Disaffiliation in associations and the ἀποσυναγωγός of John

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Dates:
Received: 20 Sept. 2010
Accepted: 23 Sept. 2010
Published: 07 June 2011

This article tries to understand what might have been at stake for the synagogue from which the Johannine Jesus partisans had been expelled and what was at stake in the coinage of the term ἀποσυναγωγός. It we refuse to accept naively John's overlexicalised and retrospective account of the grounds for expulsions and pay attention to the practices of other groups in articulating a disciplinary code, I suggest that what was at stake was deviant behaviour on the part of the Johannine Jesus-partisans: either failure to comply with the larger group's practices concerning Sabbath observance, or more likely, clique formation.

Introduction

The appearance of the term ἀποσυναγωγός in the Gospel of John (9:22, 12:42, 16:2) — apparently a neologism — has served as an important key to positing a date and setting for the gospel. In his influential *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (1979), J. Louis Martyn argued that the term, which is featured prominently in the healing of the blind man in John 9 and his subsequent expulsion from the synagogue, reflects not the time of the historical Jesus in the 30s of the common era, but the time of the revision of the *Birkhat haMinim* at Yavneh ca. 85–90. The story in John 9 reports that this expulsion occurred ἤδη γὰρ συνετέθειντο οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἵνα ἐάν τις αὐτὸν ὁμολογήσῃ χριστόν, ἀποσυνάγωγος γένηται ('For the Judaeans had already agreed that if someone should acknowledge him as Christ, he should be expelled from the synagogue', 9:22) — thus making the basis for expulsion a christological confession.

The grounds for supposing that a time later than the early 1st century CE is reflected by John 9:22 are several:

- it is quite unthinkable that in Jesus' day such a decision had already been taken
- the Pharisees, who are depicted as the interrogators in vv. 13, 15, 16, and 40, were scarcely in a position in the 1st century to police membership in synagogues for the simple reason that there is little evidence to suggest that the synagogue was the special sphere of Pharisaic activity and influence
- the alleged decision singles out a christological confession that the healed man had not in fact made (nor does he in the course of chapter 9) and which could only have become a criterion for expulsion very much after the time of Jesus
- the alleged decision concerns expulsion from a *synagogue* but the story itself is set in the shadow of the Temple.[1]

Martyn's solution to these aporiae is well known. John 9:22 (and 12:42 and 16:2) is part of a bi-level narration: elements belonging to the experience of John's group in the last decade of the 1st century overlay an earlier healing story, and that second level reflects the situation that obtained in the wake of the revision of the *Birkhat haMinim*, when a 'blessing' (i.e., cursing) of the *noṣrim* and *minim* was added to an older benediction.[2] This cannot have occurred much before 85 CE, since the Babli ascribed its revision to Samuel the Small, a contemporary of Rabban Gamaliel.[3]

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1. Of course there were synagogues in Jerusalem whilst the Temple was standing, for example the συναγωγή that is the subject of the Theodotos inscription and that mentioned Acts 6:9 (see Kloppenborg 2000). There is nothing, however, to suggest that Pharisees had any control over the Theodotos synagogue; on the contrary, the ἀρχισυνάγωγος is identified as a ἱερεύς, as, presumably were his father and grandfather, who were also ἀρχισυνάγωγοι. The attempt by H.C. Kee (1990, 1994, 1995) to date the inscription into the third or fourth century is based on a misunderstanding of epigraphical principles and ignores the fact that the find site, in the lower city of David, was unoccupied after the time of Hadrian and before the Byzantine period.

2. Martyn (1979: 42–50) rejects the association of ἀποσυνάγωγος with either the *nidduy* [a temporary, disciplinary exclusion] or the *ḥerem* ban [permanent excommunication] on the grounds that the *nidduy* was 'usually applied against *scholars* who refused to follow the majority ruling of a scholarly court' and that the *ḥerem* is not attested prior to the third century CE, citing Hunzinger (1954: 65–70, see also Hunzinger 1980). Martyn's thesis is that the earlier benediction was 'For apostates let there be no hope; and let the arrogant government be speedily uprooted in our days; Blessed are you, O Lord, who humbles the proud.' Into this Samuel the Small inserted 'let *noṣrim* and *minim* be destroyed in a moment, and let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not inscribed together with the righteous' (Martyn 1979: 53–59).

3. *b. Ber*. 28b–29a: 'Our Rabbis taught: Simeon ha-Pakuli arranged the eighteen benedictions in order before Rabban Gamaliel in Yavneh. Said Rabban Gamaliel to the Sages: Can anyone among you frame a benediction relating to the *minim*? Samuel the Small arose and composed it. The next year he forgot it and he tried for two or three hours to recall it, and they did not remove him. Why did they

Martyn allows a range of dates between 80 and 115 CE, preferring a date earlier rather than later (1979: 56–57).

Martyn's proposal is significant, not simply for the dating of the Fourth Gospel, but also for a general interpretation of its contents, in particular the development of its high christology and its relationship towards other Jews of the period. If the *Birkhat haMinim* had been promulgated and implemented generally by John's day, continued membership in synagogue communities would have been difficult or impossible for members of the Jesus movement and this, in turn, would help to account for John's ways of describing his Jewish opponents, his relationship to major Jewish institutions, and the very depiction of Jesus as a 'stranger from heaven'.[4]

The *Birkhat haMimin* in recent discussion

Martyn's thesis has garnered both positive[5] and negative responses. The negative reaction has to do with the identities of the *noṣrim* and the *minim* of the Twelfth Benediction, its intended function, and the date of the composition or revision of the Benediction. Reuven Kimelman urged that the earliest secure references to a *liturgical* cursing of Nazoraeans is from Epiphanius (*Haer*. 29.9.1–2) and that Origen, who had close contacts with Jews and polemicised against them, knew nothing of a liturgical cursing. John of course says nothing of *liturgical* cursing and Kimelman points out that Justin' statement in *Dial*. 137.2,[6] which is often cited as evidence supporting an early introduction of a synagogue curse against Christians, does not use καταρᾶσθαι ['to curse'] but rather ἐπισκώπτειν, 'to scoff' and says that this occurs *after* prayers, not during them (1981: 135–37). Kimelman (1981) concludes:

> the fact that the term *noṣrim* first appears in rabbinic literature in the mouth of R. Joḥanan of the third century warrants the conclusion that the Genizah formula which reads *ha-noṣrim ve ha-minim* (the *noṣrim* and the *minim*) was composed between the time of R. Joḥanan (d. c. 279) and the writing of the *Panarion* (377). The data also warrant the conclusion that *noṣrim* does not denote Christians, but rather Nazoraeans, a Jewish Christian sect whose

existence is vouched for by at least two fourth-century sources.

(Kimelman 1981: 138)[7]

In Kimelman's view the *Birkhat haMinim* did not have Christians specifically in view, and the 4th-century revision, which added *noṣrim*, was directed at Jewish Christians, not Christians in general. He claims that there is no unambiguous evidence that Judaeans cursed Christians in their synagogues, and that Christians were 'welcome in synagogues' (1981: 244).

William Horbury offered a very different assessment of the evidence, arguing that there is good evidence, beginning with Justin, that Christians *were* cursed in synagogues,[8] and this can only have occurred during synagogue prayers, despite Justin's μετὰ τὴν προσευχήν. Hence, the traditional idea that the *Birkhat haMinim* was directed against Christians is essentially correct (Horbury 1982: 17–61). In a later article, Horbury argued that, even setting aside the issue of the particular form that exclusionary practices might have taken and the specific issues of the formulation and dating of the *Birkhat haMinim*:

> the evidence for excommunication from the general Jewish body in the pre-rabbinic period is not plentiful, but it is enough to suggest the existence of a recognised custom. Groups such as the Qumran community and the 'Associates' of the Mishnah would have been likely, from their limited and exclusive character, to implement the custom more frequently than the general body.

(Horbury 1985: 38)

In assessing the debate, it is important to distinguish three issues. Firstly there is the issue of whether *noṣrim* included Gentile as well as Judaean Christians. Whilst important, this issue turns out to be irrelevant for the purposes of this paper. Kimelman and Teppler have shown that the term *noṣrim* appears only late in Amoraic literature, that rabbinic allusions to the Benediction fail to mention the *noṣrim* in those contexts, and that the benediction was always known as *Birkhat haMinim*, and never as *Birkhat haNoṣrim*. This strongly suggests that *noṣrim* is a late addition, probably not much earlier than the 4th century (Kimelman 1981: 234).[9]

A second issue concerns connotations of *minim*. Kimelman helpfully distinguishes between *min* in tannaitic, Palestinian amoraic, and Babylonian amoraic usages, and observes that in tannaitic literature *min* denotes any deviant Judaean (1981: 228).[10] Since there is little in tannaitic literature to single out Jewish Christians specifically as *minim*, Kimelman argues that

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(Footnote 3 cont...)
not remove him seeing that Rav Judah has said in the name of Rav: '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. But is there not a fear that he may have recanted? — Abbaye said: 'We have a tradition that a good man does not become bad.' 'But does he not? It is not written, BUT WHEN THE RIGHTEOUS TURNS AWAY FROM HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS AND COMMITS INIQUITY?' — 'Such a man was originally wicked, but one who was originally righteous does not do so' (transl. Epstein).

4.The term, of course, is the coinage of de Jonge (1977).

5.For example, Bowman (1975: 194; Kysar 1975: 149–56; Barrett 1978: 361–62; Brown 1979: 22, 172–74; Segal 1981: 256–57). Beasley-Murray states very cautiously, 'The *Birkath haMinim* may be viewed as an indicator of the tensions between the Jewish Christians and their non-Christian compatriots presupposed by the Evangelist, but not as a chronological marker that has already been passed' (1987: lxxviii). Schiffman argues that the composition of the *Birkhat haMinim* is from the time of Yavneh and that this resulted in the Johannine expulsion of Christians from the synagogue. Schiffman emphasises, however, that 'while the benediction against the *minim* sought to exclude Jewish Christians from active participation in the synagogue service, it in no way implied expulsion from the Jewish people. In fact, heresy, no matter how great, was never seen as cutting the heretic's tie to Judaism' (1981: 149–55, esp. 151–52).

6.'Having assented, therefore, do not ridicule the Son of God; do not obey the Pharisaic teachers and scoff not at the king of Israel, as your *archisynagogoi* teach you to do after your prayers.'

7.Similarly Horst (1994). Katz points out that it is unlikely that the *noṣrim* formed a part of the original version of the Benediction, since Jewish Christians, as Jews, would already be covered under *minim*, and Gentile Christians were of no concern to the synagogue. He suggests that the term *noṣrim* was added sometime between 175 and 325 CE (Katz 1984: 66).

8.Justin uses καταρᾶσθαι of Christ and his followers five times (*Dial*. 16.4; 93.4; 108.3; 123.6; 133.6) and at 16.4 states that this occurs ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς ὑμῶν. At *Dial*. 47.4 he uses καταθεματίζειν [curse] and says that this occurs ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς, and at *Dial*. 137.2 he claims that οἱ ἀρχισυνάγωγοι ὑμῶν scoff [ἐπισκώπτειν] 'after the prayers' [μετὰ τὴν προσευχήν].

9.Yaʿakov Teppler's recent monograph concludes that this addition is not earlier than the 4th century (2007:48–62, 71–72).

10.Teppler further notes that 'the thin collection of *mishnayot* which deals with *minim* lacks... a single common denominator' (2007: 185). These *mishnayyot* include *m. Meg.* 4.8, *m. Meg.* 4.9, and *m. Sanh.* 4.5. The only text to concern Christianity directly is *m. Soṭ* 9.15, but as Teppler observes, this is an interpolation into the Mishnah and belongs to the post-Constantinian period, not the time of Judah ha-Nasi (2007: 162).

the benediction was directed against Jewish sectarians (1981: 244). Peter Schäfer argues: 'die in Jabne in das Achtzehn-Bitten-Gebet eingeführte *birkat hammînîm* richtete sich gegen die römische Obrigkeit und gegen *verschiedene* Gruppen von Häretikern' ['The *Birkat haMinim* that was inserted into the Eighteen Benedictions at Yavneh is directed against Roman authority and against *various* groups of heretics'] (Schäfer 1978: 62).[11]

Schäfer recognised that amongst these heretical groups were Jewish Christians, but whether they were in view at the time of the composition of the *Birkhat haMinim* is uncertain.

Placing more emphasis on Justin's statements, Stephen Wilson argues that 'Christians were not the sole, or even the most important, group of heretics whom the Yavnean rabbis faced' but that Christians were included in the benediction against the *minim* (1995: 183). Whilst allowing that Justin's statements are confused and do not reflect firsthand experience with the synagogue, Wilson (1995) observes:

> It is true that [Justin's] references to the cursing of Christians are vague, but it is hard to know what they refer to if not to the *Birkat ha-minim*. An exact correspondence between [Justin's statements and the *Birkat ha-minim*] is not to be expected. Unless Justin had firsthand knowledge of the wording of synagogue prayers—and he nowhere leads us to think that he had—a somewhat garbled account comes as no surprise. It is important, too, even allowing for all the qualifications in recent discussions of the malediction, to *note* the consensus that Jewish Christians were included amongst the *minim*. The omnibus curse against Jewish heretics could have been understood by Christians to have been directed specifically against them even though that was not originally its sole purpose.
>
> (Wilson 1995: 182)

Wilson's view takes Justin's repeated comments seriously, but also recognises that his claim that the curse was directed at *all* Christians is likely a result of his misunderstanding. As various commentators have pointed out, a Gentile, Christian or not, cannot be a *min*.[12]

Other commentators hold that in the formulation of the *Birkhat haMinim* the Jesus movement was centrally in view. Beginning with the proposition that John 9:22, 12:42 and 16:2 must reflect an actual Judaean charge against Christians, Segal concludes that what was at stake was the claim of the Johannine group that Jesus was a mediator, which could then be construed as a claim that there were 'two powers in heaven', a position that tannaitic sages roundly rejected (cf. *m. Sanh*. 4.5). The revision of the 12th benediction was intended to apply to anyone holding that there were 'two powers' and although it was not aimed specifically at Christians, it applied 'implicitly to Christians' (1981: 254–57). Segal thus argues that 'the Christian community, in turn, appears to

have correctly understood this as a criticism of their position (1981: 257). Quibbling only with Segal's 'implicitly', Teppler is in essential agreement with Segal: 'the stance of this Midrash [*Gen. Rab*. 1.7[13]] on the question of the *minim* and in particular on the problem of the Two Powers, is *essentially anti Christian*' (2007: 347 [Author's emphasis]). The most recent contributor to the topic, Marius Heemstra urges that the *Birkhat haMinim* was 'intended to excommunicate Jewish Christians, besides other groups, as heretics' and that the issue was the Christian claim that the Messiah was 'from heaven', which implicitly conflicted with the divine origin of the Torah and thus fell under the condemnation of *m. Sanh*. 10.1:

> But the following have no portion [in the world to come]: He who maintains that resurrection is not a biblical Doctrine, the Torah was not divinely revealed, and an Epikoros.
>
> (Heemstra 2009)[14]

Whilst most of the commentators discussed up to now conclude that the *minim* of early rabbinic literature included members of the Judaean Jesus movement either implicitly or explicitly, it is important to inquire into the function of the discussion of *minut* in Mishnaic sources. Martin Goodman has reflected on the curious fact that quite unlike Christian heresiologists such as Irenaeus (or much later, Epiphanius), who display a prurient interest in the beliefs and practices of heretics, not only are mishnaic authorities extremely laconic in their allusions to the beliefs of the *minut*, but it is impossible to deduce who specifically was in view, as there is no common denominator for the few beliefs and practices to which allusion is made.

Goodman accounts for this reluctance to describe heretical positions by arguing that the early rabbis exhibited a kind of solepsism: the 'tendency to think about their Jewishness almost entirely in terms of the life of an adult male rabbinic Jew' (1996: 507). Rather than attacking *minim* the rabbis ignored them:

> There is no evidence that it served to hound out of the fold particular deviants whose continued presence was believed to threaten the health of the body politic of Judaism. Nor is there evidence that it served to define correct behaviour for rabbinic Jews by clarifying what was forbidden in thought or deed.
>
> (Goodman 1996: 508)

Instead, the concept of *minim* served as a way for rabbis to think about a category of Jews 'whose theology or behaviour placed them outside the covenant between God and Israel'

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11. Similarly Stemberger (1977).

12. '... the issue involved in the formulation of the *Birkat ha-Minim* at Yavneh was *minuth* ['heresy'] and at this time and by definition, the only Christians that could be *minim* ['heretics'] were Jewish Christians. The later, wider, amoraic usage, particularly in Babylonia, of *minim* to cover Gentile Christians is a new development' (Katz 1984: 65).

13. *Gen. Rab*. 1.7 (on 1:1): 'And no person can dispute and maintain that two powers gave the Torah or two powers created the world. For 'and the Gods spoke' is not written here, but, AND GOD SPOKE ALL THESE WORDS [Ex 20:1]; 'In the beginning the Gods created' is not written here, but IN THE BEGINNING GOD CREATED' (transl. Freedman & Simon 1961).

14. I cite Heemstra with the pagination of his dissertation. This quotation is from p. 186. 'It could be very well defended that the second description: '(the one who says) the Torah is not from Heaven' (ואין תורה מן השמים) refers to Jewish Christians, especially to those who embraced the increasingly explicit 'high' Christology that was to become central to mainstream Christianity. This high Christology (which one could describe as 'the Messiah is from Heaven', (משיח מן השמים) is arguably the main theme in the Gospel of John and the Letter to the Hebrews. It explicitly values the Messiah higher than the Mosaic Law' (2009: 191). This assertion seems very unlikely: the claim that the Torah is of divine origin neither logically excludes claims of a divine origin for Christ, nor can Heemstra cite any instances of Jewish Christian documents which deny the divine origin of the Torah. The statement of Origen (*In Rom*. 3.11) to the effect that 'Ebion' destroyed the Torah seems to be a confusion of Marcion with the eponymous founder of the Ebionites.

(Goodman 1996: 508). If, as Goodman suggests, the concept of *minut* functioned as a theoretical limit-concept for rabbinic identity rather than a practical mechanism for the regulation of Judaean life, there is even less reason to suppose that it had any function or effect outside the *batei midrash*.

A 3rd issue has the effect of relativising the force of the Benediction: it is in fact by no means probable that the Yavnean innovation could have met with immediate and universal acceptance, as earlier scholars sometimes tacitly assumed.[15] Not only did the Yavnean sages *not* have the institutional base to enforce their rulings on synagogues generally,[16] but they probably also lacked the prestige and influence that might incline synagogues beyond their immediate control to adopt their practices.[17] Levine has identified a series of aspects of the social and institutional location of the sages that would have limited their influence:

• prior to the 3rd century CE the sages were primarily based in small towns rather than the larger cities of the Galilee
• the *batei midrash* were gatherings in private homes (and hence associated with particular sages) rather than in permanent institutions with regular rules of succession
• the well-attested animosity of 2nd-century sages towards other Jews, whom they designated as *'ammei ha-aretz*, hardly indicates that they were influential in public affairs
• correspondingly, there is little evidence of 2nd-century sages holding public office.

This was to change in the 3rd century CE, in such a way that the rabbinic class could now assume a prominent political role, as it did under Judah *ha Nasi*:

> These three major developments [in the 3rd century]—urbanisation, institutionalisation, and a more positive attitude toward Jewish society at large—are in many ways interrelated. By transferring the focus of their activity to large urban centers and creating independent permanent institutions, the rabbis were led, of necessity, to develop a closer relationship with other sectors of the population. Alternatively, the positive attitude towards non-rabbinic Jewish society (which may have developed for other reasons entirely...) certainly played a role in drawing sages to the centers of the Jewish population and in encouraging them to associate with these Jewish communities on a sustained basis.
>
> (Levine 1989: 32)

Prior to 3rd century, in fact, rabbis are not represented as having much contact with the synagogue; their main institutional home was the *bet midrash* (Levine 1992: 206–7).[18] It follows from whatever measures were taken at Yavneh, they could not have had the widespread effects that scholars of Christian origins have assumed. Commenting on the evidence for the formulation and influence of the *'amidah*, Ruth Langer has concluded:

> No single piece of evidence offered here definitively proves that the central prayer of Rabbinic Judaism, the *'amidah*, began to influence Jewish practice at the earliest in the mid- to late-third century, several centuries after it was decreed at Yavneh... Whilst the rabbis may have developed relatively quickly a complex ritual response to fill the void left by the loss of the biblically mandated sacrifices, successful promulgation of this liturgy was an exceedingly slow process.
>
> (Ehrlich & Langer 2004: 438–39)

This naturally leads to a final issue. Up to now it has been tacitly assumed that Yavneh was something like a council, functioning to define practices, whether or not it had the institutional basis to enact such practices universally or even regionally. Likewise, the traditional view has assumed that Yavneh functioned to establish the parameters of orthodoxy and to expel those who fell outside the bounds of orthodoxy.

Shaye Cohen has challenged this construction of Yavneh, insisting instead that rather than producing a sect intent on excluding others, 'the goal was not the triumph over other sects but the elimination of the need for sectarianism itself' (1984: 29). It was at Yavneh that the idiom of rabbinic debate was developed, an idiom that tolerated disagreement and allowed for a multiplicity of opinions. Cohen (1984) concludes:

> At no point in antiquity did the rabbis develop heresiology and ecclesiology, creeds and dogmas. At no point did they expel anyone from the rabbinic order or from rabbinic synagogues because of doctrinal error or because of membership in some heretical group. Those who held incorrect beliefs were chastised or denied a share in the world to come, not denied a share in the people of Israel in this world.... Similarly, the *birkat hamînim*, the curse against *minim* ('heretics') which was inserted in the daily liturgy in the Yavnean period... , did not define which heretics were intended... and, in any case, denounced but did not expel.
>
> (Cohen 1984: 41–42)

Although Goodman describes Cohen's view as constructing too 'liberal' a view of the Yavnean sages (1996: 507), Cohen's last point needs to be underscored: the *Birkhat haMinim* does not define which heretics are to be cursed, and as such, without publicly available interpretive traditions to clarify its application — an interpretive tradition that cannot be found in the Mishnah —, it would be entirely ineffectual as a means to exclude anyone from the synagogue.[19] The rabbinic

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15. Martyn assumes that the Yavnean decisions represented those of a kind of general council, which were universally applicable: 'Such an important measure would naturally have constituted an official enactment by the Jamnia Academy. To make decisions regarding the synagogue liturgy was one of the major prerogatives claimed by Jamnia. Furthermore the rewording of part of *The* Prayer (Amidah = Eighteen Benedictions) would have had no purpose were it not published for use far and wide' (1979: 55–56).

16. For example, 'The chief officials of the Greek-speaking synagogues in both Israel and the diaspora were *presbyters, archons, archisynagogues*, and even *ḥazzanim*, but not rabbis (or Rabbis). One prominent individual in the Sardis synagogue was a (the?) 'priest and sage-teacher' [*hiereus kai sophodidaskalos*], but he too was not (necessarily) a Rabbi. The Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions are much more chary with their references to authority figures, but they also do not support the notion of Rabbinic dominance. The rabbis of the corpus who are mentioned by synagogue inscriptions appear as donors... , not as the leaders of the synagogues' (Cohen 1981: 19). Miller argues that rabbis might have had some connection with early synagogues, but concedes that they did not 'call the shots' (1999: 54).

17. See Schwartz (2002: 103–128).

18. See also Cohen (1992: 163): 'Although rabbinic power increased during and after the tenure of R. Judah the Patriarch, even 3rd-century rabbis lacked the legal authority to enforce their decisions in religious matters'. '[The rabbis] were neither agents of the state nor communal leaders. In sum, the rabbis did not control the religious and civil life of 2nd-century Palestinian Jewry' (1992: 164). 'There is no indication that the tannaim ever attempted to propagate their Torah among the masses' (1992: 168). 'Their judicial authority extended to a few circumscribed topics only. The rabbis were but a small part of Jewish society, an insular group which produced an insular literature. They were not synagogue leaders' (1992: 173).

19. See also Moyter, who observes that 'since the curse worked by self-exclusion rather than by expulsion (so that it would only bar from the synagogue those who recognised themselves as 'minim'), it must have functioned more as exhortation to Jews generally than as a specific means of social exclusion' (1997: 93).

concept of *minut* is simply vague, to use Goodman's term (Goodman 1996: 507).

Daniel Boyarin goes still further, arguing that 'Yavneh' as a normative council was the product of the talmudic imagination of the 4th century.[20] And whilst he does not deny (citing Justin) that some form of cursing may have occurred in synagogues, there is little evidence that it was the *Birkhat haMinim*. In fact, there is no reference to the *Birkhat haMinim* in the Mishnah; the earliest rabbinic allusion is in the 3rd-century Tosefta (*t. Ber*. 3.25).[21]

The conclusion of this survey of recent scholarship is clear: as incorrigible as Martyn's hypothesis once seemed, it is now problematic on many grounds. Not only is the element that directed the benediction to Christians in particular (*noṣrim*) a 3rd- or 4th-century addition, but several other elements of Martyn's thesis are in serious doubt:

- that *minim* included Judaean followers of Jesus
- that the benediction functioned to *exclude* deviants from synagogue participation
- that the sages at Yavneh had the social and legal means to influence the practices of synagogues in the land of Israel or elsewhere
- that the decisions which later talmudic sources ascribe to Yavneh can in fact be traced to the activities of Yohanan's academy at Yavneh.

Boyarin (2001) concludes:

> Once the evidence of and for a so-called 'blessing of the heretics' before the third century is removed from the picture, there is no warrant at all to assume an early Palestinian curse directed at any Christians. I am not claiming to know that there was no such thing, but rather that we cannot know at all, and that it is certain, therefore, that we cannot build upon such a weak foundation an edifice of Jewish-Christian parting of the ways.
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> (Boyarin 2001: 434)

Ἀποσυναγωγός in John

Most of the discussion of Martyn's thesis has focused on dismissing the revision of the *Birkhat haMinim* as a plausible context for John 9:22, 12:42 and 16:2. What has not been clarified, however, is the significance of ἀποσυναγωγός once the *Birkhat haMinim* is not treated as illuminating that context. John was speaking of *something*. Nevertheless, for reasons that I shall discuss later, we should not naively assume that John's account of expulsion — which privileges Christology — is the reason for the exclusion or expulsion of the Johannine Jesus people.

The term ἀποσυναγωγός

The 1st issue to consider in untangling this problem presented by the Fourth Gospel is the term itself. Whose term is it? As far as can be determined, the first occurrences of ἀποσυναγωγός in the Greek language are found in John, and all of the subsequent occurrences of the term are found in patristic rather than pagan literature, most of them simply quoting or paraphrasing John 9.[22] Whether this is a neologism of John's or of his group, or the coinage of the synagogue in John's locale cannot, of course be known with certainty. Moulton and Milligan thought the latter: 'This is of course just the sort of word that would have to be coined for use in the Jewish community' (Moulton & Milligan 1930: 70).

Moulton and Milligan's conjecture may be correct, especially because the term refers to persons negatively, by indicating the social relationships that they *no longer* enjoy. Unlike other pejorative or derisive terms such as πτωχοί (Gl 2:10; Rm 15:26; Jas 2:5), νηπιοί (Q 10:22) and probably Χριστιανός (Ac 11:26) which were eventually inverted and adopted as badges as pride, there is no indication whatsoever that ἀποσυναγωγός became a self-designation for groups of Jesus-followers. On the contrary, if we set aside the patristic occurrences of the term which simply quote or allude to the Johannine texts, the term *always* appears of persons who are so designated by the *excluding* (Christian) group. That is, patristic usage assumes the perspective of the group from which persons are excluded, and never turns it into a self-designation of the Christian group:

> φαμὲν οὖν οἱ πεπιστευμένοι κρίνειν τοὺς ἔσω οὐχ οὕτως εἰσὶν ἀνόητοι ὡς κρίνοντες τοὺς ἔσω λέγειν ὅτι «Τὴν κρίσιν τοῦ θεοῦ κρίνομεν», ἀλλὰ πρὸς τὴν οἰκονομίαν τοῦ συμφέροντος τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τὴν κρίσιν ποιοῦνται. εἰ συμφέρει τόνδε ἀποσυνάγωγον εἶναι κρίναντες αὐτὸ ποιοῦσιν· καὶ πάλιν πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον <παρα>στήσονται, οὐ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ κρίνοντες κρίσιν ἀλλὰ τὴν δεδομένην αὐτοῖς· τὴν γὰρ κρίσιν ἣν ὁ θεὸς κρινεῖ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀμήχανόν ἐστι κρίνειν ἡμᾶς· οὔτε γὰρ καρδίας ἐρευνῶμεν οὔτε οἴδαμεν οἷς λογισμοῖς τὰ πεπραγμένα ἑκάστῳ πέπρακται. [Therefore we say that those who are entrusted with judging those on the inside are not so ignorant as to say when judging those on the inside, 'we judge the judgment of God'; but they judge for the management of what is advantageous for the church. If it is advantageous (for someone) to be an *aposynagogos*, they do this, having made this judgement. And again, they will come to his side for the sake of advantage, not judging the judgement of God but the (judgement) that is given to them. For neither do we search hearts, nor do we know by which reasonings each person acts.]
>
> (Origen, *Fragmenta ex commentariis in epistulam in ad Corinthios* 18)

> Ποιήσεις οὖν αὐτὸν ἀποσυνάγωγον ὡς φονέα ἀδελφοῦ. Ἔπειτα χρόνου

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20. Responding to Cohen's historicising and eirenic view of Yavneh, Boyarin notes that '....the retrospective construction of Yavneh in late-fourth-century (or even later!) rabbinic texts involved | the denial of real enmity and the production of an imaginary and utopian comity. The Talmud, I suggest, is Yavneh's collective Athanasius' (2000: 28). 'All of the institutions of rabbinic Judaism are projected in rabbinic narrative to an origin called Yavneh'. 'That which the Rabbis wished to enshrine as authoritative, they ascribed to events and utterances that took place at Yavneh, and sometimes even to divine voices that proclaimed themselves at that hallowed site' (Boyarin 2004: 48–49).

21. *T.Ber*. 3.25: 'The Eighteen Benedictions which sages ordained correspond to the eighteen invocations of the Tetragrammaton in ASCRIBE TO THE LORD... (Ps 29). One inserts [a blessing] for the *minim* in [the blessing] for the sectarians [מינים] and [the blessing] for the proselytes in [the blessing] for the elders' (transl. Neusner 1977–1986.)

22. Apart from Origen's usage (discussed later), the term appears dominantly in and after the 4th century. Citations from the 4th century (all referring to the Fourth Gospel) are Gregorius of Nyssa, *In inscriptiones Psalmorum* (*Gregorii Nysseni opera* 5:92); Epiphanius, *Haer*. 5.45.81.4 (= Holl, GCS 3:22); Basil of Caesarea, *Regulae morales* (PG 31:797); Asterius Sophista, *Commentarii in Psalmos*, Homily 15 (M. Richard, *Asterii sophistae commentariorum in Psalmos quae supersunt* [Symbolae Osloenses, Suppl. 16; Oslo: Brogger, 1956]); Theodoros of Herakleia, *Fragmenta in Joannem*, fr. 210 col 1.10 (J. Reuss, *Johannes-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche* [TU 89; Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1966]); fr. 210 col 2.10; Ephraem Syrus, *Adhortatio ad fratres* (K.G. Phrantzoles, Ὁσίου Ἐφραίμ τοῦ Σύρου ἔργα [Thessalonica: To Perivoli tis Panagias, 1994] vol. 5:255–275, p. 260); Joannes Chrysostomus, *Hoc scitote quod in novissimis diebus* (PG 56:275.37); *In Joannem* (PG 59:338.54, 345.2, 417.44, 45, 420.53); *In faciem ei restiti* (PG 51:375.56); *De mutatione nominum* (PG 51:142.1); *Expositiones in Psalmos* (PG 55:50.35); *In Mattheum* (PG 58:636.34; 59:43.28, 66.16, 114.50, 377.22, 377.35); *In epistulam II ad Corinthios* (PG 61:485.29); *In epistulam I ad Timotheum* (PG 62:517.11).

διαστάντος, ἐὰν λέγη μετανοεῖν, στιβώσατε αὐτὸν νηστείαις, καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα χειροθετήσαντες προσδέξασθε αὐτὸν, ἀσφαλισάμενοι μέντοι αὐτόν, μή τινα ταράξῃ πάλιν. Εἰ δὲ πάλιν εἰσελθὼν ὁμοίως στασιάζει, οὐ παυόμενος τοῦ ταράσσειν καὶ κατακερτομεῖν τῶν ἀδελφῶν, ἐκ φιλονεικίας μώμους ἐπιτηδεύων, ἐκβάλετε αὐτὸν ὡς λοιμόν, ἵνα μὴ τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ λυμαίνηται· «Ὁ τοιοῦτος γὰρ ταραχὰς συνίστησι πόλει.» [You shall therefore make [a false accuser] an *aposynagogos* as a murderer of his brother. Some time afterwards, if he says that he repents, mortify him with fasting, and afterwards you shall lay your hands upon him and receive him, but still keeping him secure so that he does not trouble anyone again. But if, once he is readmitted, he becomes troublesome again and will not stop causing disturbances or quarreling with the brothers, making the faults of others his business out of contentiousness, expel him as a plague so that he may not damage the church of God. FOR SUCH A ONE IS THE RAISER OF DISTURBANCES IN THE CITY (Pr 6:14).]

(*Constitutiones Apostolorum* 2.43)

Γινέσθωσαν τοίνυν αἱ χῆραι ἕτοιμαι πρὸς ὑπακοὴν τῶν ἐντεταλμένων αὐταῖς ὑπὸ τῶν κρειττόνων, καὶ κατὰ τὴν διάταξιν τοῦ ἐπισκόπου ποιείτωσαν ὡς Θεῷ ὑπακούουσαι. ὁ γὰρ ἀπὸ τοιούτου ἐπιρρήτου ἢ ἀποσυναγώγου δεχόμενος καὶ ὑπὲρ τούτου προσευχόμενος, ἐμμένειν τοῖς κακοῖς προαιρουμένου καὶ μὴ θέλοντος μεταμεληθῆναί ποτε, κοινωνεῖ τούτῳ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ λυπεῖ Χριστόν.... [Let the widows also be ready to obey the commands given them by their superiors, and let them do according to the appointment of the bishop, being obedient to him as to God; for whoever receives from such a one who is worthy of blame or from an *aposynagogos* and prays for him, whilst he chooses to continue in a wicked deeds, and as long as he is not willing ever to repent, has fellowship with him in prayer and grieves Christ....]

(*Constitutiones Apostolorum* 3.8)

Δοκιμασταὶ οὖν γίνεσθε τῶν τοιούτων· καὶ παρὰ μὲν τῶν ὁσίως περιπατούντων λαμβάνετε καὶ τοῖς θλιβομένοις χορηγεῖτε, παρὰ δὲ ἀποσυναγώγων μὴ λαμβάνετε, πρὶν ἂν τῆς ἐκκλησίας εἶναι μέλη καταξιωθῶσιν. [Therefore examine such persons (who offer alms), and receive from such as walk in holiness, and supply those who are afflicted. But do not receive from those that are *aposynagogoi*, until they are thought worthy to become (again) the members of the Church.]

(*Constitutiones Apostolorum* 4.8)

In the context of his comments on the expulsion of the adulterous man in 1 Corinthians 5, Origen considers the possible contradiction between 1 Corinthians 5:12, οὐχὶ τοὺς ἔσω ὑμεῖς κρίνετε; and Matthew 7:1, μὴ κρίνετε, ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε and resolves the difficulty by distinguishing between divine judgement and the sphere of pragmatic judgement [πρὸς τὸ συμφέρον] given to the church. He defends the decision to treat a member as an *aposynagogos* as belonging to this latter sphere of judgement. Likewise, the three occurrences in the *Apostolic Constitutions* all understand the term to belong to the legitimate disciplinary competence of the church. What is common to all four occurrences of the term, however, is the fact that all seem to refer to a *temporary* disciplinary exclusion rather than a final expulsion and all four imagine the possibility of readmission to the group.

What was at Stake?

A 2nd issue follows from the likelihood that ἀποσυναγωγός is a technical term in the disciplinary vocabulary of the synagogue. If ἀποσυναγωγός in John represents the term coined by the local synagogue to refer to excluded persons, the question naturally arises; What was at stake for the synagogue? Proceeding on the assumption that the Johannine group was in fact locked in a struggle with the Pharisees (or early rabbis), Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998) argue that the expulsion of which John speaks is a matter of ridding the corporate body of dangerous elements of pollution as a means of maintaining purity:

> The Pharisees were a corporate group of Israelites whose main concern was to fulfil all of God's demands in the Torah, but specifically as spelled out in the Great Tradition of their scribal elders. This tradition laid heavy emphasis on boundary keeping and purity. Thus, in social practice the notable features of Pharisaic ideology were 'no-mixture' and 'exclusivity'.
>
> (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998: 177)[23]

If the Pharisees, with their strong construction of social boundaries, were in control of synagogues, then the presence of Jesus-followers, with different practices or beliefs, might be regarded as pollutants threatening the cohesion of the group.[24] If, however, as seems to be the case, the Pharisees did not control synagogues and *a fortiori* were not in a juridical position to exclude persons from synagogues — this would have been a role for an archisynagogos — and if in the post-70 CE context the early rabbis were more concerned to maintain appropriate levels of compliance with the Torah *in their own institution*, the *bet midrash*, we must seek another narrative of the expulsion of Johannine Jesus-followers.

One might, of course, argue that synagogues, even though they were not controlled by Pharisees, had as strong an investment in purity and in guarding against pollutants as the Pharisees, so that the same considerations adduced by Malina and Rohrbaugh would still apply, *mutatis mutandis*. But such a view is without foundation and would leave unexplained the early rabbinic discourse about the *ʿammei ha-areṣ*, which assumes that most Israelites did *not* attain to the standards of the early rabbis in matters of tithing and maintaining appropriate purity boundaries. We are, in any case, not well informed about the precise social dynamics that occurred in synagogues in the 1st century, either in the land of Israel or in the diaspora. The description in the Tosephta of a large synagogue in Alexandria,[25] whilst surely not the norm for diaspora synagogues, suggests an extremely diverse membership and the presence of multiple professional groups — so large and diverse that it would have been impossible to police the specific beliefs and practices

23. See also Neyrey (2006: 175–76). On the emphasis on maintaining purity in table fellowship, see Neusner (1973: 86).

24. Malina and Rohrbaugh adopt the view of Martyn that the incident reflects the revision of the Twelfth Benediction (1998: 173).

25. The large synagogue described in *t. Sukk*. 4.6, though surely not typical of diaspora synagogues, illustrates the diversity of membership that one might find in a synagogue. 'Said R. Judah: Whoever has never seen the double colonnade of Alexandria in Egypt has never seen the glory of Israel in his entire life. It was a kind of large basilica, one colonnade inside another. Sometimes there were twice as many people there as those who went forth from Egypt. Now there were seventy-one golden thrones set up there, one for each of the seventy-one elders, each one worth twenty-five talents of gold, with a wooden platform in the middle. The minister of the synagogue stands on it flags in his hand. When one began to read, the other would wave the flags so the people would answer 'Amen' for each and every blessing. Then that one would wave the flags, and they would answer 'Amen'. They did not sit in a jumble but the goldsmiths sat by themselves, the silversmiths by themselves, the weavers by themselves, the bronze-workers by themselves, and the blacksmiths by themselves. All this why? So that when a traveller came along, he could find his own fellow craftsmen and on that basis he could gain a living.'

of any or all of these sub-groups. The famous 1st-century synagogue donated by a priestess of the imperial cult, Julia Severa in Akmonia in Phrygia (*MAMA* VI 264) surely did not exclude its donor on the grounds of her involvement with the imperial cult, and a 3rd-century synagogue in Phokaia (Aeolis) explicitly offered its gentile patron a golden crown and the front seat [προεδρία] (*I.Kyme* 45). Or, one might think of the famous donative inscription from Aphrodisias, where nine city councillors from Aphrodisias are listed as donors to a synagogue (Reynolds & Tannenbaum 1987). There is no indication in any of these inscriptions suggesting the kind of strong purity boundaries in diaspora synagogues that would lead to the exclusion of persons on the basis of false belief or heteronomic practice.

A common view of what was at stake for the synagogue that excluded Johannine Jesus-believers is the high christological claims made by the Johannine group. In what is perhaps one of most subtle and sophisticated presentations of this thesis, Jerome Neyrey parses this history of the Johannine group into three phrases, the 1st represented by the signs gospel and some other materials, which reflect the missionising of other synagogue members. At this stage, Neyrey believes, the Johannine Jesus followers had a low christology, conceiving Jesus as God's agent sent to lead God's covenant people. Conflict was apparent at this phase, but mainly over the interpretation of the Sabbath:

> Construing the Scriptures as prophecy, not halakah, Jesus claims to stand in continuity with the overall thrust of Judaism…, whilst contesting the current structures of Jewish life…, many of which derived from a temple-oriented view of God and the Scriptures (see 2:13–21; 4:19–24). Jesus is heralded, then as a reformer of the system, who accepts the basic order and orientation of his religious culture but contests many aspects of how that is structured in daily life.
>
> (Neyrey 1988: 127–28)

The 2nd stage Neyrey characterises as one of 'growing elitism' and a higher christology. It is at this stage that the replacement theology characteristic of John develops and, correspondingly, the claims that Jesus is 'greater than' Jacob (4:12), Abraham (8:53, 56–58) and even Moses (1:17; 3:13–15; 5:36, 46; 6:31–32). Naturally, to present Jesus as the replacement of central Israelite institutions also led to a crisis of membership, reflected in John's categorisation of persons in groups of authentic believers, crypto-believers, persons of inadequate faith, dropouts and others:

> The Gospel document reflects the perspective of those willing to confess Jesus as the authentic replacement of Israel's cultus, and so they see true membership in the Johannine group limited to authentic believers such as those who publicly acclaim Jesus as the risk of excommunication.
>
> (Neyrey 1988: 134)

Although Neyrey does not, in his historical narrative, identify the point that excommunication occurred, it was presumably between the 2nd phase and the 3rd phase, in which John's high christology was coupled with the characterisation of the 'world' as opposed to Jesus and separation and withdrawal from the world as the appropriate strategy:

> The anti-stance against previously held values can also be observed in the way the world is treated. In stages one and

two, this world was a place to be catechised, a place deserving of God's benevolent attention, and a place in which the Word seemed willing to pitch his tent. But as opposition to Jesus culminated in excommunication from the synagogue, this world became a hateful place (15:18–25), a place from which one should flee (13:1–3; 17:5), a place of exile

(Neyrey 1988: 144)

Neyrey's narrative of the development of the Johannine group has a certain plausibility, and coordinates a sophisticated anthropological analysis (drawn from Mary Douglas' work) with a developmental analysis similar to that proposed by R.E. Brown. The question that we must ask, however, is not about how the Johannine group saw its own evolution, but rather what was at stake for the *excluding* body, the synagogue. That is, the methodological question is whether we should take the *insider account* of exclusion as definitive. There are two main reasons why we should not.

Johannine anti-language

As Bruce Malina and Joan Campbell have recognised, John's language bears the marks of an *anti-language* (Malina 1984; Campbell 2007: 163–93). This fact should invite extreme caution when it comes to taking John's account of expulsion naively as a description of the social situation of his group. According to Michael Halliday, whose coinage 'anti-language' is, anti-languages are typically found in subcultures and are characterised by re-lexicalisation — the substitution of new words for old words — and over-lexicalisation — the multiplication of terms referring to specific things or acts. Halliday notes that re-lexicalisation and over-lexicalisation are normally partial, applying only to the central concerns of the subculture.[26] Anti-languages are instruments of resocialisation and use conventional grammar but different vocabulary. Their adoption has the effect of separating the users from larger society, because anti-language is deliberately opaque to outsiders, and because the embracing of an anti-language establishes 'strongly affective identification with significant others' (Halliday 1975: 575). The adoption of an anti-language, with its peculiar intensifications and redefinitions of linguistic signs, necessarily alters the ways in which reality is perceived.

John's language displays many of these characteristics. The linguistic domain ordinarily oriented to cognition — the verbs ἀκούειν, βλέπειν, εἰδέναι, γινώσκειν, θεωρεῖν, θεᾶσθαι, μαρτυρεῖν, μιμνήσκεσθαι, μνημονεύειν, ὁρᾶν, πιστεύειν, ὑπομιμνήσκειν — have all become verbs relating to *christological cognition*, and all have essentially equivalent semantic significance, namely the Johannine recognition of Jesus as God's envoy. This is an example of over-lexicalisation — the multiplication and intensification of terms relating to a single object or practice. Re-lexicalisation is also evident in John's use of λόγος [= Jesus], ναός [= Jesus' body], ἄνωθεν [= from the heavenly realm], ὑψωθῆναι [= to be executed or glorified], ὑπάγειν [= to

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26. In Elizabethan England, for example, vagabonds formed a subculture with its own 'pelting (= paltry) speech', including numerous substitute words for 'vagabond': upright man, rogue, wild rogue, prigger of prancers (= horse thief), counterfeit crank, jarkman, bawdy basket, walking mort, kinchin mort, doxy, and dell (instances of re-lexicalisation). Criminal gangs in Calcutta display over-lexicalisation, with 21 words for 'bomb' and 41 for 'police' (Halliday 1975: 570–571).

die] and other terms designed to hide their true significance from the outsider. Κόσμος has been relexicalised so that it no longer simply means 'world' or 'order' or 'good behaviour', but takes on hostile overtones and refers to any person or any institution that does not recognise the claims that the Johannine group make on behalf of Jesus (Campbell 2007: 173–74). It seems likely that the terms Ἰουδαῖοι, Φαρισαῖοι and τέκνα τοῦ Ἀβραάμ — all terms part of John's core concerns — have also been re-lexicalised to refer to opponents of the Johannine group. But the consequence of this is that it becomes far from clear whether they refer any longer to Jews in general or to Pharisees in particular. On the contrary, these become interchangeable terms for anyone whom the Johannine group considers to be an opponent.[27]

It has long been observed that the Fourth Gospel has achieved so sharp a christological focus that it excludes virtually all ethical, ecclesiological, eschatological, and practical topics. John's exclusive focus is on christological recognition and the single ethical commandment, ὑμεῖς ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους (13:34). With this exclusive focus, it is inevitable that John would represent the conflict between his group and the synagogue as a matter of christological recognition. Given, however, John's use of anti-language, it is precarious to take John's insider narrative as a reliable guide to what was at stake for the synagogue. It is equally dangerous to assume that his use of Φαρισαῖοι is a reliable indication that the Pharisees were centrally or even peripherally implicated in opposition to John's group.

Whilst John's narrative of exclusion focuses on the *beliefs* — that is, the cognitive claims — of the Johannine group, the instances of ἀποσυναγωγός in Origen and the *Apostolic Constitutions* seems to relate not to heretical beliefs, but to *disruptive behaviour*. Moreover, the term seems to refer to *temporary* exclusion designed as a disciplinary measure. Origen's comment appears to imagine a case in which exclusion and subsequent restoration is a possibility which points to a behavioural issue rather than heretical beliefs and in the *Apostolic Constitutions* 2.43 the grounds for exclusion are clearly a matter of behaviour. In all the three occurrences of the word in the *Apostolic Constitutions* the possibility of rehabilitation is explicitly acknowledged. In 2.43 the term used for expulsion is not ἀποσυναγωγός but ἐκβάλλειν αὐτὸν ὡς λοιμόν.[28] It seems a possibility, then, that ἀποσυναγωγός was a term originally applied to a temporary, disciplinary exclusion, which, however, did not imply automatic rehabilitation. From the perspective of the Johannine group, which presumably was not prepared to recant, the term came to be seen as a permanent expulsion.

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27. Halliday's concept of anti-language has also been helpfully applied to the problem of Qumran's use of Hebrew. Weitzman argues that Qumran deliberately employed Hebrew 'to transcend the multilingualism of the wayward world around it' (1999: 45). Schniedewind points out that whilst most of the scrolls are lack Aramaic and colloquial expressions and are composed in a form of Hebrew that is closer to classical forms than current spoken Hebrew, and employs a distinctive code and symbolic terminology, MMT, written to obtain a rapprochement with the priesthood in Jerusalem, is composed in a more vernacular Hebrew. The use of anti-language in MMT would have been counterproductive (1999: 235–52).

28. Note that John uses ἐκβάλλειν as the conclusion to the story of the blind man (9:34–35): ἀπεκρίθησαν καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· ἐν ἁμαρτίαις σὺ ἐγεννήθης ὅλος καὶ σὺ διδάσκεις ἡμᾶς; καὶ ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω. ἤκουσεν Ἰησοῦς ὅτι ἐξέβαλον αὐτὸν ἔξω καὶ εὑρὼν αὐτὸν εἶπεν....

The possibility that exclusion was originally for disruptive behaviour and that it was in the first instance disciplinary becomes more likely once we look at the disciplinary practices of contemporary groups.

Exclusion and expulsion in Judaean associations

The practice of exclusionary discipline is well attested in a variety of contemporary Judaean and pagan associations, and in virtually all instances disruptive or deviant behaviour was the grounds for exclusion rather than holding to certain beliefs. As Louis Ginzberg (1976) once observed, commenting on the origins of the Karaites:

> It was not dogma but law that was apt to produce lasting schisms in Judaism. It was not theological differences that created the Karaite schism in the eighth century but differences of opinion about matters of law, and one may confidently assert that so long as Jewish-Christianity was not distinct from the bulk of the people in its attitude to the Law, it was regarded as a normal part of it in spite of its peculiar dogmas.
>
> (Ginzberg 1976: 105)

As will become clear from the following survey of exclusionary practices, exclusion occurred in reaction to behaviour, not belief. Or to put it differently, it was only when beliefs led to or were embodied in certain deviant behaviour that persons were excluded and expelled. John Barclay aptly notes that 'deviance' is not a quality that inheres in persons or their acts, but is the result of the application of the norms and sanctions of a group to persons who fail to meet those norms or as Ginzberg puts it, it is a matter of 'law' (Barclay 1995).

The community at Qumran practiced both exclusion and expulsion. In his description of the Essenes Josephus speaks only of expulsion:

> Τοὺς δ᾽ ἐπ᾽ ἀξιοχρέοις ἁμαρτήμασιν ἁλόντας ἐκβάλλουσι τοῦ τάγματος, ὁ δ᾽ ἐκκριθεὶς οἰκτίστῳ πολλάκις μόρῳ διαφθείρεται τοῖς γὰρ ὅρκοις καὶ τοῖς ἔθεσιν ἐνδεδεμένος οὐδὲ τῆς παρὰ τοῖς ἄλλοις τροφῆς δύναται μεταλαμβάνειν ποηφαγῶν δὲ καὶ λιμῷ τὸ σῶμα τηκόμενος διαφθείρεται. [They expelled (ἐκβάλλειν) from the order those convicted of serious sins, and the person ejected many times comes to a most miserable end for, being bound by oaths and customs is not able to partake of the food of others, and so falls to eating grass and wastes away and dies of starvation.]
>
> (Josephus *Bell*. 2.143–44)

Even with so drastic a measure, Josephus claims that this often led to the community taking the offenders back in order to prevent their death.

Serek (1QS) and the *Damascus Covenant* (CD) provide a more detailed picture of exclusionary practices. 1QS 6.24–27; 7.2–16 prescribes temporary exclusions (לבדל):

- for lying intentionally about property
- stubbornness
- impatience
- disobedience
- speaking in anger against a priest
- insulting a fellow member
- lying to a member
- speaking foolishly

- interrupting another member's speech
- falling asleep at a meeting
- leaving a meeting without permission
- walking naked
- spitting
- exposing oneself
- laughing immoderately
- gesticulating with the left hand
- slandering a member.

On the other hand, permanent expulsion [לשלח] is prescribed for misuse of the divine name (7.1–2), slandering the group (7.16–17), grumbling against the leadership of the *yaḥad* (7.17), leaving the *yaḥad* after having been a member for ten years (7.22–24), or giving food to one who has been expelled (7.25).[29]

Liturgical cursing is indeed described in 4Q266 11 8–14 and 1QS 2.11–18, but this practice seems to function as a general admonition to members to observe the covenant and to warn potential deviants that violations of the rule will be punished (Shemesh 2002: 48). That is, liturgical cursing is not a mechanism of exclusion or expulsion; because the curse does not identify specific faults or behaviour, it would have been ineffective as a means by which to identify deviants. Instead, liturgical cursing simply reinforces the general disciplinary framework of the group. It is not until the deviant deeds are actually observed that the actual exclusion or expulsion of a member can take place:

> [3]... When his deeds become apparent (וישׁע מעפוהב), he shall be expelled from the congregation (יֹשׁלח מעדה)[4] line one whose lot did not fall amongst the disciples of God. In accordance with his unfaithfulness, all the men[5] of knowledge shall reproach him, until the day when he returns to take his place in the session of the men of perfect holiness. [6] But when his deeds are evident (וישׁע מעפוהב), according to the explanation of the law in which [7] the men of perfect holiness walked, no one should associate with him in wealth or work, [8] for all the holy ones of the Most High have cursed him (אררוהו). And (proceed) according to this judgment, with all those who despise the first [9] as amongst the last, for they have placed idols in their heart {and have placed} and have walked in the stubbornness of [10] their heart. For them there shall be no part in the house of the law.
>
> (CD 20.3–10, Transl. García Martínez 1997–1998)[30]

Matthew 18 also prescribes an exclusion of deviant members from the group after a graduated system of warnings. There is no indication of liturgical cursing, and the actual exclusion is not described with ἐκβάλλειν; but the deviant is described with the phrase ἔστω σοι ὥσπερ ὁ ἐθνικὸς καὶ ὁ τελώνης (18:17).

Using Bryan Wilson's sectarian typology (Wilson 1959; 1969; 1990), Regev has made a strong case for seeing the Qumran sect within the general framework of introversionist sects (2004; 2007).[31] Comparing Qumran to various radical reformation groups — Shakers, Mennonites, Hutterites, and Amish — Regev sees as characteristic of all of these groups a view that 'the world is alien and irredeemably evil, from which individuals must withdraw as fully as possible in order to attain salvation' (Regev 2007: 43, referring to Wilson 1973: 12–21). Boundary maintenance is thus a priority, and it is in this context that Regev views the penal codes at Qumran and the practice of disciplinary exclusions practiced by the Shakers, Hutterites and Amish, and the more severe practice of *Meidung* (shunning) amongst the Amish (and Mennonites) (Regev 2004: 157, 162; 2007: 276–80). Deviant behaviour is:

> a threat to the integrity of the sect's social boundary of separation from the outside world, by causing a breach through which the world threatens to affect the sect. Therefore such sanctions are not merely means of securing discipline and social cohesiveness. They are designed to preserve the foundation of introversionist sectarianism, namely, the social boundary of separation from the outside world.
>
> (Regev 2007: 278)

Regev's use of Wilson's typology is instructive for understanding the governance and practices of Qumran in cross-cultural perspective.[32] Philip Esler has argued with plausibility that the group represented by the Fourth Gospel is, like Qumran, an introversionist sect, committed to seeing the world as irredeemably evil and preoccupied with 'its own holiness and...its belief that only through belonging to [the community] and believing in Jesus Christ can salvation come' (Esler 1995: 90).[33] Whilst this is an apt characterisation of the Johannine group, it is not obviously an apt characterisation of the social group from which the Johannine group separated. It is perfectly possible — indeed likely — that John's group became an introversionist sect *as a result of and response to their marginalisation* from the synagogues to which they were once attached. But that does not mean that those synagogues should be conceived of as 'sects', excluding deviant members as a mechanism for maintaining a sharp boundary between the sect and a hostile world, seen through the optic of dualist language.

To recall the earlier discussion of the *Birkhat haMinim*, not only were the Pharisees, with their strong boundary concepts, not in control of synagogues, but, as Shaye Cohen observes, 'at no point did they expel anyone from the rabbinic order or from rabbinic synagogues *because of doctrinal error or because of membership in some heretical group*' (1984: 41 [Author's emphasis]). Adiel Schremer's recent *Brothers Estranged* arrives at a similar conclusion (Schremer 2010).

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29. Similar exclusions and expulsions are found in CD (4Q266 10 ii–11; 4Q270 7 1–11). On these, see Hempel (1998); Shemesh (2002).

30. Shemesh argues that 'In accordance with his unfaithfulness... returns to take his place in the session of the men of perfect holiness' is an interpolation because it contradicts the permanent exclusion of ll. 6–10 (2002: 51).

31. On Qumran as an introversionist sect see the earlier work of Esler (1995).

32. Regev insists that Qumran not be seen as unique and distinctive, but rather an instance of introversionist dynamics: 'the regulations of the *yahad* and the Damascus Covenant, which seem so odd to the students of the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as to those who are interested in ancient Judaism or the origins of Christianity, actually are a result of the fascinating social phenomenon of sectarianism. The Qumranic parallels to the practices and organisation of the Shakers and the Anabaptists cannot be a matter of coincidence. They are derived from the actualisation of the sectarian introversionist ideology in Qumran. They stem (at least most of them) not from a certain interpretation of Scripture or from external influence, but from a particular and internal worldview — a perception of an endless fear of sin, an aim for redemption and a necessity for maintaining discipline and moral stance' (2004: 178–79).

33. Earlier Rensberger classified John's community as dominantly introversionist, but argued that the world for John was not so irredeemably evil nor the community so isolated as in a typical introversionist sect. 'Unlike Wilson's introversionist type, and like his conversionist and revolutionists types, John 'demands public expression in testifying to the truth' and apparently still hopes for new members' (Rensberger 1988: 27, citing Wilson 1973: 45). See also Robbins (1996: 152) and others.

Schremer's main thesis is that the rabbinic discourse on *minut* did not develop as a reflection of Christian heresiological discourse and that it was not primarily concerned about false belief. Like Christian concern about heresy, rabbinic discourse was about the articulation of the bases for identity, but Palestinian rabbis were not especially worried about the competing dogmatic claims of Christians or Jewish Christians. Instead, they reacted to an existential crisis caused by the failure of the 2nd revolt. In the wake of the failure of Bar Kochba, some Jews, rejecting the (standard) deuteronomistic idea that national defeat was the result of sin, concluded instead that it was God who had been defeated, or that there was another, more powerful god, the god of Rome. This being the case, why remain Jewish? The rabbis reacted to this crisis by creating a discourse of identity that labelled such a view as *minut*. Rabbinic discourse defined Judaism by defining what a Jew was not (Schremer 2010).

Two conclusions of Schremer's work are important for my argument. Firstly, he notes with that with the exception of *t. Ḥull* 2:22–24, the term *minim* does not specifically refer to Christians. Secondly, and more importantly, rabbinic statements about the *minut* routinely connect *minim* with 'those who separate themselves from the ways of the community' [פרושין] (Schremer 2010: 57).[34] The issue for the rabbis was not in the first place holding false beliefs, but the social consequences of the crisis: a failure of loyalty to and solidarity with the people of Israel.[35]

> In contrast to Justin... for whom 'heresy' was a matter of false belief, *minut* was constructed by second-century Palestinian rabbis in terms of social-national loyalty no less than through the perspective of doctrine and theological thought.
>
> (Schremer 2010: 66)

Hence, insofar as Jewish Christians might have been considered as *minim*, it was not their beliefs that troubled the rabbis, but a matter of social and communal loyalty. Jewish Christians fell under the rubric of *minim* when they established their own congregations, separate from the communities of Israel (Schremer 2010: 117).

As an analogy to the rabbis lack of interest in Christian beliefs, Schremer adduces Kai Erikson's study of denunciations of the Quakers in the mid-17th century. Erikson observes:

> Literature from the period fairly crackles with angry denunciations of the Quakers, but for all the heat generated by

this verbal attack it seems that the authorities neither knew very much nor cared what theories lay behind the Quaker crusade.... It did not matter very much whether a Quaker was actually overheard muttering some spiritual indignity or other, for in the very process of remaining aloof from the ideological consensus of the community he had proved himself to be a blasphemous creature.
>
> (Erikson 1966: 127, 131–32 [Author's emphasis])

Like the opponents of the Quakers, the Tannaim were not especially interested in the peculiar beliefs of their opponents; what mattered was their separatist behaviour and the damage this was perceived to do to the people of Israel.

This brings us back to John. John's account of the process of separation from the synagogue and his description of his opponents have been over-lexicalised and re-lexicalised to focus exclusively on belief as the main issue, whilst the contemporary Jewish practice suggests that behaviour and loyalty were the more important matters when it came to defining deviance. Once this is recognised, it becomes precarious to read John's language as if it were a simple description of the processes of separation and expulsion. John's group came to understand these processes in introversionist ways, but that is not obviously the way in which the synagogue understood them.

Exclusion and expulsion in Greek and Graeco-Egyptian associations

Associations in the ancient world developed a variety of disciplinary strategies to manage group life. The agonistic nature of Mediterranean social relations was routinely exploited in the interests of the association by cultivating competitive behaviour, called φιλοτιμία (Whitehead 1983), that would benefit the club by provided benefactions. Such competition, however, had to be managed carefully so as not to allow its destructive potential to undermine social cohesion.[36] Exclusion and expulsion were amongst the strategies adopted to manage and control conflict.

The phenomena of disciplinary exclusion and permanent expulsion are attested in associations in Athens, especially in the 1st two centuries of the Common Era. Whilst disciplinary practices are attested earlier, these were usually restricted to fines imposed on members for non-attendance at meetings. For example, *IG* II² 1361.19–20 (330–324/3 BCE) rules, δς δ᾽ ἂν ἐπιδημῶν Ἀθήνη|||[σ]ι καὶ ὑγιαίνων μὴ συμβάλληται, ὀφειλέτω β᾽ ἱερὰς τῆι θε[ῶι], 'whoever is at home in Athens and healthy and does not attend, owes 2 drachmae, sacred to the goddess [Bendis]'. Attempting to change the association's laws, however, led to a fine and suspension:

> [ἐὰ]ν δ[έ τι]ς [ε]ἴπ[ηι] ἢ ἐπιψηφίστη παρὰ τόνδε τὸν νόμον, ὀφειλέτω ν δραχμὰς τῆι
> θεῶι ὅ τ[ε εἰπὼν καὶ] ὁ ἐπιψηφίσας καὶ μὴ μετέστω αὐτῶι τῶν κοινῶν· ἀναγράφειν δὲ
> 15 [αὐτὸν ὀφείλο]ντα τῆι θεῶι τοῦτο τὸ ἀργύριον εἰς τὴν στήλην τοὺς ἐπιμελητά[ς]·

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34. *Ber.* 3.25: 'The eighteen benedictions which the Sages ordained correspond to the eighteen invocations of the tetragrammaton in [the psalm] ASCRIBE TO THE LORD [Ps 29]. One incorporates [the benediction] concerning the *minim* into [the benediction] concerning the *paroshim* [פרושין]; *t. Sanh.* 13.5: 'The *minim*, the apostates the traitors, the Epicureans, those who deny the Torah, those who separate from the ways of the community....'

35. 'Since *minut*, as it emerged from the complex web of early rabbinic traditions, is a category that has a strong social and communal connotation, exceeding the realm of pure theology, it seems that the early rabbinic polemic against *minut* was motivated by a number of considerations, and it was not confined exclusively to an endeavor of establishing doctrinal truth. For the rabbis, those who maintained that 'there is no Power in heaven' or that 'there are two Powers in heaven' or even that 'there is Power in heaven yet He became old and weak, all were expressing one and the same doubt regarding God's power and potency. And this doubt was understood by early rabbinic tradition in terms of *unfaithfulness* and *disloyalty*—first to God and then also to the Jewish people. Moreover, Rome's victory was perceived as a manifestation of the victory of its god. And in that period, the personification of Rome's god was the emperor. Necessarily, then, doubting God's power and divinity entailed the affirmation of the divinity of the Roman emperor, and this contributed also a religious dimension to the social phenomenon of *minut*' (Schremer 2010: 62).

36. This argument is developed in Kloppenborg (1996).

If someone should move or introduce a motion in violation of this law, they will owe 50 drachmae to the goddess — both the one who formulated the motion and the one who moved it — and let them not participate in the common activities, and the supervisors are to inscribe on a stele the names of these persons who owe this money to the goddess.

(*IG* II² 1361.13–15)

The inscribing of names of debtors on a stele is attested elsewhere,[37] and was apparently a shaming technique, designed to gain compliance with the decree. However, nonpayment of the fine also brought with it temporary exclusion from the association's cultic affairs.

From about the same period comes the νόμος of a group of *thiasōtai* also proscribing speaking or acting' in contravention of the association's *nomos*.

εἰὰν δέ τις παρὰ τὸν νόμον ἢ εἴπει ἢ πράξει, κα-
15   τηγορίαν αὐτοῦ εἶναι τῶι βουλομένωι τῶν θιασωτῶ-
ν καὶ ἂν ἔλει αὐτὸν τιμάτωσαν αὐτὸν καθότι ἂν δο-
κεῖ τῶι κοινῶι.

And if someone should either speak or act in contravention of the law, an accusation against him may be lodged by any of the *thiasōtai* who so wishes; and if he convicts him, let them assess the penalty, whatever seems appropriate to the association.

(*IG* II² 1275.14–17)

By the 1st century BCE fines for nonattendance are still attested, but added to these are exclusion from the association for the nonpayment of monthly dues. An Athenian association from the 1st century BCE rules:

5   ἔδοξεν τῶ[ι κοι]-
[νῶι τῶν Ἡρ]οϊστῶν, προνοηθῆναι τῆς [προσ]-
[όδου ὅπω]ς οἱ ἀποδημοῦντες τῶν Ἡ[ρωϊσ]-
[τῶν καθ’ ὁν]δηποτεοῦν τρόπον διδῶ[σι εἰς]
[τὴν θυσίαν?] δραχμὰς τρεῖς, οἱ δὲ ἐπιδη[μοῦν]-
10 [τες καὶ] μὴ παραγινόμενοι ἐπάναγκ[ες]
[ἀποδιδῶ]σι τὴν φορὰν τὰς ἐξ δραχμ[ὰς ἐ]-

[ὰν καὶ μὴ? λάβ]ωσιν τὰ μέρη· ἐὰν δὲ μὴ διδ[ῶσι]
[τὴν φοράν, ἔ]δοξεν μὴ μετέχειν αὐτο[ὺς]
[τοῦ ἐράν]ου ἐὰν μή τινι συμβῆι διὰ πέ[ν]-
15 [θος ἢ διὰ ἀ]σθένειαν ἀπολειφθῆναι·

... the association (*koinon*) of the Heroistai resolved to make provision for the income (of the association), so that those of the Heroistai who are away from home for whatever reason shall pay three drachmae for the sacrifices, and those living at home but not in attendance shall be required to pay six drachmae as the contribution, and they shall not receive their portion (of the sacrifice). And if they do not make a contribution, it was resolved that they should not participate in the club (*eranos*), except if one should be absent because of mourning or because of sickness.

(*IG* II² 1339.5–15; 57/6 BCE)

By the 2nd century CE there is more evidence both of

temporary exclusion and expulsion. An Attic club from the 2nd century CE comprised of 'male friends' [φίλοι ἄνδρες] formulated an 'ordinance of friendship' [θεσμὸν φιλίης] governing their meetings. The club is probably an association of *Heroistai*, but the identity of the hero is unknown. Amongst the provisions is one concerning fighting, presumably at the regular gatherings:

40 εἰ δέ τις μά-
χας ἢ θορύβους κεινῶν φαίνοιτο,
ἐκβαλλέσθω τοῦ ἐράνου ζημιού-
μενος ε’ Ἀττ[ι]καῖς κε’ ἢ πληγαῖς αἰκαικιζό-
μενος ταῖς διπλαῖς πέτρα κρίσεως.

But if anyone of those should be seen where fighting or disturbances occur, he shall be expelled from the club (*eranos*), being fined twenty-five Attic drachmae or being punished with double the blows in addition to judgment (?).

(*IG* II² 1369.40–44)

It is worth noting that ἐκβάλλειν appears here to connote expulsion. But an alternative is also proposed: paying a fine of 25 drachmae. Also worth noting is the distinction between a monetary fine and physical punishment, which points to the presence in the association of slaves, who are subject to physical punishment. Freeborn members pay a fine. Here it appears that the threat of expulsion was used to motivate the payment of the fine and, ultimately, compliance with the club's code of behaviour.

The famous Iobacchoi inscription from mid-2nd-century CE Athens has a yet more differentiated set of disciplinary practices. The rule of this Bacchic association provided for monthly meetings, several special festivals and the performance of a sacred play in which members took special roles. But the rule also provides a glimpse into the mechanics of operating a cultic association and its sometimes raucous character, which the rules tried to limit. These include, like *IG* II² 1339, exclusion [εἴργειν] from the gathering for the failure to contribute monthly dues, except in the case of persons who are out of town, in mourning or ill (ll. 48–51). Singing, causing a disturbance and clapping were prohibited (ll. 63–65), and fighting, disorderly conduct, sitting in another member's seat, insults and abuse led to a fine of 25 'light drachmae' (= 25 obols), a relatively minor sum. Members who failed to pay the fine were excluded until they paid (ll. 72–83). Physical violence was dealt with more severely, with a fine of 25 silver denarii and exclusion for a period to be determined by the priest (ll. 84–90). The decree describes the role of the officer in charge of order [εὔκοσμος] and his assistants, called ἵπποι ['horses'], whose duty it was to expel those who fight (l. 90: ἐκβαλόντι τοὺς μαχομένους, cf. ll. 136–46). Failure to report an assault (and to take the matter to the public courts), and failure on the part of the *eukosmos* to enforce order also led to fines of 25 silver denarii.

There is nothing to suggest that the Iobacchoi constituted a 'sect' under Wilson's definition. On the contrary, the priest of the Iobacchoi was Claudius Herodes Atticus, one of the richest men of the empire, teacher of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus and consul in 143 CE. In this regard the Iobacchoi of

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37. **For example, the** *orgeōnes* of Echelos, *Agora* 16:161.5–8 (Athens, early III BCE): ἀναγράψαντας τοὺς ὀφείλοντά[ς τι εἰς τὴν κοι]|νωνίαν ἐν στήλει λιθίνει στῆσαι παρὰ τ[ὸν βωμὸν] | ἐν τῶι ἱερῶι τά τε κεφάλαια καὶ τὸν τόκο[ν ὁπόσου] | ἂν ἔχει ἔκαστος, '(they are to) inscribe the names of those who owe anything to the association — both the principal and the interest. as much as each owes — and set it up by the altar in the temple'; *I.Samos* 10: ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀπ[οδι]|[δ]ῶσι τότε πάντα τὰ χρήμα]τα καὶ τοὺς τόκους, ἀναγ[ρά]|[ψαι αὐτοὺς ἀτίμους τοὺς ἐπ]ιμελητὰς τῆς φυλῆς...., 'if they do not pay all the money and the interest, let the supervisors of the *phylē* inscribe (the names of) those dishonorable persons.' In Athens, the Council handed over the names of public debtors to the *praktores* who were empowered to try to collect the debts and to inscribe the names of defaulters on lists on the Acropolis (Hunter 2000: 26–27).

Athens were similar to the Italian Dionysiac association at Torre Nova (Campania), patronised by Agrippinilla, the wife of Gavius Squilla Gallicanus, consul in 150 CE, and proconsul in Asia in 165 CE (McLean 1993). Both were clubs led by elites, and were gathered around sociability and the performance of a Dionysiac play. Unlike the Agrippinilla association, which included elite and nonelite persons, the Athenian Iobacchoi attracted only citizen members. Nevertheless, it was necessary to formulate exclusionary practices to ensure the orderly conduct of club affairs.

Another 2nd-century CE Attic association dedicated to Herakles (*SEG* 31:122) also had to confront a series of disciplinary problems. The rule calls for the appointment of 10 πράκτορες [bailiffs] whose role is not described in the rule. But the fact that the rule immediately suggests a provision in the case that those nominated refuse to serve in this role indicates that the role might be onerous. The municipal πράκτορες of Athens were empowered to collect debts and to inscribe the names of debtors on a stele (Hunter 2000: 26–27), and hence it is likely that a similar fiscal and disciplinary role was in view in *SEG* 31: 122. A propos of those entrusted to distribute the sacrificial meat, the rule stipulates that ἐὰν δέ τις τῶν πεπιστευμένων εὐρεθῇ ῥυπαρόν τ|[ι] πεποιηκὼς ἀποτινέτω δραχμὰς εἴκοσι, 'If anyone who is entrusted (with this task) is found to have done something sordid, he shall be fined 20 drachmae' (ll. 33–34).

Fighting was also penalised with a fine of ten drachmae for the one initiating the fight, and half that amount for those who joined in.[38] As was the case with *IG* II² 1369, the association first voted to expel [ἐκβιβάσαι] the member and then imposed a fine (ll. 5–9). Hence, the threat of expulsion seems to have been the tool for extracting the fine. Payment of dues was also subject to a disciplinary rule:

> τὰς δὲ φορὰς
> καταφέριν τῷ ταμίᾳ ἐπάναγκες ἰς τὰς ἐγδόσις· ὁ δὲ μὴ κατενένκας
> ἀποτινέτω τὸ διπλοῦν < ὁ δὲ μὴ δοὺς τὸ κάθολον ἐξέρανος
> 45 ἔστω·
>
> The dues must be brought to the treasurer (so that) loans can be made. Whoever does not pay shall be fined a double amount. Whoever does not pay at all shall be expelled from the association (*exeranos*).
>
> (*IG* II² 1369.42–45)

The procedure implied here is a two-stage disciplinary measure: failure to pay dues in a timely fashion would invite a fine (and, presumably, temporary exclusion). Failure to pay that fine led to permanent expulsion. For this a new term, ἐξέρανος, was coined to describe the member.[39]

Artemidorus (of Ephesus) also relates in his book on dream interpretation a dream in which a member of an association is expelled. It occurs in the context of several dreams which bespeak contemptuous behaviour[40]:

> ἔδοξέ τις ἐν συμβιώσει καὶ φρατρίᾳ τοῖς συμβιώταις ἀναστειλάμενος ἑκάστῳ προσουρεῖν. ἀπηλάθη τῆς φρατρίας ὡς ἄτιμος· εἰκὸς γὰρ τοὺς οὕτω παροινοῦντας μισεῖσθαί τε καὶ ἀπελαύνεσθαι. [Someone who belonged to a club and a phratry dreamt that he lifted up his clothes in front of his fellow club members (συμβιῶται) and urinated on each one of them. He was expelled from the phratry for being unworthy of it. For it is understandable that those who act in such a drunken manner should be hated and expelled.]
>
> (Artemidoros, *Onirocritica* 4.44)

Although Artemidorus does not indicate what the dream might mean to the waking person, his scenario of drunken behaviour occasioning expulsion is consistent with what is listed in other association rules as the grounds for expulsion.

These examples cited of exclusionary practices are all from Greece or Asia, and one might well raise the question, *quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis*? Associations, however, were ubiquitous in the ancient Mediterranean (Poland 1909; Waltzing 1895–1900; Kloppenborg & Wilson 1996; Nijf 1997; Ascough 2003; Harland 2003) and, although with some notable exceptions the longest and most detailed association rules are preserved in Attica, there is no good reason to doubt that other associations in Asia, Syria, Egypt, North Africa, Italy and elsewhere adopted practices to control conflict and dissent. Closer, perhaps, to the geographical provenance of the Fourth Gospel, an association devoted to Zeus Hypsistos in the mid-1st century BCE Fayûm outlawed absences from the meetings, fighting, abusing fellow members at the banquet and sexual activity with a member's wife, but also faction-making and departure from the 'fellowship of the president':

> καὶ μ[η]{ι}[δ]ενὶ αὐτῶν ἐξέστω{ι} συντευματαρχήισειν[41] μη{ι}δὲ σχί<σ>ματα συνίστασ[θαι] μηιδ᾽ ἀπ[ο]χωρή{ι}σε[ιν ἐκ] τῆς τοῦ ἡγ[ου] μένου φράτρας εἰς ἑτέραν φράτραν [It is not lawful for any one of them to <unknown verb> or to organize factions or to leave the brotherhood of the president for another brotherhood...]
>
> (*P.Lond*. VII 2193.13–14)

These inscriptions and papyri provide an important glimpse into the types of conflict typical in associations, and the strategies adopted for managing those conflicts. A wide variety of conflict-laden behaviour was imagined, from fighting to contemptuous acts to absenteeism — all aggressive acts in a culture sensitive to honor and shame — and from faction-formation to abandoning the group for another club. What is common to all of these forms of deviance is that they involved observable behaviour rather than mental states or simple expressions of belief. Together with the dossier of exclusionary and polemical practices from Qumran and the Tannaim, these data point to the conclusion that belief and mental states mattered a good deal less than empirical behaviour when it came to invoking disciplinary exclusions from both Judaean, Greek and Graeco-Egyptian associations.

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38. The inscription was first published by Raubitschek (1981) and discussed by Lupu (2005: 177–90).

39. According to a TLG search the term is not attested in other Greek inscriptions or in Greek literature.

40. I owe this example to Philip Harland.

41. See Nock, Roberts and Skeat (1936: 51) comment, 'We perhaps need some word meaning 'seek to be leader of a sub-unit'; συνταγματαρχήισειν of which we had thought, seems impossible palaeographically and is on other grounds hardly thinkable.'

Ἀποσυναγωγός reconsidered

As was noted earlier, it is common to suppose that the expulsion noted by the Fourth Gospel was a response to the high christology of the Johannine group. But this account needs adjustment in two respects. Firstly, it privileges intellectual content over deviant behaviour, accepting the Johannine narrative as a reliable guide to the aetiology of expulsion, despite the fact that John's is an insider account replete with anti-language and its characteristic relexicalisation of key terms and recasting of the terms of group identity. Secondly, the common view locates the exclusion from the synagogue in the wrong place, *after* the articulation of John's distinctively high christology. I think it more likely that John's distinctive christology and soteriology is a response to exclusion.

In comparable associations — in particular those that cannot be characterised as 'sects' with strong boundary markers and those that had only a weak investment in maintaining purity in the face of a hostile world —, the grounds for exclusion and expulsion were not the holding of deviant beliefs but in exhibiting deviant behaviour:

- refusing to pay membership dues
- behaving in a disorderly fashion
- refusing the acknowledge authorities
- clique formation
- staying away from meetings.

I assume that whilst christological beliefs might from the perspective of the *later* Johannine community have been regarded as decisive, it is not until those attitudes become 'apparent in behaviour' (CDC 20.3) that exclusion could occur.

There is little doubt that the *result* of expulsion was the Fourth Gospel's articulation of a complex retrospective rationale, based on the group's claim to have seen in Jesus what their fellow synagogue members refused to see or were unable. But this interpretation, along with the corresponding demonising of the *Ioudaioi* and *Pharisaioi*, should be seen as retrospective rather than a contemporary account of expulsion. Before they undertook to rationalise their expulsion in dogmatic terms, these partisans of the Jesus movement began to assume behavioural practices which precipitated their exclusion and eventual expulsion.

What were these practices? John's sheen of anti-language and his privileging of belief makes it difficult to look below the surface of his text for clues. One of the most obvious points of friction between the Johannine Jesus group and the *Ioudaioi* is Sabbath observance. Sabbath controversies appear in John 5:9–18; 7:22–24 and 9:14–17, all in connection with thaumaturgy.[42] The deviant behaviour in question involved carrying on the Sabbath (5:10: σάββατόν ἐστιν, καὶ οὐκ ἔξεστίν σοι ἆραι τὸν κράβαττόν σου) and making a paste for healing purposes (9:16: τὸ σάββατον οὐ τηρεῖ). Because

both speaking and acting against an association's *nomos* could be grounds for disciplinary measures (see above on *IG* II² 1275; 1QS 7.17), actions taken in violation of Sabbath practices might well constitute grounds for disciplinary exclusion. John 7:22–24 suggests that the Johannine partisans of Jesus might have developed a halakhic argument to justify their deviant Sabbath practice, long before they developed the highly christocentric argument of 5:16–47.[43] Yet the two Johannine stories introduce the Sabbath dating almost as an afterthought (Jn 5:9; 9:14) rather than relating the stories as Sabbath controversies from the beginning. This might suggest that whilst Sabbath observance was a contentious issue, it was not the main problem for the synagogue.

Johannine attitudes toward the temple and the behaviour and allegiances that would flow from these are a 2nd possibility. By the time that the Johannine group produced its literature, they had articulated a view of Jesus as replacing key Israelite institutions, including the Temple (1:51; 2:13–22; 4:21). Whilst this in effect amounts to a form of competition with the Temple, the Gospel also routinely depicts Jesus as teaching in the Temple (7:14, 28; 8:20; 10:23; 18:20). It fails to employ the anti-Temple saying recorded in Mark 14:58 as a statement against the Temple and entirely lacks an equivalent to Mark 13:1–2. Instead, the Temple saying is treated as a cryptic statement about Jesus' own death and resurrection. This probably indicates that the replacement theme, which surely would have been considered to be deviant discourse had it been promoted whilst the Johannine Jesus followers were still in the synagogue, was a development after their departure from the synagogue and probably functioned to compensate for that separation.

A 3rd and perhaps more promising behavioural issue is Johannine ethics. It is common to observe that the Fourth Gospel is notorious for its lack of ethical instructions. The one distinctive piece of ethical advice that the Johannine Jesus conveys is ὑμεῖς ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους (13:34), introduced as a 'new commandment'.[44] As many commentators have noted, the Johannine love-command is in obvious contrast with the interpretation of Leviticus 19:18 (ἀγαπήσεις τὸν πλησίον σου ὡς σεαυτόν ἐγώ εἰμι κύριος) in other sectors of the early Jesus movement, which seems to have construed τὸν πλησίον σου not in any sectarian sense, but ranging from 'fellow countryman' to 'stranger' (Lk 10:29–37). Q 6:27–28 (ἀγαπᾶτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν καὶ προσεύχεσθε ὑπὲρ τῶν διωκόντων ὑμᾶς) is in even more striking contrast with John 13:34. John's command points inward, not outward, and is aimed at reinforcing group solidarity and the buttressing of fictive-family commitments.

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42. Curiously, the detail that the healings in question occurred on a Sabbath appears as a footnote to the healing (5:9; 9:14).

43. John 7:22–24: διὰ τοῦτο Μωϋσῆς δέδωκεν ὑμῖν τὴν περιτομήν — οὐχ ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ Μωϋσέως ἐστὶν ἀλλ' ἐκ τῶν πατέρων — καὶ ἐν σαββάτῳ περιτέμνετε ἄνθρωπον. ²³ εἰ περιτομὴν λαμβάνει ἄνθρωπος ἐν σαββάτῳ ἵνα μὴ λυθῇ ὁ νόμος Μωϋσέως, ἐμοὶ χολᾶτε ὅτι ὅλον ἄνθρωπον ὑγιῆ ἐποίησα ἐν σαββάτῳ; ²⁴ μὴ κρίνετε κατ' ὄψιν, ἀλλὰ τὴν δικαίαν κρίσιν κρίνετε [therefore Moses gave to you circumcision — not that it was from Moses, but from the ancestors — and on the Sabbath you circumcise persons. If a person is circumcised on the Sabbath in order that the Law of Moses is not broken, are you angry that I make the enter person healthy on the Sabbath? Don't judge on appearances, but judge rightly!]

44. Van der Watt suggests that this implies egalitarian relationships within the Johannine group: 'differences of status and roles are suspended within the confines of the community' (2006: 160). But the use of 'egalitarianism' is inappropriate here (Elliott 2003).

It is important in this context to keep in mind that ἀγαπᾶν connotes *observable behaviour*, not simply emotional or mental states. To 'love one another' means to act in some fashion which signals strong attachment. As Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998) argue:

> In the Mediterranean world, love always had the underlying meaning of attachment to some group, one's fictive kin group. The world also could be used of attachment to God. Since in 1st-century Mediterranean society there was no term for an internal state that did not entail a corresponding external action, love always meant doing something that revealed one's attachment— that is, actions supporting the well-being of the persons to whom one was attached.
>
> (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998: 228)

When, sometime after the composition of the gospel, the First Letter of John later made fraternal love the test of filiation to God and membership in the Johannine group (1 Jn 3:10; 4:7–8, 20; 5:1–2), the author was simply continuing and elaborating what was already presupposed in John 13:34: the formation of a clique in the face of hostility.

In the final version of the Fourth Gospel a rationale for mutual love had been articulated which constructed group members not as slaves to God but as friends: 'I call you no longer slaves... but friends' (Jn 15:15). This claim to friendship is based on a claim of shared knowledge of God: πάντα ἃ ἤκουσα παρὰ τοῦ πατρός μου ἐγνώρισα ὑμῖν. They also memorialised foot-washing, which they interpreted both as a transformative ritual that constituted them as καθαροί (13:10) and as ceremony generating and reinforcing strongly affective bonds (13:14).

It is impossible to know how far back in the formation of the Johannine group such claims to friendship with God went or when the footwashing ritual came into use. It is a fair conjecture, however, that if the Johannine sub-group had begun to express in its behaviour claims to special knowledge of the divine (and therefore a special relationship to the divine). This was at variance with dominant linguistic modes of expression and to engage in claims to 'love one another' and to constitute themselves as a fictive family (that is, a clique) *within* the synagogue, such behaviour would inevitably have put them into conflict with the *archisynagogos* and other authority structures in the synagogue.[45] Associations normally penalised both absenteeism and factionalism as well as the refusal to acknowledge duly-constituted authorities in the association. The kinds of behaviour that would naturally flow from the Johannine footwashing ceremony and the claims of John 15:15 are precisely the kind of clique-forming activity that would likely be penalised in an association.

'Loving one another', especially in the context of expressions of a status-transformation that levelled status distinctions and departed markedly from the servile metaphors hitherto used to express one's relationship with the divine might well have functioned as the marks of behavioural deviance that would lead to clique formation and, eventually, to exclusion and expulsion.

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45. **On the role of the** *archisynagogos*, see Rajak and Noy (1993); Levine (1998); Lifshitz and Schiby (1960).

Conclusion

This article has attempted to understand what might have been at stake for the synagogue from which the Johannine Jesus partisans had been expelled and what was at stake in the coinage of the term ἀποσυναγωγός. It we refuse naively to accept John's overlexicalised and retrospective account of the grounds for expulsions and pay attention to the practices of other groups in articulating a disciplinary code, I suggest that what was at stake was deviant behaviour on the part of the Johannine Jesus-partisans: either failure to comply with the larger group's practices concerning Sabbath observance, or more likely, clique formation.

To suggest that the empirically-observable behaviour of clique-formation was the cause of the exclusion of the Johannine Jesus-followers should not be taken to mean that they held no distinctive beliefs. It is to suggest that it was not until these beliefs were manifest in deviant behaviour that temporary exclusion or expulsion could have occurred. The Johannine group would hardly have admitted that the reasons for their exclusion or expulsion from the synagogue were clique formation, non-attendance, or disruptive behaviour. Their account of exclusion featured only the recognition of Jesus as the Christ. From the point of view of the other members of the synagogue, it may indeed have been the case that this group was guilty of misbehaviour related to their cliquishness. The resolve of the Johannine clique to persevere in their deviance turned exclusion into expulsion.

Acknowledgements

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