Annotated bibliography on the Birkat haMinim (Blessing on heretics): First part A - J

Self-Definition and Separation of Judaism and Christianity

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Introduction

"The Eighteen Benedictions

Prayers were not written down during Talmudic times, apart from a few excerpts and short prayers from well after 70 CE. It was traditionally assumed that there was some kind of taboo or proscription preventing this, but the discovery of written prayers at Qumran shows that this was not true, at least for some Jews. Probably the feeling that prayers should not be fixed (see 4.4 above), or perhaps that prayers should be learned from your own teacher (cf. Lk. 11.1), made people reluctant to commit them to writing.

Various prayers can be argued to originate before 70 CE,(56) but we do not have the words of any in rabbinic literature, except perhaps the prayer of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement (m.Yom.3.8; 4.2; 6.2). However, it may be possible that a surviving version of the Eighteen can be dated back to Temple times. The Cairo Genizah, which preserves documents from as early as the ninth century, contains one fragment of the Eighteen which has extremely early features, and it is possible that it preserves some wording from before 70 CE.

The modern Jewish prayer books have developed mainly from the Babylonian traditions with some elements from the Palestinian traditions. The Sephadic rite (which is used by Jews from Spain and Portugal) is the closest to the Babylonian rite as described by Amram Gaon,(57) and the Ashkenazi rite (used in Germanic- and English-speaking countries) and old French rite (now disused) are slight developments of this. The Roman rite from Italy and Romanian rite from the Balkans are related to the Palestinian tradition as preserved best in the Genizah texts Although these prayer books undoubtedly contain early material, only minor elements can be dated before 70 CE."

(56) Heinemann listed these, with extensive reasons, in Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1977), pp. 124-55.

(57) The earliest prayer book which we have is that of Amram Gaon from the mid tenth century, though different MSS have much variation, and it is often difficult to know what is the earliest reading. The three most important MSS with their translations are found in David Hedegard's *Seder R. Amram Gaon* (Lund: Lindstedts Universitets-Bokhandel, 1951).

David Instone-Brewer, *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament: Volume 1: Prayer and Agriculture*, pp. 95-96.

"The Eighteen Benedictions in the Palestinian (Genizah) version

A genizah is a repository of documents which are no longer needed, but which cannot be thrown away because they contain the name of God. Normally such repositories are emptied periodically,

and the contents are buried, often in the context (61) a burial service. The Genizah of the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo was larger than most, and documents accumulated for several hundred years until Solomon Schechter gained permission to take documents away for study.

This collection, most of which is in Cambridge University Library, consisted of about 210,000 documents dating back to the tenth century.(62) Schechter soon discovered some texts which looked very similar to the modern prayer of the Amidah (the Eighteen Benedictions) but with very significant differences. It is now generally agreed that Genizah texts represent Palestinian prayer traditions, which were also followed in Egypt.

One text which Schechter published had extremely early features.(63) It is the most well known of the Genizah fragments of the Eighteen, and is generally known as the Genizah version of the Eighteen, though actually there are many other Genizah fragments which do not preserve these early features. It was translated by Heinemann," but the English version accidentally omitted two very important lines about the Temple at Jerusalem, and so although it was generally acknowledged as old, the pre-70 date of this text was overlooked. In the following, words in bold are those which are shared with the Babylonian version, as represented by Amram, and reconstructed from various sources by Finkelstein." Benedictions are numbered slightly differently in the Babylonian (B) and Palestinian (P) versions."

(61) For the background and introduction to these texts see Stefan C. Reif, *A Jewish Archive from Old Cairo: A History of the Cambridge University's Genizah Collection* (Richmond: Curzon, 2000).

(62) T-S K27.33b in Cambridge University Library published in "Geniza Specimens," *Jewish Quarterly Review* OS 10 (1898): 654-59.

(63) Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1977), pp. 26-27.

David Instone-Brewer, *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament: Volume 1: Prayer and Agriculture*, p. 97.

Versions of the Twelfth Benediction

Palestinian version (Genizah)

For the apostates let there be no hope,
and may the kingdom of the arrogant
be quickly uprooted in our days;
and may nazarim
and minim instantly perish;
may they be blotted
from the book of the living,
and not be written with the righteous.
Blessed are you Lord,
humbler of the arrogant.

Babylonian version (Amram)

For the apostates let there be no hope,
and may minim instantly perish and all
the enemies of your people be cut off
and may the kingdom of the arrogant
be quickly uprooted
and crushed and humbled
in our days.
Blessed are you Lord,
breaker of enemies
and humbler of the arrogant.

David Instone-Brewer, *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament: Volume 1: Prayer and Agriculture*, p. 104.

Bibliography of the studies in English

1. Allison, Dale. 2011. "Blessing God and Cursing People: James 3:9-10." *Journal of Biblical Literature* no. 130:397–405.
"The *Birkat ha-minim*, the twelfth blessing in the *Shemoneh Esreh* or Eighteen Benedictions, has played an important role in some reconstructions of early Christian history.(1) In 1964, for example, W D. Davies urged that, sometime around 85 c.e, the twelfth benediction was reformulated so as to include a curse against Christians: "Let the *notserim* and *minim* perish in a moment." Davies thought this circumstance relevant for understanding the Gospel of Matthew, and especially the Sermon on the Mount, which he interpreted in the light of a growing hostility between the synagogue and followers of Jesus.(2)" (p. 397)
(...)
"Regardless of who was the first to read Jas [James] 3:9-10 in the light of the *Birkat haminim*, what counts is that more than one exegete has discerned in the passage a reference to the cursing of Christians in a synagogue. Given this, a question arises: What would have occurred to late first- or early second-century Jews or Jewish Christians when they listened to Jas 3:8-10, if they otherwise knew of the *Birkat haminim* and how it was being used against followers of Jesus? "No human is able to subdue the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly venom. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings made in the likeness of God. From one and the same mouth come forth blessings and curses. This need not be, my brothers: I submit that thought of the Birkat ha-minim would have been very near to hand." (p. 405)
(1) For an overview of how NT scholars have read the *Birkat ha-minim* into the NT, see S. J. Joubert, "A Bone of Contention in Recent Scholarship: The 'Birkat Ha-Minim' and the Separation of Church and Synagogue in the First Century AD;' *Neot* [*Neotestamentica*] 27 (1993): 351-63. The so-called Palestinian version reads as follows: "For the apostates let there be no hope, and uproot the kingdom of arrogance, speedily and in our days. May the Nazarenes and the sectarians perish as in a moment. Let them be blotted out of the book of life, and not be written together with the righteous. You are praised, O Lord, who subdues the arrogant:' The many textual variants of these words and their relationship to the so-called Babylonian recension of the Amidah are complex issues beyond the scope of this essay.
(2) Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 256-315.(...)

2. Ashton, John. 2007. "Second Thoughts on the Fourth Gospel." In *What We Have Heard from the Beginning: The Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*, edited by Tatcher, Tom, 1–18. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press.
"The Birkat-Haminim
In 1979, J. Louis Martyn published a revised edition of his classic *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (1968). The revision includes a long note (1979b, 54 n. 69) defending his views on the euphemistically titled *Birkat-Haminim*, a "Benediction of the Heretics" (generally thought to have been introduced into the synagogue liturgy in the late–first century C.E. and regarded by Martyn as the key to the Fourth Gospel's allusions to excommunication), against certain objections raised privately by Wayne Meeks and in the published writings of other scholars. Martyn admits "that we are dealing with questions which can be resolved only with some degree of probability," but repeats his personal opinion that the *Birkat–Haminim* "was issued under Gamaliel II and that it is in some way reflected in John 9:22, etc." In another note (1979b, 56 n. 75), Martyn argues against Morton Smith that the Eighteenth Blessing was probably introduced toward the beginning of the period during which Gamaliel II controlled the Jamnian Synod (80–115 C.E.), not toward the end, as Smith proposed. An earlier date would make a connection with the excommunication referred to in John 9:22 more likely. Most of the very considerable scholarly work on this question that has appeared since 1979 is very critical of Martyn's position." (pp. 15-16)
(...)
"John's Gospel gives us one, surely biased, version of the break between the two groups. The version of "the Jews" would have been very different and may well have said nothing about excommunication. Pieter van der Horst makes the point that "the door [of the synagogue] always remained open [to Christians] even in Jerome's time" (1993–1994, 368). In the case of the Gospel of John, however, we are dealing with a local dispute that had issued in an all–too–real and probably rather messy divorce: the Jesus group had broken away from the synagogue and would never return. In putting so much stress on the relationship between the *Birkat–Haminim* and the expulsion of the Jesus group from the synagogue to which texts such as John 9:22 allude, Martyn lays himself open to the complete rejection of his theory by, among others, Boyarin. This is unfortunate, because, as I observed fifteen years ago, Martyn's reading of John 9 is not built upon his interpretation of the Eighteen Benedictions—"at most it is buttressed by it" (Ashton 1991, 108 n. 102). Quite apart from the support Martyn finds for his theory in rabbinical sources, the evidence of the Fourth Gospel itself, read, as it surely must be, in relation not to the time of Jesus but to that of the Jesus group within the synagogue, points to a decisive break between "the Jews" and those among them who professed belief in Jesus. This evidence alone is sufficient to justify research into the history of this group." (p. 17)
References
Ashton, John, 1991. *Understanding the Fourth Gospel*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Martyn, J. Louis. 1968. *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel.* 1st ed. New York: Harper & Row.
———. 1979b. *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*. 2nd ed. Nashville: Abingdon.
van der Horst, Pieter W. 1993–1994. "The Birkat ha–minim in Recent Research." *Expository Times* 105:363–68.

3. Bernier, Jonathan. 2013. *Aposynagōgos and the Historical Jesus in John: Rethinking the Historicity of the Johannine Expulsion Passages*. Leiden: Brill.
Summary: "In '*Aposynagōgos and the Historical Jesus in John*', Jonathan Bernier utilizes the critical-realist hermeneutics developed by Bernard Lonergan and Ben F. Meyer to survey historical data relevant to the Johannine expulsion passages (John 9:22, 12:42, 16:2). He evaluates the major two contemporary interpretative traditions regarding these passages, namely that they describe not events of Jesus'

lifetime but rather the implementation of the *Birkat ha-Minim* in the first first-century, or that they describe not historical events at all but serve only to construct Johannine identity. Against both traditions Bernier argues that these passages plausibly describe events that could have happened during Jesus' lifetime."
"Cumulatively, the present study aims to demonstrate that, contra Martyn,(91) the *aposynagōgos* passages describe events that historically are at least plausible if not probable. Further, it aims to demonstrate that, in dispensing with the two-level reading strategy, one does not thereby dispense with historical questions about the Johannine *Sitz im Leben*. It will be argued that early Christ-believing communities did indeed have a collective interest in their communal history. Yet, they understood that history to have begun with Jesus. Early Christ-believing communities understood themselves as standing in some sort of continuity with the history of Israel, as this was remembered in the Jewish scriptures, yet also understood that their own chapter in this history began with Jesus, whose life, death, and after-death, had inalterably renovated the cosmos. Necessarily, the acts of remembering and telling that collective history were social acts, certain products of which—notably but not exclusively the canonical gospels—remain available for the historian to consult.
Each of chapters Two through Five will consider an issue of relevance to the interpretation of the *aposynagōgos* passages, respectively synagogue studies, Christology, empire criticism and memory. Chapters Two through Four will employ primarily oblique patterns of inference, with the aim of demonstrating that what the a*posynagōgos* passages report is plausible.
Employing the direct pattern of inference, Chapter Five will aim to convert the plausibility inferred in the previous chapters into probability. Finally, Chapter Six will summarize the study." (pp. 25-26)
(91) Cf. J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, (3rd ed.; Louisville, Ky: Westminster John Knox, 2003)., 46–66.

4. ———. 2017. "Jesus, Ἀποσυνάγωγος, and Modes of Religiosity." In *John and Judaism: A Contested Relationship in Context*, edited by Culpepper, R. Alan and Anderson, Paul N., 127–133. Atlanta: SBL Press.
"This paper, which summarizes the argument put forth in Jonathan Bernier (2013), will consider the implications for our understanding of one particular set of texts, namely, the Johannine ἀποσυνάγωγος [expelled, or excluded from the synagogue] passages (John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2), designated as such because of their unique use of this somewhat enigmatic Greek term. My work has sought to demonstrate that, given the current knowledge of the contemporary state of synagogue studies, these passages should be understood to suppose institutional realities that were altogether plausible in the pre-70 period." (p. 127)
"We then might conclude the following. (1) The *Birkat Haminim* is of very questionable relevance to the study of the ἀποσυνάγωγος passages. (2) There is nothing in our evidence that would preclude the possibility that the ἀποσυνάγωγος passages describe institutional realities circa 30 CE in the land. (3) Such realities were more likely informal than formal and are also attested in Luke-Acts. (4) These realities make sociological sense. (5) There is nothing in our evidence that would preclude the possibility that Jesus and his followers were subjected to such institutional realities, both during and in the period immediately following his life. The cases for relating the ἀποσυνάγωγος passages to the *Birkat Haminim* or treating them as little more than fiction begin to look quite weak compared to the case for relating them to events of Jesus's life and the lives of his followers." (p. 133)
References
Bernier, Jonathan. 2013. *Aposynagōgos and the Historical Jesus in John: Rethinking the Historicity of the Johannine Expulsion Passages*. BibInt 122. Leiden: Brill.

5. Binyamin, Ben-Zion. 1987. ""Birkat ha-minim" and the Ein Gedi inscription." *Immanuel; a Journal of Religious Thought and Research in Israel* no. 21:68–79.

6. Boyarin, Daniel. 2006. "Anecdotal Evidence: The Yavneh Conundrum, *Birkat Hamminim*, and the Problem of Talmudic Historiography." In *The Mishnah in Contemporary Perspective. Volume Two*, edited by Avery-Peck, Alan J. and Neusner, Jacob, 1–35. Leiden: Brill.
"There is every reason to doubt that the so-called curse of the heretics as formulated under Gamaliel II at Yavneh or that it existed at all before the end of the second century. The only source we have for this "Yavnean" institution is a Babylonian talmudic story from the fourth or fifth century of Rabban Gamaliel's asking Samuel the Small to formulate such a blessing, the latter forgetting it a year later and meditating for two or three hours in order to remember it (*B. Ber*. 28b–29a). This hardly constitutes reliable evidence, or indeed evidence at all. The aroma of legend hovers over this entire account. In the Palestinian Talmud *Berakhot* 4:3, 8a, apologetic reasons for retroactively ascribing this "blessing" to Yavneh are indicated explicitly." (p. 28, two notes omitted)
(...)
"Once the evidence of and for a so-called curse 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.(80) I am not claiming to know that there was no such thing, but instead suggesting 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.(81)." (p. 31)
(80) See also Martin Goodman, *State and Society in Roman Galilee, A.D. 132–212* (Totowa, 1983), p. 86, implying as well such a denial.
(81) Reuven Kimelman, "Birkat Ha-Minim," has suggested that the assumption that the so-called curse of the minim denotes automatically Christians "is behind the often repeated assertion that about the year 100 the breach between Judaism and Christianity became irreparable."
References
Kimelman, Reuven, "Birkat Ha-Minim and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity," in Sanders, E. P., A. I. Baumgarten, and Alan Mendelson, eds., *Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period* (Philadelphia, 1981), vol. 2, pp. 226–244; 391–403.

7. ———. 2012. "Once Again *Birkat Hamminim* Revisited." In *La croisée des chemins revisitée : Quand l'"Eglise" et la "Synagogue" se sont-elles distinguées ?*, edited by Mimouni, Simon Claude and Pouderon, Bernard, 91–105. Paris: Cerf.
Abstract: "One of the most fraught of scholarly debates in the discussion about « parting of the ways » has to do with the question of a *birkat hamminim*, an alleged early curse of Christians in Palestinian synagogues. According to those who maintain the antiquity of this curse, already in the last third of the first century Christians were clearly defined over-against Jews and were cursed as such in the « ancient synagogue ». In the last three decades, the evidence for such an early curse has been seriously questioned by various scholars, notably Reuven Kimelman in what has become a classic paper. Recently Joel Marcus has made a valiant effort to revive J. Louis Martyn's brilliant hypothesis of the so-called « curse of the heretics » as the background for the talk in the Fourth Gospel of being *aposynagogos* in support of a much earlier break between the nascent Christian movement and other Jews than is now advanced in several quarters, including this one. In this article, I hope to show that there is, indeed, almost no evidence for such a curse before the third century."
References
R, Kimelman, *Birkat Ha-Minim* and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity (1981).
J. L. Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel. Third Edition* (2003).
J. Marcus, *Birkat Ha-Minim* Revisited (2009).

8. Broadhead, Edwin K. 2010. *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus: Redrawing the Religious Map of Antiquity*. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Chapter 13: Rabbinic Evidence for Jewish Christianity, § 3. The *Birkhat ha-minim*, pp. 290-296.
"Despite the work of Horbury and others, it is not clear that an early, standardized form of the 12t h Benediction was used in a consistent manner against all Christians. A curse against Jewish Christians is more likely, but consistent use of a standard curse is difficult to demonstrate.(36)
How are these various treatments of the *birkhat ha-minim* to be evaluated?
Seen from a larger perspective, the debate of the last twenty years centers on the question of a schism between Jews and Christians and is carried on in the context of post-Holocaust scholarship. Often overlooked in the intensity of this conversation is the range of nuances involved in identity formation and transformation.
For the years after the fall of the Temple (70 ce) and the consequent dispersion, it is difficult to define what it means to be a Jew or to be a Christian, and later clarity should not be read back onto this formative period. This era of transition was marked not only by the movement of individuals between groups, but also by the relocation and reformulation of every type of Judaism.
Both the definition of *minim* and the framing of the *birkhat ha-minim* belong to this formative period. At its base, the term *minim* is used by some Jews to describe other Jews thought to hold inappropriate practices and ideas. A false picture can be obtained by an uncritical scan of the rabbinical corpus, where the use of the term varies by time and place. At the stages of the formation and first recension of rabbinic materials in Palestine, *minim* likely refers to other Jews. The list of suspects is rather short: Sadducees, Jews who collaborate with Rome, Jews who adapt Hellenistic culture, Jews drawn to gnosticism, Jews who resist rabbinic authority. (...)
A few rabbinic passages appear to refer directly or implicitly to Jesus himself. While there is little reflection of the historical profile of Jesus in these passages, their intent is clear: to portray Jesus as an apostate Jew. This characterization applies as well to the followers of Jesus.
In the Babylonian recension and in its later developments, the term *minim* and the *birkhat ha-minim* are expanded to a wider field of view and a different focal point. Eventually Gentile Christians and other non-Jewish opponents were, in some instances, included in the curse. This later form of the *birkhat ha-minim* may be one of the factors that fires the patristic rhetoric against all Judaism." (pp. 295-296)
(36) See the analysis by Steven Katz, "The Rabbinic Response to Christianity," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Volume Four: *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period,* ed. Steven Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 259-98, but especially pp. 280-94.(...)

9. Büchler, Adolph. 1956. "The Minim of Sepphoris and Tiberias in the Second and Third Centuries." In *Studies in Jewish History*, 245–274. London: Oxford University Press.
"If we review the passages which we have dealt with as referring to the Minim, we find that the Minim in Tiberias and Sepphoris in the second and third centuries represented Judaism as having been rejected by God, inculcated a plurality of Gods which they proved from the Bible, described God as indifferent to repentance, and denied the resurrection. In none of these passages can a Jewish Christian be understood under the name Min, in none of them is there to be found a clear reference to Christianity or a hint of Jesus. In most cases the persons concerned are Bible-reading heathen who oppose Judaism and its basic doctrines, antinomian Gnostics or, in a few cases, heathen Christians who agree with them. In none of the remarks quoted can a Jewish Gnostic be clearly discerned. Most of the parallels to the explanations and assertions of the Minim are provided by the heathen Christian Justin Martyr, who borrowed much from the spokesmen of the Logos doctrine and used it for the exposition and systematization of Christianity. Some parallels are provided by Simon Magus in his search for a plurality of Gods in the Bible." (pp. 271-272, a note omitted)

10. Carroll, Kenneth L. 1957–58. "The Fourth Gospel and the Exclusion of Christians from the Synagogues." *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* no. 40:19–32.
"In three places the Gospel of John speaks of Christians being excluded from the synagogues by the Jews. The word used, in each of these occasions, is ἀποσυνάγωγος which means " excluded from the sacred assemblies of the Israelites ; excommunicated ". This word, often translated as " put out of the synagogue ", occurs only three times in the New Testament, with all three appearances being in the Fourth Gospel." (p. 19)
(...)
"It is interesting that nowhere in the synoptic gospels is there found reference to such action on the part of the Jews. Why is it that John alone reports this development when the three earlier gospels apparently know nothing of it ? The answer to this question can be found in the late date at which the Fourth Gospel was produced and in the fact that the author, whoever he may have been, was a gentile. John, the latest of the gospels to appear, was written at the beginning of the second century. It was not until the last quarter of the first century that official Judaism really recognized the danger from Christianity. Then the Jewish leaders apparently felt the greatest challenge was from the Minim,(1) or Jewish Christians the enemy within their midst.
And so the bitterest assault upon these Jewish Christians took place from the turn of the first century to the middle of the second century." (p. 20)
(1) R. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London, 1903), pp. 380-81. Harris Hirschberg, "Once Again The Minim", *The Journal of Biblical Literature*, Ixvii (1948), 305 ff., holds that the term *Minim* denotes adherents of Pauline Christianity. This writer, after much study, concludes that the term *Minim* is used in the Mishnah and Talmud to identify Jewish Christians.

11. Cirafesi, Wally. 2023. "Rethinking John and “the Synagogue” in Light of Expulsion from Public Assemblies in Antiquity." *Journal of Biblical Literature* no. 142:677–697.
Abstract: "Since the immensely influential work of J. Louis Martyn, many Johannine scholars have interpreted John’s ἀποσυνάγωγος passages (9:22, 12:42, 16:2) as reflective of the gospel’s outsider position in relation to Jewishness. In Martyn’s model, as well as in the model of his contemporary Raymond E. Brown, “the synagogue” functioned as synecdoche for “Judaism,” leading both scholars to the conclusion that John’s ἀποσυνάγωγος passages reflected the experience of a late first-century community that was on its way out of the “household of Judaism.” In this article, I draw upon recent advances in scholarship on ancient synagogues to problematize the equation of “the synagogue” with “Judaism” in toto, still a very prominent analytical framework in Johannine studies today. I then argue that John’s expulsion passages are helpfully illuminated when the sociohistorical context of the events described in the text itself are viewed from the broader perspective of expulsions from public assemblies in Jewish and Greco-Roman antiquity. From this angle, John’s story of ἀποσυνάγωγος can be read as an account of the contentious politics of popular assemblies, in which there were winners and losers in the competition over political influence, rather than as part of a compositional strategy of disaffiliation from Jews and Judaism *tout court*."
References
J. Louis Martyn’s *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel,* 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003; original, 1968).

12. Cohen, Shaye J. D. 2013. "In Between: Jewish-Christians and the Curse of the Heretics." In *Partings: How Judaism and Christianity Became Two*, edited by Shanks, Hershel, 207–236. Washington, DC: Biblical Archaeology Society.
A shortened and revised version in the Chapter 8, *Ways That Parted: Jews, Christians, Jewish Christians (ca. 100–150)* of S. J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah. Third Edition*, Louisville: John Knxox Westminster Press 2014, pp. 231-254.

"The Mishnah knows the category *min/minim/minut* but not the B*irkat ha-Minim*, which is first attested in the Tosefta. The social consequences of being labeled a *min* are never spelled out, just as the social consequences of the recitation of the *Birkat ha-Minim* are never spelled out. The category *minim* certainly can include, and in two Tosefta passages does include, Jewish-Christians, but the category is broader than just Jewish-Christians. Many modern scholars have argued that the institution of the *Birkat ha-Minim* played an important role in the parting of the ways between (rabbinic) Jews and (Jewish) Christians, but in recent years the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction and now there is an equally vociferous chorus on the other side, arguing that the *Birkat ha-Minim* had little or nothing to do with the emergence of two communities, one Jewish and the other Christian. In this chapter I have argued in favor of the latter view.
The Christian evidence and the rabbinic are disconnected. Christian texts (like Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*) emphasize that Christianity is right and that Judaism is wrong, because Christians, not Jews, properly understand the Hebrew scriptures. There certainly is a parting of the ways here, at least in the reality as constructed by these texts. In contrast, rabbinic texts completely ignore gentile Christians, basically ignore Christian truth claims, and provide limited evidence for meaningful contact between sages and Jewish-Christians. Here the parting of the ways is expressed through avoidance and neglect. But it is a parting just the same." (pp. 235-336)

13. Dacy, Marianne. 2005. "The twelfth benediction ("Birkhat ha-Minim")." *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* no. 19:53–62.

14. de Boer, Martinus C. 2020. "Expulsion from the Synagogue: J. L. Martyn's *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* Revisited." *New Testament Studies* no. 66:367–391.
Abstract: "In *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, Martyn argued that John 9.22 concerns the formal expulsion from the synagogue of Jews who were confessing Jesus as the Messiah of Jewish expectation. Johannine scholars following Martyn have often claimed that a 'high' Christology must have provided the catalyst for this trauma, not the 'low' Christology posited by Martyn. For Martyn, however, a 'high' Christology was a subsequent development, leading to a second trauma, that of execution for blasphemously claiming that Jesus was somehow equal to God. Accepting Martyn's argument on 9.22 with respect to this issue, and leaving aside the debate about the relevance of the *Birkat ha-Minim*, this article seeks to determine why local synagogue authorities, evidently represented in John's narrative by the Pharisees, would have found the acceptance of Jesus as Messiah so offensive that they formulated a decree to expel fellow Jews espousing this new messianic faith. Analysis of John 5, 7 and 9 demonstrates that the Pharisees in the Johannine setting found this confession offensive because they regarded the behaviour of Johannine disciples on the Sabbath as thoroughly inconsistent with their own understanding of the Sabbath commandment and as significantly hindering their desire to play an authoritative role in determining what counted as acceptable behaviour on the Sabbath and what did not. In short, the specific catalyst for expelling Jews confessing Jesus as Messiah from the synagogue was their Sabbath observance, which the Pharisees in the Johannine setting came to regard as an unacceptable deviation from their own developing views on the matter in the period after 70 ce."

15. Doole, J. Andrew. 2021. "To Be 'An Out-of-the-Synagoguer'." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* no. 43:389–410.
Abstract: "Since J. Louis Martyn proposed that John reflected a two-level drama, there has been much criticism of his (anachronistic?) use of the Birkat Ha-Minim to explain the expulsion of Christians from the synagogue. Adele Reinhartz maintains that this is really a case of anti-synagogue propaganda on the part of the evangelist. Yet, in all the exegetical discussion, one aspect which is rarely examined is the nominal form of ἀποσυνάγωγος (Jn 9.22; 12.42; 16.2a), a strange term which Bible translations have to turn into a verb.

This label appears to come from a Greek-speaking Jewish milieu, and its negativity is re-appropriated by the author of this Christian text. Social identity research provides an insight into how a positive approach to stigmatizing labels can allow a community to thrive. This can be applied to ἀποσυνάγωγος in John, an insult which actually demonstrates the validity of one's faith and identity. It is good to be a reject."

References

Martyn, J. Louis 1968. *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Harper & Row).

16. Ehrlich, Uri. 2007. "Birkat ha-Minim (Heb. בִּרְכַּת הַמִּינִים , "benediction concerning heretics")." In *Encyclopaedia Judaica: Second Edition. Volume 3: Ba-Blo* edited by Skolnik, Fred, 711–712. Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale.

"BIRKAT HA.MINIM (Heb. בִּרְכַּת הַמִּינִים , "benediction concerning heretics"), the twelfth benediction of the week-day Amidah (the *Shmoneh Esreh* prayer). The benediction belongs to the latter part of the Amidah petitions, which beseech the redemption of the people of Israel. Worded more like an imprecation (see Tanḥuma [Buber ed.], Vayikra 3), [*] in its invocation of divine wrath against internal enemies to Jewish integrity and against external enemies of the Jewish people, it differs from the other petitions.

Birkat ha-Minim is also distinguished from the other Amidah benedictions by the fact that it was appended after the formulation and fixing of the Amidah text." (p. 711)

(...)

"Its exceptional importance in Christian-Jewish relations from the first century C.E. to the present has focused intense scholarly attention on this benediction. The relatively crystallized wording of the benediction in the extant early *siddurim* (ninth to twelfth centuries) makes it likely that the text preserved there closely resembles its original formulation.

We find the following wording in a Palestinian siddur from the Cairo Genizah:

For the apostates let there be no hope. And let the arrogant government be speedily uprooted in our days. Let the noẓerim and the minim be destroyed in a moment. And let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the arrogant" ([Salomon] Schechter).

(...)

"The language of the benediction clearly demonstrates that it was directed, not at non-Jews in general, but rather specifically aimed against external persecutors of the Jews and against Jewish separatists who posed a danger to Judaism's internal cohesion. Nonetheless, as early as the first centuries C.E. we find church fathers voicing the claim that the Jews curse the Christians in their prayers. Such contentions, alongside censorship of *siddurim [**],* wrought significant changes in the wording of the benediction during the Middle Ages.

Also contributing to this modificatory process were shifts in the social environment of the Jews and in their worldview.

Without exception, the word *noẓerim* was expunged from all Jewish prayer rites, and in many, substitutions were made for *minim* (heretics) and *meshummadim* (apostates), as in the accepted opening in the Ashkenazi rite: "may the slanderers (*malshinim*) have no hope." Some Reform prayer books omit this benediction entirely." (p. 712)

[*] *Midrash Tanḥuma*, Wilna, 1885, edited by Solomon Buber,

[**] Siddur (plural *siddurim*] is a Jewish prayer booòk.

17. Ehrlich, Uri, and Langer, Ruth. 2005. "The Earliest Texts of the *Birkat Haminim*." *Hebrew Union College Annual* no. 76:63–112.

Abstract: "The *birkat haminim* petitions God to doom groups of people deemed harmful to the Jewish community, both Jews and gentiles. The blessing's text consequently was often adapted to reflect new realities. Throughout its history, it has attracted attention from those, especially Christians, concerned about Jewish

attitudes to them. This concern led to extensive censorship of the text. However, modern scholars pondering the early history of the blessing had only limited evidence for its actual formulations. This article presents a panoramic study of the text of the *birkat haminim* from the earliest preserved manuscripts (from the Cairo geniza) until official Catholic censorship began in the sixteenth century. The six centuries plus of texts presented here allows us to document the medieval development of the blessing. Across the regional variants, we find an extremely stable structure together with significant openness to addition, deletion, or rearrangement of the parts. This data and its analysis provide a firm basis for understanding the prayers subsequent developments and a firmer basis than previously available for reconstructing its earlier history. This evidence will serve, we hope, as a resource for scholarly discussion about the place of the *birkat haminim* in the complex array of relationships between Jews and gentiles."

18. Flusser, David. 1988. "The Jewish Christian Schism (Part II)." In *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 635–644.
"In discussing Jewish opposition to Christianity during the first century of its existence, we ought to mention one of the eighteen benedictions of the Shemonah Esrey, namely, the benediction against heretics (*Birkath ha-Minim*), The Church Fathers, beginning with Justin Martyr, asserted that the Jews curse the Christians in their synagogues, but the common opinion that *Birkath ha-Minim* was added after the Destruction of the Temple and directed against Christians is incorrect. The original benediction was evidently the second in a series of three sections which were inserted in the *Shemonah Esrev* in the later Maccabean period: the first of the three was probably a malediction of the Sadducees, and the third, which is still in use invoked blessing upon the "Pharisaic" community: upon the righteous, the pious (*Hassidim*), the elders of the people and the scribes.(29) The second of these three is known as *Birkath ha-Minim*, the benediction against the heretics. If the Essenes were once seen as dissenters, then the three sections correspond to the three Jewish sects mentioned by Josephus: the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Pharisees. It is essential to realize that Christians are explicitly mentioned in only two texts of *Birkath ha-Minim*, which were found in the Cairo Genizah and are remnants of the old Palestinian rite. These two texts speak about "the Christians (*nozrim*, i.e., Nazoraeans) and the heretics (*minim*)" Thus, it is evident that the term for "Christians" was added to an older text, which spoke only about heretics. This was probably done in order to stress that the term "heretics" (*minim*) refers mainly to Christians. This addition was made before the year 400, as both Jerome and Epiphanius expressly state that the Jews curse "the Nazoraeans" in their synagogues. When Justin earlier asserts that the Jews curse those who believe in Christ, this may also mean that both the Jews and the Christians in his days understood *Birkath ha-Minim* as being directed against the Christians, even if the word itself did not then appear in the benediction: in the second century Christians were the strongest and most numerous group among those considered as heretics by the Synagogue." (pp. 636-637, two notes omitted)
(29) So according to the normal text. In all extant texts of the benediction, the proselytes are also mentioned, but those who, following the option in Tosefta Berakhoth 3:25, once said a special benediction for the proselytes, did not automatically include the proselytes in the benediction for the elders.

19. ———. 2007. "4QMMT and the Benediction Against the Minim." In *Judaism of the Second Temple Period: Vol. 1: Qumran and Apocalypticism*, 70–118. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans.
Translated from Hebrew by Azzan Yadin.
"Conclusion.
We have traveled a long way in trying to arrive at the origins of *Birkat haMinim*. Along the way, we have had to employ various hypotheses, but these have worked to our advantage, as we have managed to uncover certain aspects of the religious sensibility of the Second Temple period, and to clarify a number of heretofore obscure issues regarding the history of the Amidah. The primary kernel of *Birkat*

ha-Minim lies in the notion that while the God of Israel is a forgiving god, He will not absolve those who speak against Him or His glory - neither in this world nor in the next. Despite the long and winding road traversed by this idea - from its original kernel to the final form of *Birkat ha-Minim* - the core notion that sinners who scorn God's glory "have no hope" remains constant. This same notion finds expression in the very end of chapter three of Seder 'Olam: " [T] hose who separate themselves from the path of the community, for example the *minim*, the informers, the hypocrites and the heretics . . . will be locked in hell and they will be judged in it for all eternity, forevermore . . . . On account of what? That they lifted their hands against the *zevul*.[*]" Incidentally, other than the 'hypocrites: the other three types of sinner are cited in *Birkat ha-Minim*." (p. 115)
(...)
"The final twist in the development of *Birkat ha-Minim* occurred after the destruction of the Second Temple. The historical evidence indicates that during the second temple the Jewish congregations came to understand *Birkat ha-Minim* as aimed against the Christians. Ultimately, at some point no later than the fourth century, the word 'Christians' was incorporated into the text of the benediction - though this occurred only in the Palestinian liturgy.
I have presented an exhaustive and extensive survey, but it could not be otherwise given the subject at hand. It was necessary to trace the development of a single Jewish benediction over the course of many generations of growth and development in Jewish religious thought - undoubtedly one of the most important religious worldviews. Ancient Jewish thought was by no means impoverished or simplistic, rather sophisticated and sensitive. (142) The history of *Birkat ha-Minim* is but one of many examples of the intellectual richness of Jewish religious thought of the time." (pp. 116-117)
[*] In the Talmud (*Chagigah* 12b), *Zevul* is the name of the fourth or sixth of the seven Heavens.
(142) See J. H. Charlesworth, "Jesus Research: A Paradigm Shift for New Testament Scholars:' *Australian Biblical Review* 38 (1990), 26.

20. Grossberg, David M. 2017. *Heresy and the Formation of the Rabbinic Community*. Tübingen: Moh Siebeck.
Chapter 2: Varieties of Minim in the Second Temple and Rabbinic Period. II. Minim as Insiders in the Late Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Periods 57-72; Chapter 3: Co-opting the Sinners of Israel. The Sinners of Israel and the Sinners of the Nations of the World 92-98.
"I propose, therefore, the following as very plausible first steps to the coinage of *minim* in its rabbinic signification. A biblical Hebrew idiom comes into more common use as an ordinary noun in the Second Temple period, which afterwards, through a stylistic usage in an influential work of Second Temple literature, takes on a slightly pejorative connotation that is subsequently adopted as a way of dismissing and delegitimizing opponents by labeling them as deviants, the “wicked *minim*.” Having established a possible etymological source for the rabbinic sense of the term *minim*, our next step will be to seek texts that shed light on how this Second Temple period noun with its pejorative shading of “wicked *minim*” came to be applied to a specific group. For this endeavor, we have no other recourse than the tannaitic literature because only there is the term used in this sense. I argued in section one, above, that the term *minim* always appears in the tannaitic literature as a sectarian designation. It is never a variegated term the way “heretic” or even “sectarian” is. There are no lists of *minim* in the tannaitic literature and no types of *minim*. *Minim* always functions lexically as a proper noun in a fashion parallel to terms such as Pharisee and Sadducee.(49) It is this usage that indicates to me the likelihood that a specific group was originally targeted by being pejoratively named *minim.* If the term was used as a general pejorative as “sectarian” or “deviant” then we would expect to see it used that way in the literature. We would expect wicked Jews generally to be called *minim* or different types of *minim* to be discussed. The fact that *minim* always functions in the tannaitic literature as a sectarian designation for a

conceptually circumscribed although otherwise unknown sect suggests that the term was originally coined in reference to a specific sect.(50)" (pp. 62-63)
(49) See discussion in the previous section and in n. 30, there, for many examples from the tannaitic literature.
(50) As I will discuss below, the word *minim* does take on additional signification in later amoraic texts. A text from the Jerusalem Talmud even mentions “twenty four groups of minim” (see n. 131 [Y. Sanhedrin 10:5, 29c (ed. Venice]). But this is a later development.

21. Hirschberg, Harris. 1943. "Allusions to the Apostle Paul in the Talmud." *Journal of Biblical Literature* no. 62:73–87.
"Be this as it may, the fact remains that according to Talmudic records the secession of the *Minim* started from an ideology which is closely akin to that of Hebrews. It is interesting to note that the two records differ in regard to the verb which expresses the fact of secession. One of them has [a hebrew word] which means "they separated themselves" (from the Jewish community),(67) whereas the other report has [a word] which verb has frequently the special meaning of "withdrawing oneself from the supremacy of the Law."(68) As we have proven, the *Minim* were Paul's adherents, and since only Jewish *Minim* could renounce
their allegiance to the Law, the following conclusion offers itself: Paul's conception of Christianity gained entrance into Jewish circles by means of a propaganda which was basically the same as that of Hebrews. This fact may have given rise to the strong, though disputed, tradition which ascribed the authorship of Hebrews to the Apostle to the Gentiles." (pp. 86-87)
(67) Cf. Jacob Levy, *Wörterbuch iiber die Talmudim und Midraschim*, Berlin-Wien 1924, IV, 151 f.
(68) *Ib.* 94 f.

22. ———. 1948. "Once Again: The Minim." *Journal of Biblical Literature* no. 67:305–318.
"A few years ago the present author, in this Journal, set forth his theory that the word "Minim" in Talmudic literature denotes adherents of Pauline Christianity.(1) At practically the same time F. C. Grant emphatically denied even the remotest possibility of the term referring to Christians in any passage of ancient Jewish literature.(2)
Thus far there have been no further arguments in favor of either theory. The present author therefore desires to reopen the discussion on one of the most important and intriguing problems of NT research." (p. 305)
(...)
"Modern NT research has made a startling discovery: "It is not until the decade 90-100 that the literary effect, that can be traced so surely to his [Paul's] letters, begins with apparent suddenness to show itself."(74)And: "There is no evidence of any knowledge of Paul's letters before A. D. 90 or 95, but... after this date they seem to be widely known," which speaks for "a publication of the letters of Paul at about this time."(75)
Clemen proved convincingly that Hebrews - at least in its present form -dates from the same period, the year 95 or 96.(76)
Within the frame of this essay the present author cannot deal with the question whether there is not some merit to the old tradition of Paul as the author of this letter. Suffice it to state that the material presented seems to support the theory that the term *Minim* refers to Paul' s adherents par excellence, only the Talmudic literature naturally evinces greater interest in those of Jewish origin. Thirty-five years ago Buechler already came close to this conclusion when he showed that, on the one hand the use of the term *Minim* appears to indicate Jewish heretics, but that on the other hand during the second and third century it was more frequently used in reference to non-Jewish sectarians in Galilee.(77) The present author's theory would offer the logical solution of this problem.(78)" (p. 318)
(1) *JBL*, LXII (1943), 77 ff.
(2) *The Earliest Gospel*, [Abingdon Press, New York and Nashville, 1943] 92 f.

(76) Carl Clemen, *Die Entstehung des Neues Testament*, Leipzig 1906, 88 ff.
(77) *Judaica, Festschrift zu Hermann Cohens siebzigstem Geburstage,* Berlin 1912 271 ff.
(78) Alexander M. Honeyman [A Tannaitic Term for the Christians], in *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 1947, 152, mentions the fact that in Syriac and Christian Palestinian Aramaic the word "Min" is used mainly in the sense of "people (s), nation (s)." Although he seems disinclined to accept this connotation for the Talmudic 'Min,' it would make excellent sense as the characterization of a movement which with Paul believed that "the salvation of God is sent to the Gentile." The corollary, viz., that "Israel has ceased to be God's people" is a frequent argument used by *Minim* of unquestionably Jewish background; cf. *JBL*, LXII, 82, n. 49.

23. Horbury, William. 1983. "The benediction of the 'Minim' and early Jewish-Christian controversy." *Journal of Theological Studies* no. 33:19–61.
Reprinted in W. Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998, pp. 67-110.
"The history of the benediction in relation to Christianity may now be briefly resumed. Justin, the first non-Jewish witness who directly alleges a synagogue curse, was right in supposing that Christians, both Jewish and gentile, were cursed in synagogue. The curse, one of a number of measures against emergent Christianity, was a form of the Benediction of the *minim*. This malediction on heretics was approved at Jamnia under Gamaliel II and incorporated in the Tefillah, which at this time was gaining an importance as a bond of Jewish unity. The wording of the benediction was variable, and no surviving text can be assumed to reproduce a specimen form of the Jamnian prayer. As has often been noted, it could apply to heretics other than Christians; but the impression of Jewish opposition given by Christian sources from Paul to Justin, confirmed by the scattered but hostile references to Christianity in early rabbinic literature, suggests that Christians were prominently in view at the time of the benediction's approval." (p. 108 of the reprint)
(...)
"In the fourth century Nazarenes and minim were specified in this benediction in Palestine. Part of the evidence to this effect from Epiphanius and Jerome suggests that a Jewish-Christian sect was intended; but their conflicting remarks on this point are secondhand, and conditioned by their immediate aims. Justin, believing that the curse applies to all Christians, and Tertullian, assuming that all Christians are meant by Nazareni, are better guides to the scope of the benediction.
This interpretation is supported by ancient non-Christian recognition of the church of Jews and gentiles as a single tribe or race. It also suits the Judaism of the early Christian centuries, when, as the relevant section of the Tefillah attests, proselytism remained important.
The benediction thus understood is not inconsistent with reports of Christian visitors in synagogue during the patristic period.
It was one of a number of expressions of the sole and universal claims of Judaism, whereby such visitors could be encouraged as potential proselytes.! (p. 109 of the reprint)

24. ———. 1998. "Jewish Unity and the Benediction of the *Minim*." In *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy*, 1–14. Edinburgh: T&T Clark.
"I. Jewish Unity and the Benediction of the Minim
In chapters 1-2, on excommunication and the Benediction 'of the *Minim*' it is argued that the far-flung Jewish community of the Second Temple period retained enough cohesion for norms to be preserved concerning offences demanding exclusion; the atmosphere of zeal evident in Philo, Josephus and the New Testament would have sharpened awareness of these norms, and the Eighteen Benedictions themselves form a document of corporate zeal, not without overtones of mission and messianism. The Twelfth Benediction is to be interpreted within this context; it was a focus of the communal cursing of Christians reported by Justin Martyr and later

on by Jerome, and was one of a number of measures related to the exclusion of Christians from Jewish communities, and to the polemic against Christianity and its founder which is reflected in a number of rabbinic texts. These measures are considered again in chapter 4, on Barnabas and Justin, and the associated polemic is further illuminated by Christian and pagan reaction to it or adoption of it, as illustrated in chapters 3, 5 and 6. Norms developed in the Second Temple period are important again in chapter 8, 'Jews and Christians on the Bible', in connection with the canon. Lively debate has surrounded the two questions of Jewish unity and of communal repression treated in the first two chapters." (p. 8)

25. ———. 1998. "Early Christians on synagogue prayer and imprecation." In *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity*, edited by Stanton, Graham and Stroumsa, Guy G., 296–317. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
"The Christian notices of synagogue prayer illustrated above have something to offer, it has been suggested, not only on topics in Jewish - Christian relations, such as the cursing of Christians, but also on the rise of the synagogue, the significance of the ark and the development of Jewish public prayer. Christian texts are important among the early attestations of synagogues, they cohere with archaeological and other indications of the impressive architecture of synagogues, and they show the prevalence of common prayer at an earlier date than most Jewish sources permit. They can also give glimpses of the style of prayer; Tertullian's notices suggest an esteem for decorum and gravitas recalling Philo and the Mishnah. Moreover, it is of significance for the study of the western Diaspora if such Christian reports can be illuminated by rabbinic and targumic texts, as was attempted above. Links of some strength between the west and the homeland can then be presupposed.
Lastly, the fact that Christian texts can offer material for consideration in the study of Jewish prayer suggests that, although Christians saw the synagogue through Old and New Testament spectacles, their eyes were not wholly blinded to their contemporary Jewish neighbours." (pp. 311-312)

26. Instone-Brewer, David. 2003. "The Eighteen Benedictions and the 'Minim' before 70 CE." *The Journal of Theological Studies* no. 54:25–44.
Abstract: "The wording of one version of the Eighteen Benedictions, which is preserved in a Geniza fragment (T-S K27.33b), appears to assume that the Temple is still standing, in two lines which are usually not printed. Other features of this version also suggest
that it preserves wording which originates from the Second Temple period. It also includes the curse of the Minim which is traditionally regarded as a Jabnean addition, but there is evidence that the curse had an earlier origin, and the wording of the curse
is found to be a criticism of the Sadducean priesthood."

27. ———. 2004. *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament: Volume 1: Prayer and Agriculture*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans.
Tractate Berakhot: Blessings (Prayer): The Eighteen Benedictions 96-119.
"The emphasis of #12 appears to have changed even before the Genizah Palestinian version. The final blessing concerns the ‘arrogant’ or perhaps ‘arrogantly sinful’ (one who commits *zadon*, ‘deliberate sin’), and the body of both versions relate this to a ‘kingdom.’ Both the Palestinian and Babylonian versions have inserted a curse on heretics. The Palestinian version refers to the *minim* (‘heretics’) and *nazarim* (which will be discussed below), and earlier versions may have referred to the *Perushim* (see Dating below) while the Babylonian has retained only the *minim*. The Palestinian version has inserted this curse after the “be quickly uprooted,” and Babylonian has inserted it before these same words, which shows that the curse was added after the original benediction was already in a fairly fixed form." (p. 104)
(...)
"The reference to ‘Nazarenes’ is usually regarded as a reference to Christians, who were occasionally known as the “sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24.5), or to the early

sect of Jewish Christians known as the Nazarenes. The early Church Fathers felt that it was directed at all Christians. (67)
The *minim* is a general term for 'heretic' in rabbinic literature, and they are not defined in this prayer, though many identities have been proposed. The general consensus is that this referred generally to heretics, or perhaps to Christians because they are linked with the Nazarenes. However, it is possible that the *minim* was a reference to the Sadducees, and that this replaced the word *Perushim*, 'Pharisees,' which was used when the Sadducees were in the ascendancy. Probably both versions continued to be used until 70 CE when the Sadducees virtually disappeared (see Dating below).
The "kingdom of the arrogant" sounds like the perception of the Roman occupation by Jews in the early first century. After this time the rabbis discouraged criticism of the Roman authorities (cf. m.Ab.3.2), and it is difficult to know what other 'kingdom' could be referred to. Later rabbis suggested that it was a reference to Christians. Hai Gaon (eleventh century) and Judah ha-Levi (twelfth century) derived 'apostates' (*meshumadim*, משומדים (from 'baptized' (*meshumad*, (דמעושם).
However, it is hardly likely that the new sect of Christians would have been regardedas a 'kingdom' before the fourth century, despite their claims about being a 'kingdom,' which must have sounded grandiose to most Jews in the early centuries." (pp. 104-105)
(67) Tertullian says specifically that 'the Jews call us *Nazareni*' (*Adversus Marcionem* 4.8.1), and Justin Martyr says repeatedly that the Jews curse Christians in the synagogue and speak disparagingly about them after their prayers (Justin Martyr, *Dialogue* 16, 93, 95, 96, 123, 133).
These are summarized well in William Horbury, "The Benediction of the Minim and Early Jewish-Christian Controversy," *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 33 (1982): 19-61.

28. Jaffé, Dan. 2021. "*Extra Ecclesiam nulla Salus*! *Birkat ha-minim* Reconsidered – Text and Context." In *Reflections on Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity*, edited by Jaffé, Dan, Nir, Rivka and Teppler, Yaakov Y., 151–176. Bern: Peter Lang.
"Despite the many articles that have been written on *Birkat ha-minim* in recent years, a great many questions have not yet been satisfactorily resolved. This is notably the case concerning the historical context in which this prayer was introduced.(1)" (p. 151)
(...)
"Thus, although it is hard to emit a detailed opinion on the impact of the B*irkat ha-minim*, there is reason to suppose that the Jews who believed that Jesus was the messiah would have had difficulty continuing to pray in synagogues.(45)
The Birkat ha-minim is to be contextualized therefore in the period of the tanaim when Judaism was about to progressively undergo a hermeneutic revolution that would have consequences on its structure and its rituals.
At this point, one cannot say more about this question without reviewing the conclusions that many researchers have already drawn.(46)" (pp. 175-176)
(1) This chapter is a slightly modified version of my paper: « Hors de la Synagogue, point de Salut ! Contribution à l'étude des relations entre Rabbis et judéo-chrétiens: l'exemple de la *Birkat ha-minim* », in D. Jaffé (ed.), *Juifs et chrétiens aux premiers siècles. Identités, dialogues et dissidences*, Cerf, Paris, 2019, p. 339–362.(...)
(45) Some scholars have refused to see a relationship between the *minim* of the twelfth benediction and the followers of Jesus; for a radical position, see J. Maier, *Jüdische Auseinandersetzung mit dem Christentum in der Antike*, Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982, who identifies the *minim* as Jews who reject rabbinic authority and adopt a syncretist and assimilationist attitude. For an opposite viewpoint, see B.- Z. Binyamin, 'Birkat ha- minim and the Ein Gedi Inscription', *Immanuel* 21 (1987), pp. 68-79. We would tend more toward a much more nuanced thesis along the lines, for example, of Broadhead, *Jewish Ways of Following Jesus. Redrawing the Religious Map of Antiquity,* p. 295, when he writes:

'A curse against Jewish Christians is more likely, but consistent use of a standard curse is difficult to demonstrate'.
(46) We are planning to reexamine this subject, taking a very close look at Christian sources with an eye out for any reactions to the *Birkat ha-minim*. In a similar vein, we have shown the polemics between the Sages of the Talmud and Justin Martyr, with each side answering the other on common subjects. See D. Jaffé, 'Adversus Iudaeos : la loi et les observances dans le Dialogus cum Tryphone Iudaeo', in S. Morlet, O. Munnich, and B. Pouderon (eds.), *Les Dialogues Adversus Iudaeos. Permanences et mutations d'une tradition polémique. Actes du colloque organisé les 7 et 8 décembre 2011 à l'université Paris-Sorbonne*, Paris, Institut d'études augustiniennes, 2013, pp. 49-65.
We mention the recent book of Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, *Jewish-Christian Dialogues on Scriptures in Late Antiquity. Heretic Narratives of the Babylonian Talmud*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, although unfortunately, we have not been able to introduce it in this article.

29. Joubert, S. J. 1993. "A bone of contention in recent scholarship: The 'Birkat-ha-Minim' and the separation of Church and Synagogue in the first century AD." *Neotestamentica* no. 23:351–363.
Abstract: "Up to the present the Twelfth Benediction (better known as the Birkat ha-Minim) of the Jewish statutory prayer ha figured prominently in discussions of the separation of church and synagogue and the development of Jewish Christianity. The aim of this paper is to provide a short overview of the present state of research concerning the role and function, if any, of the Birkat ha-Minim in the period between the destruction of the temple and the Bar Kochba revolt."
"Recent research on the Birkat ha-Minim has once again accentuated the complexity of early Jewish-Christian relations, especially in the post-70 period. One simply cannot trace the separation of church and synagogue solely to the Twelfth Benediction anymore, since it was just one of the ways in which Jewish communities reacted to threats to their symbolic universes. In this regard recent studies which employ social-scientific theories have contributed to a new awareness of the impact of social factors and forces on the ideologies of early Christian and Jewish movements (eg Horsley 1989; Neyrey 1990). Further social-scientific analyses of the documents of these movements will undoubtedly help to form a more comprehensive picture of aspects which are relevant to the understanding of early Jewish-Christian relations, such as their self-identity, social location, processes of community formation, understanding of other 'symbolic universes'; etc (cf Neyrey 1991)." (p 361)
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Horsley, R A 1989. *Sociology and the Jesus Movement*. New York: Crossroad.
Neyrey, J H 1990. Paul, in other words: A cultural reading of his letters. Louisville: Westminster.
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