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Birkat Ha-Minim and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity*

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Introduction

A decisive stage in the process of communal self-definition is reached when a community sets criteria for exclusion. The exclusionary benediction, *birkat ha-minim*, played such a role in the process of achieving normative self-definition in rabbinic Judaism.

Since the talmudic period *birkat ha-minim* has constituted the twelfth benediction of the rabbinic statutory prayer, the so-called 'eighteen benedictions' or 'amidah'. The 'amidah' is recited thrice daily on weekdays. On the Sabbath or holidays an alternative form is employed which does not contain *birkat ha-minim*.

The publication of the Genizah version of *birkat ha-minim* over eighty years ago¹ has renewed interest in the benediction as a major document in the history of Jewish-Christian relationships in the first centuries of the Common Era. This version reads as follows:

1. For the apostates let there be no hope.
2. And let the arrogant government be speedily uprooted in our days.
3. Let the *nosrim* and the *minim* be destroyed in a moment.
4. And let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous.
5. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the arrogant.

Recent studies of the benediction have argued cogently that not long after the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE) the rabbis, under the aegis of Rabban Gamaliel, had an old blessing

reformulated. The blessing had functioned as a denunciation against separatists who defected from the community in times of woe. In the light of the reference to the 'arrogant government' it is possible that the benediction had uppermost in mind Jews who collaborated with the Romans against the Jews. In any case, the benediction, as reformulated, included a denunciation of the *minim*.² This resulted in a single benediction denouncing both the heterodox and separatists. Apparently, post-temple Judaism perceived the threat from communal separatists and theological dissidents on a similar plane.³ In actuality, it was probably difficult to distinguish between the two.

The reformulated benediction became known as *birkat ha-minim*. What was the purpose of *birkat ha-minim*? In general three positions have garnered scholarly support. The first position is based on the manner in which the benediction functioned, which was to exclude any *min* from acting as reader in the synagogue. This, of course, assumes that a *min* would not want to curse himself. If he erred or glossed over the benediction he would thereby expose himself to suspicion.⁴ Since he also would not want to be cursed by others, the insertion in the statutory prayer would lead to the exclusion of *Minim* from the synagogue.⁵

The difficulty with this position is that it assumes that *min* has a denotation more limited than 'heretic'. A condemnation of heretics in general without a specific reference to which heresy was meant would have a limited effect, since it is unlikely that a theological dissident would see himself included in the term 'heretic'. This understanding is thus dependent on the assumption that *min* had a specific denotation.⁶ Even if that were true initially, it is clear that *min* loses any specific denotation, as will be shown below. Thus, the benediction would lose its purpose.⁷

The second position holds that the term *minim* refers to Jewish Christians and that the benediction is a declaration that these are equivalent to apostates, thereby excluding them from the people of Israel. The result of such a declaration would lead to their exclusion from the life of the synagogue.⁸ We shall allude to this position in our discussion of the terms *minim* and *nosrim*. In the meanwhile, it is worth noting that some variation of this position is behind the oft-repeated assertion that about the year 100 the breach between Judaism and Christianity became irreparable.⁹

Jewish and Christian Self-Definition

The third position is that the purpose of the curse is simply that of all curses, namely, a request to God that the *minim* be cursed and damned. This position has much to recommend it. It does not assume that *minim* had a specific connotation beyond heretics or, what may be closer etymologically, sectarians.¹⁰ Second, it accounts for why *minim* are so easily classed in tannaitic literature with other nondescripts such as apostates and informers whose destruction is to be sought¹¹ and/or who are locked in hell.¹² Third, it corresponds with the rabbinic source that assumed that *birkat ha-minim* is an elliptical expression for *birkat qellelat ha-minim*, i.e., the benediction for the cursing of the *minim*.¹³

Whatever the case may be, the benediction would lead to the exclusion of the *minim* and whoever is associated with them from the synagogue. Who was actually excluded depends on the meaning of the terms *minim* and *nosrim*.

Minim

Much has been written on the meaning of the word *min* and its identification.¹⁴ Suggestions range from viewing it as a catch-all term for heretics to viewing it as a specific denotation of some heretical group such as Jewish gnostics and/or Jewish Christians.¹⁵ Some have even contended that *min* can denote Christian¹⁶ and/or pagan Gentiles.¹⁷

The confusion results from poor formulation of the question. To ask about the meaning of *min* in rabbinic literature is to assume terminological consistency for over half a millennium over different bodies of literature. The question should be sub-divided as follows: what does *min* denote (a) in tannaitic literature? (b) in the amoraic literature of Palestine? and (c) in the amoraic literature of Babylonia?

(a) In tannaitic literature, there is unambiguous evidence that *min* can denote a deviant Jew. This can be shown by an example from each of the major compositions of tannaitic literature, the Mishnah and the Tosefta.¹⁸ In the Mishnah (Meg 4.8) it says that if one places the phylacteries on the forehead or on the palm it is a way of *minut*. It is not our concern here to investigate whether this is based on a literal reading of scripture and/or on sectarian practice,¹⁹ but rather to emphasize that a way of placing phylacteries was identifiable as a way of *minim*, clearly a

non-rabbinic way of placing phylacteries. The Tosefta (tBM 2.33) also clearly understands *minim* as Jews when it categorizes the following two groups. On the one side are Gentiles,²⁰ shepherds and small cattle raisers; on the other side are *minim*, apostates and informers. Similarly, it distinguishes between meat in the hands of a Gentile and meat in the hands of a *min* (tHull 2.20). In both cases the distinction is significant since the law is more severe with regard to a *min*.

(b) In the amoraic literature of Palestine, there is also solid evidence that *minim* are Jews. Here, however, it is important to base the argument, as much as possible, on the earliest edited amoraic documents such as the Palestinian Talmud, Genesis Rabbah, and Leviticus Rabbah which in all probability were compiled in the first half of the fifth century. So, for example, a statement of the third-century Palestinian, R. Johanan, employs the term *minim* for Jewish schismatics: 'Israel did not go into exile until it had split into twenty-four sects of *minim*' (pSanh 10.6; 29c). On the other hand, when Palestinian amoraic literature refers to known positions of Gentile Christians it tends to place the argument in the mouth of 'the nations of the world' and not that of the *minim*. So, for example:

Moses asked that the Mishnah also be in written form like the Torah. But the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that the nations would get to translate the Torah and reading it, say in Greek, would declare: We are Israel; we are the children of the Lord. The scales would appear to be balanced between both claims, but then the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to the nations: What are you claiming, that you are my children? I have no way of knowing other than that my child is he who possesses my secret lore. The nations will ask: And what is Thy secret lore? God will reply: It is the Mishnah. (Pesiqta Rabbati 5.1, ed. Friedman, 14b.)

This source clearly protests against that type of patristic exegesis which wrenched scripture from its Jewish moorings. The same protest apparently lies behind the declaration of a Palestinian amora that the Sinaitic revelation was 'an elixir of life to Israel, but a drug of death to the nations of the world' (CantR 2.3.5).

Sometimes, a known Christian argument is placed in the mouth of a 'philosopher': for example, the classical patristic argument against circumcision which holds that, if circumcision were necessary, God would not have created Adam uncircumcised,²¹ or the contention that God rejected the Jewish people.²²

Finally, two recent studies which have identified the oppo-

ment of some rabbinic polemics on the Song of Songs with Origen have emphasized that his arguments are placed in the mouth of 'the nations of the world'.²³ If there ever were a Gentile who would be referred to as a *min* it would be Origen. Origen was a Christian biblical scholar who resided in Palestine. He possessed a rudimentary knowledge of Hebrew. Moreover, he studied under 'Hebrew' teachers and maintained contact with some rabbinic authorities.²⁴ If, nevertheless, he is still referred to as one of 'the nations of the world', all the more so other Gentile Christians who had less in common with Judaism.

Thus in Palestinian literature, be it tannaitic or amoraic, it is reasonable to conclude that *minim* had a Jewish sectarian denotation and was not used to refer to Gentiles.

(c) The problem arises in the amoraic literature of Babylonia, namely the Babylonian Talmud. Those scholarly hypotheses based on it have wrecked havoc with the term *min*. Most prominent among those who have argued that *min* can denote a Gentile is S. Lieberman, who cites the following data:²⁵

The text of TB (Pes 87b) reads מִיָּדָא, which very often means Gentile, especially in sources originating in Palestine (see Krauss [*Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter im Talmud* I, 1898], p. XV, n. 2). Seder Eliyahu Rabbah ibid. [p. 54] states clearly that the man who questioned R. Juda the Patriarch was מִיָּדָא, ἡγεμών, a general. Similarly, TB (Aboda Zara 6b) records that a מִיָּדָא presented the same Rabbi Juda the Patriarch with money, whereas the parallel story in TP (ibid. I. i. 39b) mentions a מִיָּדָא (δοικηνάριος, *ducenarius*) instead of מִיָּדָא. In both cases the מִיָּדָא was a heathen Roman official.

These notices prove only that a host of Greek terms were rendered in the Babylonian Talmud as *min*. They prove nothing with regard to Palestinian usage of the term *min*. In Palestine the Greek terms would be understood, as reflected in the above parallels. And since *min* had an actual sectarian denotation it is not haphazardly used to indicate anyone of dubious identity. On the other hand, elsewhere (bBer 7a) a Palestinian *min* who badgered R. Johanan's older compatriot R. Joshua b. Levi with scriptural passages is identified by Lieberman as a Jewish Christian.²⁶

This highlights the complexity of the problem. To resolve it, one must ask whether the language of a statement preserves the idiom of its original context, or whether it has been altered by the redaction of the document in which it is recorded. A Palestinian statement may reflect Babylonian terminology if it

appears in the Babylonian Talmud. So, for example, the Palestinian amora R. Yohanan is alleged in the Babylonian Talmud to have used the expression מִיָּדָא (=*a min* among the nations)²⁷ an expression which allows for a *min* to be a Gentile. The parallel discussion in the Palestinian Talmud,²⁸ however, has instead *goy* (= Gentile). There is therefore no evidence that the Palestinian, R. Johanan, employed *min* to refer to a Gentile. A Büchler's contention that *minim* are sometimes 'Bible-reading heathens'²⁹ is also based on Babylonian material and thus not pertinent to determining the denotation of *minim* in Palestine. The point is not that *min* in the Babylonian Talmud must refer to a Gentile, but that it might do so. In each case the argument must be made on the context, if possible, and not the term.

Why is there this difference in terminology between Babylonian and Palestinian sources? In Palestine, the term *min* had a sectarian connotation, indeed some have speculated that the word itself denotes a specific sect.³⁰ This prevented the indiscriminate use of the term. In Babylonia, owing to the lack of *minim* in the Palestinian sense (see bAZ 4a; bPes 56a) the word assimilated the meaning it had in the local vernacular as we know it from Syriac and Christian Palestinian Aramaic.³¹ It would be a methodological mistake, indeed, to extrapolate from its usage in these languages its meaning in Palestinian texts.³²

One of the sectarian meanings that *min* had in Palestine was Jewish Christian. This can be surmised from the mention of *min* and Jesus in the same episode in several Palestinian texts, tannaitic and amoraic. The first tannaitic source (tHull 2.24) reads as follows:

It happened that R. Eliezer was arrested for words of *minut* and they brought him to the tribunal for judgment. . . . When he was released from the tribunal he was troubled that he had been arrested for words of *minut*. His disciples came in to comfort him but he would not accept (it). R. Akiba entered and said to him: . . . Perhaps one of the *minim* said to you a word of *minut* and it pleased you. He replied: By Heaven, you reminded me. Once I was walking in a street of Sepphoris and chanced upon Jacob the man of Kefar Sichnin and he told me something of *minut* in the name of Yeshu (=Jesus) ben Pantiri.³³

The second one (ibid. 2.22) records that Eleazar ben Dama was bitten by a snake and that Jacob the man of Kefar Sama came to cure him in the name of Yeshu ben Pantiri.³⁴ In the nick of

time ben Dama was prevented from being subjected to the cure of Jacob by the intervention of R. Ishmael.

The *min*, Jacob, is in both cases associated with Jesus. In the Babylonian version of the first story Jesus is referred to as Yeshu the Nazarene.³⁵ The two different place names are not difficult since modern geographers hold that they correspond to two villages in Galilee, lying north of Nazareth, namely, Kefar Semai and Saknin. The same Jacob was associated with both. Indeed, as will be discussed below, Saknin was known as a place of Nazaraeans.³⁶

From this it can be concluded that one of the prominent groups which could be included in the term *minim* was Jewish Christians. This fact is also reflected in the interpretation of R. Issi of Caesarea that Eccles. 7.26 refers to *minut*. Accordingly, he applies the last part of the verse, 'The good before God will escape from her: but the sinner will be ensnared by her', to different known cases including the aforementioned ones:

The good – R. Eleazar. *But the sinner* – Jacob of Kefar Nibbuyara.

The good – Eleazar b. Dama, *But the sinner* – Jacob of Kefar Sama.

The good – Hananiah the nephew of R. Joshua, *But the sinner* – the inhabitants of Capernaum.

The good – Judah b. Naqosa. *But the sinner* – the *minim*.

The good – R. Nathan, *But the sinner* – his disciple.

The good – R. Eliezer and R. Joshua, *But the sinner* – Elisha.³⁷

From this it is clear that *minim* can include at least Jewish Christians. Hence it is safe to conclude that the Palestinian prayer against the *minim* was aimed at Jewish sectarians among whom Jewish Christians figured prominently.

Nosrim

The term *nosrim* is as problematic as the term *minim*. Since the discovery of the Genizah text some scholars have argued that it was part of the original prayer text of *birkat ha-minim*. Some have argued on the basis of stylistic considerations.³⁸ Others have argued that evidence from patristic sources, pointing to a Jewish practice of cursing the Christians 'while they read the prayers', indicates that *nosrim* was part of the original text.³⁹ This, of course, assumes that *nosrim* means 'Christians' by way of the cognate Nazarenes. Others have contended, albeit circularly, that *nosrim* must be original, for if *minim* is ambiguous there is no explicit mention of Christians.⁴⁰

A significant number of scholars have contended that *nosrim* has been added. The major argument has been the difficulty of rendering smoothly both terms together.⁴¹ Those who contend that *nosrim* is original have had to render the phrase as 'Jewish Christians and other heretics'.⁴² The fact that 'other' has to be supplied highlights the difficulty of rendering an apparently redundant text such as 'Jewish Christians and heretics'.

Informing the debate on the meaning of the text are also assumptions about the impact of Christianity (including Jewish Christianity) on rabbinic Judaism in the first century and a half or so. Generally, those who perceive a significant impact by Christianity argue for the inclusion of *nosrim* in the original formulation.⁴³ Those who perceive a minimal impact tend to exclude *nosrim* from the original formulation.⁴⁴ A careful review of the evidence for the Christian impact on rabbinic Judaism will show that most generalizations are based on ambiguous evidence, a conclusion I intend to discuss elsewhere. It would be safe therefore not to base positions unduly on the general situation, but to argue each case on its own merits. When evidence is lacking for the particular case, the prudent course is to withhold judgment rather than to assume a Christian impact on Judaism.

[One of the results of the McMaster Symposium which lies behind this volume was a highlighting of the lack of evidence for any formative impact of Christianity on any major element of tannaitic Judaism, including the development of rabbinic law, the formation of the Mishnah, the structuring of the liturgy, the closing of the canon, and the major propositions of rabbinic theology. This itself is sufficient to question the thesis that *birkat ha-minim* was primarily directed against Christianity. We must be careful of anachronistically overestimating the impact of Christianity on Judaism in the first two centuries.]

In addition, there are several major considerations for excluding *nosrim* from the original formulation. First, in all six versions of *birkat ha-minim* published by A. Marmorstein, the opening word is *nosrim*, not *minim*.⁴⁵ If *nosrim* were present *ab initio* the talmudic nomenclature would likely have been *birkat ha-nosrim*. Second, if the term were a part of the statutory liturgy from the first century onwards, the term *nosrim* should have become a common term in rabbinic literature. In fact, *nosrim* does not appear in tannaitic literature. Indeed, in that form, it appears unambiguously only once in amoraic literature in a passage by

R. Johanan (c. 200-279) which will be discussed below. Jesus is also referred to in the Babylonian Talmud as *ha-nosri*⁴⁶ (as he is called in the gospel *ὁ Ναζωραῖος*, Matt. 2.23 and elsewhere),⁴⁷ and a day is called 'of the נוצרים' in the same document by the third-century Babylonian Samuel.⁴⁸

Thus internal rabbinic evidence makes it highly unlikely that *nosrim* was part of the original *birkat ha-minim*.

What about the alleged Christian evidence for Jews cursing Christians during prayer? Discussions of this evidence frequently commit the fallacy of filling in the lacunae of first- and second-century sources with fourth-century material, oblivious to the fact that differences may be due to developments in the meantime.⁴⁹ The fact that the thrust of contemporary scholarship has highlighted the major developments which took place within Judaism and Christianity from the second to the fourth century should be a warning against the hazards of such an approach.

Before dealing with the patristic evidence, some comments are in order on the supposed role of *birkat ha-minim* in the gospel of John, if only because such a role is assumed more and more by students of the gospel.⁵⁰ This is despite the fact that scholarship is becoming increasingly less sure about the setting of the gospel.⁵¹

The issue with regard to the gospel of John has two aspects which are not necessarily related. First, is there awareness of *birkat ha-minim*? Second, is there any evidence that it then contained a reference to *nosrim*? John mentions three times that Jews who 'confess Christ' were excluded from the synagogue *ἀποσυνάγωγος*, 9.22; 12.42; 16.2). There is no evidence that this situation was prevalent anywhere else.⁵² The context of the mention of 'Pharisees' (12.42) indicates that it is a derogatory reference to local leadership.⁵³ Indeed the absence of any mention of such exclusion by early Christian authors argues against its being a pervasive practice. It is hard to believe that a major rabbinic practice which is supposed to have originated in Yavneh about the turn of the first century is attested to in only one Christian document. If it were aimed against Christians it would have been widespread.⁵⁴ Thus it is of no surprise that the term for exclusion from the synagogue, *ἀποσυνάγωγος*, appears nowhere else in early Christian literature and has no precise parallel in rabbinic terminology.⁵⁵ It is even possible that the whole charge was concocted to persuade Christians to stay away from

the synagogue⁵⁶ by making them believe that they would be received with hostility. Thus the Jews are generally represented in a negative fashion.⁵⁷ Alternatively, the gospel wanted to convince Jews who had 'confessed Christ' that there was no turning back, since such confession marks one as rejected by the synagogue. It is more likely that the final edition of the gospel is addressing Gentiles who are far removed from Judaism. This accounts for the gospel's having to explain so much of Judaism, even the well-known festivals.⁵⁸

In any case, John makes no reference to the prayers of the Jews nor to any curse and thus is not helpful for establishing any part of the formulation of *birkat ha-minim*. This conclusion holds even if John were responding to a situation, that resulted from the adoption of *birkat ha-minim*.⁵⁹

It is not uncommon to buttress the alleged evidence from John by references to patristic literature. The pertinent patristic evidence derives from Justin, Origen, Jerome and Epiphanius.

In his *Dialogue with Trypho* Justin Martyr mentions nine times that Jews cursed Christ and/or those who believe in him. Of these, five make no mention of the synagogue (93, 95, 108, 123, 133); of the remaining four, which mention the synagogue (16, 47, 96, 137), only one (137) mentions it in the context of prayers. It reads:

Scoff not at the King of Israel, as the rulers of your synagogues teach you to do *after your prayers* (my italics).

Only this statement really pertains to our investigation. With regard to the others, there is no necessary connection between *birkat ha-minim* and the cursing of Christ or Christianity. There were undoubtedly Jews in Rome in Justin's time who cursed Christ to avoid suspicion by the Roman authorities of any illegal connection with Christianity.⁶⁰ And Justin knows that the Jews regard as blasphemous at least five Christian assertions.⁶¹

The connection between the comment of Justin just cited and *birkat ha-minim* is, to say the least, problematic. First, there is no mention of Christians. Second, although elsewhere Justin employs *κατάραμαι* (=curse) and *καταναθματίζω* (=anathematize) or forms thereof, here he uses only 'ἐπικλώψητέ ποτε (=scoff), a term which would not be appropriate to *birkat ha-minim*. Third, whatever did take place occurred after the prayers (*μετὰ τὴν προσευχήν*), while *birkat ha-minim* is in the middle of the statutory prayers (the twelfth

of the 'Eighteen Benedictions')! Justin clearly proves inadequate as evidence for positing the existence of a statutory Jewish prayer which cursed Christians.⁶²

The next patristic witness is Origen. He offers less evidence than Justin. One comment merely says that the Jews curse Christ everywhere up to the present time.⁶³ Two other pertinent comments appear in his *Homilies on Jeremiah*. The first comment (10.8.2) accuses Jews of cursing and blaspheming Jesus and plotting against those who believe in him. The second source (19.12.31) says, 'Enter the synagogue of the Jews and see Jesus flagellated by those with the language of blasphemy.' One must be careful of Origen's hyperbole. For instance, in another of the same *Homilies* (12.13.20-23) he says that Jews are still responsible for the murder of Jesus since they understand the Law and the Prophets according to its plain sense! Thus for Origen the mere practice of Judaism is an affront to the coming of Christ and could be conceived as blasphemous.⁶⁴ Whatever the case may be, Origen makes no mention of Christians being cursed nor of any connection to the prayers. Thus, P. Nautin is misled when he writes in his annotated French translation of the *Homilies* as follows: 'Sans doute faut-il y voir une allusion à la malédiction portée dans les *Schemone Esre* contre les "minim", désignant les chrétiens.' Even he must have had some misgivings about this judgment, for he goes on to say, 'Origène, qui n'est pas parfaitement renseigné en parle ici comme d'un blasphème contre Jésus lui-même.'⁶⁵

It is inadequate to contend that Origen was poorly informed on such a visible public practice. There probably was no church Father, of his time, as well informed about the Jews.⁶⁶ Besides his rabbinic contacts he was acquainted with Jewish converts to Christianity. These may have been the source of his information on the clandestine tribunals of the court of the Patriarch. The *Homilies on Jeremiah* themselves were composed during the 240s after Origen had spent over a decade in Palestine. Several years earlier, in fact, he had reflected his awareness of addressing on Sunday those who had just been to synagogue on the Sabbath.⁶⁷

The only reason to contend that Origen was misinformed is to force his comment into a pattern which has been imposed on both the gospel of John and Justin. Once it is realized how weak the evidence is from John and Justin, the cogency for foisting on Origen an understanding which cannot be supported by what he says disappears and Origen's statement is left to

stand as it is. Origen reports Jews blaspheming Jesus. [Even this may have to be taken *cum grano salis* in the light of his aforementioned *Tendenz*. It is likely, as de Lange suggests, that Origen's harping on the hostility of the Jews reflects a long-standing theological theme rather than reflecting current events.⁶⁸] Origen does not report Jews cursing Christians in their prayers, and there are insufficient grounds to assume that he thought they did.

The nature of the references is quite different in the writings of Epiphanius and Jerome. They wrote, however, about a century and a half after Origen. Much has happened within and between Judaism and Christianity in the meanwhile.⁶⁹

Only in Epiphanius and Jerome are there clear references to Jews, Nazoraeans, and cursing *during* the prayers thrice daily. At first glance, they appear to diverge on the denotation of the word *nosrim* in the prayer. Jerome apparently sees in it a reference to Christians while Epiphanius sees it as a reference to the contemporary Jewish Christian group, the Nazoraeans. In four places Jerome makes the point that the Jews in the synagogues curse the Christians thrice daily under the name Nazoraeans (*sub nomine Nazarenorum*).⁷⁰ This alone constitutes evidence that *nosrim*, in Jerome's time, appeared in *birkat ha-minim* and that Jerome would have the reader believe that it referred to Christians.

But did it? It is not clear. According to S. Krauss, Jerome is saying that 'the malediction in the liturgy is nominally directed against the Nazorenes but really against the Christians. From the turn of the phrase it is evident that Jerome thought he had made a discovery. "How artful the Jews are," he seems to say, "they curse the Nazarenes when they mean the Christians."'⁷¹

Two additional factors make it difficult to accept that Jerome himself believed that it referred explicitly to Christians. First is Jerome's tendency to present Judaism and Jews pejoratively.⁷² Second is the existence of a second statement of Jerome which tends to undermine the first and coheres better with what Epiphanius wrote and with the results of our analysis of the rabbinic material below.

In one of his epistles to Augustine (112.13) Jerome wrote:

Until now a heresy is to be found in all parts of the East where Jews have their synagogues; it is called 'of the Minaeans' and cursed by Pharisees up to now. Usually they are named Nazoraeans. They

believe in Christ . . . but since they want to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians.⁷³

Jerome is pointing to a group of Jewish Christians who are called Nazoraeans. They are associated with Minaeans and are cursed by the Jews. This dovetails with what Epiphanius wrote in his *Panarion* about twenty years earlier. Both present evidence for the association of Jews, Nazoraeans, and cursing *during* prayers. Epiphanius's comments appear in his discussion of the Nazoraean heresy:

... they are rather Jews and nothing else. However, they are very much hated by the Jews. For not only the Jewish children cherish hate against them but the people also stand up in the morning, at noon and in the evening, three times a day and they pronounce curses and maledictions over them when they say their prayers in the synagogues. Three times a day they say: 'May God curse the Nazoraeans.'⁷⁴

Epiphanius clearly considers the Nazoraeans to be Jews. The reference to cursing the Nazoraeans thrice daily, while standing in the synagogue, with the words, 'May God curse the Nazoraeans', leaves no room for doubting that Epiphanius is referring to the formulation of *birkat ha-minim* as found in the Genizah. Epiphanius goes on to say that their proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ is what provoked the malediction.

It is of particular note that the first Christian source clearly to mention cursing thrice daily in the synagogues makes no mention of Christians. The same source is also the first patristic mention of the Jewish Christian sect of the Nazoraeans. Jerome, who next mentions the Nazoraeans, associates them with the Minaeans and infers that both are cursed by the Jews. This, along with the fact that the term *nosrim* first appears in rabbinic literature in the mouth of R. Johanan of the third century, warrants the conclusion that the Genizah formula which reads *ha-nosrim ve-ha-minim* (= the *nosrim* and [?, see below] the *minim*) was composed between the time of R. Johanan (d. c. 279) and the writing of the *Panarion* (377). The data also warrant the conclusion that *nosrim* does not denote Christians, but rather Nazoraeans, a Jewish Christian sect whose existence is vouched for by at least two fourth-century sources.⁷⁵

What was the status of these Nazoraeans? The testimonies of Epiphanius and Jerome seem to conflict. According to Epiphanius, 'They are Jews and nothing else.' According to Jerome, 'They are neither Jews nor Christians.' It is possible that Jero-

me's harsher judgment on their Jewishness reflects the growing effect of an explicit reference to them in *birkat ha-minim*.⁷⁶

Besides the chronological correlation of the insertion of *nosrim* in *birkat ha-minim* and the mention of the Jewish Christian Nazoraeans by Jerome and Epiphanius, there are several additional considerations for understanding *nosrim* as denoting Jews. The first is the internal evidence from the text of the benediction; the second is the patristic evidence that Christians were not excluded from the synagogue.

After mention of the *nosrim* and the *minim*, line 4 of the benediction goes on to say: 'Let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous.' This is a way of execrating Jews by removing them from the covenant (see Jub. 36.10) and consequently from the community of the saved. Exclusion from the covenant entails loss of salvation.⁷⁷ There is no reason explicitly to exclude Gentiles from the Jewish Book of Life. That this was a contemporary practice can be gathered from Jerome, who mentions that apostate Jews were 'expelled from the community'.⁷⁸

What about the patristic evidence? Not only is evidence lacking from rabbinic sources that Gentile Christians were excluded from the synagogue, there is abundant evidence from patristic sources that Christians were frequenting the synagogues quite often. Indeed, there is far-flung evidence that it was the church leadership that strove to keep Christians away from the synagogue and not the Jews who were excluding them. Such protest from the church Fathers demonstrates the receptivity of the synagogue to Christians. This situation is highly unlikely if the synagogue liturgy contained a daily curse against Christians.⁷⁹

It is of no small significance to note that Jewish receptivity to Christians is precisely where rabbinic Judaism had made its strongest impact, namely, Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria. So, for example, the *Martyrium Pionii*, which has been dated from the end of the third to the middle of the fourth century,⁸⁰ records Pionius (d. 250 - Smyrna) as saying: 'I hear that the Jews call some of you to the synagogues.' Indeed, the Jews seem to have mounted a missionary campaign among the Christians of Smyrna.⁸¹

Origen, as mentioned above, is also aware that he had congregants who attended synagogue on the Sabbath. Indeed, Origen also alludes to Jewish missionaries who induced Christians to practise Jewish rites.⁸²

In the late fourth century, Jerome stressed that Christians imitated the rites of the synagogue, probably as a result of familiarity with synagogue practice.⁸³ Jerome also pointed out, to his chagrin, that Christians were often the beneficiaries of Jewish generosity. This reached such a level, that he urged that such charity be refused lest it attract them to Judaism.⁸⁴

Finally, the evidence from John Chrysostom is overwhelming. In the *Homilies Against the Jews*, he harangues against the Judaizing activities of Christians, in general, and their frequenting of synagogues, in particular. The latter was so serious that he felt impelled to denounce it over fifteen times.⁸⁵ His vituperative attacks probably indicate that the Christian legislation against Christian attendance at Jewish religious meetings was ineffective.⁸⁶ Chrysostom, himself, reported that Christians who frequent synagogues urged their household, friends and neighbours not to report them to the priests.⁸⁷ Clearly, the synagogue was a very real attraction for Christians.

Significantly, in an effort to dissuade Christians from rushing off to the synagogue begging the Jews to help them, Chrysostom asserts that the Jews laugh and scoff at them. Then most revealingly he concedes: 'Even if they do not do it openly . . . they are doing this deep down in their hearts.'⁸⁸ Not only can Chrysostom not adduce evidence for Jews cursing Christians, he cannot even adduce evidence for Jews scoffing at them. The Jews must have been quite receptive to Christians seeking their assistance and the succour of the synagogue.⁸⁹

If one of the most virulent antisemites of the church cannot produce evidence for official Jewish denigration of Christians, then its existence is seriously called into question. Not only is evidence lacking from Christian sources that *birkat ha-minim* was directed against Gentile Christians, but there is also evidence, direct and indirect, that it was not. Indeed, the preponderance of the evidence points to a fourth-century Jewish Christian sect, called by Epiphanius and Jerome the Nazoraeans, as the group to which the term *nosrim* refers.⁹⁰ Once it is clear that *nosrim* does not refer to Christians but to Nazoraeans, it is not at all surprising to discover that the Hebrew was originally *nasrim* and thus more assonant with Nazoraeans.⁹¹

Nasrim in rabbinic literature

The identification of what now have to be called the *nasrim* with Jewish Christian Nazoraeans is supported by the two talmudic references to *nasrim*. Both derive from Palestine, although they are found in the Babylonian Talmud.⁹² The first reference is generally unknown since the text is corrupt. The text reads 'Kefar Sekania of Egypt',⁹³ an otherwise unattested place. The word for Egypt is, however, נַעֲרִים (*MSRYM*), which is identical to *nasrim* (נַעֲרִים), except for the first letter, which is a נ rather than the י of *nasrim*. J. N. Epstein has pointed out that these two liquid letters are sometimes transposed in names.⁹⁴ It thus becomes easy to read or understand the text as 'Kefar Sekania of *nasrim*'.⁹⁵ Kefar Sekania is identical with the aforementioned Kefar Saknin, which was known as a place of *minut*.⁹⁶ Since one of the major sects behind the term *minim* is Jewish Christianity, it is of no surprise that a place of *minut* should also be known as a place of Nazoraeans.

The second mention of *nasrim* is in the following source:

Our rabbis taught: . . . the men of the stations [in temple times] assembled in their synagogues and observed four fasts, on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of that week. . . . On Friday they did not fast out of respect for the Sabbath; and certainly not on the Sabbath. Why did they not fast on Sunday? - R. Johanan said: On account of the *nasrim*.⁹⁷

Whom did R. Johanan mean by the *nasrim*? Since the source is dealing with the first century, did he mean first-century Christians who were called Nazarenes (Acts 24.5)? or was he reflecting on his own reality and pointing to the Jewish Christian Nazoraeans. J. Z. Lauterbach unequivocally concluded: 'It designates the Christians who observe Sunday.'⁹⁸ S. W. Baron also holds that it designates Christians.⁹⁹

Conversely, R. T. Herford, after considering a similar passage in *Maseket Soferim*,¹⁰⁰ remarks, 'R. Johanan transferred to the time of the Temple a feature of the religious life of his own totally different time'.¹⁰¹ H. J. Schoeps also ponders, albeit equivocally, the possibility that these 'are to be identified with these Jewish Christians'.¹⁰² Finally, W. D. Davies is of the opinion that R. Johanan 'claimed that Jews did not fast on Sundays because of Jewish Christians'.¹⁰³

There are two major considerations which militate against the probability that the explanation relates to first-century condi-

tions. First there is no evidence that Sunday was the Christian 'Sabbath' in Palestine before the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70.¹⁰⁴ And even if it were, it is difficult to believe that Christianity was sufficiently influential in Palestine before 70 to have affected official Jewish practice.¹⁰⁵

Conversely, there are cogent considerations for understanding R. Johanan's statement as a reflex of his contemporary reality. First, it was R. Johanan's practice to comment on the contemporary situation using the backdrop of an alleged first-century reality.¹⁰⁶ Second, there was a contemporary Jewish Christian sect which observed both Saturday and Sunday in a special manner. Based on a combination of the testimonies of Eusebius and Epiphanius it seems that this sect was sometimes referred to as Nazoraeans.¹⁰⁷ Finally, Jewish Christian communities populated areas not far from R. Johanan's home-town of Tiberias.¹⁰⁸

To return to the original question: Why did they not fast on Sunday? The traditional answer is: 'Lest they say: We rejoice on Sunday; they fast on it' (*Maseket Soferim*, 17, 4, ed. Higger, p. 301). Baron follows V. Aptowitzer: 'He may well have meant that the Christians should not be led to think that the Jews abstain from work on that day as an acknowledgment of the Christian claim to its sanctity.'¹⁰⁹

The traditional answer can be supported by references in Christian literature which encourage rejoicing on Sunday.¹¹⁰ The position adopted by Baron is somewhat difficult. It assumes that abstinence from work on a day is an acknowledgment of its sanctity. This is a Jewish assumption. It is not clear that Sunday in the third century was distinguished by Christian abstinence from work.¹¹¹ In addition, it assumes that abstinence from food requires abstinence from work. Those who fast regularly know that this is not necessarily so. Indeed, the rabbis remonstrated against those who worked on the national fast of the ninth of Ab (bTaan 30b).

The third possibility is that R. Johanan does not want Jews to fast on Sunday lest they be confused with those Jewish Christians who fast on Sunday.¹¹² The evidence for this assertion is meagre, but worth considering. The first is in the Greek version of the *Acts of Thomas* 29, which says concerning the Apostle Thomas:

And when he had blessed them he took bread and oil and herbs

and salt, and blessed and gave to them; but he himself continued in his fasting, for the Lord's day was about to dawn.¹¹³

Possibly, Thomas continued to fast through 'the Lord's day'. The second source is the *Syriac Didascalia Apostolorum* 21, which reports¹¹⁴ that after the crucifixion, Jesus appeared

in the morning of the first day of the week. . . . And He said to us, teaching us: Are ye fasting for Me these days? or have I any need that ye should afflict yourselves? . . . For it is not lawful to you to fast on the first of the week, because it is My resurrection. . . . Fast then from the second day of the week, six days wholly, until the night after the Sabbath; and it shall be reckoned to you as a week.

This seems to be a polemic against those who are fasting on Sunday. Both of the above documents are early third-century products of Syrian Christianity.¹¹⁵ The first is considered a Gnostic-Christian or Encratite document. The second, according to A. Marmorstein, 'was written with the specific purpose of frightening away Jewish-Christians from Jewish practices and usages'.¹¹⁶ G. Strecker also emphasizes that the *Didascalia* is not dealing with Judaizing Christians but with Jewish Christians.¹¹⁷ Schoeps cites Marmorstein's judgment approvingly, adding that the work is specifically directed against Ebionitism.¹¹⁸

In light of the judgments of Marmorstein and Schoeps on the *Didascalia*, the opinions of Zahn and Kretschmar on its provenance take on added significance. T. Zahn, whose position was adopted by H. Achelis in his monograph in J. Flemming's German edition of the *Didascalia*, placed it among the Nazoraeans of Aleppo in Coele-Syria. A. Harnack, C. Schneider and G. Kretschmar placed it in south-eastern Syria, most likely Bostera,¹¹⁹ which was not only a centre of Jewish Christianity, but also a place frequented by third-century rabbis.¹²⁰

In the light of the Syrian Christian material which points to a group of Jewish Christians who fast on Sunday and the fact that *The Apostolic Constitutions*¹²¹ also opposed Sunday fasting, it is not unlikely that R. Yohanan's comment about not fasting on Sunday was concerned with distinguishing between the Jews and the Nazoraeans,¹²² who were known to be ascetically inclined.¹²³

Once it is clear that *našrim* refers to the Jewish Christian Nazoraeans, this should be of help in understanding the formulation *ha-našrim ve-ha-minim* that posed such difficulty at the beginning.

If the formula were original it should read smoothly. The roughness indicates a composite text; that is, *nasrim* was attached to a fixed text or replaced some other opening term which had combined smoothly with *minim*, such as 'apostates' or 'informers'. Originally there must have been two distinct categories such as 'heretics and defectors'. This seems to be the pattern behind the other versions.¹²⁴

The version under discussion remains difficult, but understanding *nasrim* as referring to contemporary Jewish Christians does help. Although it is possible to allow for the rendering 'the Nazaraeans and other Jewish heretics', it is unlikely once *nasrim* is seen as a later interpolation. It is more likely that the *naḥ* of *ve-ha-minim* is explicative as it frequently is in Palestinian rabbinic literature.¹²⁵ The result would translate as 'the Nazaraeans who are the *minim* (i.e. heretics of our day)'. It is even possible to follow a comment of S. Lieberman on a similarly difficult expression,¹²⁶ and translate as 'the Nazaraeans of the *minim*'. This rendering receives striking support from Jerome's comment cited above on the relationship between the Nazaraeans and the *minim*, where he said that the Nazaraean heresy is called 'of the Minaeans' (= *Minaeorum*)!

Conclusions

The following are the salient results of our investigation of *birkat ha-minim*:

1. *Birkat ha-minim* was not directed against Gentile Christians, but against Jewish sectarians.
2. The Genizah version which reads *ha-nasrim ve-ha-minim* was primarily directed against Jewish Christians.
3. There is no unambiguous evidence that Jews cursed Christians during the statutory prayers.
4. There is abundant evidence that Christians were welcome in the synagogue.
5. Thus *birkat ha-minim* does not reflect a watershed in the history of the relationship between Jews and Christians in the first centuries of our era.
6. Apparently, there never was a single edict which caused the so-called irreparable separation between Judaism and Christianity. The separation was rather the result of a long process dependent upon local situations and ultimately upon the political power of the church.

Ruler of This World: Attitudes about Mediator Figures and the Importance of Sociology for Self-Definition

A. F. SEGAL

The problem of normative group self-definition is nowhere more evident than in the discussions of the rise of Gnosticism. Although the question of the origins of Gnosticism has occupied scholarly attention for a century, there has been surprisingly little interest in the social situation in which the orthodox and heretical groups separated or in how the various sects and denominations came to the conclusion that they were different from their neighbours. All too often a simple answer to the problem of gnostic self-definition has been assumed: Gnosticism is the inevitable outcome of the combination of Hebrew and Greek thought – the spirit of late antiquity, the dominant form of late Hellenistic spirituality. Just before, during or after this encounter, Christian and Jewish orthodoxies arose to defend the faithful from such a radical synthesis.¹ Some form of this intellectual dialectic has been widely assumed by many recent scholars, perhaps to sidestep the overall problem of gnostic origins in order to address more specific exegetical problems within their own fields of competence. Of course, I do not mean to say that this enterprise has been profitless. Rather, it has been advantageous to set aside some of the larger questions, in order to concentrate on the specific textual problems inherent in the publication of the Nag Hammadi material.²

Though recent sociological studies on the rise of Gnosticism represent a different perspective they are nevertheless important and complementary.³ By looking for the social forces which contributed to the rise of Gnosticism, their authors are attempting to get beyond the tacit assumption of an intellectual dialectic

tPes 1.4; tYomTob 2.12; tBK 9.30; tZeb 8.17; tHull 6.8. R. Judah also reports incidents which occurred at the court of R. Gamaliel II: tTer 2.13; tKet 8.1 and tGitt 1.4.

72. Thus we cannot say whether he took a stance more favourable to the Patriarchate because he was already well disposed towards the Hillelites (as indicated by his already holding some sort of office), or whether he received the office as a reward for having moved closer to the Patriarchate. Other sources concerning R. Judah b. Ilai confirm my interpretation of his political position. In contrast to the anti-Patriarchal Akibans who are consistently portrayed as being on good terms with R. Meir (above, p. 214), R. Judah b. Ilai is represented as having disapproved of R. Meir. See the sources and discussion in Epstein, *Tannaim*, p. 107, to which should be added R. Judah's pointed remarks in CantR 2.4.

It is worth noting that both his father and son, R. Ilai and R. Jose b. Judah, figure in stories concerning the Patriarch: tPes 2.15; Sifre Deut 335 (Horowitz/Finkelstein, p. 385) (but compare the MSS variants and the version in M. Tann. Deut p. 205); GenR 76.8, p. 906; pDem 1.1 (21c); 7.1(26a); pShebi 6.4(37a). For comments on the R. Ilai story see Urbach, 'Mi-Yehuda la-Gall', pp. 65f. To my knowledge there has been no real discussion of the R. Jose b. Judah stories.

73. The evidence concerning R. Meir requires further extended consideration. For a preliminary discussion see Baumgarten, 'R. Judah I'. The case of R. Jacob b. Korshai, the principal teacher of R. Judah according to the Palestinian Talmud (see pShab 10.5(12c); pPes 4.1(30d) and pPes 10.1(37b) would properly belong to the full discussion of the evidence concerning R. Meir (R. Jacob's teacher). See further S. Safrai, 'Jacob b. Korshai', *Ej IX*, col. 1221 and Epstein, *Tannaim*, p. 193.

74. The nature of the evidence is, of course, to blame. See the discussions above, pp. 222-4. The question of the reliability of rabbinic evidence has received much attention in recent years. See e.g. W. S. Green, 'What's in a Name - the Problematic of Rabbinic Biography', *Approaches to Ancient Judaism*, 1978, pp. 85ff.

75. We can only speculate on R. Judah's reasons for giving Akiban teaching the place he did in his Mishnah. To some extent our speculations depend on the answer given to a much debated larger question: R. Judah's intentions and goals in compiling the Mishnah. See the sharp disagreement between Epstein (*Tannaim*, pp. 205-11, 225-26), who sees the Mishnah as a law code, and Albeck (*Mavo la-Mishnah*, 1959, pp. 270-83), who sees the Mishnah as a compendium of Oral Law intended for students. Between these extremes, but closer to Epstein, is the view of Urbach, 'Mishnah', *Ej XII*, col. 104; for a fuller statement of Urbach's position see his Hebrew review article of Albeck's *Mavo* published in *Molad* 17, 1959, pp. 422-40. Urbach sees R. Judah as intending to compile an authoritative canon of mishnayot; the very fact of the existence of an authoritative canon helped decide the law. See further Halivni's comments above, pp. 379f.n. 3.

76. On the Akiban coloration of the Mishnah see Halivni's remarks, above, p. 210. Cf. Urbach, 'Mishnah', col. 104.

10 Birkat Ha-Minim and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity

*I am grateful to Professors David Goodblatt, Wayne Meeks and John Townsend for their reading of the MS and for their helpful suggestions.

1. S. Schechter published two medieval Egyptian liturgical fragments in 1898 in 'Genizah Specimens', *JQR*, os 10, 1898, pp. 657, 659. For an updated bibliography on the issues generated by the text, see P. Schäfer, *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des rabbinischen Judentums*, 1978, p. 53 n. 3.

2. See J. Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns*, 1977, p. 225 and literature cited (n. 20) (Hebrew original, p. 142 n. 20).

3. A similar development seems to have taken place in Christianity in the same period. Compare Paul (1 Cor. 6.9) with Ignatius (*Philadelphians* 3.3) for the development from social disrupters to theological dissidents who in the case of Ignatius are probably Jewish Christians. See P. J. Donahue, 'Jewish Christianity in the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch', *VC* 32, 1978, pp. 81-93.

4. This is how it apparently functions in the Talmudim, see pBer 5.4; 9c and bBer 28b-29a. The texts, however, are somewhat problematic, see Sh. Goren, *Ha-Yerushalmi ha-Meforash*, 1961, pp. 210f.

5. See Y. M. Elbogen, *Ha-Tefillah be-Yisrael be-Hippututah ha-Historit*, 1972, pp. 28f., who based himself on Midrash Tanhumah (ed. Buber) *Vayyiqra* 3 (Leviticus, p. 3). For a possible scenario, see J. L. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 1979, pp. 59-61.

6. N. Perrin (*The New Testament: An Introduction*, 1974), who accepts Martyn's analysis, tries to wriggle out of this difficulty by saying, 'its presence in the synagogue liturgy would force out of the synagogue community those who knew themselves to be designated Nazarenes or Minim' (p. 230, my italics).

7. See next section entitled 'Minim'.

8. See G. Alon, *Mehqarim be-Toledot Yisra'el I*, 1957, p. 192.

9. See, for example, two widely-read treatments from different perspectives: W. H. C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, 1965, p. 179; and S. W. Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews II*, 1952, p. 135. It is difficult to find studies which question this assumption.

10. See M. Goldstein, *Jesus in the Jewish Tradition*, 1950, p. 45, and literature cited.

11. *TBM* 2.33.

12. *TSanh* 13.5.

13. Midrash Tanhuma (ed. Buber) *Vayyiqra* 3. L. Ginzberg, without citing this source, came to the same conclusion. He, however, adds that 'benediction' may be used euphemistically (see Job 1.5; 2.5, 9 et

al.), *A Commentary on the Palestinian Talmud III*, 1941, p. 280. The 'curse theory' for *birkat ha-minim* is supported by Y. Cohen, *Peraqim be-Toledot Tequfat ha-Tanna'im*, 1978, p. 117.

14. Goldstein, *Jesus in the Jewish Tradition*.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 46f. For a sophisticated comprehensive treatment of the issues involved, see A. F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism*, 1977.

16. A. Büchler, 'The Minim of Sepphoris and Tiberias in the Second and Third Centuries', *Studies in Jewish History*, 1956, p. 271; S. Lieberman, 'The Martyrs of Caesarea', *Annuaire de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves* 7, 1944, p. 398; M. Simon, *Verus Israel*, 1964, p. 238; H. Hirschberg, 'Allusions to the Apostle Paul in the Talmud', *JBL* 62, 1943, pp. 73-87.

17. Büchler, 'The Minim of Sepphoris', p. 252; S. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, 1965, p. 141 n. 196. K. G. Kuhn tries to solve the problem by positing a temporal distinction: Minim in older texts were Jews while in later texts (from 180-200) they refer 'no longer to heretics within Judaism, but to those of other beliefs mostly Christian', 'Gijlon-im und Sifre Minim', *Judentum - Urchristentum - Kirche* (ed. Eltester), 1960, p. 39.

18. An apparent exception to the thesis that *mini* in early Palestinian rabbinic literature denotes Jew is the statement at the end of mSot (9.15) that 'the kingdom will revert to *minut*'. This statement is problematic all around. It is not clear where it belongs, who said it, or what it means.

Although the statement appears in the Mishnah of the printed editions, recent research has shown that it is a later appendage based on the bSanh 97a (see Epstein, *Mabo le-Nusah ha-Mishnah II*, 1948, p. 976; and Ch. Albeck, *Mishnah, Seder Nashim*, 1959, p. 394). Thus it is missing in the Leningrad MS published by A. Katsch, *Ginze Mishnah*, 1970, p. 77; the Pisaro or Constantinople edition of the Mishnah (Jerusalem 1970) p. 200; and the Parma MS (Jerusalem 1970) p. 162. Only the Kaufman MS (Jerusalem 1968) approximates it, reading *מלכותה מן הנימין* (p. 245).

Is the statement then tannaïc or amoraïc? In bSanh 97a it is cited in the name of R. Nehemiah as a baraita, indicating that it is tannaïc. Elsewhere in later documents (CantR 2.13.4; *Seder Eliyahu Zutta* 15, ed. Friedman, p. 12 and n. 46) it is also cited in the name of R. Nehemiah. If this is the tanna of that name and the statement accurately reflects the original terminology, then the statement is truly problematic. Scholars have discerned in the expression 'the kingdom will revert to *minut*' an allusion to the Christian takeover of the Roman Empire. It is hard to believe that about 175 CE a rabbi would have noticed anything to make that suggestion credible. An alternative which is not wholly satisfying is to interpret the 'kingdom' as referring to the internal Jewish administration, since the Patriarchate had the aura of royalty. The statement thus reflects the menace of Jewish heresies, which we know was a constant problem.

On the other hand, R. Nehemiah may be the amora of that name (see *Enziklopediah le-Hokme ha-Talmud*, ed. M. Margoliot, 1964, p. 666; and A. Hyman, *Toledot Tanna'im ve-Amoraim*, 1964, p. 926a). This supposition is reinforced by the fact that the statement does not appear originally in any tannaïc document and that the statement is always cited with other amoraïc statements about the coming of the son of David (even the cited R. Nehorai could be the Amora). The difficulty is that the statement is introduced by TNY' - the sign of a tannaïc citation. This, however, may be the work of a scribe who, knowing the Mishnah Sotah and the fact that generally R. Nehemiah' refers to the tanna (indeed, it is claimed that anonymous sections of the Tosefta are the work of R. Nehemiah just a little before in the same tractate - bSanh 86a), just assumed that this was a citation from the Mishnah and therefore inserted the term TNY'. If this be so, then the expression 'the kingdom will revert to *minut*' is a Babylonian amoraïc statement from about 325 CE! In the text of the paper, we show that the Babylonian Talmud used *mini* indiscriminately and frequently of Gentiles. Accordingly, this expression does not contradict the thesis that in early Palestinian rabbinic literature *minim* are Jews.

19. H. Hirschberg's interpretation ('Once Again - The Minim', *JBL* 67, 1948, pp. 305-18, 309ff.) is ingenious but unconvincing.

20. This is also the reading of the parallel in bAZ 26a according to the Spanish MS (ed. Abramson), New York 1957.

21. Justin, *Dial.* 19 and 92; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 5.9 and *Adv. Jud.* 4, cf. *The Gospel of Thomas* 53 (I owe this reference to the kindness of Professor Wayne Meeks). See GKabb 11.6 (ed. Theodor-Albeck), p. 94, and notes, esp. end of n. 6, and parallels.

22. *Midrash ha-Gadol Leviticus* (ed. Steinsaltz), p. 735. The parallel in the Babylonian Talmud (Yeb 102b) reads *min*. See below for the discussion of *mini* in that Talmud.

23. E. E. Urbach, 'The Homiletical Interpretations of the Sages and the Exposition of Origen on Canticles, and the Jewish-Christian Disputation', *SH* 22, 1971, pp. 248-75, originally in Hebrew, *Tarbiz* 30, 1960, pp. 148-70; R. Kimelman, 'R. Yohanan and Origen on the Song of Songs: A Third Century Jewish-Christian Disputation', *HTR* 72, (forthcoming). See also the statement of 'the nations of the world' in *Midrash Tanhuma* (ed. Buber) Ba Shellah 24 (Exodus, p. 67) and N. R. M. de Lange, *Origen and the Jews*, Cambridge 1976, pp. 93f.

24. See works cited in n. 23.

25. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, p. 141 n. 196.

26. Lieberman, 'The Martyrs of Caesarea', p. 440.

27. BAZ 65a according to the Spanish MS. The similar expression in bHull 13b is by a Babylonian.

28. PYeb 8.1; 8d. See S. Lieberman, *Midreshe Teman*, 1970, p. 8, *contra* G. F. Moore, 'The Definition of the Jewish Canon and the Repudiation of Christian Scriptures', *The Canon and Masorah of the Hebrew Bible* (ed. Leiman), 1974, p. 124.

The thesis that Palestinian material was subject to linguistic alteration

in the hands of Babylonian amoraim is demonstrated by the various studies of M. Moreshet in the *Henoch Yalton Memorial Volume*, 1974, and in the *Archive of the New Dictionary of Rabbinic Literature*, 2 vols., 1972–74.

29. Büchler, 'The Minim of Sepphoris'.

30. J. Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*, 1949, p. 180.

31. R. Payne-Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, 1897–1901, p. 2094; F. Schwally, *Idioticon des christlich-palästinischen Aramäisch*, 1893, p. 50. My point is that the usage is attested to in the above, not that Christian Palestinian Aramaic was used in Babylonia.

32. As do L. Finkelstein, *Ha-Perushim ve-Anshe Keneset ha-Gedolah*, 1950, p. 34 n. 119; and Hirschberg, 'Once Again – The Minim', p. 318 n. 78.

33. For the text, parallels, and comments, see J. Neusner, *Eliezer Ben Hyrcanus*, 1973, I, pp. 400–3, cf. II, pp. 366f.

34. For an updated comprehensive discussion of this cognomen for Jesus, see J. Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der talmudischen Überlieferung*, 1978, pp. 260–67.

35. BAZ 16b–17a. On 'the Nazarene' see n. 91 below.

36. See p. 241 below.

37. KohR 7.26.3, see *ibid.* 1.8.4. It is possible that only the first interpretation is R. Issi's while the rest was added. For our purposes it makes no difference.

38. See K. G. Kuhn, *Achtzehngebet und Vaterunser und der Reim*, 1950, pp. 18ff.

39. Advocates of this position are legion. Among recent authors, see Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, p. 58 n. 78; W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*, 1966, pp. 278f.; and J. T. Townsend, 'The Gospel of John and the Jews; The Story of a Religious Divorce', *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity* (ed. Davies), 1979, pp. 72–97, esp. 86. This position goes back at least as far back as S. Krauss, 'The Jews in the Works of the Church Fathers', *JQR* 5, 1892–93, pp. 130ff.

40. See Townsend, 'The Gospel of John and the Jews'.

41. See Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*, pp. 56f., for several suggestions. Even the updated note in Elbogen, *Ha-Tefillah*, p. 31, has to equivocate by saying, 'The explicit mention of the *minim* who repudiate Judaism in general; and that of the *nosrim* in particular.' This gives the erroneous impression that the text reads first *minim* and then *nosrim* rather than the reverse. R. Wilde, *The Treatment of the Jews in the Greek Christian Writers*, 1949, p. 119 n. 126, says: 'In Acts 24.5 we read τῆς τῶν Ναζωραίων αἰρέσεως, which may safely be said to represent the Hebrew expression, *nosrim* and *minim*. Such equivalence is both a sign of the great antiquity of such expressions and a further reason for their probable inclusion in the original curse formula.' This clever, but far-fetched, suggestion ignores the construction of the Greek.

42. In French: Simon, *Verus Israel*, p. 236; in English: Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, p. 58; in German: P. Riessler, *Altjüdisches Schrifttum ausserhalb der Bibel*, 1928, p. 9, cited from S.

Krauss, 'Zur Literatur der Siddurim', *Festschrift für Aron Freimann*, 1935, p. 138 n. 10. See also Baron, *Social and Religious History*.

43. E.g. Davies, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 276, who goes on to argue for a major interaction between Judaism and Christianity in the Yavnean period. See also E. Lerle, 'Liturgische Reformen des Synagogengottesdienstes als Antwort auf die jüdenchristliche Mission des ersten Jahrhunderts', *NovT* 10, 1968, pp. 31–42. An exception is Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*, pp. 51–7, who excludes *nosrim* from the original formulation, but perceives a major interaction between the two.

44. E.g., M. Avi-Yonah, *The Jews of Palestine: A Political History from the Bar Kokhba War to the Arab Conquest*, ET 1976, p. 142 (Hebrew original, p. 122). Cf. Cohen's critique (*Peraqim*, p. 138 n. 328) precisely on this point.

45. A. Marmorstein, 'The Amidah of the Public Fast Days', *JQR* 15, 1924, pp. 409–18, 415–17. See also the Oxford MS of *Seder R. Amram Gaon* (ed. Goldschmidt), p. 25, n. to line 9.

46. Jesus is called *ha-nosri* (see n. 91 below) only in Babylonian literature. (References have been censored from the standard printed editions, see S. M. Haberman's edition of R. Rabinovicz, *Ma'amar al Hadpasat ha-Talmud*, Jerusalem 1965, p. 28 nn. 25f.) Each body of literature is consistent in its use of terminology. Not only is Jesus referred to as *ha-nosri* in Babylonian amoraic sources (bSanh 103a; bBer 17b), but even alleged tannaitic material (such as bSanh 43a; 107b; bSot 47a) contained therein employs the identifying *ha-nosri*. This tendency is so strong that the same episode when found in a tannaitic document (tHull 2.24) reads 'Jesus ben Pantiri' while the parallel in the Babylonian Talmud (bAZ 16b–17a, Spanish MS, p. 28 line 21) reads 'Jesus *ha-nosri*'. This phenomenon renders unnecessary the analysis of J. Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, ET repr. 1953, p. 38.

47. The Hebrew term will be discussed in n. 91 below. Still, it should be noted that the Hebrew is no more clear than the Greek. For the different theories, see R. E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 1977, pp. 207–13; and H. H. Schaeder in TDNT IV, pp. 874–9.

48. BAZ 6a, 7b, see *Diqduqe Soferim* and Spanish MS ad loc.

49. This fallacy is well-nigh universal. An exception may be M. Liber, 'Structure and History of the Tefillah', *JQR* 40, 1949, p. 350 n. 43. He, however, never seems to have worked out the implications of his insight.

50. Among recent commentators, see R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to St John*, Garden City 1966, pp. LXXXV, 380; Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 51–62; R. Kysar, *The Fourth Evangelist and His Gospel – An Examination of Contemporary Scholarship*, 1975, pp. 149–54; and S. Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel*, 1975, pp. 245–50.

51. See W. A. Meeks, ' "Am I a Jew?" – Johannine Christianity and Judaism', *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults I* (ed. Neus-

ner), 1975, pp. 163-86; and Townsend, 'The Gospel of John and the Jews'.

52. See D. Hare, *The Theme of Jewish Persecution of Christians in the Gospel according to St Matthew*, 1967, p. 55.

53. Even Martyn (*History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, p. 55 n. 69 point 1) considers this a serious possibility. His arguments for rejecting it are unconvincing. His first point is based on Justin, which as will be shown below does not support his contention that John is responding to a situation that emerged by virtue of *birkat ha-minim*. His second point, concerning rabbinic tradition on the nature of the charges that led to Jesus' death, is based on evidence much later than John and, in any case, is irrelevant to *birkat ha-minim*. The mere fact that the benediction is not mentioned in any tannaitic document may tend to support Wayne A. Meeks's position, cited there, that the talmudic 'scenes portray as punctiliar events in Gamaliel's time what was actually a linear development stretching over a lengthy period and culminating in the pertinent formulation of the *Birkat ha Minim*, perhaps quite a bit later than Gamaliel'. The talmudic evidence (above, n. 4) is also insufficiently precise to enable the historian to trace the introduction of the benediction back to Samuel the Small under the auspices of Rabban Gamaliel.

In general, historians should be careful of the use of Jewish leadership groups in the gospels. Frequently, their presence serves as a foil to Jesus (i.e. to show current Christians how to respond to Jewish charges). The precise name of the group was rather unimportant to the aim of the authors, who generally did not know the differences between them anyhow. For the synoptics, see M. J. Cook, *Mark's Treatment of the Jewish Leaders*, 1978. For John, see Meeks, 'Am I a Jew?', pp. 172 and 182 n. 72; and U. Wahle, 'The Terms for Religious Authorities in the Fourth Gospel. A Key to Literary Strata', *JBL* 98, 1979, pp. 231-53.

54. Luke 6.22 is something quite different. The answer of K. L. Carroll ('The Fourth Gospel and the Exclusion of Christians from the Synagogues', *BJRL* 40, 1957-58, pp. 19-32, esp. 19f.) is not to the point.

55. So W. Schrage, *TDNT* VII, p. 848.

56. Pancaro (*The Law in the Fourth Gospel*, p. 249) entertains this possibility but rejects it because of his understanding of the relationship between *birkat ha-minim* and *ἀποσυνάγωγος*. Once serious doubt is cast on that relationship, he would presumably consider the fabrication suggestion seriously. Hare (*Jewish Persecution*, p. 55) in a similar vein says, 'John's peculiar hostility toward the Jews makes it difficult for us to know whether these passages represent historical facts or unfulfilled predictions on the part of the author.' Also P. Winter (*On the Trial of Jesus*, 1974, p. 128) emphasized that a statement's veracity is to be seen in the light of an author's aim. Thus an assertion may be aimed at guaranteeing the fulfilment of a saying of Jesus rather than reflecting a contemporary reality (thus the relationship of John 9.22 and 12.42 to 16.2). As Perrin (*The New Testament*) says, 'The gospel and letters of

John give the impression of carefully composed wholes, of being a response to the internal dynamics of the genius and vision of the author rather than to the external dynamics of a concrete historical situation and need' (p. 222).

57. See T. L. Schram, *The Use of Ioudaios in the Fourth Gospel*, 1974.

58. See Townsend, 'The Gospel of John and the Jews', p. 8; and Meeks, 'Am I a Jew?', p. 180 nn. 63f., for literature on these issues. This orientation accounts for the peculiarity that the closely related Johannine epistles are devoid of any significant reference to Judaism, including the Law, the Jews, Israel, the scriptures, Abraham, Moses, the prophets (even Isaiah!), the Sabbath, circumcision, and even the idea of the 'fulfilment of scripture'. Indeed, not a single verse of scripture is cited; see Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel*, pp. 250f.

59. The assumption here that rabbinic enactments were immediately enforceable everywhere points to an effectiveness and power which can only be documented, and even then with difficulty, a century or two later. See R. Kimelman, 'Third-Century Tiberias: The Alliance between the Rabbinate, the Patriarchate, and the Urban Aristocracy', Supplement Volume to *ANRW* II.8, forthcoming.

If a Palestinian milieu is necessary to explain John's use of terms, then a more likely candidate is Qumran, which seems to have had a parallel in the expulsion from the community (cf. IQS 6.24-7.25; 8.16f., 22f.). This parallel becomes more cogent in the light of the views of numerous scholars who have correlated Qumran material with the background of an early edition of John. (See e.g. J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *John and Qumran*, 1972.) Besides the alleged connection between John and *birkat ha-minim* there is no explicit connection between John and rabbinic Judaism. Thus the suggestion of a connection has little historical support. In the light of the various connections between John and Qumran it is simpler to extend the connection to cover the practice of exclusion, if there were such a practice, rather than to create a new one with rabbinic Judaism. Indeed, the connection with the Samaritans seems, at least, as strong and would cover what Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, p. 55 n. 69, point 2, perceives as a 'remarkable degree of correspondence between the two elements mentioned in John . . . and the two measures referred to by Justin'. This is a correspondence which I do not find striking. On the Samaritan connection, see Meeks, 'Am I a Jew?', pp. 176f.; and J. D. Purvis, 'The Fourth Gospel and the Samaritans', *NovT* 17, 1975, p. 11 n. 1, for bibliography.

60. For the need of this practice, see S. Lieberman, 'Roman Legal Institutions in Early Rabbinics and in the Acta Martyrum', *JQR* 35, 1944-45, p. 23 n. 150.

61. Justin, *Dial.* 38, cf. 17, 108. Similarly, for John, see Pancaro, *The Law in the Fourth Gospel*, p. 502.

62. This analysis vitiates Strecker's objections ('On the Problem of Jewish Christianity', Appendix I to W. Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*, ET 1971, p. 274), to the suggestion that the struc-

ture of *Dial.* 47 (which mentions Jews cursing Christ in the synagogue) is a 'logical arrangement . . . attributed to mere abstraction'.

63. 'Cum . . . Christus usque in hodiernum diem a Iudaeis anathema fiat', Origen, *Hom.* II.8 in *Ps.* xxxvii (xxxvi) (PG 12, 1387); cf. *Comm.* in *Matt.* XVI.3 (on *Matt.* 20.17-19; GCS X, p. 469).

64. Thus Origen was so willing to curse and damn those who converted to Judaism (*Comm. Ser. in Matt.* 16 [on 23.16; GCS XI, p. 30], cited by Krauss, *JQR* 5, p. 146).

65. Origène, *Homélies sur Jérémie*, ed. P. Nautin (SC 232), 1976, p. 164.

66. See de Lange, *Origen and the Jews*, 1976, esp. pp. 39-47.

67. For the sources in Origen dealing with the converts, the tribunals, and those who attended at his sermons, see de Lange, *Origen and the Jews*, pp. 165 n. 79, 161 n. 48, 188 nn. 79f. respectively. On the dating of the two Homilies, see Nautin (ed.), *Homélies*, p. 19 n. 1.

68. de Lange, *Origen and the Jews*, pp. 85f.

69. As J. Parkes wrote, ' . . . the Church of the second century was no more the Church of the fourth than was the Judaism of the second century the complete Judaism of the Talmud. Neither had yet absorbed or rejected various intermediate groups which existed at the earlier period' (*The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue*, repr. 1969, p. 94).

70. Jerome, *Comm. in Amos* I, on 1.11f. (CCSL 76, p. 227); they blaspheme (*blasphemant*) the Christian people. *Comm. in Isa.* II, on 5.19 (CCSL 73, p. 76): they anathematize (*anathematizant*) the Christian name. *Ibid.*, XIII, on 49.7 (p. 538): they curse (*maledicunt*) Christ. *Ibid.*, XIV, on 52.4-6 (p. 578): they utter curses (*congerunt maledicta*) against the Christians. Incidentally, we should not exclude the possibility that Jerome heard that the prayer mentioned *nosrim* and read into it what he knew from Origen and Justin.

71. Krauss, 'The Jews in the Works of the Church Fathers', *JQR* 5, 1892-93, p. 132; see also his 'Zur Literatur der Siddurim', p. 126.

72. See D. S. Wiesen, *St Jerome as a Satirist*, 1964, pp. 188-94.

73. Translated in Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects*, 1973, p. 201.

74. *Pan.* 29.9.1, cited in Klijn, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 173f.

75. See Klijn and Reinink, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 50. Klijn and Reinink cast doubt on Jerome's personal acquaintance with the Nazoraeans. Their major argument is that Jerome gives allegedly conflicting reports about their belief regarding the birth of Jesus. In one place, Jerome writes that the Nazoraeans believed Jesus was 'the son of the carpenter' (*Comm. in Matt.* II, on 13.53f. [ed. E. Bonnard, SC 242, 1977, p. 294]), while elsewhere (*Epistle* 112.13, CSEL 55, p. 381) he writes of their belief in the Virgin birth. Although this appears to be contradictory, any group which read *Matt.* 1.18-25 and especially *Luke* 1.26-39; 2.5; and 3.23 could easily have made both above statements as Christian literature had previously done, see Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, pp. 521ff., esp. n. 12.

76. On the other hand, there may be no difference between them.

Epiphanius may be just being judgmental while Jerome is presenting their own self-understanding. Epiphanius says elsewhere about them that they 'did not keep the name Jews; they did not call themselves Christians, but Nazoraeans. . . . But actually they remained wholly Jewish and nothing else' (*Panarion* 29.7.1, trans. Klijn, *Patristic Evidence*, p. 173).

77. See E. P. Sanders, 'The Covenant as a Soteriological Category and the Nature of Salvation in Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism', *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Culture in Late Antiquity* (ed. Hamerton-Kelly and Scroggs), 1976, pp. 11-14.

78. Jerome, *Comm. in Isa.* XVI, on 59.15 (CCSL 73, p. 686): 'expulerint de synagogis', cited by Krauss, 'The Jews in the Works of the Church Fathers', *JQR* 6, 1894, p. 237 n. 5.

79. It will not do to say that Christians came mostly on the Sabbath when *birkat ha-minim* is not recited. Attitudinally, that is, from the point of view of synagogal receptivity, it makes no difference. For the considerable attraction of Judaism for Christians, at least through the fourth century, see R. L. Wilken, *Judaism and the Early Christian Mind*, 1971, esp. 'Jewish-Christian Relations in the Roman Empire', pp. 9-38.

80. See S. Gero, 'Jewish Polemic in the Martyrium Pionii and a "Jesus" Passage from the Talmud', *JJS* 29, 1978, pp. 164-68, esp. 164.

81. *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* 13.1; 14.1 (ed. H. Musurillo), 1972.

82. See Krauss, 'The Jews in the Works of the Church Fathers', *JQR* 5, 1892-93, p. 147 n. 2; and above, n. 67.

83. See Krauss, 'The Jews in the Works of the Church Fathers', *JQR* 6, 1893-94, p. 238 nn. 2 and 9.

84. *Epistle* 52 to Nepotian.

85. Chrysostom, *Homilies against the Jews* 1.3.3-4; 1.4.6; 1.5.2; 1.5.7; 1.6.2; 1.8.1; 2.3.5; 4.7.3-4; 4.7.7; 5.12.12; 6.6.6; 6.7.3-4; 6.7.7; 7.6.10; 8.8.7-9.

86. *Apostolic Constitutions* 2.61.1; 8.47.65; Council of Laodicea, Canon 29.

87. Chrysostom, *Homily* 8.8.8.

88. *Ibid.*, 8.8.9 (PG 48, col. 941); ET P. Harkins, *The Fathers of the Church* LXVIII, Washington 1979, p. 238.

89. See Meeks and Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch*, 1978. This receptivity continued through the Middle Ages. See Isidore Loeb, 'La controverse religieuse entre les juifs au moyen âge en France et en Espagne', *RHR* 17, 1888, pp. 324ff.

90. Nothing is being implied, positively or negatively, about the controversy whether this group was directly related to the Jerusalem church or not.

91. Originally the rabbinic term was נוצרים (*nasrim*), not נוצרים (*nosrim*). Rabbinic Hebrew tends to write *plene* as opposed to biblical Hebrew, which tends to write *defectivi* (see W. Weinberg, 'The History of Hebrew Plene Spelling: From Antiquity to Haskalah', *HUCA* 46, 1975, pp. 457-87, esp. 473 n. 49). Thus נוצרים in the Bible is pronounced

nosrim (see Jer. 4.16; 31.6[5]). A term which appears in both *plene* and *defectiva* in rabbinic sources was probably written *defectivi* originally; but later changed by a scribe to a form which he thought would facilitate pronunciation. *נצרים* without the *plene tav* is the equivalent of Nazoraeans. Once knowledge of the Nazoraeans disappeared, the pronunciation was forgotten and the *plene tav* was inserted to conform to biblical pronunciation. This often happened to no longer understood rabbinic terms. (Thus much of the speculation on the origin of *nosrim* is unnecessary, see C. Rabin, 'Noserim', *Textus* 5, 1966, pp. 44-52, 49-51.)

There is widespread evidence that *נצרים* is the original reading. Of the six versions of *birkat ha-minim* that reflect the Genizah formulation published by Marmorstein (n. 45) three read *נצרים*. In addition, Professor Shimon Sharvit informs me that one Genizah fragment (T-S K 27.33) is vocalized *נצרים*, and that the fifteenth century *Siddur*

'*Aram Sob'a* (Cincinnati 407) reads *נצרים* precluding the reading *הנצרים*. In talmudic literature the term appears unambiguously once (bTaan 27a). The fragment MS from the Genizah of that source reads *הנצרים* (ed. Malter, New York 1930, p. 128, line 15). A version cited by the *Aruch* (ed. Kohut), V, p. 375 n. 2 reads *הנצרים*. A variant in *Maseket Soferim*, ed. Higger, p. 301 ad line 22 reads *נצרים*. Also the Meiri (ed. A. Sofer, Vienna 1934, p. 81) reads *נצרים* (note that the Maharsha reads *הנצרים* - the Galileans!).

The same applies to the use of *נצרי* for Jesus in the standard printed texts. Thus the Spanish MS of bAZ (6a) reads *נצרי*, as do medieval commentators. So e.g. Rabad (ed. A. Sofer, New York 1961, p. 10 to bAZ 6a) and Nimuke Yosef in *Shitah ha-Kadmonim* (ed. M. Y. Blau, New York 1969, p. 191 to bAZ 17a) read *נצרי*. Even in *Sefer Ha-Qabbalah* (ed. G. Cohen, Philadelphia 1967, p. 15, lines 65, 74; p. 30, line 94; p. 230 n. 28) the text or a variant reads *נצרי* after 'Jesus'. Finally, an early post-talmudic work *Teshubot ha-Geonim* (ed. A. E. Harkavy, Berlin 1887, repr. Jerusalem 1966) in sections 11 and 431 reads *נצרי* and *נצרים* respectively.

92. Some see another allusion in bShabb 116a. This has not gained acceptance; see J. Lauterbach, *Rabbinic Essays*, 1951, pp. 569f.; and the edition of Steinsaltz, Jerusalem 1969, p. 511.

93. BGitt 57a.

94. Epstein, p. 1255.

95. So S. Klein (cited in ET of bGitt [Soncino Press], p. 263 n. 40) and G. F. Moore (*Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* II, repr. 1962, p. 67 n. 1).

96. See the discussion on pp. 231f. above.

97. BTaan 27b.

98. Lauterbach, *Rabbinic Essays*, p. 567.

99. Baron, *Social and Religious History* II, p. 134.

100. *Maseket Soferim* 17.4, ed. Higger, p. 301. (R. T. Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash*, 1903, p. 172, notes the reference as 17.5.)

101. Herford, loc. cit.

102. H. J. Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, ET 1969, p. 114.

103. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 283.

104. Neither I Cor. 16.2, Acts 20.7, nor Rev. 1.10 (which is clearly later than 70 CE) constitute evidence that Sunday was already the Christian 'Sabbath'. See S. Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity*, 1977, pp. 90-131.

105. With regard to the minimal impact of Christianity on Judaism before 70, see E. E. Urbach, 'Yerushalayim shel Matta ve-Yerushalayim shel Ma'alah', *Yerushalayim le-Doroteha* (Israel Exploration Society), 1968, pp. 156-71, esp. 156-60.

106. See Kimelman, 'Third Century Tiberias', n. 139.

107. Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* III.27.5) mentions that a second group of Ebionites observed the Sabbath as did the Jews and Sunday as did the Christians. Epiphanius (*Panarion* 29.7) describes a group whose characteristics overlap those of Eusebius's Ebionites and calls them Nazoraeans.

108. As e.g. the aforementioned Kefar Saknin and Kefar Semai. The other major locations were in nearby Transjordan and Coele-Syria: see Schoeps, *Jewish Christianity*, pp. 28ff.; Klijn, *Patristic Evidence*, pp. 47, 50; and G. Strecker, *Das Judentum in den Pseudoklementinen*, 1958, p. 253. R. Johanan had extensive contact with these areas; see Kimelman, 'Third Century Tiberias', n. 197. One of these communities, Bos(t)ra in Auranitis, was not only a Jewish Christian centre in the third century (J. Dantelou, 'That the Scripture Might be Fulfilled, Christianity as a Jewish Sect', *The Crucible of Christianity* [ed. Toynebee], 1969, p. 281) but maintained contact with R. Johanan, his colleagues and students. Indeed, two of those, Resh Laqish and R. Abbahu, exercised rabbinic authority there (see *Sefer ha-Yishub* [ed. S. Klein], 1939, pp. 23f.). The Midrash even records a story about a convert to Judaism from there (Tanhuma Shoftim 10; see Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, pp. 144f. n. 25). Despite the distance from Bosra to Tiberias extensive contact could be maintained between the two by virtue of the Roman road which connected them (see M. Avi-Yonah, *The Holy Land: From the Persian to the Arab Conquest*, 1966, p. 187). Bosra was probably also the first stop after the desert for Babylonians coming to Palestine (pBer 3.1; 6a).

109. Baron, *Social and Religious History* II, p. 134, cf. *ibid.*, p. 380 n. 6, referring to Aptowitzer, 'Bemerkungen zur Liturgie und Geschichte der Liturgie', *MGWJ* 74, 1930, pp. 104-27, esp. 110-12.

110. The *Didache* 14 regards Sunday as a day of communion, confession, and reconciliation. Ignatius (*Magnesian* 9) emphasizes its joyful character which precluded any fasting. This emphasis on joy is also reflected in the *Epistle of Barnabas* 15.10. The last two sources were directed against Jewish Christians or Judaizing Christians; see Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, pp. 213-23.

111. In fact, according to R. L. Odom, the admonition of Tertullian (d. 220) 'that Sunday keepers should defer their business until the next

day is the first known instance of any suggestion or directive to make the common labor taboo on Sundays' (*Sabbath and Sunday in Early Christianity*, 1977, p. 299). Even the Sunday laws of Constantine in 321 did not create a Sabbath rest (ibid., p. 265). Indeed, as late as the Council of Laodicea (c. 360) abstinence from work on Sunday was only a recommendation (Canon 29); and according to Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday*, 'the complete application of the Sabbath commandment to a bodily rest to Sunday was not accomplished before the fifth and sixth centuries' (p. 310). Whatever be the case in the West, Saturday remained the Sabbath in the East for hundreds of years to come (see Odom, ibid., p. 250). Thus R. Johanan of third-century Palestine was unlikely to have conceived of Sunday as the Christian 'Sabbath'. This is all the more unlikely if the subject is Christians before 70, as already noticed by Yosef David Sinzheim, *Yad David*, 1799, p. 256a.

112. Similar logic lies behind the promotion of Saturday fasting by R. Johanan's younger contemporary, Bishop Victorinus (fl. 275-304). He contended that the sadness and hunger resulting from the fast would enable Christians to avoid 'appearing to observe the Sabbath with the Jews' (*De fabrica mundi*, CSEL 49.5; ANF VII, pp. 341f.). For a discussion of the text, see Odom, *Sabbath and Sunday*, p. 225 n. 7.

113. *NTApoc* I, p. 458. On the provenance of the document, see ibid., p. 442.

114. *Didascalia Apostolorum*, ET R. Hugh Connolly, Oxford 1929, p. 183. Pagination follows this edition.

115. See ibid., lxxxvii-xci; and A. F. J. Klijn, *The Acts of Thomas*, 1962, p. 221.

116. A. Marmorstein, 'Judaism and Christianity in the Middle of the Third Century', *HUCA* 10, 1935, pp. 223-63, esp. 231f.

117. G. Strecker, 'On the Problem of Jewish Christianity', pp. 254-7, 271.

118. H. J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judentums*, 1949, pp. 61f. Cf. A. F. J. Klijn, 'The Study of Jewish Christianity', *NTS* 20, 1973-74, pp. 419-31, esp. 430 n. 4.

119. *Die Syrische Didaskalia* (ed. J. Flemming), 1904, pp. 257-387, esp. 366 n. 1; G. Kretschmar, 'Origenes und die Araber', *ZTK* 50, 1953, pp. 260-4.

120. See n. 108 above.

121. *Constitutiones Apostolorum* 4.3.15 and 5.3.20. Sunday fasting is also evidenced by Bar Hebraeus, *Book of the Dove*, ET 1919, p. 28.

122. Victorinus (see n. 112) had a similar concern, *mutatis mutandi*.

123. See R. Murray, 'The Exhortation to Candidates for Ascetical Vows at Baptism in the Ancient Syriac Church', *NTS* 21, 1974-75: 'nazir' is a title of Christ in the Syriac *Acts of Judas Thomas* 48 . . . and *naziruta* remained a word for ascetical self-denial' (p. 63 n. 2).

124. See Schäfer, *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des rabbinischen Judentums*, pp. 48ff.; and Marmorstein, 'The Amidah'. It is possible that there was no fixed original formulation. In general, the benedictions of the 'amidah' had the subject matter fixed but not the formulation.

This situation would help explain why the Talmud thinks it credible that Samuel the Small could have forgotten the text even though he was the one who originally emended it (bBer 28b-29a).

125. See S. Lieberman, 'Tiqne Yerushalmi', *Tarbiz* 4, 1932, 6, p. 377; Epstein, *Mabo*, pp. 1076, 1080; and M. Lehman, 'Tyunim BeVav HaPerush (Explicativum)', *Sinai* 85, 1979, pp. 200-15.

126. *Tosefta ki-Fshutah* III, p. 206 n. 16: גליותים וספר גליותים means גליותים של ספרים (my emphasis).

11 Ruler of this World:

Attitudes about Mediator Figures and the Importance of Sociology for Self-Definition

1. It would go too far afield now to summarize the many relationships which scholars have posited between Judaism, Christianity and Gnosticism. Perhaps since Gnosticism was first described by church Fathers, Christian scholars have been the most interested in the problem. Although there is agreement among them in correlating Christianity with Gnosticism, there is hardly any agreement on a theory which would explain that correlation. Particularly thorny has been the problem of whether Gnosticism or Christianity is the chronological predecessor. Did Christianity grow out of a gnostic environment or did Gnosticism grow out of a Christian one? The early church Fathers saw Gnosticism as a Christian heresy, and they first reported the term 'gnostic' as a description of it. But from Graetz's time forward it became clear that the question of priority could not be addressed without careful study of Jewish texts. See A. F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism*, 1977, pp. 1-30 and esp. pp. 14-18. Also see Carsten Colpe, *Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, 1961; W. Meeks, *The Prophet-King*, 1967, pp. 6-17; E. Yamauchi, *Pre-Christian Gnosticism*, 1973, pp. 13-28; L. Ginzberg, *Die Haggada bei den Kirchenvätern*, 1899; I. Heinemann, *Darkhe ha-Agadah, Jerusalem* 1954; S. Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine*, 1965, and *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine*, 1962; E. E. Urbach, *The Sages, ET 1975*, and 'Teshubot Anshe Ninevah ve-Havikuah ha-Yehudi-Notsri', *Tarbiz* 20, 1950, pp. 118-22.

2. For a summary of research on the gnostic problem, see R. Haardt, 'Zur Methodologie der Gnosisforschung', *Gnosis und Neues Testament* (ed. Troeger), 1973, pp. 77-88.

3. See E. M. Mendelson, 'Some Notes on a Sociological Approach to Gnosticism', *Le origini dello gnosticismo*, 1967, pp. 668-76; Hans Kippenberg, 'Versuch einer soziologischen Verortung des antiken Gnostizismus', *Numen* 17, 1950; Kurt Rudolph, 'Das Problem einer Soziologie und sozialen Verortung der Gnosis', *Kairos* 19, 1977, pp. 35-54; Petr Pokorný, 'Der soziale Hintergrund der Gnosis', *Gnosis und Neues Testament* (ed. Troeger), 1973, pp. 77-88; Peter Munz, 'The Problem of "Die soziologische Verortung des antiken Gnostizismus"', *Numen* 19,