Than Caesar: Christology and Empire in the Fourth Gospel*,¹⁷ for each is concerned explicitly with matters of empire. It will be argued that much like empire critical scholarship standing within the classic Martynian tradition, empire critical scholarship standing within the neo-Martynian tradition focuses unduly upon implicit messages purportedly detectable in John's Gospel.

Carter deals, at length, with "Titles Not Used for the Emperor That Evoke Jewish Traditions Challenging Imperial Claims," and "Titles and Images Shared between Jesus and Roman Emperors,"¹⁸ arguing that such terms evidence an implicit critique of empire.¹⁹ Carter lists six titles and images shared between Jesus and Roman emperors: shepherd, saviour of the world, king of the Jews, son of God, Lord and God.²⁰ Yet, whilst it is perhaps not inaccurate to state that in other Jewish works "[t]hese titles and images applied to Jesus also often evoke disruptive Jewish traditions that contest Roman power,"²¹ one cannot convert "often" into "always," not without committing an example of what Fischer calls "the fallacies of statistical probability."²² The stated fact that often these titles and images have anti-imperial valences necessarily means that sometimes they do not. The burden is upon Carter to establish that they do in the specifically Johannine instance.

The problem, fundamentally, is that John never associates terms such as shepherd, saviour of the world, king of the Jews, son of God, Lord and God, with any explicit anti-imperial rhetoric. For his part, Tom Thatcher recognizes that this is the case, and argues that "whilst John's story about Jesus may not include much in the way of overtly political content, writing a gospel can itself be understood as one of the many hidden transcripts that operated within the Johannine community alongside other forms of covert resistance."²³ Yes, it could thus be understood. Yet, how

¹⁶ Carter, *John and Empire*.

¹⁷ Cf. Thatcher, *Greater Than Caesar*.

¹⁸ Carter, *John and Empire*, 177–197.

¹⁹ Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology*, 66–152, advances similar arguments, such that much of what is here said about Carter could be applied also to Richey.

²⁰ Carter, *John and Empire*, 185–197.

²¹ Carter, *John and Empire*, 177.

²² Fischer, *Historians' Fallacies*, 118.

²³ Thatcher, *Greater Than Caesar*, 29. Emphasis removed from original.

do we know that it should? What warrant has the exegete for finding that which is hidden? If it is hidden, then how do we know that it is there at all? If we know that it is there, then in what sense is it hidden in the first place?

Thatcher acknowledges this difficulty, stating that,

Compared to authors like Luke and Paul, John doesn't seem to have much to say about Rome one way or another, so engrossed was he in his exalted Christological vision and realized eschatology . . . [I]n fact, *John's Christology is his response to Rome*. . . . Since the Gospel of John is essentially Christological, John's views on empire can only be discussed in terms of the ways that he presents Jesus to the reader.²⁴

Yet, if John's view of Rome is articulated *explicitly* through his presentation of Jesus, and if his gospel is essentially Christological, then how can it be said that John has little to say about Rome? If John's view of Rome is articulated *implicitly* through his presentation of Jesus, then how do we know that his Christology articulates his view of Rome?²⁵ When does advert to implicit meanings differ substantially from a concession that one lacks the necessary data to support one's argument? One cannot but sympathize with Seyoon Kim's suggestion, with respect to Pauline studies, that "the anti-imperial interpreters' appeal to the device of coding [or, hidden and implicit messages more generally] amounts to an inadvertent admission of the failure of their whole interpretative scheme."²⁶

It seems that Thatcher is caught in a proverbial Gordian knot. Insofar as he argues that John engages in explicit anti-imperial critique, he must confront the paucity of direct Johannine commentary on empire, whilst insofar as he argues that John engages in implicit anti-imperial critique, he must confront the question of whether the critique is there at all. Such a knot is endemic to Martynian empire criticism, due to its reliance upon a highly questionable allegorical method. This Gordian knot can be cut, however, by recognizing that the Roman empire does feature significantly in John's Gospel, and quite explicitly. Why look for hidden transcripts about empire when the empire appears out in the open? Thus the post-Martynian alternative discussed below aims to cut the knot precisely by

²⁴ Thatcher, *Greater Than Caesar*, 5. Emphasis in original.

²⁵ None of this is obviated by the inescapably political dimensions of Christology, for "political" is not synonymous with "anti-imperial." One needs rather to establish that the political dimension of specifically Johannine Christology is specifically anti-imperial.

²⁶ Seeyon Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008), 33.

focusing upon how John explicitly narrates empire within his broader narration of Jesus' life and times.

4.3 A POST-MARTYNIAN EMPIRE CRITICISM: THE LITERAL EMPIRE

The aim of this section is to develop an approach to the question of John and empire that avoids the pitfalls suffered by Martyanian empire criticism. The primary purpose of this section is to shift discussion of the imperial context from discussion of hidden codes to discussion of the literal sense, and from discussion of the literal sense to discussion of the historical referent (for if medieval exegetes held that the literal sense taught the events, modern exegetes have learned that letter and event are not synonymous, no matter how much the letter remains always our primary access to the event). It will be argued that Jesus and his followers fell victim to a reasonable fear of Roman intervention on the part of certain Judean rulers. It will be argued that the sort of exclusionary actions attested to by the *apospynagōgos* passages can reasonably be construed as motivated in part by certain rulers' fear of Rome.

The Roman empire is the most prominent within John's Gospel when John claims that Jesus was put to death by order of a Roman governor, Pontius Pilate.²⁷ Yet, John's Gospel reports that Pilate put Jesus to death at the behest and impetus of a coalition of Jerusalem-based elites that included the high priest, Caiaphas (cf. 18:12–19:16, esp. 18:28). John's Gospel, especially vv. 11:47–48b, also indicates that it was due to a fear of Roman power that the Jewish leadership brought Jesus to Pilate in the first place. According to 11:47b–48, a group of priests and Pharisees, having got together to discuss Jesus, ask τί ποιούμεν, ὅτι οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος πολλὰ ποιεῖ σημεῖα; ἐὰν ἀφώμεν αὐτὸν οὕτως, πάντες πιστεύουσιν εἰς αὐτόν, καὶ ἐλεύσονται οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ ἀροῦσιν ἡμῶν καὶ τὸν τόπον καὶ τὸ ἔθνος ("What are we to do? This man is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy

²⁷ Cf. the classic treatments of the trial in S.G.F. Brandon, *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* (London: B.T. Batsford, 1968); Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 1:315–877; John Dominic Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus? Exposing the Roots of Anti-Semitism in the Gospel Story of the Death of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1996); E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 294–318; Gerald S. Sloyan, *Crucifixion of Jesus: History, Myth, Faith* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1995), 9–44; Gerald S. Sloyan, *Jesus on Trial: A Study of the Gospels* (2nd ed.; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2006); Paul Winter, *On the Trial of Jesus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1961).

both our holy place and our nation”). In John 11:50, the high priest, Caiaphas, commends a course of action to prevent the Romans from intervening, telling his co-conspirators that οὐδὲ λογίζεσθε ὅτι συμφέρει ὑμῖν ἵνα εἷς ἄνθρωπος ἀποθάνῃ ὑπὲρ τοῦ λαοῦ καὶ μὴ ὅλον τὸ ἔθνος ἀπόληται (“You do not understand that it is better for you to have one man die for the people than to have the whole nation destroyed”).

Keener argues that “Caiaphas’ view, as portrayed in John, stems more from ‘expediency’ than from moral principle,” yet also states that “[e]xpediency was a standard tool of moral reasoning among Greek philosophers.”²⁸ Keener seems more on the proper track with the latter than the former statement. Caiaphas, as presented in John’s Gospel, is indeed engaged in a form of moral reasoning, which we might indeed designate an argument from expediency, wherein he urges his fellow elites to prefer the lesser of two possible evils, namely the death of one man rather than the death of the entire nation. Lest the nation be destroyed, Jesus of Nazareth must die, and his popularity must come to an end. It was from this moment on, John tells us, in v. 53, that the Pharisees and priests began to plot Jesus’ death, and, in v. 54, he tells us further that Jesus could no longer walk openly among the Judeans. Fear of Roman intervention has led to murderous intent.

This argument is almost an appendix to that developed in Chapter Three. It was suggested there that, just as there were numerous figures in the late Second Temple period that were seen, if not as messianic figures, certainly as significant prophets and kingly claimants, so too was Jesus likely perceived. Of these, the anonymous Samaritan,²⁹ Theudas,³⁰ an anonymous Jewish Egyptian,³¹ and an anonymous “impostor” in the early 60s,³² Simon of Perea,³³ and Athronges,³⁴ were each killed during Roman efforts to suppress their respective movements. We know that eventually the Romans did come and destroy the temple after certain groups revolted against the imperial administration in Palestine.³⁵ Under

²⁸ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Books, 2003), 2:856.

²⁹ *Ant.* 18.85–87.

³⁰ Acts 5:36, *Ant.* 20.5.1.

³¹ Acts 21:38, *Ant.* 20.8.6, and *J.W.* 2.13.5.

³² *Ant.* 20.8.10.

³³ *Ant.* 17.10.6, *J.W.* 2.4.2.

³⁴ *Ant.* 17.10.7, *J.W.* 2.4.3.

³⁵ The express fear that the temple (ὁ τόπος) would be destroyed is unintelligible under the two-level strategy. A post-70 Johannine community would not look upon the destruction of the temple as a fearful possibility, but rather remember it as a historical fact. Richey,

such conditions, fear of Roman intervention, and the consequences that it might have for the survival of both the Jewish nation and the temple establishment, would have been altogether reasonable. If these members of the Judean elite thought Jesus could plausibly provoke such a response from the Romans, then their efforts to stem his popularity make eminent sense.

It does not seem a coincidence that, on the one hand, in 11:47ff., it is certain priests and Pharisees who plot against Jesus, and that, on the other, 9:22 and 12:42 both suggest that the Pharisees were among those most actively seeking to make *aposynagōgoi* those who recognized Jesus as messiah (cf. the argument in Chapter Two). This is most easily explainable if we accede that certain Judean Pharisees were opposed to Jesus, and that in these activities they were partnered with members of the priestly establishment.³⁶ On the one hand, these Pharisees sought to make *aposynagōgos* those who recognized Jesus as messiah. On the other, they entered into an alliance with leading priests to have Jesus killed. Insofar as any usage of violence can be deemed rational, this seems an altogether rational counter-insurrectionary strategy.

The above discussion supposes, with the plurality of the data on the matter, that the Judean leadership was involved to some extent in Jesus' arrest and trial. This is *contra* Crossan, who is concerned to demonstrate that the Gospel traditions surrounding Jesus' death are, on the one hand, the ground of much subsequent Christian anti-Judaism and anti-semitism, and on the other, largely fictitious, especially regarding the role of Jewish authorities in Jesus' death.³⁷ Crossan argues that the trial and passion

Roman Imperial Ideology, 22, adduces 11:48 as evidence that the "Jewish authorities within the synagogue saw the [Johannine] community as a threat," thus transferring the entirety of the discussion to a post-70 synagogue context. Even if one were to grant Richey's classic Martynian suppositions, this reading would be highly problematic, for rather than address it simply ignores the fear expressed regarding the survival of the temple.

³⁶ On Pharisees as opposed to Jesus, cf. John P. Meier, *Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (4 vols; New York: Doubleday, 1991–2009), 3:289–388; cf. also Helen K. Bond, "Political Authorities: The Herods, Caiaphas, and Pontius Pilate," in *Jesus among Friends and Enemies: A Historical and Literary Introduction to Jesus in the Gospels* (ed. Chris Keith and Larry W. Hurtado; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2011), 219–248; Anthony Le Donne, "The Jewish Leaders," in Chris and Hurtado, eds., *Jesus among Friends and Enemies*, 199–218.

³⁷ Crossan, *Who Killed Jesus*, 31–38. Cf. the related arguments put forth by Mary Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 150, and Winter, *Trial of Jesus*, 10–15, that contrary to the statement in John 18:31, the Judean leadership in Jerusalem could have sentenced someone to death. Even if this were correct,

narratives are “prophecy historicized” rather than “history remembered.” How plausible are Crossan’s arguments on these matters?

Regarding whether the trial and passion narratives generated Christian anti-Judaism and anti-semitism, that is a matter well beyond the scope of this book;³⁸ and even granted that the passion narratives have indeed been imbricated in anti-Jewish and anti-semitic discourse, it would not follow that they are historically unreliable, but rather that we in the contemporary world must wrestle with the effects of these texts, regardless of their historical reliability. On the matter of whether the trial narratives are prophecy historicized or history prophesized, Mark Goodacre argues persuasively that these two categories are not as mutually exclusive as Crossan presents, but rather we must remember that “traditions [about Jesus] generated scriptural reflection, which in turn influenced the way the traditions were recast.”³⁹ This is essentially identical to the main argument put forward in Le Donne’s *Historiographical Jesus*,⁴⁰ and has also been emphasized recently by Dale Allison.⁴¹

Looking more specifically at Crossan’s argument, it can be said to rest over much on his reconstruction of a hypothetical *Cross Gospel* that was the source for the passion narratives of the four canonical Gospels.⁴² If we exclude such hypothetical texts and focus upon the texts that are in fact extant in the data, we note a prolific memory that the Judean leadership was involved in Jesus’ death along with Pilate. Even if we accept the *Cross Gospel*, Crossan has not established that the traditions regarding the

we would probably do best not to conclude that they never brought Jesus forth, but rather that they did so for reasons other than a lack of authority to sentence someone to death.

³⁸ That said, the present author cannot but agree with the statement by Burton Visotzky, “Methodological Considerations in the Study of John’s Interaction with First-Century Judaism,” in *Life in Abundance: Studies of John’s Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown* (ed. John R. Donahue; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2005), 91–107, here p. 92, that “[d]enying that Johannine interpretation has either been anti-Semitic or served anti-Semitism is exactly that, a case of denial.” On the matter of anti-Judaism in John’s Gospel more generally, cf. Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, and Frederique Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, eds., *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

³⁹ Mark Goodacre, “Scripturalization in Mark’s Crucifixion Narrative,” in *The Trial and Death of Jesus: Essays on the Passion Narrative in Mark* (ed. Geert van Oyen and Tom Shepherd; Leuven: Peeters, 2006), 33–47, here p. 40.

⁴⁰ Le Donne, *Historiographical Jesus*.

⁴¹ Dale C. Allison, *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2010), 387–433.

⁴² Cf. the critique of this hypothetical source in Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 1:116–117.

Judean leadership's involvement were late and unreliable developments, but only that they did not come from the *Cross Gospel*.

Crossan's more specific exegetical argument, that the evangelists are trying to shift blame from the Romans to a Judean leadership that had no role in the trial, is also weak in warrant. The evangelists, and perhaps also the traditions upon which they were dependent, could very well have known that certain members of the Judean leadership and Pilate were all involved in the trial, and nonetheless have chosen to emphasize the former's role over the latter's. Moreover, it is not altogether clear that the evangelists are attempting to cast Pilate in a positive light; it is still he who orders him killed, after all, and a judge who knowingly sentences an innocent man to die is not often considered a moral luminary. Ultimately, whilst it is certainly the case that each evangelist is choosing to emphasize different aspects of Jesus' trial, that is a far way from establishing that the stories of the Judean leadership's involvement is without any historical substance.

Ultimately, then, the question becomes why the Judean leadership would be involved in such activities, and the fear of Roman intervention emerges as a plausible explanation. If such fear is plausible, then in turn it is also plausible that this in part motivated the efforts to make those sympathetic to Jesus *aposynagōgoi*. This all seems to be closely related to the inescapably political valences of Jesus' preaching. Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God, a term that could not have but made the people in power somewhat nervous.⁴³ If Jesus was seen as a potential or actual revolutionary, it is not at all implausible that this could have led to his death at the hands of those who had the best reasons to fear revolution, both Judean and Roman.

⁴³ One of the few matters upon which a plurality of historical Jesus scholars seem to agree is that the kingdom of God was central to Jesus' teaching. Where historical Jesus scholars seem unable to agree is on exactly what Jesus meant by the term, with some scholars, such as Allison, *Constructing Jesus*, 31–204; Meier, *Marginal Jew*, 2:237–506; Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 202–212; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 228–337, emphasizing that Jesus is proclaiming the eschatological notion that God is in the process of coming to establish direct rule among humanity, and other scholars, such as John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 265–302; Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence*, 167–208, emphasizing that the language of kingdom is more allegorical, and speaks to how Jesus envisioned that his followers would go about creating a better world. Regardless how one supposes that Jesus meant by the term "kingdom of God," it is easy to imagine that by proclaiming the kingdom, he gave both the Judean and Roman rulers the impression that he was fermenting rebellion.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has been an exercise in empire-critical reading. Following a critique of the allegorical mode of empire criticism employed by scholars working within the classic and neo- Martyrian traditions, a post-Martyrian empire criticism, which focused upon the literal level of the text, was developed. Given that John's narrative clearly situates the events reported in the *aposynagōgos* passages within Jesus' lifetime, it seemed reasonable and indeed necessary to see if what they report is plausible given the political realities of Judea, c. 30 CE. It was argued that they are. John's Gospel 11:47ff. was adduced as the primary data in this regard, indicating as it does that certain among the Jerusalem elite feared the potential consequences of Roman intervention to prevent Jesus' insurrection. Such fear of Rome led eventually to the plot to kill Jesus, but it is argued that the *aposynagōgos* passages report less extreme attempts to curb his popularity.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTENTION AND KNOWLEDGE: APOSYNAGŌGOS AND THE DIRECT PATTERN OF INFERENCE

5.1 AN INITIAL ORIENTATION

Chapters Two through Four aimed to demonstrate, via what Meyer calls the oblique pattern of inference, the plausibility of the *aposynagōgos* passages. Chapter Five aims to demonstrate, via what Meyer calls the direct pattern of inference, that we can reasonably convert this plausibility into probability. According to Meyer, “[t]he components of the direct pattern are intention, knowledgeable, and veracity. If the intention of the writer can be defined to include factuality and if the writer is plausibly knowledgeable on the matter and free of the suspicion of fraud, historicity may be inferred.”¹ Meyer states that any “verification [of judgments regarding historicity] follows *either* a direct *or* an oblique pattern of inference”;² and by the end of this chapter, the present study will have followed *both* direct *and* oblique patterns of inference. If Chapters Two through Four have demonstrated that the events described in the *aposynagōgos* are plausibly historical, and if Chapter Five can demonstrate that John intended factuality, and was plausibly knowledgeable on the matter, and free of the suspicion of fraud, then we have sufficient warrant to render a judgment of “probable” on the historicity of these passages.

5.2 GOSPEL WITHOUT JESUS: THE MARTYNIAN TRADITION

A major theme throughout this study has been the infeasibility of the Martynian tradition’s central hermeneutical supposition, *viz.* that John’s Gospel can and should be read as a two-level drama that tells the story of both Jesus’ life and the history of the Johannine community. The two-level drama effectively obviates concern with what is called the literal sense of the text, which is demonstrably the story of Jesus, and thus also with the

¹ Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2002), 85.

² Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 85. Emphasis added to original.

historical referents to which this literal sense attests. The two-level drama becomes effectively not the story of Jesus and the community, but only the allegorical transformation of the Gospel into the community's history. This section represents a final, in some ways summary, critique of how the Martynian traditions misconstrue what John's Gospel both aims at and succeeds in communicating.

5.2.1 *Community without Jesus: The Classic Martynian Tradition*

Martyn argues that, from John's perspective, "[t]he two-level drama makes clear that the Word's dwelling among us and our beholding his glory are not events which transpired only in the past... These events to which John bears witness transpire on both the *einmalig* and the contemporary levels of the drama, or they do not happen at all."³ According to Martyn, John recognized that the Word continued to dwell in the Johannine community, and that the Gospel witnesses to the Word's ever-present and ever-revealed glory by allegorically embedding the story of the community within the story of Jesus. According to Martyn, then, the Johannine Gospel was produced through the community's reflection upon its own experience, and the community conceived the articulation of this reflection as the ongoing post-resurrection work of the Word.

Fundamentally, Martyn understands John's Gospel as a story about the present told through an ostensible recounting of the past, rather than as a story of the past told in the present. The Martynian traditions follow broadly in this supposition. According to Raymond Brown,

[p]rimarily, the Gospels tell us how an evangelist conceived of and presented Jesus to a Christian community in the last third of the first century, a presentation that indirectly gives us insight into that community's life at the time when the Gospel was written. *Secondarily*, through source analysis, the Gospels reveal something about the pre-Gospel history of the evangelist's christological views; indirectly, they also reveal something about the community's history earlier in the century, especially if the sources the evangelist used had already been part of the community's heritage. *Thirdly*, the Gospels offer limited means for reconstructing the ministry and message of the historical Jesus.⁴

³ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (3rd ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 143.

⁴ Raymond E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), 17.

According to Brown, although each of the four canonical gospels presents itself as recollections of Jesus' life, it is precisely on Jesus' life that each yields the least valuable data, whilst yielding consistently more valuable data on the history of the respective community that produced each Gospel.

With both Martyn and Brown, we are confronted with questions about the aims of John. What does John aim to do in his gospel? This question necessarily compels us to consider the genre of John's Gospel, for insofar as generic choice is an intentional act, genre is inescapably correlated with authorial intent. For his part, John Ashton is quite adamant that the Gospels, and John's in particular, should not be read as biographies of Jesus.⁵ Ashton suggests instead the term "proclamatory narrative" to describe the Gospels, which he argues has the advantage of "suggesting that the religious aspect of a work (namely the extreme claims it makes on behalf of its hero) is likely to affect its historical reliability."⁶ Here we cannot but see a repeat of that old trope that theology and history cannot easily, if at all, co-exist within the same text. Ashton employs this trope as a warrant for the two-level drama, arguing that since John aimed to proclaim a theology of immediate relevance to his community, he could not have but compromised the factuality of his account. "[W]riting for readers whose circumstances were radically different from those of the few followers Jesus had gathered in his own lifetime and who must have read these chapters [specifically 5, 8, 10, 14–16, but one could generalize Ashton's argument to the majority of the gospel] as a direct reflection of their own experiences,"⁷ Ashton's John told readers about their own lives, through the medium of Jesus' life. The past is made to serve the needs of the present, such that the past disappears almost entirely.

⁵ John Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (2nd ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 24–27. It should be noted that the first edition of Ashton, *Understanding*, published in 1991, came out before Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), now in its second edition, *viz.* Richard A. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004). Burridge's monograph has established what can best be described as a new majority view within Gospel scholarship, *viz.* that the canonical gospels should be understood as Greco-Roman *bioi*. A significant flaw in the second edition of Ashton, *Understanding*, is its failure to engage adequately with Burridge's work and its influence. Cf. also Tobias Hägerland, "John's Gospel: A Two-Level Drama?", *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25/3 (2003): 309–322, for a consideration of John's genre, with the two-level drama given particular attention.

⁶ Ashton, *Understanding*, 27.

⁷ Ashton, *Understanding*, 27.

The classic Martynian paradigm is sustainable only if John's Gospel is understood to be the Johannine community's witness to its own history. Yet, the Gospel must first be interpreted allegorically before it can serve as the Johannine community's witness to its own history. Yet, if the Gospel interpreted allegorically can serve as a witness to Johannine history, why can the Gospel *as read on a literal level* not serve as a witness to the historical Jesus? It is a matter of some irony that Johannine community critics are deeply suspicious regarding the historical reliability of that which John's Gospel reports explicitly about Jesus, but remarkably credulous regarding the historical reliability of their own reconstructions of the Johannine community. This combination of suspicion and credulity is present in the neo-Martynian tradition as much as the classic.

5.2.2 *Identity without Jesus: The Neo-Martynian Tradition*

If, in the understanding of the classic Martynian tradition, John's Gospel is the Johannine community's witness to its own history, then, in the understanding of the neo-Martynian tradition, John's Gospel is the Johannine community's witness to its own identity. This is most plainly evident in both the "social identity approach" articulated by Raimo Hakola and Adele Reinhartz, individually and in collaboration, as well as in Warren Carter's argument that the *aposynagōgos* passages are issuing imperatives rather than narrating events.⁸ Hakola and Reinhartz argue that the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees should be read in terms of the Johannine community's efforts to define itself over and against Judaism. Similarly, Warren Carter argues that the *aposynagōgos* passages should be read not as descriptions of things that happened in the past, but rather as instructions on how Johannine Christians should behave in the present.⁹ Collectively, these scholars describe a Gospel that is imbricated in the community's efforts to define its own identity.

Yet, absent is almost any sense that the Johannine author or authors were writing about the past, not even the past of their own community.

⁸ Warren Carter, *John and Empire: Initial Explorations* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 26; Raimo Hakola, *Identity Matters: John, The Jews, and Jewishness* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Raimo Hakola and Adele Reinhartz, "John's Pharisees," in *In Quest of the Historical Pharisees* (ed. Jacob Neusner and Bruce D. Chilton; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 131–147; Adele Reinhartz, "Reading History in the Fourth Gospel," in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies* (ed. Tom Thatcher; Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2007), 190–194.

⁹ Carter, *John and Empire*, 26.

Whatever might have happened to Jesus, and whatever might have happened in the history of their community, are, for all practical, purposes, presented as incidental to these operations. Memory, in particular, does not emerge as an analytical category of any value, for John, whether a single author or cipher for a collectivity of authors, was concerned not with remembering the past but only with constructing the present. This seems a regressive move, relative to the classic Martynian tradition, which at least acknowledges that John's Gospel is interested in remembering actual events.

Of course, it would border on the absurd to claim that the author of John's Gospel was unconcerned with constructing a particular present. After all, he does tell us explicitly that he seeks with his Gospel to either create or deepen the reader's faith (cf. 20:31). Yet, it does not follow necessarily that his concern with constructing the present obviated his concern to know the past. Tom Thatcher recognizes fully that this is the case, and that John was both concerned to create a particular present and to remember the past. Thatcher introduces into the discussion the term "memory wars," to describe how different ways of articulating the past can be deployed within struggles to define the present.¹⁰ Thatcher recognizes quite correctly that people always remember the past for reasons immanent to the present, and that those reasons do not obviate but rather *create* the conditions for remembering.

Yet, Thatcher is vulnerable to the charge of focusing too much attention on the productive role of the conflicts immanent to the Johannine community's present, to a near-total neglect of how the particular representations that emerged in those conflicts might have related to the community's past. Neglected especially is the past that John's Gospel focuses upon explicitly, namely the life of the earthly Jesus. And it is upon this matter that the post-Martynian alternative developed in this study focuses its attention.

5.3 A POST-MARTYNIAN ALTERNATIVE: REMEMBERING APOSYNAGŌGOS

The post-Martynian alternative developed in this study utilizes primarily the direct pattern of inference to argue that John and his community recalled Jesus' life precisely because *Jesus' life was part of their collective*

¹⁰ Tom Thatcher, *Why John Wrote a Gospel: Jesus, Memory, History* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 51–102.

past, and thus fundamental to their present identity as a collectivity that believed that he was the messiah and the Son of God. Their identity was defined precisely as those for whom Jesus' life and death were constitutive events, such that the present could only be properly understood by remembering the past, and very specifically the past that was Jesus' life.

In utilizing the direct pattern of inference, the present author will employ in large measure what we might call "the social history of knowledge" approach to the Gospel tradition developed and deployed by, *inter alia*, Birger Gerhardsson, his former student, Samuel Byrskog, and Richard Bauckham.¹¹ The term "social history of knowledge" is borrowed here from Peter Burke's monograph of the same name.¹² Although Burke provides an excellent, succinct, overview of the sociology and social history of knowledge, the specifics of his study, focused as they are upon the early modern period, are of little immediate use for the scholar of Christian origins.¹³ Burke's historical specificity, however, reminds us that the first step in any historical investigation must be the concrete study of historical particularities. Gerhardsson, Byrskog, and Bauckham exemplify such a procedure. Beginning with the interpretation of the gospels and other material produced by early Christians, they only subsequently develop the sort of analytical syntheses that might legitimately be informed by the sort of theoretical apparatuses explored by, *inter alia*, Kenneth Bailey, James Dunn, and Werner Kelber.¹⁴

¹¹ Cf. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 2006); Samuel Byrskog, *Story as History, History as Story: The Gospel Tradition in the Context of Ancient Oral History* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Rabbinic Judaism and Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998); Birger Gerhardsson, "The Secret of the Transmission of the Unwritten Jesus Tradition," *New Testament Studies* 51/1 (2005): 1–18.

¹² Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge: From Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2000).

¹³ Burke, *Social History of Knowledge*, 1–17.

¹⁴ Cf. Kenneth E. Bailey, "Informal Controlled Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels," *Asia Journal of Theology* 5 (1991): 34–51; Kenneth E. Bailey, "Middle Eastern Oral Tradition and the Synoptic Gospels," *Expository Times* 106 (1995): 363–367; James D.G. Dunn, "Altering the Default Setting: Re-envisaging the Early Transmission of the Jesus Tradition," *New Testament Studies* 49/2 (2003): 139–175; Werner H. Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997). For critical responses to the work of these scholars, cf. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 252–262; Robert B. Stewart and Gary R. Habermas, eds., *Memories of Jesus: A Critical Appraisal of James D.G. Dunn's Jesus Remembered* (Nashville, Tenn.: B&H Publishing Group, 2010); Tom Thatcher, ed., *Jesus, the Voice, and the Text: Beyond the Oral and the Written Gospel* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2008).

Scholarship such as that produced by Bailey, Dunn, and Kelber runs a fundamental risk, namely anachronism. Bailey supposes that the ways in which certain contemporary Middle Eastern peoples transmit knowledge are essentially identical to the ways in which the Jesus tradition was initially transmitted. For their respective parts, Dunn and Kelber depend greatly upon an understanding of the natures of orality and literacy, particularly as articulated in the synthesizing work of Walter Ong; Ong, in turn, drew largely upon the Homeric scholarship of Albert Lord and Milman Parry, as well as the work of their fellow classicists Eric Havelock and Berkley Peabody.¹⁵ Studies of contemporary Middle Eastern modes of communication, of folk-singers in early 20th century Yugoslavia (upon which Parry and Lord based much of their work), of verse, composition, and cognition in Homer, Hesiod, and Plato, are all quite interesting in their own right, but only and precisely because of their historical specificity. Yet, it is this same historical specificity that makes them of dubious relevance to the study of the Jesus tradition, for the Gospels are neither ancient Greek epic poetry, nor 20th century Yugoslavian folk-songs. Although study of these various literatures might well aid us in developing a synthetic theory of knowledge production, the initial step must always be to study each in their own historical particularity. One must study the Gospels in their own time and place before introducing insights gleaned anachronistically.¹⁶ Consequently, those studies whose initial point of

¹⁵ Cf. Eric A. Havelock, *The Greek Concept of Justice: From its Shadow in Homer to its Substance in Plato* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978); Eric A. Havelock, *Origins of Western Literacy* (Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1976); Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963); Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960); Walter J. Ong, *Interfaces of the Word* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977); Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: Technologizing the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982); Walter J. Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967); Milman Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected Papers of Milman Parry* (ed. Adam Parry; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Berkley Peabody, *The Winged Word: A Study in the Technique of Ancient Greek Oral Composition as Seen Principally through Hesiod's Works and Days* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1975).

¹⁶ Birger Gerhardsson has himself been accused of anachronism, by introducing into his study insights that he gleaned from the study of rabbinic literature; cf. esp. Morton Smith, "Comparison of Early Christian and Early Rabbinic Literature," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82/2 (1963): 169–176. In response to such accusations, Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, has written, "[t]he total program for the transmission of material was not worked out during the time of the temple; the pedagogic techniques were refined and made more methodic, efficient, and general after 70 and 135... Therefore it cannot be totally anachronistic... to take the basic principles for transmission... and one by one ask if they were not applied already during the period of the temple by early Christian teachers, perhaps even by Jesus himself." In fairness, Kenneth Bailey also carries out much the

departure is the time and place of the Gospels are more likely to generate reliable conclusions about these texts than those whose initial point of departure lies elsewhere.

Turning back to the direct pattern of inference, the analytical question becomes whether or not the specifically Johannine knowledge-productive processes—such processes defined to include both the intent and the process of knowledge transmission—were such as to favour historically reliable reports. If an affirmative answer is most reasonable, then the historical plausibility of the *apospynagōgos* passages is increased significantly. If a negative answer is most reasonable, then their historical plausibility is decreased significantly. It is to these tasks that we turn now.

5.3.1 *The Aims of John: Defining John's Intention*

John's Gospel contains a series of statements regarding what herein is termed as knowledge production. The statements to be discussed below have primarily to do with knowledge about what Jesus said and did, and include John 1:14, 2:19–22, 14:26, 19:35, 20:30–31, 21:24–25, and 1 John 1:1–3.

5.3.1.1 *The Word in History: John 1:14 and 1 John 1:1–3*

Richard Bauckham has argued that given that “[t]he theological claim of the prologue that ‘the Word became flesh and dwelt among us’ (1:14) presupposes that Jesus was a real human person in real history . . . [w]e should not expect the history to have been lost behind the interpretation but rather to have been highlighted by the interpretation.”¹⁷ Therefore, argues Bauckham, we can conclude that John “intends to be faithful to history.”¹⁸ This is a reasonable inference, although one that to a certain extent begs the question, for it necessarily presupposes that John thought that what happened historically to the en-fleshed Word matters theologically.¹⁹

same procedure. Yet, whereas Gerhardsson can reasonably suppose a significant degree of cultural continuity between Jewish people of the late Second Temple and those of the early Rabbinic periods, Bailey cannot as reasonably suppose a degree of cultural continuity between the Jewish people of the late Second Temple period and the modern non-Jewish people with whom he interacted in the latter part of the 20th century.

¹⁷ Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 14.

¹⁸ Bauckham, *Testimony*, 27.

¹⁹ Bauckham's argument is not obviated by the questionable yet influential hypothesis, articulated by Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 14, that “the Prologue is a piece of cultic-liturgical poetry, oscillating between the language of revelation and confession,” and thus should be read as ahistorical myth. Even if we grant Bultmann's argument—and it is hardly a

Bultmann famously argued that 1:14 employs the language of mythology. In order to substantiate this claim, he resorted to now thoroughly discredited theories of a pre-Christian gnostic Redeemer-myth.²⁰ Yet, even Bultmann had to concede that, for John, the *logos* appeared *in history*,²¹ for it is as *sarx*, flesh, “that the Logos appears, i.e. the Revealer is nothing but a man.”²² Rather than seeing the language of myth in 1:14, then, probably we should prefer to see in this verse what Sadananda describes as a “historical theophany.”²³ Far from myth, in John 1:14 the reader learns that the Word appeared in flesh, which is to say that God appeared in history.²⁴ A close reading of 1 John 1:1–3 supports such an interpretation.

The author of 1 John²⁵ informs the reader in 1:1 that

given that we must; for a recent critique of Bultmann’s reading of the Prologue, cf. Tom Thatcher, “The Riddle of the Baptist and the Genesis of the Prologue: John 1:1–18,” in *The Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture* (ed. Anthony Le Donne and Tom Thatcher; London: T&T Clark, 2011), 29–48—it seems nonetheless the case that a theologically creative author could conceivably marshal a cultic-liturgical poem to make theological declarations about his intention. Moreover, Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 17–18, can only sustain his argument that the Prologue is cultic-liturgical poetry by resorting to the *ad hoc* argument that vv. 6–8 and 15—wherein the narrative shifts from the cosmos to the historical role of John the Baptist—are later insertions into the poem. Yet, given that these verses stand as potential evidence that John in the Prologue intends to report actual history, in excluding them from the Prologue Bultmann seems to be tacitly acknowledging that they contradict his hypothesis.

²⁰ Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 61. Perhaps the most definitive verdict on Bultmann’s gnostic redeemer-myth is that of Edwin M. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism: A Survey of the Proposed Evidence* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1973), 164, who states “when we realize that *all* of the evidences cited . . . as irreproachable proof [for the gnostic redeemer-myth]—the Hermetica, the Hymn of the Pearl, the Mandaic literature—are of clearly post-Christian date, we have grave doubts as to the strength” of any theory of a Gnosticism which pre-dates, or is even coeval, with the production of the New Testament corpus.

²¹ Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 62–63. Cf. also Rudolf Bultmann, *The Johannine Epistles* (trans. R. Philip O’Hara, Lane C. McGaughey, and Robert W. Funk; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 8.

²² Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 62.

²³ Daniel Rathnakara Sadananda, *The Johannine Exegesis of God: An Exploration into the Johannine Understanding of God* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 151–217.

²⁴ The appearance of God in history being a theme quite resonant with the deeper Jewish tradition, going back to the earliest chapters of the Tanakh.

²⁵ The present discussion proceeds on the supposition that 1 John was written either by the author of John’s Gospel, or by someone intimately familiar with his mode of thought and speech. Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 19–30, provides what still remains one of the best overviews of the arguments for and against common authorship. The more recent assessment offered by Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (2 vols.; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Books, 2003), 1:123, sums up well the state of our knowledge: “[d]espite the lack of consensus on authorship, however, no serious challenge has been mounted against the documents deriving from the same community or school; they have too much in common for that.” Although the present author is inclined to consider the Gospel and 1 John as the products of a single author,

[w]e declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

When due allowance is made for Bultmann's idiosyncratic theological language and *Tendenzen*, it is difficult to disagree with his suggestion that in 1 John 1:1–3, “one must speak of a paradoxical identity, which consists in the fact that a historical event [i.e. the incarnation of the Word] is at the same time the eschatological event.”²⁶ From John's perspective, however, there is no distinction made between the historical, on the one hand, and the eschatological, or indeed the theological more broadly, on the other. Yarbrough has put the matter quite well, stating that, according to the prologue of 1 John, “the eternal has somehow materialized in the carnal.”²⁷ As far as John is concerned the history of *Jesus*, the Word-made-flesh, is theological, precisely because it is the history of Jesus, the *Word-made-flesh*.²⁸ Jesus' flesh was God's flesh, and thus it mattered what that flesh had done and what had been done to that flesh.

it suffices for purposes of the current discussion to accept that they came from a Johannine circle or school. Note that the argument in Bultmann, *Johannine Epistles*, 1, that John's Gospel and 1, 2, and 3 John cannot come from the same author because “[w]hereas the Gospel is opposed to the ‘world,’ or to the Jews who are its representatives, and therefore to non-Christians, the false teachers who are opposed in 1 John are within the Christian community and claim to represent the genuine Christian faith,” reveals the significant weakness of the Bultmannian approach to questions of history, an approach supposed by both the classic and neo- Martyrian traditions. If we grant Bultmann's argument that 1 John has distinctly different polemical targets than does the Gospel (although it is not clear to the present author that the Gospel has *any* polemical target, thus obviating the supposed distinction), it follows neither that 1 John was written later than the Gospel (these different opponents could have existed at the same time), nor that the same author could not have written each text at different times. Regardless, Bultmann, *Johannine Epistles*, 1, carries on to say that “[t]he relationship between 1 John and the Gospel rests on the fact that the author of 1 John had the Gospel before him and was decisively influenced by its language and ideas,” thus supporting the conclusion that, even if one accepts Bultmann's highly questionable understanding of the relationship between the Gospel and 1 John, the latter can be used to illuminate the former.

²⁶ Bultmann, *Johannine Epistles*, 9.

²⁷ Robert W. Yarbrough, *1–3 John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008), 34.

²⁸ Brown, *Epistles of John*, 164–165, notes that several exegetes have read *περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς* in 1 John 1:1 not as “regarding the [incarnate] Word of life,” but rather as “regarding the [proclaimed] word of life,” i.e. *logos* as a reference to the proclamation about Jesus, rather than *logos* as Jesus. This alternate reading is less than compelling, for although the author of 1 John might refer to what he heard regarding the proclamation about Jesus, how

Although neither John 1:14 nor 1 John 1:1–3 suffice to demonstrate that John was concerned with what Meyer calls factuality, they do raise the initial suspicion that, as Bauckham argued, it mattered a great deal to him theologically what Jesus did and what was done to him. This goes well beyond Blomberg's relatively modest, but nonetheless indubitable, claim that in the Gospel's Prologue "John is affirming the real humanity of Jesus as a historical figure, a claim not contested today by any serious scholarship,"²⁹ and is quite consistent with Schnelle's argument that, *contra* Käsemann's untenable argument for a "naïve docetism" in John's Gospel, John contains an intentionally antidocetic Christology.³⁰ For John's Gospel, it is not simply the case that Jesus existed as a real human person in history, although that is affirmed unequivocally, but also that through this human, historical existence he brought, as stated in 1:17, ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια. Given that such statements preface John's story of Jesus' human, historical existence, it is difficult to conceive of a world in which John considered the details of that existence incidental to his theological claims.

Bauckham's interpretation renders problematic the long-standing tendency, in not only Johannine scholarship but the study of the New Testament as a whole, to oppose history to theology. Against this tendency, Bauckham presents a John who is interested in history not despite but rather *because of* his theology. This corresponds well with further indications within John's Gospel that, for theological reasons, John felt a degree of what we might call "hermeneutical restraint" upon the creativity that he could employ whilst telling his story of Jesus. At the same time, almost paradoxically, this hermeneutical constraint upon creativity seems clearly to have functioned also as an impetus for creativity. 2:18–22 supports this understanding of how constraint and creativity interact in John's story of Jesus, and thus one suspects also in the production of knowledge within the Johannine community.

likely would he be to say that he saw and, more to the point, touched it? Indeed, how, exactly, does one touch a proclamation? The language of seeing, hearing, and touching, cumulatively point towards something that existed as more than proclaimed words. This should incline us towards reading *logos* as the incarnate Word, with the genitive τῆς ζωῆς construed in an exegetical or (less likely) appositional sense.

²⁹ Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel: Issues and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 72.

³⁰ Udo Schnelle, *Antidocetic Christology in the Gospel of John* (trans. Linda Maloney; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992). Cf. Ernst Käsemann, *The Testament of Jesus: A Study of the Gospel of John in the Light of Chapter 17* (London: SCM Press, 1968), and the important response to Käsemann by Marianne Meye Thompson, *The Humanity of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

5.3.1.2 *Constraint and Creativity: John 2:18–22*

2:18–22 suggests that only subsequent to Jesus' resurrection did his disciples fully understand his saying about the destruction and rebuilding of the temple. Brown has argued that this "post-resurrectional amplification" of Jesus' saying constituted a misinterpretation of what "was originally an eschatological proclamation referring to the Jerusalem temple."³¹ Against such interpretation, Köstenberger observes that Jesus, throughout the Gospel tradition, repeatedly predicts his death and subsequent resurrection on the third day.³² Both Brown and Köstenberger suppose that Jesus did actually utter something like what John attributes to him in 2:19. For our present purposes, it is not necessary to determine how faithful to Jesus' intentions were the disciples' post-resurrection amplification.³³ Regardless of whether or not the disciples correctly construed Jesus' statement, either before or after Easter, it is far easier to imagine that John would correct and qualify a statement that he did not fashion out of whole cloth, than that he would correct and qualify one that he did. Thus it appears that whilst, on the one hand, John felt a degree of constraint to remain faithful to Jesus' words, he also proceeded in such a way that recollections of Jesus' sayings did not so much preclude as constitute the basis for creative reflection upon what Jesus had said.

The above reading does open the theoretical possibility, however, that, through such creative reflection, the Johannine community encoded their own story allegorically within that of Jesus'. This possibility is undermined by 14:26.

³¹ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1966), 1:123.

³² Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004), 109.

³³ The present author does, nonetheless, think it quite probable that Jesus did utter words much like 2:19. One can envision a scenario in which Jesus rose from the dead after predicting that he would, or a scenario in which he rose and certain of his pre-resurrection statements were re-interpreted to refer to his resurrection, or a scenario in which he did not rise after three days, but due to his pre-resurrection predictions his followers came to believe that he had. One can less easily envision a scenario in which Jesus neither rose from the dead after three days, nor had predicted that he would, for such a scenario would be almost entirely unable to explain why his followers came to believe both that he had risen from the dead and that he had predicted that he would do so. Thus, either Jesus rose from the dead, or he predicted that he would, or both, but not neither. On whether Jesus actually rose from the dead, cf. the recent, magisterial, study by Michael R. Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2010), as well as older works on the matter, such as, Gerd Luedemann, *The Resurrection of Jesus: History, Experience, Theology* (trans. John Bowden; Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1994); N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1996).

5.3.1.3 *The Paraclete's Memorial Function: John 14:26*

John's Gospel is unique among the canonical gospels for several reasons, one of which is that only John discusses the mechanisms of memory explicitly. In 14:26, one of four Johannine Paraclete passages, i.e. passages within John's Gospel in which Jesus speaks of a *παράκλητος* (the other three being 14:16, 15:26 and 16:7), Jesus states that ὁ δὲ παράκλητος, τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον, ὃ πέμψει ὁ πατήρ ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου, ἐκεῖνος ὑμᾶς διδάξει πάντα καὶ ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν ("But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you").

Martyn reads this passage, and the Paraclete passages as a whole, as evidence of a hermeneutical license that allows John to tell allegorically the story of his community through his gospel.³⁴ Such a reading places stress upon διδάξει πάντα ("will teach you everything"), to the virtual neglect of ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν ("will remind you of all that I have said to you"), or perhaps more precisely supposes, as Bultmann states, that "[t]here is of course no differentiation made here [in 14:26] between two functions of the Spirit...; διδ. and ὑπομ. are one and the same."³⁵ Raymond E. Brown assumes much the same, arguing that διδάξει πάντα and ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ εἶπον ὑμῖν should be construed as in synonymous parallel.³⁶

Yet, teaching is not synonymous to, but rather constitutes a category qualitatively different from, reminding. It would appear that John intends to inform the reader that the Paraclete might teach new matters to the disciples, but of Jesus' words it reminds them.³⁷ In order to read 14:26 as evidence of a hermeneutical license that allowed John to allegorically tell the story of his community, in the phrase ὑπομνήσει ὑμᾶς πάντα ἃ

³⁴ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (3rd ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 136–143.

³⁵ Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 626, n. 6.

³⁶ Brown, *John*, 2:650–651.

³⁷ C.K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978), 467, perhaps goes too far in the opposite direction of Bultmann, Martyn, and Brown, when he argues that "in John the Paraclete reminds the believer not of anything within himself but of the spoken, though not fully understood, words of Jesus. There is no independent revelation through the Paraclete, but only an application of the revelation in Jesus." 14:26 suggests that the Paraclete will teach a sum of material in excess of Jesus' words. Yet, Barrett is correct when he says that the Paraclete does not *remind* "the believer of anything within himself but of the spoken... words of Jesus." Moreover, given that the Paraclete is understood in John to continue Jesus' presence in the world, even the sum of material taught in excess of Jesus' words should reasonably be seen as an extension of Jesus' teaching.

εἶπον ὑμῖν one must construe as references to the Johannine community both ὑμᾶς and ὑμῖν. Yet, in that phrase, Jesus promises that the Paraclete “will remind *you* [ὑμᾶς] of all that I have said *to you* [ὑμῖν].” Given that in the narrative context the pre-resurrection Jesus is speaking to his pre-resurrection disciples, it must be specifically those disciples who are to be reminded of those things which were said to them. Yes, it is the Paraclete who brings these things to mind, but it was Jesus who first spoke them to the disciples.

Combined with 2:18–22 (cf. the discussion above) and the statement in 14:26 that the Paraclete would διδάξει πάντα (“will teach you everything”), we should probably conclude that John construed the Paraclete’s creative function as derivative of its memorial function. For John, Jesus’ sayings were remembered through the Paraclete, which then taught their proper interpretation. Such a reading, which is highly consistent with the textual data, is inconsistent with the Martynian allegorical reading, which assumes necessarily that any given saying that John attributed to Jesus can be read as having originated in, and being descriptive of, the community, independent of any actual memories of Jesus.

14:26 suggests that those who heard the earthly Jesus played a special role in the processes of knowledge production, and more specifically the memorial processes, through which at least the Johannine sector of the Jesus tradition took shape. This in turn suggests that John was concerned with establishing that eyewitnesses had a special authority in the process of knowledge production.³⁸ These witnesses as well as the broader community apparently construed the Paraclete as central to their memory work. This was “memory-in-the-Spirit,” and the Spirit was operative within a community. More to the point, there are indications that within this community one witness was of particular significance in the production of Johannine Jesus tradition.

5.3.1.4 *The Beloved Disciple was There: John 19:35*

In 19:35, one reads that the disciple whom Jesus loved (cf. 19:26) witnessed and testified to Jesus’ crucifixion, and more specifically to the fact that his legs were not broken and that water and blood came out his side (cf. 19:33–34). John deemed it crucial to establish in 19:35 that “He who saw this has testified so that you also may believe. His testimony is true, and

³⁸ As urged by, *inter alia*, Bauckham, *Eyewitnesses*, 348–471; Bauckham, *Testimony*, 9–72; Byrskog, *Story as History*, 235–242.

he knows that he tells the truth.” At stake is the truth of particular events witnessed at the crucifixion. *Contra* Andrew Lincoln, who argues that “[t]he truth of that witness does not refer to its circumstantial accuracy but to the explanation of God’s purposes implied by its narrative,”³⁹ the “truth” here must at least suppose if not refer to circumstantial accuracy. How can it be otherwise, if John believes, as he indicates in 19:36 that “[t]hese things occurred so that the scripture might be fulfilled, ‘None of his bones shall be broken’”?⁴⁰ It is precisely the circumstantial accuracy of the report that substantiates the theological conclusion about the events, and thus also makes the events of more than antiquarian interest to John.

Whether or not the witness in 19:35 is the Beloved Disciple,⁴¹ or another, unnamed, witness, Byrskog puts it well when he observes that, “[t]his is an event presented at a historical distance and open for everyone who attended the event to observe. The episode is part of the history of the past. Hence, faith and truth are not swallowed up entirely by the present

³⁹ *Contra* Andrew T. Lincoln, “We Know That His Testimony Is True: Johannine Truth Claims and Historicity,” in *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 1: Critical Appraisals of Critical Views* (ed. Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 179–197, here p. 197.

⁴⁰ Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1997), 622, captures well what John seems to be saying, when he writes that the “purpose clause introduced [in 19:35] by ‘so that’ is intended not only to confirm the church’s faith in the historicity of Jesus’ death on the cross or the details mentioned here but to direct its attention to the fulfillment of prophecy in those details as proof of the degree to which God’s involvement with and saving counsel for his Son is manifest in the particular manner of Jesus’ dying.” Cf. the similar comment in Barrett, *St. John*, 558, that, “‘You’ (readers of the gospel) ‘are not merely to believe that blood and water did in fact issue from the side of the Crucified, but to believe in the full Christian sense.’” Both commentators rightly identify that John’s theological interest does not obviate but in fact is the reason for his historical interest.

⁴¹ As argued by, *inter alia*, Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 677–679, and Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1154. This seems the most prudent course of interpretation. The Beloved Disciple is the only male disciple said to be present at the crucifixion (cf. 19:26), and elsewhere in John’s Gospel (cf. 21:24) we find his role as eyewitness described in language very similar to 19:35. Says Paul N. Anderson, “Introduction to Part 3: Aspects of Historicity in John 13–21,” in *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 2* (ed. Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 245–253, here p. 249, “[s]everal assertions are made by the final narrator [in 19:35]: (1) ‘he who saw this has testified so that you also may believe’; (2) ‘his testimony is true’; and (3) ‘he knows that he tells the truth’ . . . [A]n explicit attribution of authorship is made at the end of the Gospel (21:24), making three assertions as well: (1) ‘this is the disciple who is testifying to these things’; (2) ‘and [he] has written them’; and (3) ‘we know that his testimony is true.’” Yet, it must be noted that the identification is not unequivocal in 19:35, and the passage could potentially refer to another male witness to the crucifixion.

dimension of the story; rather, truth finds its basis in the concrete observation of a past event, and faith is aroused in relation to that truth."⁴² As we have seen with passages such as 1:14, 2:18–22, and 14:26, that history, rather than being the antithesis of belief, is, for John, its precondition.

Thatcher has suggested that “[p]erhaps the greatest irony of the historical literature lies in the fact that the Fourth Gospel offers ‘the most [theologically] mature’ outlook on Christ in the New Testament while also making the most explicit claims to direct contact with the historical Jesus.”⁴³ Although indeed there is in John’s Gospel a conjunction of theological sophistication and active interest in and contact with Jesus, this conjunction would seem ironic only to those who suppose that theology and history must somehow be antithetical. Of such a supposition, Marianne Meye Thompson has well said, “[t]hat is a very strange way to imagine how theology works,”⁴⁴ and one is inclined to add that it is also a very strange way to imagine how history works. Given this lack of irony, it is not surprising to find the thematic relationship between belief and history evident in the next passage to be discussed, 20:30–31.

5.3.1.5 *Belief through History: John 20:30–31*

John sets up 20:30–31 as a μὲν . . . δὲ construction: on the one hand, there are many signs which Jesus is known to have done in the presence of his disciples; on the other hand, he says, I have selected those that I think most conducive to fostering belief.⁴⁵ John elected to present a certain set

⁴² Byrskog, *Story as History*, 236.

⁴³ Tom Thatcher, “Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel: Phase Two of the John, Jesus, and History Project,” in Anderson, Just, and Thatcher, eds., *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 2*, 1–6, here p. 2. Note that Thatcher quotes the phrase “the most [theologically] mature” from John A.T. Robinson, *The Priority of John* (ed. J.F. Coakley; London: SCM Press, 1985), 342. Parenthetical emendation in the quote from Robinson is Thatcher’s.

⁴⁴ Marianne Meye Thompson, “The ‘Spiritual Gospel’: How John the Theologian Writes History,” in *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 1: Critical Appraisals of Critical Views* (ed. Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007), 103–107, here p. 104.

⁴⁵ It is irrelevant to the present discussion whether John intends to foster pre-existing faith among Christians, or to foster a faith in unbelievers that would lead to conversion. Barrett, *St. John*, 575, suggests that the matter is related to whether the text originally read the present subjunctive πιστεύητε (as in P66, * \aleph , B, and θ), or the aorist subjunctive πιστεύσητε (as appears in the majority of other witnesses), with the former suggesting that it should read “that you may continue to believe, be confirmed in your faith” and the latter reading “that you may here and now believe, that is, become Christians.” Barrett himself prefers the present subjunctive, yet Keener, *John*, 2:1215, quite rightly argues that “the matter can hardly be settled by appeal to the divided textual witness.” Whichever John intended, the salient point for the present discussion is that he choose from among

of signs from a larger database of signs that were remembered as having actually happened. The δὲ side of the μὲν . . . δὲ construction opens questions about why John chose these particular signs, or more precisely, given his own statements, why he considered these particular signs most conducive to fostering belief. The μὲν side, however, makes clear that he defined his activity as one of choosing from a set of signs that actually happened. From John's perspective, the factuality of these signs was a necessary, but not sufficient, supposition for their inclusion. They needed also to foster belief that Jesus was the Christ. John's problem was not that he has too little tradition, and thus must create from whole cloth stories about Jesus, but rather that he had far more than he could actually use in his Gospel. If the factuality of those things that Jesus is said to have done was a necessary, but clearly not sufficient, condition for their inclusion in the Gospel, one should expect reasonably that the same would be the case for those things done to and around Jesus.⁴⁶

5.3.1.6 *Author as Eyewitness: John 21:24–25*

John 21:24–25 claims that the author was witness to things that Jesus did, and presumably, by implication, those things done to and around him.⁴⁷

a database of material about Jesus those that he thought most conducive to achieving his purpose, and that this act of selecting supposes the factuality of the selected material. Regardless of what decision one renders on the matter of the present versus the aorist subjunctive, Bultmann, *Gospel of John*, 698–699, might be quite close to the mark when he suggests that “[s]o far as the Evangelist is concerned it is irrelevant whether the possible readers are already ‘Christians,’ or are not yet such; for to him the faith of ‘Christians’ is not a conviction that is present once for all, but it must perpetually make sure of itself anew, and therefore must continually hear the word anew.”

⁴⁶ Blomberg, *Historical Reliability*, 271, notes that 20:30–31 “raise the further, fairly pointed question of whether the Fourth Evangelist could have believed that substantially mythical or legendary accounts of Jesus’ life could create or nurture Christian faith.” One can only maintain that John could have believed thus if one ignores his own words in this passage, namely that Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλα σημεῖα ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐνώπιον τῶν μαθητῶν [αὐτοῦ] (“Jesus *did* many other signs in the presence of his disciples”). The author appears to have considered it a necessary condition for including this material in John’s Gospel that Jesus actually did these things, and in the presence of witnesses.

⁴⁷ It could be argued that 24a merely indicates that the Beloved Disciple (the referent of οὗτος; cf. 21:20–23) was witnessing to those events described in chapter 21; on this matter, cf. Brown, *John*, 2:1123–1124, who notes it as a possibility but does not think it likely. Brown very likely renders the best judgment on this matter. Almost certainly, the intended sense in 21:24a is that the Beloved Disciple was a witness of and wrote down the things reported in the Gospel as a whole, as argued by Barrett, *St. John*, 587–588; Brown, *John*, 2:1123–1124; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2005), 522–523. This seems to be confirmed by v. 25, which indicates that if ἄλλα πολλὰ ἃ ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς (“other things which Jesus did”), if written down, one could fill more books (βιβλία) than the world itself could hold. This statement, coming at the end

The phrase ἀληθῆς αὐτοῦ ἡ μαρτυρία ἐστίν in 21:24 is nearly identical to a phrase in 19:35, ἀληθινὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία; and in both, μαρτυρία refers to the Beloved Disciple's report of events of Jesus' life (cf. the discussion above). It thus seems almost inescapably the case that in 21:24 John is referring to the Beloved Disciple's reports, throughout the gospel, of events that actually happened. Moreover, 21:25 almost certainly refers back to 20:30, or at the very least, both passages emphasize that John could have reported many more events than he actually does. Much as in 20:31, it seems that the truth referenced in 21:24 entails what Meyer would call factuality, which is to say that, from the perspective of 21:24, what is reported in the Gospel are events that did happen historically.

of the gospel, is best construed as a statement to the effect that, as much material as this *book* (not chapter) contains, it barely scratches the surface of the Jesus tradition (cf. the very similar statement in 20:30).

It could be objected that 21:24–25 come from a different author than the rest of the Gospel, and thus that it reflects not John's own intentions but rather the claim of another about his intentions; cf. J.A.T. Robinson, *Can We Trust the New Testament?* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977), 83, who thought 21:24–25 the only verses in the Gospel that must be an addition to the original text; cf. also the more recent discussion in Keener, *John*, 2:1241. The majority view is indeed that John's Gospel originally ended with chapter 20, with chapter 21 a later addition to the Gospel; for a recent overview of these issues, cf. Keener, *John*, 2:1219–1222, 2:1240–1242. This argument is based upon 20:30–31, which as we have seen, presents John's "purpose statement" for his Gospel, and could be read as a conclusion and thus an end to the work as a whole. The majority view, however, is not unassailable. First, there is the not inconsequential textual detail that John's Gospel does not end at 20:31, and that there is no manuscript evidence that it ever did. Moreover, Keener, *John*, 2:1221, argues that in those instances in Graeco-Roman literature wherein an editor has clearly added a secondary ending, these endings typically reverse the author's own views. Within Jewish literature, arguably such a phenomenon occurs with the endings of Job and Ecclesiastes. Yet, John 21 in no way reverses what John had written through chapter 20. The purpose statement of 20:30–31 might pose exegetical questions, but those problems do not necessarily provide warrant for dissolving the unity of the text. Bauckham, *Testimony*, 274, states well the position that the present author finds most compelling, namely that chapter 21 is indeed an epilogue, "but an epilogue that there there is no reason to doubt belongs to the original design of the Gospel."

For the sake of argument, however, let us grant that chapter 21 is an addition to the Gospel. The language of chapter 21 is not significantly distinct from the language of the rest of the Gospel; cf. Margaret Davies, *Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 263. The best judgment is that either the author wrote this chapter himself, even if it was added later. Again, for the sake of argument, let us grant that chapter 21 was appended to the Gospel by someone other than John. This person apparently was someone thoroughly acquainted with John's thought, such that he could write in a style indistinguishable from John's. It would seem reasonable then to conclude that such a redactor had a good sense of John's intention, thus effectively obviating any challenge to reading John 21:24–25 in order to construe John's aim. As such, speculation over whether chapter 21 is a later addition is not only poorly grounded in the data, but moreover has little if any exegetical significance.

5.3.1.7 *Summary*

This section has argued that the author of John's Gospel intended what Meyer calls factuality. John felt himself constrained by the actual events of Jesus' life as well as the things that Jesus said. This did not mean that he was not a creative theologian, however. Quite the opposite, for Jesus' sayings and the events of his life spurred John on to creativity. Memories of Jesus were not obstacles to, but rather preconditions for, John's theology. The question remains, and will be addressed in the next section, whether he was indeed in a position to have genuine knowledge about Jesus. No matter how much one might want to communicate accurate and reliable knowledge regarding a matter, if one is not situated such as to have reliable knowledge, one is not likely to do so.

5.3.2 *What the Author Knew: Was John Plausibly Knowledgeable?*

The previous section argued that the author of John's Gospel intended what Meyer calls factuality. It remains to be considered whether the author of John's Gospel was someone who could plausibly know those things that he reports, especially as regards events reported in the *aposynagōgos* passages. There are two avenues that one could potentially pursue in considering whether this is the case. The first regards the matter of how traditions about Jesus circulated in the first generation or two of the Christ movement, whilst the second is to determine as clearly as possible the identity of the author of John's Gospel. Ultimately, however, these two approaches coalesce, for, it will be argued below, the Jesus tradition circulated primarily through the communication of testimony among and from eyewitnesses. Consequently, given that it can be demonstrated that John the Evangelist was very likely an eyewitness to Jesus, we can reasonably conclude that he was someone well-situated to learn much about Jesus' life, and thus potentially about the events reported in the *aposynagōgos* passages. If it can be shown that the author was plausibly an eyewitness specifically to the events reported in the *aposynagōgos* passages, then we can all the more reasonably conclude that he was well-situated to know about these events in particular.

5.3.2.1 *The Basic "Unit" of Transmission: Eyewitness Testimony in the Jesus Tradition*

The present author holds that the necessary "first principle" of any historical examination of the Jesus tradition must be that eyewitnesses were the first and most authoritative bearers of that tradition. This first principle

is held against the form-critical paradigm developed and promoted by, *inter alia*, Rudolf Bultmann and Martin Dibelius,⁴⁸ the basic suppositions of which have informed much Gospel scholarship of the last century. The form-critics supposed a radical divide between those who knew Jesus during his lifetime and those who initially formulated the Jesus tradition, as well as those who gave it the forms in which it came down to us. Gerhardsson says well that, “For the pioneer form critics, Dibelius and Bultmann, it was a fundamental idea—taken over from contemporary folklore—that the synoptic tradition had anonymous origins in the early Christian congregations, that it arose among people whose names are unknown.”⁴⁹

The pioneer form-critics were hardly the last scholars of the Jesus tradition to suppose as their starting point an essentially folkloristic model predicated upon anonymous tradents. Werner Kelber, for instance, situates his influential monograph *The Oral and the Written Gospel* over and against both the form-critical tradition, and Gerhardsson’s critique thereof.⁵⁰ Insofar as Kelber breaks with Bultmann’s primary suppositions, it is on the matter of orality versus literacy, and not over the matter of anonymity. Whereas Bultmann thought that the distinction between oral and written transmission of the Jesus tradition was largely a matter of analytical indifference, Kelber made this distinction between the two media the starting point of his critical paradigm. In order to establish this distinction, it is to the study of “oral culture” that Kelber turns.⁵¹ Yet, Kelber

⁴⁸ Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (trans. John Bowden; New York: Harper and Row, 1968); Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (trans. Bertram Lee Woolf; Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971).

⁴⁹ Birger Gerhardsson, *The Reliability of the Gospel Tradition* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 35–36.

⁵⁰ Kelber, *Oral and the Written Gospel*, 2–14.

⁵¹ Kelber, *Oral and the Written Gospel*, 14–34. Interestingly, Bultmann has perhaps been vindicated on this matter by the one sociologist of memory who has taken an active interest in studies of collective memory in the Jesus tradition, Barry Schwartz, “What Difference Does the Medium Make?,” in Le Donne and Thatcher, *The Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture*, 225–238, here p. 238, who has written that “social experience will bend written and oral history in the same directions. Writing and orality are, and, we have good reason to believe, always have been, different codings of one and the same message.” Cf. his argument, in Barry Schwartz, “Christian Origins: Historical Truth and Social Memory,” in *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity* (ed. Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher; Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 43–56. Schwartz’s reasoning is difficult to refute. It seems unlikely that two media within a single community would lead to substantially different messages simply because they are different media. *Contra* Marshall McLuhan’s famous aphorism, the medium is not the message. Moreover, any thesis that poses a radical rupture between the oral and the written must explain how, given that

maintains the basic supposition of an anonymous community.⁵² Kelber articulates not a break with, but rather a modification of, the form-critical paradigm, in which the media through which any tradition is articulated and transmitted are foregrounded as primary factors in giving form to the gospels.

The supposition that anonymous communities were responsible for the Jesus tradition continues in the recent scholarly interest in “collective memory.”⁵³ Based in large part on the work of Maurice Halbwachs, the study of “collective memory” *vis-à-vis* the Jesus tradition has inherited his thoroughly Durkheimian suppositions.⁵⁴ Durkheim’s structuralist-functionalist understanding of society leaves little room for individual human agency, or, more to the point, Durkheim and Durkheimians tend to study society to the neglect of individuals. More recently, Jan Assmann’s somewhat

we have direct access only to the written, we can in fact know that the oral was significantly different (which is a necessary supposition for any theory of radical rupture).

⁵² This is hardly unexpected. As already noted, Kelber adopts an understanding of “oral culture” pioneered by Ong, who in turn depended greatly upon the respective works of the classicists Milman Parry, Lord, Havelock, Peabody. Their work, in turn, represents in large part the introduction of folkloristic suppositions into the study of archaic Greek literature, particularly the Homeric and Hesiodic corpora. With their stated interest in oral formulae, Parry and those who followed his underdeveloped scholarship (Parry died at the young age of 33) were working out in classical scholarship what we might describe as a form-critical paradigm roughly analogous to what Bultmann, Dibelius and the form-critics were working out in New Testament studies. It is thus hardly surprising if we see a host of similar suppositions in scholarship that moves from one species of form-criticism to another. That there were differing emphases merely speaks to how the two disciplines went about procedurally identifying forms within texts, but not to the broader philosophical commitments that underlay the broader emphasis upon forms and formula. Lord, *Singer of Tales*, perhaps reflects most clearly the interest of this group of classicists in folklore studies, but it should be noted that Lord was continuing work that his teacher, Milman Parry, had begun.

⁵³ Cf. Werner H. Kelber and Samuel Byrskog, eds., *Jesus in Memory: Traditions in Oral and Scribal Perspectives* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2009); Kirk and Thatcher, *Memory, Tradition, and Text*. With specific reference to the Gospel of John, cf. Anthony Le Donne, “Memory, Commemoration and History in John 2:19–22: A Critique and Application of Social Memory,” in Le Donne and Thatcher, *Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture*, 186–204; Tom Thatcher, “John’s Memory Theatre: A Study of Composition in Performance,” in Le Donne and Thatcher, *Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture*, 73–91.

⁵⁴ Having been one of Emile Durkheim’s few students to survive the First World War, Halbwachs became a standard-bearer for the second generation of that particular intellectual tradition. The most accessible English edition of his work on memory is Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (ed. and trans. Lewis A. Coser; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). On his thought, and his intellectual and personal relationship with Durkheim, cf. Lewis A. Coser, “Introduction: Maurice Halbwachs, 1877–1945,” in Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 1–34.

idiosyncratic work upon “cultural memory,” which has also influenced the study of the Jesus tradition,⁵⁵ likewise leaves little room for the individual actor in its Freudian and Nietzschean framework.⁵⁶ According to Assmann, memories are passed down through the ages in an almost genetic fashion, with little attention to the individuals who do the actual preservation and transmission.⁵⁷

Despite contemporary scholarship’s lack of interest in individual witnesses, the extant early Christian texts make clear that traditions about Jesus were transmitted by individuals. Luke, in his prologue (1:1–4), tells us that what he recorded he had received from not just anyone, but specifically from οἱ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς αὐτόπται καὶ ὑπηρέται γενόμενοι τοῦ λόγου (“by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word”).⁵⁸ Also according to Luke, when the believers gathered to reconstitute the Twelve, the primary criterion was that Judas’ successor had to have been part of the movement from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, and also a witness to the resurrection (cf. Acts 1:21–22).⁵⁹ For the present purposes, it matters little whether or not Acts accurately describes the election of Matthias. What matters is that in the mid-to-late first century, the early second century at the latest, the Twelve were remembered above all as

⁵⁵ Cf. the discussion in Alan Kirk, “Social and Cultural Memory,” in Kirk and Thatcher, *Memory, Tradition, and Text*, 1–24; Alan Kirk and Tom Thatcher, “Jesus Tradition as Social Memory,” in Kirk and Thatcher, *Memory, Tradition, and Text*, 25–42.

⁵⁶ This framework is developed over a number of studies, each of which looks at different aspects primarily of Egyptian cultural memory, in Jan Assmann, *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs* (trans. Andrew Jenkins; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), Jan Assmann, *Of God and Gods: Egypt, Israel, and the Rise of Monotheism* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), and Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), but also Israelite cultural memory, in Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, and Assmann, *Of God and Gods*, and Jan Assmann, *The Price of Monotheism* (trans. Robert Savage; Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 2010), as well in broader questions of cultural memory, especially as it relates to both questions of religion and historiography, in Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), and Jan Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory* (trans. Rodney Livingstone; Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 2006).

⁵⁷ Assmann displays an understanding of how collective memory is transmitted that is virtually identical with that found in Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism*. One supposes it not a coincidence that Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, is primarily concerned with situating *Moses and Monotheism* within a broader history of Egyptological discourse.

⁵⁸ On the Lukan prologue, with particular reference to eyewitness testimony, cf. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 116–124; Byrskog, *Story as History*, 228–232.

⁵⁹ On the election of Matthias, with particular reference to eyewitness testimony, Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 114–116; Byrskog, *Story as History*, 232–234.

men who had been witnesses to Jesus' ministry and resurrection. That those who were remembered as the first major leaders of the movement were remembered first and foremost as eyewitnesses to Jesus, such that in fact this was the primary criterion by which they were eligible to be included among the Twelve, suggests that the early Christians placed a premium upon the memories of such persons.

It might be objected that Acts might have been written upwards of a century after the events described in its first chapter, and thus reveals sentiments of a later era in Christian history.⁶⁰ To this objection the present author would point to 1 Cor. 15. In 1 Cor. 15:3–8, Paul relates that the risen Christ appeared to a large group of believers, some five hundred or so people.⁶¹ Yet, he also mentions Jesus' appearances to particular individuals, such as Cephas, the Twelve (which, although a collective group, were not anonymous), James, and even Paul himself. Indeed, Paul mentions this litany of witnesses specifically to remind his readers that it is from the proclamation of such individuals that they came to believe (cf. 1 Cor. 15:11). Thus we see the same basic principle at work, and this in an extant work from what is oft-considered the earliest known Christian writer: the bearers of the tradition were primarily named and known individuals. Even if he does not name the more than five hundred believers who witnessed the risen Christ, they are presented as a known and circumscribed group. In any case, these are presented as witnesses supplemental to such figures as Cephas, the Twelve and James, and thus, again, does the main point stand: the earliest Christians understood their traditions about Jesus to be transmitted primarily by known persons rather than anonymous collectives.

⁶⁰ Regarding the historical progression of debates over the date and purpose of Acts from the seventeenth through the third quarter of the twentieth century, cf. W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975); cf. also W. Ward Gasque, "A Fruitful Field: Recent Study of the Acts of the Apostles," *Interpretation* 42 [1988]: 117–131, which is included also as an appendix to the lightly revised 1989 edition of Gasque, *History of Acts*. Cf. also C.K. Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; London: T&T Clark, 1994–1998), 2:xxiv–xxxii.

⁶¹ On 1 Cor. 15, with particular reference to eyewitness testimony, cf. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 307–308; Byrskog, *Story as History*, 225–226; Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*, 299–301. It is oft argued that Paul envisions in this text a series of visionary rather than somatic appearances of the risen Jesus; cf. the strongest contemporary articulation of this argument is Luedemann, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 33–108; against this reading of 1 Cor. 15, and indeed of the Pauline material related to the resurrection overall, cf. Licona, *Resurrection of Jesus*, 372–440.

If we grant that much of early Christ-belief was formulated through what we might call the “memory work” of eyewitnesses to Jesus, we must confront the question of how reliable are eyewitnesses. Through engagement with work on the psychology of memory, Judith Redman has recently argued that, given the fundamental malleability of human memory, even if “at least parts of the Gospels as accounts were controlled by eyewitnesses until very close to the time at which they were recorded, this does not give them a greater probability of accuracy than does the notion that they are the highly redacted documents that are argued by the form critics.”⁶² Yet, Redman’s argument fails to deal with the fact that, as C.A.J. Coady articulates it well, “our trust in the word of others is fundamental to the very idea of serious cognitive activity,”⁶³ such that testimony has “the same general epistemic status as our primary sources of information, such as perception.” Coady’s argument is not so much that we should grant to testimony such an epistemic status, but more that we do so routinely and necessarily.⁶⁴ Barry Schwartz has made a similar argument, stating that, “[w]itnesses usually get something wrong, but we depend on them to give us a general idea of what happened in situations where we are absent.”⁶⁵

Indeed, absent a lively degree of trust in the testimony of others, we are unable to function in this world. This is demonstrated clearly, and somewhat humourously in Richard Whateley’s 1819 essay, *Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Bonaparte*, which Coady cites as a significant impetus to his own thinking.⁶⁶ A quite tongue-in-cheek essay, Whateley approaches Napoleon’s life by employing the radical skepticism associated with David Hume. Such skepticism, Whateley points out, must lead us to the conclusion that we can know little about Napoleon’s life, or even if he existed at all, and this whilst Napoleon was still alive. In a particularly trenchant passage, Whateley writes,

“But what shall we say to the testimony of those many respectable persons who went to Plymouth on purpose, and saw Buonaparte with their own eyes? must they not trust their senses?” I would not disparage either the

⁶² Judith C.S. Redman, “How Accurate are Eyewitnesses? Bauckham and the Eyewitnesses in the Light of Psychological Research,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 192/1 (2010): 177–197, here p. 193.

⁶³ C.A.J. Coady, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), vii. For a discussion of Coady’s philosophy of testimony in relation to historical Jesus studies, cf. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 473–478.

⁶⁴ Coady, *Testimony*, 175.

⁶⁵ Schwartz, “Christian Origins,” 55

⁶⁶ Coady, *Testimony*, vii.

eyesight or the veracity of these gentlemen. I am ready to allow that they went to Plymouth for the purpose of seeing Buonaparte; nay, more, that they actually rowed out into the harbour in a boat, and came alongside of a man-of-war, on whose deck they saw a man in a cocked hat, who, they were told, was Buonaparte. This is the utmost point to which their testimony goes; how they ascertained that this man in the cocked hat had gone through all the marvellous and romantic adventures [attributed to Napoleon]...we are not told. Did they perceive in his physiognomy, his true name, and authentic history?⁶⁷

Even those who claimed to have seen Napoleon from afar were actually reliant upon the testimony of others who pointed him out and identified him. Their testimony, then, can only be accepted if we accept the testimony that was passed on to them. Thus, the only evidence for Napoleon's existence furnished by those gentlemen who went to Plymouth is in fact the report that other people pointed out a man they claimed to be Napoleon Bonaparte. Yet, they might not have seen Napoleon, or even gone to Plymouth. Indeed, I have never been to Plymouth, and for its existence rely entirely upon the reports of others. When we begin to consider Whateley's larger point, that most people of the day were dependent entirely upon newspaper reports for any knowledge of Napoleon's actions and even existence,⁶⁸ the argument that there was never such a man might seem quite reasonable.

Of course, the argument is not reasonable, and precisely because testimony is basic to our functioning as human beings. Whether it is our birthdate or the existence of Napoleon Bonaparte, for much of what we know about our world and ourselves we are entirely reliant upon the testimony of others. The evidentiary value of such testimony turns on the supposition that some people know more about certain events than others, precisely because they witnessed them personally, and this despite the malleability and imperfection of memory. Thus does Redman overstate her case, for she leaves little room for the very things that make possible the continuity of social life, and thus indeed social life itself.

In response to Redman, and drawing upon a wider range of contemporary psychological data, McIver argues of eyewitnesses to Jesus that "[t]heir memories would be most reliable in reporting the gist of the event and what happened and least reliable about matters relating to

⁶⁷ Richard Whateley, *Historic Doubts Relative to Napoleon Bonaparte* (7th ed.; London: B. Fellowes, 1841), 25–26.

⁶⁸ Whateley, *Historic Doubts*, 13–14.

time. Their contribution would have had a ‘first-order’ faithfulness to the events in Jesus’ life that they had witnessed.”⁶⁹ This seems certainly more consonant with our experiences in the world. For our specific purposes, then, *vis-à-vis* the *aposynagōgos* passages, it is reasonable to conclude that the author, if either an eyewitness or drawing upon eyewitness testimony, reports reliably at least what McIver calls the “gist” of what happened. Indeed, insofar as the *aposynagōgos* passages are relatively sparse on details, what we get is precisely in accordance with the strengths of eyewitness testimony, as described by McIver, *viz.* a general rather than detail-rich description.

A full discussion of John’s knowledge regarding the *aposynagōgos* passages would need to consider more fully the precise identity of the Evangelist. Lest discussion of such a vexed and controversial matter interrupt the flow of the study’s main argument, however, such matters have been moved to two appendices, one on the external data relevant to the matter, and the second on the internal data. For now, let us turn to consideration of exactly the role which community might have played in the creation of the *aposynagōgos* passages.

5.3.3 *A Mnemonic Community: The Sitz im Leben of the Aposynagōgos Passages*

Given the discussion of the crucial position that memories of Jesus occupied in Johannine theology, a tentative definition of the *Sitz im Leben* of the Jesus tradition within the Johannine community would probably look much like Samuel Byrskog’s definition of the *Sitz im Leben* of the Jesus tradition more generally, as “that recurrent type of mnemonic occasion within the life of early Christian communities when certain people cared about the Jesus tradition in a special way and performed and narrated it orally and in writing.”⁷⁰ It was presumably within such a *Sitz im Leben* that John recounted the events about which he writes in the *aposynagōgos* passages. In this *Sitz im Leben*, then, “social memory” was wholly oriented towards remembering the earthly Jesus, and articulating Jesus’ significance for early Christians’ emerging collective and personal identities. Indeed, it

⁶⁹ Robert K. McIver, *Memory, Jesus, and the Synoptic Gospels* (Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 161.

⁷⁰ Samuel Byrskog, “A Century with the *Sitz im Leben*: From Form-Critical Setting to Gospel Community and Beyond,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 90/1 (2007): 1–27, here p. 21.

does not seem an overstatement to say that early Christ-believing communities were in large part the effect of a felt need to preserve and transmit memories of Jesus. *Contra* the fundamental premises of community criticism, which were in large part adopted from form-criticism, it was perhaps less the needs of such communities that generated the memories, and more the need to remember that generated such communities.

Various locations and dates have been proposed for where and when John's Gospel originated.⁷¹ Although the present author is persuaded that the traditional location, *viz.* Ephesus, probably sometime prior to 70, are respectively the best candidates for date and location, and that we should locate the author's primary locale geographically in western Asia Minor (it seems more than a coincident that Papias and Polycarp were bishops of nearby Hierapolis and Smyrna, respectively), it is crucial to stress that John's Gospel is *not about this context*.⁷² It is about Jesus. This does not exclude the possibility that Christians, either in the Ephesian region or elsewhere, would read the *apospynagōgos* passages and hear therein resonances of their experiences. When John describes the experiences of conflict with and within Judean synagogues, Christians in Smyrna and Philadelphia might well have heard resonances of their experiences of conflict with, as it is put to them by another John, "those who say they are Jews but are not" (Rev. 2:9, 3:9). Yet, this has to remain speculative.

What is clear is that the author did intend his presentation of the events reported in the *apospynagōgos* passages to be read as reports about Jesus' life, and that he embedded within them no allegorical history of his community. Having found their identity, their being, in Christ, the early members of this new movement quite reasonably wanted to know who he was, what he did, what was done to him and around him. John met that very-present need to know about the past, by presenting what he knew about their Lord, initially orally and later in writing. The *apospynagōgos*

⁷¹ Cf. the discussions in Barrett, *St. John*, 128–131; Brown, *John* 1:ciii–civ; Keener, *John*, 1:140–149.

⁷² With the exception of the present author's preference for a pre-70 date, this is precisely the position taken by Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 237–263. On the one hand, on the basis of the Patristic data, Trebilco argues that Ephesus is the most likely provenance for John's Gospel; on the other hand, on the basis primarily of Bauckham's critique of what this study has called community criticism, he argues also that John's Gospel is of no value in considering the life of the Christian community or communities in Ephesus. This is partially in opposition to Sief van Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), who likewise argues that John's Gospel most likely originated in Ephesus, but unlike Trebilco, argues that this provenance can shed meaningful light on the text.

were written as part of John's effort to meet that desire to know about Jesus. The Gospel provides little warrant to think that they were more, or even as, interested in allegorical reports about current and recent events in their own midst, than or as they were in the story of Jesus in the world.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Chapter Five aimed to build a social history of Johannine knowledge, and then to consider how this might contribute to our reading of the *aposynagōgos* passages. It was argued that the Martynian traditions tend to suppose, without sufficient warrant, that the author of the Gospel constructed, without reference to the actual events of Jesus' life, the accounts offered in the *aposynagōgos* passages. For the classic Martynian tradition, John aimed to tell the story of events that actually happened in the life of the Johannine community. For the neo-Martynian tradition, John aimed to construct the community's identity in the present. In both traditions, the needs of the present obviated a concern to reliably represent Jesus' life.

This chapter also presented the case for a post-Martynian position, in which it was understood that the needs of the Johannine community's present, far from obviating, actually *necessitated* a commitment to reliably present Jesus' life. To remember Jesus historically was to remember God historically. Remembrance was a theological act. The acts of remembrance that culminated in John's Gospel were guided in large part by an eyewitness to Jesus, and possibly also to the events reported in the *aposynagōgos* passages. Combined with the previous chapters, wherein via the oblique pattern of inference it was argued that the events reported in the *aposynagōgos* passages are historically plausible, John's intent to report factuality and the probability that he was plausibly knowledgeable on the matter, established here via primarily the direct pattern of inference, there emerges reasonable warrant to render a judgment of probability regarding the historicity of these passages.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This study began with a discussion of how recent scholarship has simply supposed that the *aposynagōgos* passages cannot refer to events of Jesus' life. Unfortunately, we saw also that such scholarship fails consistently to provide us with adequate warrant for their judgment on the matter. Thus was formulated, in response to such scholarly assertions, the central question of this study, namely, could the Johannine *aposynagōgos* passages plausibly, or even probably, refer to events of Jesus' life?

In seeking to answer this question, this study makes three significant contributions to the current scholarly discussion. The first, a negative contribution, is to challenge what the present author designated the Martynian traditions. The Martynian traditions build upon the pioneering work of J. Louis Martyn, particularly his *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, first published in 1968 and now in its third (2003) edition.¹ In particular, the scholars categorized as working within this tradition adopt Martyn's two-level reading strategy, whereby the Johannine narrative is re-written as an allegory for the history and experience of what is typically called the Johannine community. This study was itself developed largely from Martyn's reading of the *aposynagōgos* passages, and then generalized to the rest of the Gospel.

Employing this strategy, the classic Martynian tradition argues that the *aposynagōgos* passages describe the expulsion of certain members of the Johannine community, or what would become the Johannine community, from one or more synagogues in the later first century. Typically, although not always, again following Martyn, such scholars understand the *Birkat ha-Minim* to be the mechanism by which such expulsions occurred. The neo-Martynian tradition argues that these passages do not describe any actual expulsion, but rather are concerned only to construct a Johannine identity. Both traditions agree that these passages provide no usable data for investigating Jesus' life.

¹ J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (3rd ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

Against such approaches to the *aposynagōgos* passages, the present study seeks to articulate a post-Martynian alternative, one that departs from the basic hermeneutical supposition of the Martynian tradition, namely the two-level reading strategy. It was argued that a more appropriate historical understanding of the *aposynagōgos* passages had to proceed through investigation of the literal sense of the text, rather than through an allegorical interpretation. It was recognized as a fundamental supposition of critical exegesis that the literal is not identical to the historical, but that nonetheless, historical investigation should proceed primarily from the literal, i.e. from that which is written, not from what is interpreted allegorically.

The study's other two contributions are positive contributions, both of which relate to the current revisioning of John's Gospel as a source for historical Jesus studies. Emblematic of this revisioning is the SBL's John, Jesus, and History Group, which has been meeting for over a decade, and has produced two volumes, with a third to follow.² Such revisioning requires scholars both to think about what sort of philosophy of history is more conducive to adequate judgments on matters of historicity, and also to undertake detailed studies of particular Johannine passages with a focus upon such matters. The second two contributions, then, lie in these areas.

The first of these, on the matter of philosophy of history, entails the employment within New Testament studies of a historiographic procedure based in large part on the critical realism developed by Bernard Lonergan and introduced into New Testament studies by Ben F. Meyer.³ Particularly helpful was Meyer's discussion of the difference between and respective utility of what he calls oblique and direct patterns of inference. Oblique patterns "are oblique inasmuch as they approach the narrative indirectly,

² Anderson, Paul N., Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher, eds., *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 1: Critical Appraisals of Critical Views* (Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2007); Anderson, Paul N., Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher, eds., *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 2: Aspects of Historicity in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta, Ga.: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009).

³ Particularly relevant works including Bernard J. Lonergan, *Insight* (5th ed.; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), Bernard J. Lonergan, *Method in Theology* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971); Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2002); Ben F. Meyer, *Critical Realism and the New Testament* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 1989); Ben F. Meyer, *The Early Christians: Their World Mission and Self-Discovery* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1986); Ben F. Meyer, *Reality and Illusion in New Testament Scholarship: A Primer in Critical Realist Hermeneutics* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1994). On the significance of Lonergan for Meyer's thinking, cf. Meyer, *Critical Realism*, 1–16, 147–156.

neither ambitioning nor depending on definition of its intention.”⁴ By way of contrast, the pattern of direct inference is such that “[i]f the intention of the writer can be defined to include factuality and if the writer is plausibly knowledgeable on the matter and free of the suspicion of fraud, historicity can be inferred.”⁵ Thus, the present author was able to develop three basic “tests” for inferring historicity: plausibility of the account, intent of the author, and knowledgeability of the author.

Meyer’s patterns of inference facilitated the second positive contribution, namely a detailed study of the *apospynagōgos* passages with a focus upon matters of historicity. Chapters Two through Four focused upon utilizing oblique patterns of inference to determine whether the *apospynagōgos* patterns were plausible regarding related matters such as the ancient synagogue in Chapter Two, the Christological confession stated explicitly in 9:22 and implied in 12:42 and 16:2 in Chapter Three, and politics and empire in Chapter Four. Utilizing appropriate oblique patterns of inference, it was concluded in each chapter that, indeed, the data warranted a positive judgment of historical plausibility regarding the matter under discussion.

Yet, whilst such a conclusion weakens any arguments against the plausibility of these passages, it does not necessarily establish that what the *apospynagōgos* passages claim transpired did in fact occur. Rather, establishing historical plausibility could potentially lead only to a judgment of verisimilitude, i.e. that the author intended merely to create a plausible but not a historical account. Thus, the matter of authorial intent had to be considered. Moreover, even if it is possible to establish that the author intended a historical account, or what Meyer calls “factuality,” it would not follow that he actually had adequate knowledge about what happened. In response to such further relevant questions, Chapter Five employed the direct pattern of inference in order to consider whether or not John intended to report factuality and whether he was plausibly knowledgeable with regard to the matters about which he wrote. It was argued that, in both cases, a positive answer was warranted. As such, it was suggested that the judgments of plausibility made in the previous three chapters could be converted into a judgment of probability. On the basis of these conclusions, the following historical reconstruction presents itself as likely.

⁴ Meyer, *Aims of Jesus*, 85.

⁵ Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (Eugene, Or.: Pickwick Publications, 2002), 85.

Sometime around 30 CE, Jesus began his ministry. Whether or not he conceived of himself as the messiah, others thought that he was claiming to be such. He attracted a sufficient following that certain Pharisees as well as members of the priestly establishment became concerned. In part, their concern was what we might call religious, insofar as he was seen to teach things antithetical to the Torah. In part, it was what we might call political, insofar as there developed a fear that the popularity of his movement might lead to Roman intervention.

To counter these perceived threats, a coalition of Jerusalem-based elite persons entered into a probably informal agreement to pressure those who were sympathetic to Jesus to abandon those sympathies. One of the ways in which they did this was to exert their informal influence such as to exclude those who appeared sympathetic to Jesus from Jerusalem's public assembly. This was done either using forms of violence or threats of violence, incited by that coalition that opposed Jesus.

These actions eventually proved unable to curb Jesus' popularity, and thus his opponents became more aggressive. Again utilizing their political influence, this time to sway Pontius Pilate, they were able to get Jesus executed. Yet, even this proved insufficient, as Jesus' followers continued to proclaim the message that had gained him not only those followers but also powerful enemies. The messianic movement and the political turbulence such movements brought with them did not cease when the leader had been eliminated. Thus the efforts to exclude his followers from the public assembly continued, and perhaps even intensified. Some of the conflicts between Christians and the authorities reported in the first chapters of Acts, and perhaps also in the Synoptic Gospels, might witness also to these efforts on the part of those who opposed the movement.

As stated above, this study makes both negative and positive contributions. Even if one were to reject the positive contributions, it would not be enough to overturn the negative contribution. The conclusion that one particular reconstruction of historical events is implausible does not mean that there can be no plausible reconstruction. If, at the end of this study, the reader is convinced that the *aposynagōgos* passages could refer to events during Jesus' lifetime, but that this present author's particular reconstruction is erroneous on either minor or major details, then the author welcomes alternative reconstructions. The search for truth, after all, is routinely not the search for the final, definitive, statement on a matter, but rather the best statement that can be made at any given time, given the data and the state of knowledge currently extant.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

EXTERNAL DATA RELEVANT TO JOHN'S IDENTITY

The external data consists entirely of patristic material, most primarily that of Irenaeus, who informs us quite clearly that a man named John who was a disciple of the earthly Jesus wrote the Fourth Gospel whilst residing in Ephesus.¹ Employing the direct pattern of inference, with some advert to oblique patterns where necessary, we can ask whether Irenaeus had reason to relate truthfully information about the origins of John's Gospel, and whether we can reasonably suppose that they had access to such information.

For our purposes, we need not determine exhaustively Irenaeus' intention in writing about John and his Gospel. Rather, we must merely establish whether he intended factuality. There is a strong *prima facie* case to be made that he did. Irenaeus invokes John's authority as an apostle in order to refute the teachings of various "heretical" groups. This is perhaps most evident in his *Letter to Florinus*, a text worth quoting at length.

These opinions [of the Valentinians] are inconsistent with the church, and bring those who believe them into the greatest impiety. These opinions not even the heretics outside the church even dared to proclaim. These opinions those who were presbyters before us, they who accompanied the apostles, did not hand on to you. For while I was still a boy I knew you [Florinus] in lower Asia in Polycarp's house when you were a man of rank in the royal hall and endeavouring to stand well with him. I remember the events of those days more closely than those which happened recently, for what we learn as children grows up with the soul and is united to it, so that I can speak even of the place in which the blessed Polycarp sat and disputed, how he came in and went out, the character of his life, the appearance of his body, the discourses which he made to the people, how he reported

¹ In *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1., he informs the reader that John, disciple of the Lord, wrote his Gospel whilst residing at Ephesus in Asia; in 2.22.1., he states also that a John, disciple of the Lord, taught in Asia for sometime; and in 3.3.4. he indicates that whilst the church in Ephesus was founded by Paul, John taught there for some time. It seems that Irenaeus has in each of these passages the same man in mind, although there is evidence for the existence of two Christian leaders named John in the Ephesian region in the mid to late first-century (cf. the discussion on the two Johns in Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), 33–72.

his intercourse with John² and with others who had seen the Lord, how he remembered their words, and what were the things concerning the Lord which he had heard from them, and about their miracles, and about their teaching, and how Polycarp had received them from the eyewitnesses of the word of life, and reported all things in agreement with the Scriptures. I listened eagerly even then to these things through the mercy of God which was given to me, and made notes of them, not on paper but in my heart, and ever by the grace of God do I truly ruminate on them, and I can bear witness that if this blessed and apostolic presbyter had heard anything of this kind [i.e. that taught by the Valentinians] he would have cried out, and shut his ears, and said according to his custom, "O good God, to what time has thou preserved me that I should endure this?" He would have fled even from the place in which he was seated or standing when he heard such words. And from his letters which he sent either to the neighbouring churches, strengthening them, or to some of the brethren, exhorting and warning them, this can be made plain.³

From this passage, one can gather that Irenaeus's reason for invoking John the Evangelist is to point out that Valentinian (and other "heretical") teachings did not come from the apostles. If Polycarp, that *apostolikos presbyteros* ("apostolic presbyter"), a man who knew John himself, would not have subscribed to the Valentinian teachings, then how can one reasonably think that the apostles would have done so? And if the apostles would not have done so, then how can one accept these teachings as part of the apostolic faith? Moreover, by associating Polycarp's opinions on the matter with a man whom Irenaeus elsewhere identifies as the author of John's Gospel, he undercuts Valentinian claims (or that of other "heretics") to better understand the Gospel than do the "orthodox." Irenaeus seems to be employing a similar strategy when he invokes John in *Adv. Haer.*⁴ That he does believe wholly that what he says about John is factual can be inferred from the fact that he reminds Florinus of shared experiences. He would presumably not state that he and Florinus both knew Polycarp, or that Polycarp used to reminisce about John, if he knew both that this was factually incorrect and that Florinus would know that this was factually incorrect.

Such a reading is less suspicious of Irenaeus' intention than that necessitated by what Charles Hill has dubbed the "Orthodox Johannophobia paradigm," i.e. the argument that Irenaeus wrote to integrate John's Gospel

² That Irenaeus understands this to be John the Evangelist seems probable, as he elsewhere seems to associate Polycarp with that John (*Adv. Haer.* 3.3.4).

³ Cf. *Letter to Florinus*, as preserved in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.20.4–7 (Lake, LCL).

⁴ Cf. *Adv. Haer.* 2.22.5, 3.1.1., 3.3.4.

into the emerging catholic⁵ canon, and that the Gospel had previously been thought suspect if not heretical by the catholic churches.⁶ Whilst this was perhaps once the near-consensus among critical scholars, newer research shows that it hardly stands up to the extant data. Certainly, the Valentinians and perhaps other Gnostic groups found much in John's

⁵ The present author finds the term "catholic," in the precise sense of a "universal" church, much more appropriate to describe the Christianity represented by figures such as Ignatius and Polycarp than circumlocutions such as "proto-orthodox" or "proto-catholic." On the one hand, the term καθολικός is already attested as early as Ign. *Smyrn.* 8.2, and thus "catholic," as its transliteration, has the salutary advantage of being a term that is present in our extant texts. On the other hand, to say something is "proto-X" is tacitly to state that it is "not-X," for if were X, then we could simply say so. If the "proto-orthodox" and "proto-catholic" are, respectively, "not-orthodox" and "not-catholic," then in what sense are they orthodox or catholic at all? If they are in no sense orthodox or catholic, what does the prefix "proto-" indicate? More to the point, "proto" implies a teleological notion of history, viz. that a group's identity is defined not by what they were at a given moment, but rather by what they would become in the future. Such teleological thinking is dubious in any critical historiography.

The position advanced here fits quite well with that recently advanced by Mark Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church* (Surrey, UK: Ashgate, 2009), who argues that many of those Christians commonly labeled as "Gnostic" were much more a vital part of the catholic church, and contributed more to its developing doctrines, than has previously been recognized. Edwards's argument regarding the second and later centuries is also remarkably apposite to the arguments regarding the early second-century put forward recently by Thomas A. Robinson, *Ignatius of Antioch and the Parting of the Ways: Early Jewish-Christian Relations* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 76–88, who argues that rather than envisioning several rival Christianities in any given city, each with its own ecclesiastical structures, we should imagine that each city typically had one Christian *ekklesia* (although this *ekklesia* might very well be organized into individual house church units) that understood itself as a local instantiation of what Robinson calls "The Great Church." Christian theological diversity at the start of the second century thus was typically worked out within the context of that single local *ekklesia*. Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy*, 7, also provides us with a workable definition of "orthodoxy," as "whatever is taught in any epoch by the majority of bishops." Such an understanding sees orthodoxy as a product of catholicity, in that orthodoxy was something that was worked out by churches that already understood themselves as part of a catholic Christianity, and thus it seems reasonable to foreground the former in our description of these churches. Put otherwise, rather than heresy preceding orthodoxy, as Bauer argued, "orthodoxy" and "heresy" were both products of dialectical discourse among and within the catholic churches. Note that from the historian's perspective, Nicene theology would thus be defined as orthodox not necessarily because its propositions are demonstrable true, but rather because this was the Christian theology supported by the majority of the episcopate.

⁶ Cf. the discussion of the history of the Orthodox Johannophobia paradigm and its critics, running from Walter Bauer to Martin Hengel, Charles E. Hill, *The Johannine Corpus in the Early Church*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 11–55. Hill's reassessment has helped contribute significantly to a current reassessment of the reception history of John's Gospel, in which both the Gospel itself and the Gnostic Christians who first commented upon the text are seen as more in the mainstream of catholic Christianity than was previously allowed; on this reassessment, cf. Rasimus, "Introduction," 1–16.

Gospel that they could utilize for developing their own, ultimately rejected, theological systems.⁷ However, as Hill has demonstrated, the orthodox had no reticence about using John's Gospel.

Quite simply, Irenaeus had no reason to integrate John into the life of the church, as it was there already, nor did he have to convince the orthodox that they could read and learn from it, as they did already. Moreover, even apart from Hill's careful survey of second-century awareness of and use of John's Gospel, the role ascribed to Irenaeus in the Orthodox Johannophobia paradigm seems intrinsically unlikely. In order to accept this hypothesis, one must suppose that somehow Irenaeus successfully convinced a group of people that a text that they almost universally feared was in fact a text that they almost universally deemed authoritative. The argument overall strains the bounds of plausibility, and a judgment of at least improbable if not outright impossible seems best warranted. As such, we are left with the inferences, argued above, that Irenaeus did indeed factuality.

It does not necessarily follow, however, that Irenaeus had access to accurate information about the author of the Fourth Gospel. Thus we must ask, from whence came his knowledge on the matter? Irenaeus was certainly familiar with the work of Papias of Hierapolis, and could have gotten material from him.⁸ Yet, given the reference in the *Letter to Florinus* to Polycarp's familiarity with "John and others who had seen the Lord," as well as the fact that Irenaeus hailed originally from Smyrna, the city in which Polycarp was bishop, we have good reason to think that Polycarp is his primary source of information about John's Gospel.

Yet, how reliable is Irenaeus' claim to have received tradition regarding John from Polycarp? Hartog suggests that "Polycarp may have had a few stories of a (brief?) childhood connection with John, and Irenaeus, for his part, may have remembered only little of the material."⁹ If this is accepted,

⁷ Cf. the discussions in Kyle Keefer, *The Branches of the Gospel of John: The Reception of Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 21–43; Elaine H. Pagels, *The Johannine Gospel in Gnostic Exegesis* (Atlanta, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1989); Paul-Hubert Poirier, "The Trimorphic Protentia (NHC XIII, 1) and the Johannine Prologue: A Reconsideration," in Rasimus, *Legacy of John*, 93–104; Tuomas Rasimus, "Ptolamaeus and the Valentinian Exegesis of John's Prologue," in Rasimus, *Legacy of John*, 145–172; John D. Turner, "The Johannine Legacy: The Gospel and *Apocryphon* of John," in Rasimus, *Legacy of John*, 105–144.

⁸ Cf. *Adv. Haer.* 5.33.4.; also, the discussions in cf. Bauckham, *Testimony*, 33–72; Mutschler, "John and his Gospel," 323–327.

⁹ Paul Hartog, *Polycarp and the New Testament: The Occasion, Theme, and Unity of the Epistle to the Philippians and its Allusions to the New Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 41.

then in fact the data furnished by Irenaeus should be deemed quite unreliable. Yet, we need to emphasize in Hartog's statement the word "may." Mutschler has observed that Hartog's statement about Irenaeus is exactly the opposite of what Irenaeus himself says about his memories.¹⁰ He describes himself listening intently and ruminating throughout the years upon Polycarp's statements. This does not sound like dim recollections, but rather vivid memories that he has devoted time to actively remembering. Certainly, we have only Irenaeus's testimony on the matter; yet, as we have seen, testimony is a much stronger form of data than has often been allowed among critical scholars, and thus one should not dismiss Irenaeus's testimony so easily.

If we grant that Irenaeus is likely conveying reliable testimony regarding what Polycarp stated, then the question becomes about the reliability of Polycarp's testimony. The direct pattern of inference will be of limited utility here. Yet, we can inquire regarding the plausibility of his account via an oblique pattern of inference. So doing, we find corroborating evidence in the writings of Papias, who was from Hierapolis, a city not far from either Smyrna or Ephesus, and claims to have either known a certain John, disciple of the Lord, or at least to have known other believers who knew him.¹¹ This provides us with multiple attestation that there was a man named John who was known to Christian leaders who flourished in the Ephesus region in the early second century.

Polycrates similarly provides corroboration of Polycarp's memories. Whilst arguing in favour of celebrating *Pascha* on 14 Nisan, Polycrates not only mentions John as one of his relatives, but both identifies him explicitly with the Beloved Disciple and states that he was laid to rest in Ephesus.¹² Again, we have attestation of a John well known to Christians in and around Ephesus. That Polycrates was himself bishop of Ephesus raises moreover the possibility that he was drawing upon local ecclesiastical memories. The context of Polycrates' statements suggest strongly that these traditions were widely recognized in the second century; writing in favour of the Quartodeciman practice, it would hardly have served his purpose to invoke traditions about John that would have been considered suspect if not false.

¹⁰ Bernhard Mutschler, "John and his Gospel in the Mirror of Irenaeus of Lyons: Perspectives on Recent Research," in Rasmus, *Legacy of John*, 319–344, esp. pp. 325–326.

¹¹ Cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.3–4; cf. the discussions in Bauckham, *Testimony*, 33–72; Martin Hengel, *The Johannine Question* (London: SCM Press, 1989).

¹² *Apud.* Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.24.2–7.

Both the general and the oblique patterns of inference thus furnish us with good reason to be generally accepting of what we might call the “Ephesian” traditions surrounding John. It is significant to note that only towards the end of the second century did a few Christians in Rome, headed by a presbyter named Gaius, argued that it was instead written by Cerinthus, John’s traditional rival.¹³ Bauckham rightly observes that this attribution to Cerinthus is “obviously parasitic on the attribution to John.”¹⁴ Thus even the one attested early challenge to Johannine authorship in fact emerges as supportive of the larger tradition. Does the absence of contravening testimony furnish definitive evidence in favour of Johannine authorship? Certainly not. Yet, combined with the positive evidence furnished by the Ephesian traditions, Johannine authorship and an origin in and around Ephesus seems by far the best judgment.¹⁵

For the purpose of the present of discussion, it is not necessary to identify precisely who this John might have been, but rather merely to observe that the patristic data unequivocally presents him as a disciple of the earthly Jesus. Yet, given that there are those scholars who suppose that the early Christians could not possibly know or be trusted to report upon their own history, and thus counsel us to dismiss external data, and since the discussion thus far establishes only that John was an eyewitness to Jesus but not necessarily specifically to the events described in the *apospynagōgos* passages, or at the very least was such a person who might have had access to eyewitness testimony regarding those events, we must, in the following section, consider the internal data.

¹³ Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy*, 207–208, argued that Gaius represented a well-established catholic suspicion of, if outright opposition to, John’s Gospel; this view has recently been addressed, and refuted, at length by Hill, *Johannine Corpus*, 172–204. On Cerinthus more generally, cf. Charles E. Hill, “Cerinthus, Gnostic or Chiliast? A New Solution to an Old Problem,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8/2 (2000): 135–172.

¹⁴ Bauckham, *Testimony*, 35.

¹⁵ Other second-century sources, such as the *Acts of John*, the *Epistles of the Apostles*, Clement of Alexandria (cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.23.6.), or the Muratorian Canon, are of reduced value regarding Johannine identity, given our inability to clearly account for the origins of their knowledge. For our purposes, none of these sources add data which we cannot glean from Irenaeus, Papias and Polycrates, and any data that might conflict ought to be rejected in favour of the better source.

APPENDIX B

INTERNAL DATA ON JOHN'S EYEWITNESS STATUS

The discussion in this appendix necessarily supposes that the Beloved Disciple was an actual, historical, person, and this contra those exegetes who would interpret him as merely a symbolic figure or literary device.¹ The Gospel of John clearly presents the Beloved Disciple as someone who existed in historical time. Only if we suppose that John does not intend a genuinely historical narrative can we assume that he intends the figure to be construed as anything other than an actual human being. Yet, we have already considered in this chapter compelling evidence that the author does intend a genuinely historical narrative. More to the point, the Beloved Disciple interacts with other characters in the narrative, most notably Jesus and Peter. It is difficult to imagine that John wants us to construe Jesus and Peter as non-historical symbolic figures. What warrant, then, is there to suppose that John wants us to place the Beloved Disciple in an ontological category distinct from other characters in the narrative?

Probably the most crucial datum for consider the identity of the Evangelist is 18:15. If we suppose that 18:15 refers to the Beloved Disciple, and that this individual is to be identified with the author of the Gospel,² what

¹ On the history of scholarship regarding those who would interpret the Beloved Disciple as a symbolic figure, cf. James H. Charlesworth, *The Beloved Disciple: Whose Witness Validates the Gospel of John?* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1995), 134–141.

² Obviously, one must demonstrate rather than simply suppose both that John's Gospel identifies the Beloved Disciple as the author of the Gospel, and that this other disciple (ἄλλος μαθητής) mentioned in 18:15 is the same person as the Beloved Disciple. The former point has already been addressed above, and it was judged as probably the case, and thus we will here focus upon the latter. Objecting to the perspective that this "other disciple" is the Beloved Disciple, Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:1091, argues that "the nearly uniform opposition of the Judeans, especially those of the Jerusalem elite, earlier in the Gospel makes an identification with one of Jesus' Galilean followers more difficult to conceive." It must be observed that this argument rests upon his prior conclusion that the Beloved Disciple was Galilean, *viz.* John, son of Zebedee; cf. the discussion in Keener, *Gospel of John*, 2:84–105. Here Keener explicitly follows the classic argument for Zebedean authorship advanced by B.F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to St. John: The Authorized Version with Introduction and Notes* (London: J. Murray, 1881), v–xxxii; on the history of scholarship for Zebedean authorship, cf. Charlesworth, *Beloved Disciple*, 197–213. Keener is here begging the question. Rather than use his prior conclusion that the Beloved Disciple was Galilean to judge whether the Beloved Disciple is the other disciple of 18:15, Keener should first

can we learn about him from 18:15? Minimally, as Keener suggests, he was a casual acquaintance of the high priest, although the more casual one construes his acquaintance with the high priest, the more difficult it is to account for how he was able not only to enter but also to bring in Peter (cf. 18:16).³ In John A.T. Robinson's memorable phrase, the other disciple had in the high priest's home "connections below stairs if not above."⁴ That is to say, he was either a member of the Jerusalem elite, or a servant member of the Jerusalem elite. Either explains well his access to the high priest's home. Although the choice between elite and servant is not absolutely certain, the former seems more likely than the latter.⁵

judge whether the Beloved Disciple is the other disciple of 18:15, and then use that judgment, positive or negative, to evaluate his prior conclusion that the Beloved Disciple was Galilean.

Indeed, only 21:7, in which the Beloved Disciple is said to be fishing with Peter, would seem to suggest that the Beloved Disciple was Galilean, and even this passage is somewhat ambiguous. In 21:2–3 the reader is informed that the disciples Simon Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee and two other disciples were together. Peter decided to go fishing. The others decided to accompany him. Note that they gathered *prior to* Peter's decision to go fishing. Thus, one cannot assume that any or all of the disciples had gathered together with any intention to fish. Previously, 20:19 and 26 had indicated that the disciples were still gathering regularly. It seems reasonable to assume that the gathering of 21:2 is another such gathering, and that Peter's decision to go fishing was impromptu. Thus it is not necessarily the case that all seven men were Galilean fishermen (although at least some were), nor is it impossible that one or more of the others came along more for the company than the fishing.

More to the point, 18:15 and 21:7 cannot be read in isolation. Elsewhere, 20:2 seems to almost unequivocally identify the other disciple with the Beloved disciple, by making reference to τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς ("the other disciple, whom Jesus loved). Aside from the definite article and the entirely non-probative (for the present purposes) shift to the accusative, τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν (20:2) is identical to ἄλλος μαθητής (18:15). It seems probable that the definite article appears in 20:2 to indicate precisely that this is not just *any* other disciple, but *the* other disciple, the one who was alongside Peter when they went to the courtyard of the high priest; and this other disciple is here identified explicitly as the disciple Jesus loved. Admittedly, in this instance we have the verb φιλέω rather than the ἀγαπάω that appears in the other references to the Beloved Disciple. It is possible that τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς ("the other disciple, whom Jesus loved") in 20:2 is not the same as τῶν μαθητῶν . . . ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς ("the disciple . . . whom Jesus loved") in 13:23. Given that the semantic range of φιλέω and ἀγαπάω overlap substantially, however, it seems more likely that these terms reference the same individual. If this is the case, we have good reason to suggest that both ἄλλος μαθητής in 18:15 and τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν in 20:2 are references to the Beloved Disciple.

³ Keener, *John*, 2:1090.

⁴ Cf. Robinson, *Priority of John*, 64.

⁵ If he was a servant accompanying his master, then the master's presence and even existence are elided entirely in the text, although admittedly we cannot rule out the possibility that he slipped in without his master, or that John simply did not think it necessary to mention that he was a servant. Yet, that he was himself known to the high priest should incline us more naturally towards thinking that the Beloved Disciple was a member of the

That the Beloved Disciple moved in the circles of the elite is tantalizing in light of 12:42, wherein John informs the reader that even some among the rulers feared being made *aposynagōgos*. If the Beloved Disciple can be counted among the Jerusalem elite during Jesus' ministry, then it is conceivable that he either was one of those who feared being made *aposynagōgos*, or knew those who had such a fear. The former possibility is particularly attractive. If he was indeed sufficiently close to Jesus that he leaned upon his chest at the last supper (cf. 13:23), then it is not at all unreasonable to suppose that he was among those who had most reason to fear being made *aposynagōgos*.

The gospel tradition is unambiguous that, prior to Jesus' death, there were present in Jerusalem people sympathetic to his mission. Matt. 21:8–9, Mark 11:9–10, and John 12:12–13 all suggest that there was a significant level of popular support for Jesus in Jerusalem, as also does the Judean elite's fear of the Romans induced by that popularity. That Jesus had access to a house where he could celebrate his last supper indicates that there were in Jerusalem those who were willing to offer him not just adulation, but also more practical support. That the arrangements appear to have been made in advance (cf. Matt. 26:17–19, Mark 14:12–16, Luke 22:7–13) suggests that we should perhaps think of the owner of the house as a member of, and perhaps a leadership position in, a Jerusalem-based Jesus "cell" that was part of Jesus' broader movement. Cumulatively this suggests that Jesus had followers in and around Jerusalem, of whom the Beloved Disciple might have been one.

As argued above, the Beloved Disciple was possibly even one of those rulers who feared being made *aposynagōgos*, mentioned in 12:42. This would help account for why John, alone among the evangelists, reports upon Jerusalemite followers of Jesus who feared being, and perhaps were, made *aposynagōgos*. He, alone among the evangelists, experienced at least this fear if not this exclusion. Either way, his basis in Jerusalem and his connections with the elite points to the Beloved Disciple as someone who would potentially have had access to eyewitness testimony regarding the matters discussed in the *aposynagōgos* passages.

elite, for it is not unreasonable to suppose that the high priest would be more familiar with his fellow elite than with their servants. Either way, the Beloved Disciple is here presented as a man who is welcome in the households of the Jerusalem, and more specifically priestly, elite.

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