

CAIAPHAS, JOHANNES ROMANUS: JOHN'S IMPERIAL ROMAN AUDIENCE

by

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In 1930s, alarmed by the Nazis' embrace of the Gospel of John, Ernest Cadman Colwell¹ advanced the thesis that John was written to appeal to cultured, wealthy, anti-Semitic, patriotic citizens of the Roman Empire.² This article advances a related but more focused thesis, that John was written for the imperial court and administration, at a time when it was unprecedentedly anti-Semitic,³ and Judaism or Jewish-Christianity had infiltrated its highest echelons (Clemens' and Domitilla's children were the heirs to the throne).⁴

In his anti-Semitism and much else, Domitian was unlike his father, Vespasian, and brother, Titus, practical military men, who enjoyed good relations with such prominent Jewish

¹ Colwell served as President of the University of Chicago from 1945 to 1951 and President of the Society of Biblical Literature in 1947.

² Ernest Cadman Colwell, "The Fourth Gospel and the Struggle for Respectability," *JR* 14:3 (1934): 298 ("Nazi Official . . . in summer of 1933, announced that Christianity in the Third Reich would be based upon the Gospel of Love, i.e. John"), 301 ("the most patriotic Roman citizen would find nothing to suggest that Christianity was a seditious movement"); Idem, *John Defends the Gospel* (Chicago: Willett, Clark, 1936), 43 ("the church is the enemy of" and "stand(s) outside Judaism;" "the pagan who approached Christianity through the pages of the Fourth Gospel would not suppose for a moment that Christianity was a Jewish movement"); 47 ("The cultured pagan who disliked the Jews would have no reason for disliking the Jesus of the Fourth Gospel"), 150; Alan Davies, "Racism and German Protestant Theology: A Prelude to the Holocaust," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 450 (1980): 28 and n. 32 (Fichte described John as the "only teacher of true Christianity"); Lars Kierspel, *The Jews and the World in the fourth Gospel* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 8–9. Colwell was influenced by Hans Windisch's "displacement" theory. D. Moody Smith, *John Among the Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001), 19–37.

³ Margaret H. Williams, "Domitian, the Jews and the 'Judaizers': A Simple Matter of Cupidas and Maiestas?", *Zeitschrift fur Alte Geschichte* 39:2 (1990): 205, 210–11; Martin Goodman, "Trajan and the Origins of Roman Hostility to the Jews," *Past & Present* 182 (2004): 3–29.

⁴ Steve Mason, "Should Anyone Wish to Enquire Further (*Ant.* 1.25): The Aim and Audience of Josephus's *Judean Antiquities/Life*," in *Understanding Josephus: Seven Perspectives* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 96–103; Suetonius, *Dom.* 14–15, 17; Dio, 67.2–2; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.18.5; Gavin Townsend, "Some Flavian Connections," *JRS* 51:1/2 (1961): 62.

figures as Johanan ben Zakkai (Yavneh), Josephus, Tiberius Julius Alexander (Philo's nephew and Titus' second-in-command), and Herodian Princess Berenice (Titus' Cleopatra). Vespasian and Titus owed their throne, and Rome a handsome reward in spoils, to the Jewish war,⁵ in which Domitian played no part.

Living an insular life at court, publicly, Domitian portrayed himself as a reformer and reinstater of Roman religion and morals (his private life greatly notwithstanding) and allowed himself to be flattered as a god. Prior to the time of Domitian, judging from their writings, Romans had not seen Roman adherents or converts to Judaism as a threat to the Roman order. But, around the time of Domitian, Roman writers, such as Tacitus and Juvenal began looking upon converts in a new way: as traitors and conspirators against all that Romans held sacred and dear.⁶ That perception probably motivated Domitian's attempt to wipe out adherents to Judaism among the nobility. Interestingly, in the Talmud, Clemens is one of only two imperial Romans to enjoy a share in the World-to-Come (*Abod. Zar.* 10b2–4). Domitilla is remembered for catacombs.⁷

Whereas, Colwell maintained that John was written to make Christianity more attractive to outsiders, I do not regard John as a missionary tract.⁸ Rather, in my view, John presents Christianity as harmless and non-threatening for an audience that had no intention of converting but rather sought to persecute Christianity. For this reason, John contains passages that are not

⁵ In great contrast to the Bar Kokhba war that produced nothing good for anyone. Werner Eck,

“The bar Kokhba Revolt: The Roman Point of View,” *JRS* 89 (1999): 76–89.

⁶ Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Respect for Judaism by Gentiles According to Josephus,” *HTR* 80:4 (1987): 417 n. 23, 428–29; Allen Brent, *The Imperial Cult and the Development of Church Order* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 173 (“critical development in imperial ideology”).

⁷ Though her catacombs are Christian, her personal chapel is said to be “arranged on a Jewish pattern.” “Flavia Domitilla,” *EncJud* (1906).

⁸ Wayne A. Meeks, “The Man from Heaven in Johannine Sectarianism,” *JBL* 91:1 (1972): 70.

only anti-Jewish, but also to a degree anti-Christian, that belittle Christianity for the gratification of John's haughty, supercilious, condescending, self-satisfied imperial audience⁹—in order to protect from their wrath those who commissioned John. And, John's anti-Semitism, rather than arising from Christian animosity, arose from what in modern parlance would be called an "improper tone at the top," imperial animosity.

I doubt that John was the product of a Johannine community or school, particularly where, not for lack of searching, such community has yet to be located in the historical record. Producing books or scrolls of relatively high literary quality was labor-intensive, time-consuming, and expensive; stereotypically books were a pretentious status symbol of the rich.¹⁰ I suspect that John was commissioned by a wealthy, elite Roman patron or patrons, and was probably composed within a short time frame¹¹ in Alexandria,¹² its contents presented to suit its patrons' wishes and needs: to urgently distance Christianity from Judaism. Whatever the case,

⁹ This characterization is based, among other sources, upon the nauseatingly obsequious, fawning flattery of Domitian by his court poets Martial and Statius.

¹⁰ Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 83–84, 87, 91, 93–96, 99–101, 123, 225–27; Roger S. Bagnall, *Early Christian Books in Egypt* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 50–69; Lucian, *Adv. indoct.*; Seneca, *Ep.* 27.

¹¹ See James Muilenberg, "Literary Form in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 51:1 (1932): 40; Meeks, "Heaven," 48.

¹² Suetonius, *Dom.* 20. Alexandria was Drury Lane to Rome's Broadway. Cicero, *Rab. Post.* 34–35; R. W. Reynolds, "The Adultery Mime," *CW* 40:3/4 (1946): 77. Additionally, like Philo, unusually, John uses a Hellenistic allegorical style, which was popular in Alexandria, while the dominant style in the Empire at the time was the Callimachean allusive style (evident, for example, in Matthew's many allusions to rabbinic law). Anne Gosling, "Political Apollo: From Callimachus to the Augustans," *Mnemosyne*, 4th Series 45:4 (1992): 501–12.

for a supposed sectarian text, more than anywhere else, John quickly became prominent in Rome.¹³

Nor do I accept the notion that John is particularly “Jewish” in literary style and content.¹⁴ In the first place, much of the presumed “Jewish” material in John is very basic, of the sort that Gentiles would readily comprehend, such as the figures of Moses and Abraham, motifs such as manna from heaven, the good shepherd, true vine.

Secondly, as respects rabbinic material in John, if one goes to almost any source dealing with rabbinic allusions in the gospels (Daube, for example, or Strack-Billerbeck), John is a distant fourth with far fewer rabbinic allusions worth mentioning than any of the other three.¹⁵

¹³ Kyle Keefer, *The Branches of the Gospel of John: The Reception of the Fourth Gospel in the Early Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 97 (school of Valentinus); Juan Chapa, “The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Gospel of John in Egypt,” *VC* 64 (2010): 327–52.

¹⁴ Kierspel, *Jews*, 55 (“currently Johannine scholars tend to overemphasize Jewish features of the Gospel”), 173, 199 (“we have only started to understand the rhetorical effect of the Gospel in the Roman context of the first century”). On linguistics, see, for example, Wayne A. Meeks, “‘Am I a Jew?’ Johannine Christianity and Judaism,” in *Christianity and Other Greco-Roman Cults: Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty: Part Two: Early Christianity* (ed. Jacob Neusner; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 163–85; Morton Smith, “Aramaic Studies and the Study of the New Testament,” *JBL* 26:4 (1958): 304–13. Meeks and Smith cite approvingly Colwell’s *The Greek of the Fourth Gospel* (1931). John is known for its “high Christology,” which is not Jewish. Much like Josephus, John has several explanations for readers/hearers unfamiliar with Jewish customs (2:6, 13; 5:1; 6:4; 7:2; 19:31, 40, 42) and translations of basic Aramaic terms into Greek—suggesting a Gentile audience. Kierspel, *Jews*, 189–90. John rarely quotes the Hebrew Bible. Kierspel, *Jews*, 192. And, for that matter, what is an asclepion doing in a Christian gospel (5:1 ff.)? Apropos of John’s preamble, according to Brent, *Cult*, 45–49, 67, the concept of *logos* was an important ideological underpinning of the imperial cult.

¹⁵ Colwell, “Respectability,” 299 (pointed out by Walter Bauer). See also Morton Smith, *Tannaitic Parallels to the Gospels* (Philadelphia: SBL, 1951). And, with increasing scrutiny, the number of credible rabbinic allusions in John is decreasing. See, for example, Catrin H. Williams, “John and the Rabbis Revisited,” in *Engaging with C. H. Dodd on the Gospel of John: Sixty Years of Tradition and Interpretation* (ed. Tom Thatcher and Catrin H. Williams; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 111, 122; Burton L. Visotzky, “Methodological Considerations in the Study of John’s Interaction with First-Century Judaism,” in *Life in Abundance: Studies of John’s Gospel in Tribute to Raymond E. Brown* (ed. John R. Donahue; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 91–107. Matthew is the immediate focus of any inquiry regarding rabbinic influence in the NT. Herbert W. Basser, *The Mind Behind the*

And, thirdly, much of the rabbinic material in John is topical,¹⁶ of the sort that an educated Roman would understand, and seemingly selected for being anti-Jewish—supporting Meeks’ observation that John “is most anti-Jewish just at the points it is most Jewish.”¹⁷ A prime example is John’s Samaritan woman pericope which references the most famous encapsulation in the popular imagination of the Eighteen Enactments of 65–66 (a nadir of Jewish jurisprudence) that Samaritan women were impure menstruants from the cradle (*Shab.* 16b4 & n. 38, 17a2; *Nid.* 33b4–5).¹⁸

Thus, this article is devoted to a discussion of certain Johannine pericopae apologetically suited for an anti-Jewish, elite, pagan Roman audience: Caiaphas’ speech, which is the centerpiece hereof, the spearing of Jesus by a Roman spear, John’s use of signs, Peter cutting the

Gospels: A Commentary to Matthew 1–14 (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2009), ix–17; Samuel Tobias Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Hoboken: KTAV, 1987), xxviii; David Daube, “Ye Have Heard—But I Say Unto You,” in *New Testament Judaism*, in *The Collected Works of David Daube* (ed. Calum Carmichael; 5 vols; Berkeley: Robbins Collection, 1992–2014), 2:171 (“Matthew’s is a Rabbinic gospel”). All citations to Daube are to *Collected Works*.

¹⁶ For example, at the time John was written, Gamaliel II may have commissioned Shmuel HaKatan to formulate what would become the *Birkat ha-Minim*. But, its composition, incorporation into the liturgy, and spread was very slow. Moreover, originally it was recited by the prayer leader, not the congregants, and as ultimately formulated was explicitly directed at *minim* rather than Christians *per se*. Thus, John’s *apostynagogos* may reference an actual topical development, but which at the time had insignificant actual impact. *Ber.* 28b5–29a1 & n.47.

¹⁷ Meeks, “Jew?”, 172, 176.

¹⁸ The infamous Eighteen Enactments of 65–66 (not to be confused with the Eighteen Benedictions) was the most xenophobic anti-Gentile pronouncements in Judaism of all time, considered the low point of Jewish law, “a day of calamity for the nation.” David Daube, “Samaritan Woman,” 2:635; *Shab.* 13b–14a; 15a–b; 17a3 (“that day as grievous to Israel as the day on which the golden calf was made”); *Avod. Zar.* 35a–36a; Cecil Roth, “An Ordinance against Images in Jerusalem, A.D. 66,” *HTR* 49:3 (1956): 169–77. Also, Jesus raising Lazarus on the fourth day mocks the Jewish “third day” tradition (John 11:39 “he stinketh”). Conversion as rebirth that Pharisee Nicodemus cannot comprehend (John 3:4) was a well-known Pharisaic doctrine. *Yev.* 48b4 & n. 39; 62a3 & n. 31; David Daube, “Conversion to Judaism and Early Christianity,” 2:476–77. Reflecting the Roman aversion to the Sabbath as laziness, John “ridicule(s) those who were concerned with weekly (Sabbath) observance.” Herold Weiss, “The Sabbath in the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 110:2 (1991): 321; J. Hugh Michael, “The Jewish Sabbath in the Latin Classical Writers,” *AJSL* 40:2 (1924): 117–24.

ear of the high priest's servant, the allusion that Jesus was of illegitimate birth, John's treatment of the covenant and Eucharist, John's scene of Pilate and the crowd, and Jesus' titles in John.

CAIAPHAS: JOHN 11:45–53

In John 11:49–52, Caiaphas famously states, “Take account, you know nothing nor consider that it is better (profitable, good, expedient) that one should die for the people than that the whole (entire) people (nation) perish.”¹⁹ Caiaphas did not say this on his own, but, because he was the high priest for that year. Caiaphas prophesied that Jesus would die, not for the nation alone, but also so that, scattered abroad, the children of God should gather together in one. Later, after Jesus' arrest, the text reiterates that Caiaphas was the high priest that year, he who gave counsel to the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people (18:13–14).

“Expediently, one death for many” sticks out as a formula,²⁰ which suggests that its author almost certainly got it from some prior source.²¹ Bolstering this assumption, for the most part, the story is not written in John's distinctive vocabulary, literary style, and construction.²² Yet, the story has been regarded as “to a great extent a pure composition” of the Johannine author(s).²³ And, the story has been considered not to “literally represent a historical event,” but to be “a freely composed symbolic narrative.”²⁴

¹⁹ Caiaphas' introductory words are an unpleasant onomatopoeia, “*ouk oidate ouden oude*,” which in Greek should indicate something bad.

²⁰ Ernst Bammel, “*Ex illa itaque die consilium fecerunt . . .*” in *The Trial of Jesus* (ed. Ernst Bammel; London: SCM Press, 1970), 26 (“reads like a proverb”).

²¹ C. H. Dodd, “The Prophecy of Caiaphas: John xi.47–53,” *More New Testament Studies* (Manchester: University of New Hampshire Press, 1968), 59 (“improbable in the extreme” that the story “is the original work of the author;” it must come “from some source or other”).

²² Dodd, “Prophecy,” 65–66.

²³ Ernst Haenchen, *John 2: A Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7–21* (trans. Robert W. Funk; ed. Robert W. Funk and Ulrich Busse; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 76–77, also 14 (citing Bultmann and others).

²⁴ Haenchen, *John*, 77 (citing Strathmann).

However, for some reason, Caiaphas' speech did not figure prominently in early Christian-Jewish controversy.²⁵ And, though John's Caiaphas had a rich legendary afterlife, his speech did not,²⁶ which evokes the principle "absent friends can be as conspicuous as present ones,"²⁷ suggesting there may have been something about Caiaphas' speech that has escaped our notice, something inappropriate.²⁸

Caiaphas' speech is constructed as a series of four doublets ending in "one." "The Romans will come and take away both our place and nation." "You know nothing nor consider." Caiaphas said this not for himself alone but also *ex officio*. Jesus would not die for the nation alone but also so that the scattered children of God might be gathered together in one. Thus, the formula, of many and one, is not just recited, but echoed and amplified in the construction of the speech itself.

The speech is particularly unusual in that the high priest "prophesies," speaking *ex officio*. Ordinarily, John has scant regard for Jews or anything Jewish. Nevertheless, because of this "prophesying," it has been thought that "the high priest unintentionally becomes God's prophet," whose words are ironically true.²⁹ And, Jesus is portrayed as, or as like, a sacrifice,

²⁵ Bammel, "*illa*," 38.

²⁶ See Adele Reinhartz, *Caiaphas: The High Priest* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 40–72; 144–64.

²⁷ David Daube, "The Form is the Message," 2:201.

²⁸ Jennifer K. Berenson Maclean "Barabbas, the Scapegoat Ritual, and the Development of the Passion Narrative," *HTR* 100 (2007): 310–12 (lack of legendary afterlife revealing).

²⁹ Lawrence B. Porter, *The Assault on the Priesthood: A Biblical and Theological Rejoinder* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2012); 250–55; Dodd, "Prophecy, 59;" Walter Grundmann, "The decision of the Supreme Court to put Jesus to death (John 11:47–57) in its context: tradition and redaction in the Gospel of John," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (eds. Ernst Bammel and C. D. F. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 307–09. Parenthetically, Grundmann had a deplorable pre-war and wartime record.

which is unusual for John, which deletes (and otherwise denigrates) the sacrifice of the Last Supper Eucharist (13:26–30).³⁰

Because of its perceived prophetic character Caiaphas' speech has been regarded by some as high theology. Dodd calls Caiaphas' prophetic pronouncement, "the most characteristic and distinctive idea" of John "without parallel elsewhere" in the NT, which "brings us near to the centre of Johannine theology."³¹ However, as we shall see from a Roman source-text, the principal meaning is different than currently understood.

ROMAN ALLUSIONS IN CAIAPHAS' SPEECH: PALINURUS

The formula "one for many" goes back to Praxithea's speech in Euripedes' *Erechtheus*, which is in the (human) "girl sacrifice" theme of the Iphigenia and Polyxena stories, or for that matter the delivery of a rebellious malefactor in 2 Samuel 20:1–22, retold in Josephus *Ant.* 7.289–292.

A fascinating feature of the "one for many" concept is that it became a very important, developed, and sophisticated practical issue in rabbinic law after John was written, in the wake of Hadrian's persecutions, as found especially in the (early to mid-third century) debates of Johanan and Resh Lakish³² (but not before the trigger of Hadrian's persecutions). However,

³⁰ Oscar S. Brooks, "The Johannine Eucharist: Another Interpretation," *JBL* 82:3 (1963): 297–98; Clarence T. Craig, "Sacramental Interest in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 58 (1939): 39; J. Albert Harrill, "Cannibalistic Language in the Fourth Gospel and Greco-Roman Polemics of Factionalism (John 6:52–66)," *JBL* 127:1 (2008): 133–58, particularly 135 and n. 7, 140, 142–43, 149–50, 158; Haenchen, *John*, 77.

³¹ Dodd, "Caiaphas," 58 (John 11:52).

³² David Daube, "Appeasing or Resisting the Oppressor," 2:99. According to Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Signification of Mark 10:45 Among Gentile Christians," *HTR* 90:4 (1997): 371–82, that the Son of Man came "to give his life as a ransom for many" does not encompass the same concept as "one for many."

Daube writes that Josephus' account of, "the extradition of the Sicarii (by the Jews of Alexandria) to the Romans in A.D. 73 offers a close parallel to Caiaphas' attitude" (in John).³³

The concept *unum caput dabitur pro multis* ("one man shall give his life for many") is prominent in the *Aeneid*, found in two places: one positive, in the Palinurus story of Book 5.815, and one negative, in Juturna's speech in Book 12.224–35. Generally, in pre-Christian literature, the dominant sense of "one for many" is negative, with Agamemnon's sacrifice of Iphigenia being the archetypal example. Naturally, however, Christians sought to present Jesus' death in a positive light. Hence, it has long been noticed that the formula in the Palinurus story is the same as the formula in Caiaphas' speech in John.³⁴ So much so that Margherita Frankel writes, "Virgil would have marveled at his own unconscious anticipation of Caiaphas' words." Indeed, the ancients also saw precedents in pagan religion to events and themes in Jesus' life. Thus, Justin Martyr explained resemblances between Jesus and pagan figures as due to demons hearing of prophecies of Jesus providing spurious imitations in advance.³⁵ And, of all the pagan authors, Virgil has long been considered a forerunner of and "uniquely near to Christianity,"³⁶ whose writings bear a striking resemblance to the NT.³⁷

³³ David Daube "Civil Disobedience in Antiquity," in *Biblical Law and Literature*, 3:642.

³⁴ Margherita Frankel, "Dante's Anti-Virgilian 'Villanello' (Inf. XXIV, 1–21)," *Dante Studies* 102 (1984), 87; Frederick E. Brenk, "Vnum pro multis caput: Myth, History, and Symbolic Imagery in Vergil's Palinurus Incident," *Latomus* 43:4 (1984): 776–801.

³⁵ *Apol.* 1.54; *Dial.* 69; Wilfred L. Knox, "The 'Divine Hero' Christology in the New Testament," *HTR* 41:4 (1948): 247 and n. 60.

³⁶ T. S. Eliot, "Vergil and the Christian World," *Sewanee Review* 61:1 (1953): 13; Philip Hardie, *The Last Trojan Hero: A Cultural History of Virgil's 'Aeneid'* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 127–36, 143–47.

³⁷ Helmut Koester, "The Memory of Jesus' Death and the Worship of the Risen Lord," *HTR* 91:4 (1998): 336–37 and n. 3.

Palinurus was Aeneus' devoted helmsman. To allow the Trojans to reach (the promised land) Italy, Neptune demanded a sacrifice from among Aeneus' men. Thus, with the shore of Italy in sight, having completed his task, Palinurus was put asleep by a god and cast overboard.³⁸

Going back prominently to William the Breton,³⁹ and long before, medieval Christian commentators saw the sacrifice of Palinurus as an anticipation of the sacrifice of Jesus.⁴⁰ And the knowledge that Virgil's Palinurus story and John's Caiaphas story use the same "one for many" formula was never entirely lost to biblical scholarship. For example, Adam Clarke's 1817 *Commentary on the New Testament*, John 11:51, references Palinurus in relation to Caiaphas. Bammel cites in a footnote Virgil, *Aeneid* 5.815.⁴¹

However, to my knowledge, while the positive parallel between the Palinurus and Caiaphas stories has been known, the negative parallel between Juturna's and Caiaphas' speeches has been ignored—even though both Juturna's and Caiaphas' speeches contain the same "one for many" formula (also found in the Palinurus story). And, only Caiaphas and Juturna give speeches, Palinurus does not. And, moreover, Juturna is a more important figure in the *Aeneid* than Palinurus, and she appears in its last and greatest book.

There is good reason to relate both Virgil's Juturna and Palinurus stories to John's Caiaphas story. The figures of Palinurus and Juturna are related.⁴² They are both associated

³⁸ W. S. M. Nicoll, "The Death of Turnus," *CQ*, New Series 51:1 (2001): 198. After swimming for three days, Palinurus reaches land, only to be slain by the natives.

³⁹ Gregory P. Stringer, "Book 1 of William the Breton's *Philippede*: A Translation," (University of New Hampshire Thesis, 2010), 58.

⁴⁰ Stringer, "William," 29–31 and nn. 116, 118 ("recurring sailing metaphor," "guiding" a poetic "ship" on "unsafe seas"), 75–76 ("You guide me along the proper path; you are the path, the guide, the ship, my Palinarus"), 30 n. 116, 75–76 n. 38 ("Palinurus became famous as the 'ideal captain'" because "Somnus had to resort to magic" to put him to sleep).

⁴¹ Bammel, "*illa*," 26 n. 81.

⁴² Nicoll, "Turnus," 196–200. Related figures is a hallmark of the *Aeneid*.

with water, Palinurus with the sea; Juturna with swamps, lakes, and streams.⁴³ Palinurus and Juturna are both immortalized in mythical etiologies by having landscapes named after them. They are also both drivers: Palinurus, the helmsman of Aeneas' ship; Juturna, the driver of her brother, Turnus', chariot. And, of course, the formula "one for many" is found in both stories. And, moreover, the *Aeneid* was the most influential literary work in the first century. The magnificence, renown, and influence of its most superb final Book 12 was such⁴⁴ that Caiaphas' speech would have brought to the educated imperial Roman mind that Juturna's speech was alluded to in Caiaphas' speech. However, unlike the very likeable Christian-like Palinurus, Juturna is a purely Roman and very sinister figure without any analogue in Homer. For example, Juturna's twisted psyche was due to her having been raped by Jupiter and then doubly tormented by his compensating gift of eternal life (12.143–52, 877–86).

JUTURNA'S SPEECH

The background of Virgil's Juturna story is as follows. Juturna's brother, Turnus, was the leader of the native Italians of the Tiber region fighting against Aeneas' foreign invading Trojans and their Etruscan allies. (Reference in parallel the Roman invaders and their native Judean and Galilean opponents.) Tired of fighting, the Italians enter into a sacred peace treaty with Aeneas and his Trojans that accommodates the invaders while maintaining the customs, language, and traditional rights of the native Italians. But, Achilles-like, Turnus prefers to fight on and either kill Aeneas and repel the invaders, or die trying. Analogously, Jesus and other Judean or Galilean patriots are, like Turnus, sacrificial victims, willing to fight and die for their

⁴³ P. Murgatoyd, "Ovid, 'Fasti' 2.585–616 and Virgil, 'Aeneid' 12," *CQ*, New Series 53:1 (2003): 312; Christine Perkell, "The Lament of Juturna: Pathos and Interpretation in the *Aeneid*," *TAPA* 127 (1997): 273–74; Z. Philip Ambrose, "The Etymology and Genealogy of Palinurus," *AJP* 101:4 (1980): 449–57.

⁴⁴ E. L. Highbarger, "The Tragedy of Turnus: A Study of Vergil, *Aeneid* XII," *CW* 41:8 (1947–48): 114.

homeland against foreign invaders, while the more accommodative Jewish priests and Pharisees in John are like the Italians, willing to make a peace treaty, to accommodate the invaders. So, the Italians decide to let Turnus fight alone in single combat against Aeneas.⁴⁵

However, upon seeing Turnus and Aeneas together, it becomes apparent to all that Aeneas outmatches and will kill Turnus. To save her brother, Juturna berates the Italians as cowards sacrificing the one for the many. “Shame on you, who send down to death one life on behalf of so many of you, who sit idle. (Far from what you expect) he alone will rise up (both) in human praise and to dwell among the gods at whose altar he has dedicated (*devotio*, sacrificed) his life . . . While you (we) (the many), our country forfeited, will descend under the yoke of arrogant foreign masters.” And, Juturna sends a false, fraudulent sign of an eagle attacking a swan being beaten off by other swans coming to its aid. Convinced by Juturna, the Italians break the treaty and resume hostilities, resulting in their defeat and Turnus’ death.

The teaching of the Juturna story for John’s Caiaphas story is that Juturna (and by extension Caiaphas) gives *horrendously* bad advice.⁴⁶ Juturna is a prophet whose actions and prophecies only make things worse,⁴⁷ contributing to the ruin of her loved ones⁴⁸ by inciting

⁴⁵ The model for the single combat scene of the *Aeneid* is the single combat of Menelaus and Paris in the *Iliad*. However, unlike among the Greeks, the Romans took a dim or decidedly ambivalent view towards single combat. The Romans fought as an army, which was their forte—organization; rarely in single combat, especially since on average they were shorter and smaller than Gauls and Germans. S. P. Oakley, “Single Combat in the Roman Republic,” *CQ* 35:2 (1985): 392, 398–99, 403–04, 407; David B. George, “Technology, Ideology, Warfare and the Etruscans Before the Roman Conquest,” in *Etruscan World*, 741–43 (*monomachia* was incompatible with hoplite-style formation and ideology).

⁴⁶ The epitome of bad advice, Juturna causes Turnus to fight the outmatched Pallas (relieving the equally-matched Lausus, Mezentius’ son) (10.38–39), which leads Aeneas on account of Turnus killing Pallas to deny the outmatched Turnus mercy, *clementia*.

⁴⁷ Victor Castellani, “Anna and Juturna in the *Aeneid*,” *Vergilius* 33 (1987): 52.

⁴⁸ Grace Starry West, “Vergil’s Helpful Sisters: Anna and Juturna in the *Aeneid*,” *Vergilius* 25 (1979): 10.

them to act in a way that will be disastrous for them.⁴⁹ Like Caiaphas, Juturna, though but one person, has her own views control the decisions of everyone else in complete disregard of the views of others. And, while both Juturna and Caiaphas argue for what they claim is the general good, in reality, Juturna and Caiaphas are selfish dissemblers pursuing their own thoroughly misguided agendas.

Among the Romans, breaking a sacred peace treaty, as Juturna counseled the Italians to do, was horrendously wrong, justifying the strongest retaliation. Revolts against Rome were seen in that light—impious breaches of treaty-covenantal faith.

The point of the “one for many” theme in Juturna’s speech (and by extension in Caiaphas’ speech) is that it is extremely shameful, cowardly, and ultimately self-defeating for the many to sacrifice the one.⁵⁰ Virgil based Juturna’s speech upon Agamemnon’s speech (*Iliad* 2.110–04) that future generations will be ashamed to learn how the Achaeans fought if they lose to the outnumbered Trojans. Thus, Juturna points to the greater numerical superiority of the Italians, over the invaders.⁵¹ You are the more, they the less, and yet shamefully, you must be scared of them—for you cowardly leave the fighting to one in place of the many of you, who so outnumber them.

Juturna’s speech also seems to be alluded to in Agrippa’s speech in Josephus (*J.W.* 2.16.344–402).⁵² Using the theme of one and many, Agrippa argues (2.16.353), “It is absurd to

⁴⁹ William S. Anderson, “Two Passages from Book Twelve of the *Aeneid*,” *California Studies in Antiquity* 4 (1971): 51.

⁵⁰ Lynette Thompson and R. T. Bruere, “The Virgilian Background of Lucan’s Fourth Book,” *CP* 65:3 (1970): 156.

⁵¹ Netta Berlin, “War and Remembrance: *Aeneid* 12:554–60 and Aeneas’ Memory of Troy,” *AJP* 119:1 (1998): 23–25 and n. 34.

⁵² John A. Dennis, *Jesus’ Death and the Gathering of the True Israel: the Johannine Appropriation of Restoration Theology in the Light of John 11:47–52* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006) 29–30, 183 (citing W. Grimm, “*Das Opfer eines Menschen: Eine Auslegung von Joh*

make war with many for the sake of one,” and gives a lengthy, comprehensive geographic survey of the Empire—extolling Rome’s ability to control vast areas and populations through comparatively tiny numbers of troops. Agrippa’s leitmotif is that Rome is militarily invincible and divinely ordained to rule the world, even when completely outnumbered.⁵³ And, like Caiaphas’ speech, Agrippa’s speech is made up for the pleasure of the imperial court.⁵⁴

Thus, alluding to Juturna’s speech, the meaning behind Caiaphas’ speech is that the Jewish high Priest gives shameful, cowardly, ultimately self-defeating advice that the people follow, leading to their ruin. And, moreover, Juturna’s speech provides a different understanding of Caiaphas’ prophecy that Jesus “would die for not the nation alone but also so that scattered abroad the children of God should gather together in one” (11:52). Caiaphas means, and necessarily his Jewish audience understands him to mean, that the Jewish nation and the Jews of the Diaspora will be “gathered in,” united as one.⁵⁵

As with Juturna, Caiaphas’ prophecy is not just incorrect, but it will produce the very opposite result of what he prophesied. Jesus’ death will do nothing to benefit the Jewish nation, quite the reverse. Implicitly, in John, Jesus’ death will bring about that which it was supposed to prevent: the Romans will come and destroy the place and grievously injure the nation.

11,47–53,” in *Israel hat dennoch Gott zum Trost* (ed. Gotthold Muller; Tier: Paulinus, 1978), 61–90, who claims that Caiaphas’ speech is modeled on Agrippa’s speech); cf. Bammel, “*illa*,” 22–23.

⁵³ Brooks Otis, “The Originality of the Aeneid,” in *Virgil* (ed. D. R. Dudley; New York: Basic Books, 1969), 63.

⁵⁴ As illustrated in its praise of Gauls and Germans, and its geographic survey of the provinces of the Empire listing the numbers of troops stationed in each place, matters known, of interest, and satisfying to the imperial court, but not aggrieved Jews. See Steve Mason, *Flavius Josephus, Volume 1B, Judean War 2* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2008), 281 and n. 2293.

⁵⁵ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1971), 567. Gathering in of God’s (Jewish) people has “deep roots,” but the connection with Jesus’ death is “specifically Johannine.” Dodd, “Prophecy,” 58–59 n. 2; Grundmann, “Decision,” 309.

Quite the opposite of what Caiaphas prophesied, the Jews will not be “gathering in as one;” they will be dispossessed and disbursed more than ever. And, doubling the irony, the people who will be “gathered in as one” are the Trojans and Italians (and their respective allies) who will be united as one nation.

The Juturna story focuses on the uniting of Rome. Though set in the mythical story of Aeneas, it alludes to Augustus’ most prized achievement, *toto Italia*, his uniting of the peninsula and empire, an absolutely crucial issue after the disastrous social wars, and then again important after Nero until Vespasian restored order.⁵⁶ Also, the imperial Roman concept of the princeps-people mystical bond of unity seems evident in John 10:16: his different sheep from different flocks shall be united into “one flock, one shepherd” (one people, one leader).

The concept behind Caiaphas’ prophecy is not that at some future date all heterodox Christians will be united. In general, John’s Christianity appears separatist—not about accommodating and uniting pluralistic views or beliefs. And, the notion of homogeneous Christian orthodoxy lay in the future. Alluding to Juturna’s speech, Caiaphas’ speech seems intended to contrast the dispersal of the Jews with the gathering together in one of the Romans and those absorbed as Romans.

The model of Juturna also explains the bizarre feature that Caiaphas, an obvious evil villain, would seem to make a most unlikely prophet to prophesy true messages from God.⁵⁷ The

⁵⁶ 12.220 (“May both nations under equal laws march together, an eternal pact of peace”); Katharine Toll, “Making Roman-ness and the *Aeneid*,” *CA* 16:1 (1997): 35–42, 48; David West, “The Deaths of Hector and Turnus,” *GR*, Second Series, 21:1 (1974): 22 (“prototypes of the contemporary Italian supporters of Augustus”); Nicoll, “Turnus,” 198 (“in the future the Trojans and their opponents will be one people,” “benefiting from Turnus’ sacrifice”); Highbarger, “Turnus,” 118.

⁵⁷ There has been much discussion among commentators concerning the three references that Caiaphas was the high priest “in that year.” Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray, R. W. N. Hoare, J. K. Riches; Philadelphia:

Jewish God does not (ordinarily) use evil prophets, who give shamefully bad advice, to prophesy messages from God.⁵⁸ And, historically, in Jewish circles of the time, the high priest was regarded as the ultimate quisling. The office was bought and sold; the persons who held it were not among the best scholars; a rabbinic genre lampooned the high priest; and the high priest was the first person of prominence assassinated in the Jewish war.⁵⁹ And, in John, Jesus blames Caiaphas saying, “he that delivered me to you has the greater sin” (19:11).⁶⁰

Caiaphas speech is not bereft of any theological précis. The story has a theme (evident in Latin; not, or less so, in English translations) of descending and ascending. Putting the one sacrificed “down” to death, instead will make him ascend “up” to the gods, while the many (instead of the one) will descend.⁶¹ But, the Johannine theme of ascent from the cross is not culturally Jewish.⁶²

Westminster Press, 1971), 410–11 and nn. 2, 10; Haenchen, *John*, 75; C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 368. The terminology “in that year” is typical of the Roman *cursus honorum*. F. F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition and Notes* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), 250.

⁵⁸ Walter C. Kaiser, “The Single Intended Meaning of Scripture,” in *Rightly Divided: Readings in Biblical Hermeneutics* (ed. Roy B. Zuck; Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996), 163.

⁵⁹ Solomon Zeitlin, “The *Am Haaretz*: A Study in the Social and Economic Life of the Jews Before and After the Destruction of the Second Temple,” *JQR*, New Series, 23:1 (1932): 45–61 (Priests and Levites disliked, even hated by *amei haaretz*); Richard A. Horsley, “The Zealots: Their Origin, Relationships and Importance in the Jewish Revolt,” *VT* 28:2 (1986): 171–76 (“no credibility with the common people”); Hyam Maccoby, *The Philosophy of the Talmud* (London, New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002), 49–51, 69 (quislings); Richard Kalmin, “Christians and Heretics in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity,” *HTR* 87:2 (1994): 157–58; *Yoma* 8b–9a, 18a3, 71b, Appendix; *Git.* 57b; *m. Ed.* 5:6–7; *B. Bat.* 115b; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.10.6; 17.6.5; Acts 23:3.

⁶⁰ In John, Pilate is like Aeneas, who kills as the mere efficient cause but is not principally at fault. Highbarger, “Turnus,” 118 (“Aeneas, as servant of the gods and the instrument of fate”).

⁶¹ In the *Aeneid*, the many, the Italians, are spared the fate of “descending” because they reverse course and courageously fight with Turnus. Nonetheless, having breached their sacred treaty-oath, the Italians might have suffered disastrous consequences. But, they are saved by a divine covenant made between Juno and Jupiter in which Juno agrees to Turnus’ death and Aeneas’ victory provided the treaty be reinstated and the Trojans adopt the Latin name and language. In

After the Caiaphas episode, Jesus removed himself into the wilderness. Celsus decried that a God or the son of God would not run and hide (Origen *Cels* 1.65). But, in Homer and Virgil, goddesses hid respectively Aeneas and Turnus.

Further, in John 19:11, Jesus says that Pilate's power over Jesus is given him from above, which from a Jewish perspective is an unbelievable concession. The same sentiment is expressed by Turnus to Aeneas: "It is not you I fear, but the gods" (from whom your power (over me) derives) (12.892–96). And, in John 18:36, Jesus says to Pilate, "My kingdom does not belong to this world," implicitly conceding Rome's divine right to rule this world.

A final coda on Juturna, goddess of fresh water: Juturna's son, Fontus, by her husband, Janus, is the patron of the font, fount, and fountain. The Etruscans and Romans were obsessed with manmade waterworks, Rome is the city defined by its fountains, and Romans consumed an enormous amount of water. John references three historically important and prominent manmade waterworks, the pools at Bethesda and Siloam and Jacob's well, the Synoptics reference none.⁶³

THE ROMAN *HASTA*

the original treaty-covenant, the only concession Aeneas required was that the Italians adopt the Trojan (read Etruscan) religion.

⁶² This "ascend-descend" reversal theme in Virgil may help explain the extraordinary Johannine theme of descent from heaven and ascent back via the cross. Joel Marcus, "Crucifixion as Parodic Exaltation," *JBL* 125:1 (2006): 73–87; Meeks, "Heaven," 51–52, 62; John 18:32; Adele Reinhartz, "'Jews' and Jews in the Fourth Gospel," in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* (eds. Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, and Frederique Vandecasteele-Vanneuville; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 214–17. In Roman lore, it is extremely common for gods to descend from heaven and then ascend back (Mercury in the *Aeneid*, for example). To ascend via the cross is most un-Jewish, as seen, for example, in the use of the ascend-descend motif (in very foreign settings) of pharaoh's cup-bearer and baker (in the Joseph story (Gen 40:19)), Mordecai and Haman (in Esther), and the Yose ben Joezer and Alcimus (in a prominent legend). Daube, "Judas," 2:791–92 (Being crucified, Yose was taunted by Alcimus as being "raised up"); Benjamin Edidin Scolnic, *Alcimus: Enemy of the Maccabees: Studies in Judaism* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2005), 83–86, passim.

⁶³ Also 2:6–7; 3:23 (abundant water).

Another example of John's use of imperial Roman imagery, in John 19:34, Jesus is speared by a (symbolically *the*) Roman spear. The Roman spear, *hasta*, was a major, well-known Roman religious and political symbol of Roman domination and power.⁶⁴ For an imperial Roman audience, speared by the Roman *hasta*, Jesus is subject to Roman earthly dominion.

In John, the blood and water that poured out from Jesus' side substitutes for Jesus' sacrificial blood in the Synoptics (1 John 5:6–8). But, the idea that blood and water, that pours from Jesus' side, and falls to the ground is sacramental is contrived and senseless, seemingly so designed not to conflict with real (Roman and Jewish) sacrificial practice. In Jewish practice, only the blood that jetted out when the animal's throat was slit, propelled by the still beating heart, was the lifeblood.⁶⁵ And, in the Jewish sacred sacrificial system (and Greek and Roman practice seems to have been similar) only the lifeblood constituted "blood" for purposes of sacred ritual.⁶⁶ In contradistinction to the lifeblood, the ordinary blood and the water generated in the Jewish Passover ritual were called the "beverages of the butchering place of the Temple

⁶⁴ Andrew Alfoldi, "Hasta-Summa Imperii: The Spear as Embodiment of Sovereignty in Rome," *AJA* 63:1 (1959): 1–27; Alan Watson, *International Law in Archaic Rome* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 27–28 (traditionally Roman wars were commenced by casting the symbolic spear into enemy territory).

⁶⁵ *Pes.* 16b1 (While Jews were forbidden to consume blood, only the consuming of lifeblood carried punishment at the hand of God, *kares*).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*; Gary Beckman, "Blood in Hittite Ritual," *JCS* 63 (2011): 99–100 (directing the blood); Lucian, *Of Sacrifice*, 13, Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 4, 1236–39; 5, 1164–1203; Cotta, *De Natura Deorum*, 1.29.81–82; Walter Burkart, *Greek Religion* (trans. John Raffan; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 56 (The blood is collected in a basin and sprayed over the altar and against the sides: to stain the altar with blood (*haimassein*) is a pious duty); Stanley K. Stowers, "On Comparison of Blood in Greek and Israelite Ritual, in *Hesed ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs* (eds. Jodi Magness and Seymour Gitin; Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1998), 179–96; especially 182–83; Eli Edward Buriss, "Cicero and the Religion of His Day," *CJ* 21:7 (1926), 531; Joan R. Branham, "Blood in Flux, Sanctity at Issue," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 31 (1997), 68–70; Carlin A. Barton, "The Emotional Economy of Sacrifice and Execution in Ancient Rome," *Historical Reflections* 29:2 (2003): 350 n. 38 (throat). On the association of sacrifice with treaty-covenant formation, Watson, *International*, 33–34.

Courtyard” and were unfit for sacred ritual (*Pes.* 16a1–b1). Moreover, the lifeblood was not allowed to just fall to the ground. Sacred blood had a specific target.⁶⁷

Sacred lifeblood or Eucharistic wine could be diluted with holy water (Heb. 9:19; Josephus, *Ant.* 3.8.6 (205)). But, sacred, holy substances had to be pure and clean. From the popular play *Laureolus*, it appears that victims of crucifixion suffered an accumulation of bloody liquids in their chests. But, the effluence that built up in the lungs in a slow asphyxiation by crucifixion was diseased, impure, and not a sacred substance. The blood and water from Jesus’ side is not sacred sacrificial lifeblood that might make a covenant or otherwise be sacramental, but a non-cultic substance, not threatening to Rome.

SIGNS

John’s Caiaphas narrative is connected to the Lazarus miracle, the last and greatest of Jesus’ *semeia*, “signs.” Delivering signs from heaven is characteristically Roman-Etruscan, and decidedly not Jewish.⁶⁸ While the Hebrew Bible has many prominent instances of signs from God,⁶⁹ Jews around the time of Jesus and decades before were far less superstitious and signs-oriented than their ancestors had been. Among Jews, doctrinal proof with the help of miracles

⁶⁷ The people is the case of the blood of the covenant; the altar in the case of the Pascal lamb; the doorposts in the case of the original exodus (among other examples). Exod 24:8; Matt 27:25. Also Stowers, “Comparison.”

⁶⁸ John 2:11; 4:54; 6:14, 26; 9:16; 11:41–42 (“Father I thank you for hearing me. I know that you always hear me, but because of this crowd here I have said this, that they may believe you sent me”); 12:18, 37; 20:30; Selby Vernon McCasland, “Signs and Wonders,” *JBL* 76:2 (1957): 149–52 (John “preoccupied with giving signs”); Idem, “Portents in Josephus and in the Gospels,” *JBL* 51:4 (1932): 323–35; Robert T. Fortna, “Source and Redaction in the Fourth Gospel’s Portrayal of Jesus’ Signs,” *JBL* 89:2 (1970): 151–66; Pauline Ripat, “Roman Omens, Roman Audiences, and Roman History,” *GR* 53:2 (2006): 155–74; Jean MacIntosh Turfa, *Divining the Etruscan World: The Brontoscopic Calendar and Religious Practice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), *passim*; Seneca, *QNat.* 2.32.2; Jean-Rene Jannot, *Religion in Ancient Etruria* (trans. Jane K. Whitehead; Madison/London: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 10–11 (“occurrences reflect a hidden truth in the divine order”).

⁶⁹ For example, Moses and Aaron before pharaoh, the plagues, manna from heaven, water from the rock, Elijah defeating the priests of Baal on Mt. Carmel. Cf. Isaiah 7:11–12.

became much frowned upon.⁷⁰ Jewish tradition developed the notion that when God performs miracles on someone's behalf, that person's heavenly merit is diminished by being rewarded in this world, and a sign demonstrating divine approval is a reward.⁷¹ The use of signs is a major conceptual and cultural difference between the Jewish-oriented Matthew and the Roman-oriented John. In Matthew, Jesus steadfastly refuses in life to provide any sign; the only sign he would provide is in his death and resurrection, the sign of Jonah.

Its connection to the Lazarus sign-miracle makes the Caiaphas story part of the (Bultmann) sign source.⁷² However, performing signs would not seem to be a reason for the Romans to destroy the nation, nor is it among the criminal charges leveled against Jesus.⁷³ It would seem to make more sense if the Sanhedrin's decision arose out of the cleansing of the Temple, for example.⁷⁴

The reason performing signs courted disaster is from the Roman-Etruscan practice of reporting signs, portents, and omens to the supreme council, Rome's Senate, for interpretation and remedial action.⁷⁵ In Roman-Etruscan culture all signs were "implicitly bad signs."⁷⁶ "The

⁷⁰ David Daube, "Enfant Terrible," in *Talmudic Law*, 1:137–42 ("a deep, general distrust of such methods"); Holger Michael Zellentin, *Rabbinic Parodies of Jewish and Christian Literature* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 137–66, 219–20; *B. Mes.* 59b (*Akhai oven story*); *Ta'an.* 23a1–b2 (Honi the circle maker); *'Eruv.* 13b2 (A heavenly voice declared, "These and those," but (the heavenly voice notwithstanding) *halakah* follows Bet Hillel); *Shab.* 33b4. Paul disparages signs in 1 Cor 1:22, but not in Rom 15:19. In Luke 23:8 signs are disparaged; Herod seeks a sign. Jewish rejection of signs was underway before Christianity became significant, and indeed, reflecting Jewish practice, Matthew rejects the use of signs.

⁷¹ *Shab.* 33b4.

⁷² Grundmann, "Decision," 301.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 300.

⁷⁴ Grundmann, "Decision," 302.

⁷⁵ Mary Beard, John North, and Simon Price, *Roman Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 19–20, 37–38, 80.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 37–38.

crucial thing was that the resources of senatorial and priestly skill and wisdom were used to avert the danger, even though there was no absolute guarantee of success.”

THE EAR CUTTING EPISODE AT JESUS’ ARREST

Found in all four canonical gospels (Mark 14:47–48; Matt 26:51–54; Luke 22:49–51; John 18:10–11), the ear cutting at Jesus’ arrest derives from biblical and rabbinic law. Rather than naturalistic, as in a real fight, in which the swordsman swings wildly and ineptly only cut the ear, the depiction is idealized. An ear injury was the archetypal minimal physical injury of no consequence to a slave, minor consequence to most people, but which rendered a priest blemished and hence unfit for office.⁷⁷ The ear cutting meant that the servant and by extension the high priest himself were rendered blemished and unfit, so that Jesus’ arrest was illegal.⁷⁸

In the Jewish-oriented Mark and Matthew, the ear is cut and left un-restored, which is the point of the story. However, in Luke, Jesus restores the ear, which restores the servant’s and the high priest’s legitimacy, defeating the story’s purpose.

Going a step further, John identifies Peter as the swordsman. And, in John, Jesus does not restore the ear. Thus, in John, the ear is cut, not restored, and Peter did it. In rabbinic law, one who blemishes another, measure for measure, will suffer the same blemish himself (“Live by the sword, die by the sword.” Matt 26:52).⁷⁹ Thus, John’s message is measure for measure, Peter must suffer the same fate as his victim. Peter’s ear is metaphorically cut—he too is blemished

⁷⁷ Exod 21:4–6; *Qidd.* 23a. In Roman-Etruscan-based practice, the *Flamen Dialis* (priest of Jupiter) was similarly subject to disqualification from office by highly technical minutia. Herbert J. Rose, *Religion in Greece and Rome* (New York: Harper & Row, 1959), 207–09; Valerie M. Warrior, *Roman Religion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 43.

⁷⁸ David Daube, Three Notes Having to Do with Johanan ben Zaccai, 1:425–31.

⁷⁹ Daube, “Three Notes;” Lev 24:19–20; *B. Mes.* 59b; *Qidd.* 21b2, 70b; Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, “Blemish,” *EncJud*, 2nd, 3:749–50.

and unfit for the priesthood. Therefore, since Peter was unfit and illegitimate, Rome's execution of him is justified.⁸⁰

John says it was the right ear, a detail superfluous from a Jewish perspective. John also gives the victim's name as Malchus. In the episode of Peter's thrice denial of Jesus, John has Peter interrogated by a relative of Malchus (18:26), which links Peter's transgression of denying Jesus with his ear cutting emphasizing Peter's fault.⁸¹

Finally, in John 20:27–29, Jesus is identified after his resurrection by unhealed wounds suffered in his execution (*stigmata*). While in Roman culture, such a portrayal (within limits)⁸² was acceptable, even laudable,⁸³ the Jewish Messiah would never be resurrected blemished.⁸⁴ And, in John 19:39, Jesus is buried with an absurdly large quantity of spices, which reflects an innovation of Sulla that became common in Roman imperial funerals.⁸⁵ In John 11:44 and 19:40; 20:7, Lazarus and Jesus are buried with their bodies in the Egyptian manner.⁸⁶ For a Roman audience an Egyptian style burial might suffice to give the narrative “local” color. But,

⁸⁰ John also minimizes Roman culpability in Jesus' death. Robert M. Grant, “The Origin of the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 69:4 (1950): 320.

⁸¹ Arthur J. Droge, “The Status of Peter in the Fourth Gospel: A Note on John 18:10–11,” *JBL* 109:2 (1990): 307–11 and n. 15 (in numerous instances, John disparages Peter, especially compared to the beloved disciple); cf. John 1:42.

⁸² John 19:32–33 reports that Jesus' legs were not broken.

⁸³ Jennifer A. Glancy, “Boasting of Beatings (2 Corinthians 11:23–25),” *JBL* 123:1 (2004): 100–07; Oakley, “Combat,” 409 & n. 145; Ovid, *Amores* 3.8.

⁸⁴ David Daube, “Disgrace,” 2:617–18, 620, 624; *Sanh.* 52b3–4 & n. 43; 82a; 103b–104a2–3 & n. 18; *Mak.* 11b1 & nn. 1–10, 13–15; *Sotah* 7b3 & n. 24–25; *B. Qam.* 92a4 & nn. 42, 47–49. In Jewish tradition, disfiguring marks sustained by the violent cause of death tended to invalidate rather than validate post-mortem identification. *Sotah* 47b; 120a3; *Yev.* 115b1 & n. 4.

⁸⁵ Geoffrey S. Sumi, “Spectacles and Sulla's Public Image,” *Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte* 51:4 (2002): 421.

⁸⁶ Christina Riggs, “Roman Period Mummy Masks from Deir el-Bahri,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 86 (2000): 121–44; Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John* (ed. Francis J. Moloney; New York: Doubleday, 2003), 1008 (“mummy wrappings”); Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray; eds. R. W. N. Hoare, J. K. Riches; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 680 & n. 6 (“Egyptian”).

in reality, Jewish customs were quite different. Jewish tradition at the time John was written favored very simple burials.⁸⁷

ALLUSION THAT JESUS WAS OF ILLEGITIMATE BIRTH

John 8:44 where Jesus denounces the Jews as “sons of the Devil” is usually considered John’s most anti-Semitic verse. But, more informative for understanding John is the exchange that led to it, in which the Jews seem to allude to Jesus having been of illegitimate birth (8:19, 41). The Jews say, “We are not illegitimate” (*porneias* meaning from fornication, adultery, “porn”), thereby implying that Jesus is from fornication. This is an example of John using topical but not profound “Jewish” material.⁸⁸ Legends among Jews of Jesus’ illegitimate birth probably arose in response to Christian legends of Jesus’ virgin birth. These probably arose out of Jewish legends of the prophetic meaning of translational differences in the Septuagint from the Hebrew (specifically *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 translated as *parthenos* (Matt 1:23)). And, these in turn arose out of legends of the Septuagint having been entirely accurately translated due to divine inspiration. Thus, the stories of Jesus’ virgin or illegitimate birth probably did not exist, arise, or take hold until about 80 CE.⁸⁹

From a Jewish perspective, it is incredible that John would contain a reference to Jesus having allegedly been of illegitimate birth as it reflects very poorly on Jesus were he a *mamser*

⁸⁷ *Mo’ed Qat.* 27b1 & n. 8. Reuben Kashani, “Burials,” *EncJud* (2nd ed.), 4:292–93; Avraham Faust, “Early Israel: An Egalitarian Society,” *BAR* (July/August 2013): 45–48, 62–63.

⁸⁸ Daniel C. Harlow, “Born of Fornication: The Jewish Charge of Jesus’ Illegitimacy in John, Celsus, and Origen,” in *Portraits of Jesus: Studies in Christology* (ed. Susan E. Myers; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 335–53; Frank Reilly, “Jane Schaberg, Raymond E. Brown, and the Problem of the Illegitimacy of Jesus,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 21:1 (2005): 57–80. The pericope is purposely written to be susceptible of both biological and spiritual meanings.

⁸⁹ Abraham Wasserstein and David J. Wasserstein, *Legends of the Septuagint: From Classical Antiquity to Today* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 68–69, 95.

(*Qidd.* 28a1 & n. 12).⁹⁰ It also reflects poorly upon Jesus from a Christian perspective. Thus, John 8:41–44 may be seen as both anti-Jewish and anti-Christian. Perhaps John’s Roman patron(s) and audience knew of the stories of Jesus’ purported virgin or illegitimate birth and wanted them referred to in their gospel. From a Greco-Roman perspective in the tradition of Alexander, being sired by a god was a common attribute of great rulers.⁹¹ But, the Jewish God, unlike his Greco-Roman counterparts, did not rape and seduce women. While unflattering of Jesus from the perspective of Jews and most Christians, the allusion in John to Jesus’ illegitimate birth makes Christianity appear less of a threat to Rome or at least fit within a Roman pagan cultural norm of great men having a divine father.

COVENANTS AND EUCHARIST IN JOHN

Perhaps the most stunning departure of John from the Synoptics and Paul is the lack of a Last Supper, Eucharist, or new covenant. As with the Hittites and Assyrians before them, treaty-covenants were the bedrock of Roman political ideology.⁹² And, a classic provision of the ancient Hittite-Assyrian treaty-covenant form (going back in Near Eastern treaties to the third millennium⁹³) was what I call the *Philokaiser*,⁹⁴ the same friends and enemies clause, that the suzerain’s friends are the vassal’s friend’s and the suzerain’s enemies are the vassal’s enemies.

⁹⁰ Similarly, John 7:41–42 mocks the idea that Jesus came from Bethlehem.

⁹¹ Andrew Lincoln, “How Babies Were Made in Jesus’ Time,” *BAR* 40:6 (2014): 42–49.

⁹² Elias J. Bickerman, “Bellum Philippicum: Some Roman and Greek Views Concerning the Causes of the Second Macedonian War,” *CP* 40:3 (1945): 146; Watson, *International*, 27–28, 64, 69; Eric Adler, “Who’s Anti-Roman? Sallust and Pompeius Trogus on Mithridates,” *CJ* 101:4 (2006): 383–407.

⁹³ Moshe Weinfeld, “The Covenant of Grant in the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East,” *JAOS* 90:2 (1970): 194; Idem, *Normative and Sectarian Judaism in the Second Temple Period* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 16; David J. Bederman, *International Law in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 187; Donald Walter Baronowski, “*Sub Umbra Foederis Aequi*,” *Phoenix* 44:4 (1990): 345–69 (Romans used dominion, majesty, subordination,

The *Philokaiser* was what justified in the ancient Jewish covenant the killing (in theory much more than practice) of all non-Jewish inhabitants of the promised land, including even women, children, and babies. In ancient treaty-covenant ideology, all persons who were not treaty partners of the suzerain were enemies, required to be eradicated.

After the Babylonian captivity, Judaism conquered by spreading its beliefs among pagans, and the concept of *hesed*, loving kindness, increasingly took hold,⁹⁵ out of which developed the notion of Christian love and mercy (perhaps more in theory than practice), epitomized in the “love your enemy” of Matt 5:44–47 and Luke 6:27, 32–36. But, the Romans clung to the old *Philokaiser* form,⁹⁶ which justified on sacred religious grounds their unspeakable cruelty.

Despite being thought of as consummately theological and spiritual, John does not contain the Sermon on the Mount nor the admonition to love enemies.⁹⁷ And, for good reason.

and inequality clauses as well as the “same friends and enemies clause,” but irrespective, Rome controlled its allies foreign policy (353, 356, 361, 363 and n. 37).

⁹⁴ From the German usage of *Kaisereid* (literally, “Caesar-oath” but more broadly the covenant), especially in Peter Herrmann, *Der romanische Kaisereid: Untersuchungen zu seiner Herkunft und Entwicklung* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1968), from which Weinfeld, *Normative*, 2–44, especially 15, 29, discovered that the Roman imperial cult followed the Hittite-Assyrian treaty-covenant form. The epithet *Philokaiser* is found on coins of Herod Agrippa I (42–43). Kenneth Lonnqvist, “A Re-Attribution of the King Herod Agrippa I ‘Year 6’ - Issue,” 47 *LA* 47 (1997): 431–32. The “friend of” formulation was common in the Asian Roman Empire for participation in associations supporting the imperial cult. Philip A. Harland, “Imperial Cults within Local Cultural Life: Associations in Roman Asia,” *AHB* 17:1–2 (2003): 95 & n.37; Epictetus 3.4.

⁹⁵ As respects the Jewish covenant with God, in rabbinic Judaism, the *Philokaiser* became a dead letter. *m. Yad*. 4.4; Jeremy Rosen, “Differing and Changing Attitudes in the Jewish Exegetical Tradition to the Fulfillment of the Biblical Land Covenant,” *BSOAS* 71:2 (2008): 193.

⁹⁶ Baronowski, “*Foederis*.” In the marriage covenant, Plutarch, *Conj. praec.* 19, counsels: a wife’s friends are the friends of her husband; his gods are her gods.

⁹⁷ John 13:34–35; 15:13–14 (“Greater love hath no man than to lay down his life for his friends”), 15:17–19; Clayton R. Bowen, “Love in the Fourth Gospel,” *JR* 13:1 (1933), 42–48. Contrary to Jewish custom, John displays little or no concern or compassion for the poor, oppressed, or outcast (12:7–8). Only Judas displays concern for the poor (12:5; 13:29).

For Romans, who clung to the *Philokaiser*, to love enemies or even neutrality was a covenantal breach. Loyalty and allegiance to the suzerain superseded all other bonds.⁹⁸

Ideologically, any covenant or allegiance necessarily rivaled the Roman treaty system and imperial cult and was threatening and unacceptable to Rome. Therefore, Philo and Josephus downplay the Jewish covenant with God.⁹⁹ The Talmud focuses far less on the covenant than one might expect. And, John shuns Jesus' new covenant completely, which, addressing an imperial Roman audience, is entirely sensible.

But, John goes further by affirmatively and repeatedly negating and disparaging the Eucharist and new covenant. Thus, John 19:26–27 creates an ersatz covenant by having Jesus from the cross say to his mother, “Woman, behold your son,” and to the beloved disciple, “Behold your mother.” In ancient history, treaties and covenants were routinely based upon manufactured familial relationships and the reciting of such formulae as, “I am your father, you are my son,” or, in Jeremiah's new covenant form, “I am your husband, you are my wife.”¹⁰⁰ Thus, the formula in John is of a covenant, but the relationship, mother and son, is not. Hence, while Jesus uses a time-honored covenantal formula, the relationship of mother and son recasts

⁹⁸ *Neque me neque liberos meos eius salute cariones habebo* (Seut. Calig. 15), “Nor will I hold myself or my children more dear than;” Daniel G. Van Slyke, “*Sacramentum* in Ancient Non-Christian Authors,” *Antiphon* 9:2 (2005): 179; D. Wardle, “An Allusion to the Kaisereid in Tacitus Annals 1.42?”, *CQ*, New Series 47:2 (1997), 609-13; Greg Rowe, *Princes and Political Culture: The New Tiberian Senatorial Decree* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 139.

⁹⁹ Louis H. Feldman, “Josephus's Portrait of Moses,” *JQR*, New Series, 82:3/4 (1992), 285, 307, 320 (embarrassing episodes omitted); “Josephus' Portrait of Moses, Part Three, 83:3/4 (1993), 318-19 (covenant dear to anti-Roman revolutionaries); Philo, *Heir* 38 (182); *Moses* 2, 29 (149)–30 (152).

¹⁰⁰ Moshe Weinfeld, “Covenant Terminology in the Ancient Near East and its Influence on the West,” *JAOS* (1973): 197 & n.83; Idem, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 80-81; Lev 26:12; Deut 29:12-13; 2 Sam 7:14; Psalms 2:7.

the covenant created by Jesus as non-threatening (to Rome) and a mere shadow of the Synoptic covenant.

Further, John 13:26–27 creates what I call the Satanic Judas Eucharist. In the location of the Last Supper Eucharist in the Synoptics, John has a two part pericope that begins with Jesus washing his apostle’s feet. For readers recalling the Synoptic presentation, nothing could be more bizarre, “defective,” and “grotesque” than representing the Eucharist as a foot washing.¹⁰¹ After the foot washing comes another bizarre episode in which Jesus identifies his betrayer by giving Judas a “sop,” morsel Jesus has dipped (compare Mark 14:20; Matt 26:23). The dipping seems to evoke Passover Seder customs. But, this episode denigrates the Eucharist as something extremely bad. The one to whom Jesus gives the erstwhile Eucharist is the traitor; by taking the morsel, Satan entered into him (13:27).

But perhaps, the writer(s) of this passage were disloyal to John’s pro-Roman, anti-Jewish purpose because John 13:25–30 records that Judas “took” or “received” the morsel and left with it. The text may studiously avoid saying that Judas ate it.¹⁰² If so, this implies that Judas did not eat the morsel, and had Judas eaten it, he might have been saved—an implication the general editor of John and his patron(s) almost certainly did not intend. Thus, the story of Jesus identifying the disloyal one may be a case of a disloyal writer subverting the gospel’s dishonorable anti-Semitic purpose. Indeed, there are a number of places where it seems writers slipped things into the gospel that subvert John’s anti-Jewish, pro-Roman agenda. A prime example is John’s story of Mary Magdalene witnessing Jesus’ resurrection, which, on the surface, appears very different from Matthew, but alludes to the same body of rabbinic law of the

¹⁰¹ Brooks, “Eucharist,” 298.

¹⁰² Samuel Laeuchli, “Origen’s Interpretation of Judas Iscariot,” *CH* 22:4 (1953): 258.

celebrated exception that permits women's testimony whether a person is alive or dead (*mYev.* 15–16).

In a third instance, in its bread of life discourse, John reformulates the Eucharist as the body and blood of Jesus (6:53–57), indicating that John's authors knew of the Christian Eucharist, but does so with “cannibalistic” overtones that neuter and render the metaphor harmless and unthreatening to Rome.¹⁰³

In a fourth instance, in the Synoptics, at the Last Super, Jesus vows that he will not drink the fruit of the vine again until in the heavenly kingdom (Matt 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18). This vow by Jesus is obviously important, and the Synoptics record that Jesus was offered wine but he refused it, or at least they do not say he drank it (Matt 27:34, 48–50; Mark 15:23, 36–37; Luke 23:36 (soldiers offered wine to mock Jesus)). Contrariwise, John 19:28–29 conspicuously has Jesus immediately before his death say he is thirsty and drink wine (mixed with water).¹⁰⁴ The detail unique to John that the drink was lifted up on a hyssop (a bush entirely unsuited for the purpose) is a covenantal, Eucharistic, and Pascal reference (Exod 12:22; Heb 9:19). It seems to me that John's purpose in having Jesus drink covenantal wine as the last thing he did before dying was to repudiate Jesus' Last Supper vow found in the Synoptics by having Jesus break it—which presents Jesus in a very bad light.

PARALLELS IN MATTHEW'S AND JOHN'S PILATE SCENES

It appears to me that John was purposefully written to appear to be independent of and disassociated from the Synoptics, but in some places this purpose is given away, especially where John (in structural form, if not in substance) gets too close to the Synoptics and especially

¹⁰³ Harrill, “Cannibalistic.”

¹⁰⁴ L. Th. Witkamp, “Jesus' Thirst in John 19:28–30: Literal or Figurative?”, *JBL* 115:3 (1996): 489–510.

to Matthew. The reason Matthew is so important is because of its plethora of recondite rabbinic allusions, which, because their details are so idiosyncratic, provide telltale clues allowing for identification—but only by those with a deep and sophisticated knowledge and understanding of rabbinic law and custom.

A case in point is the scene of Pilate and the crowd in which John seems to use the same unusual and opaque means as Matthew. Matthew 27:25, “The entire people answered, ‘His blood on us and on our children’” is a formula based upon two sources, (1) the divine covenant¹⁰⁵ and (2) the Passover liturgy.

First, the landing of the blood of the covenant on the entire people (*laos* LXX) was the ritual mechanism by which the Mosaic covenant was accepted (Exod 24:8). Second, the landing of the lifeblood of the Pascal sacrifice on the Altar was the ritual mechanism by which Passover sacrifice was accepted.¹⁰⁶

When the Temple was destroyed, and blood sacrifice in Judaism ceased, in lieu of the throwing, or pouring, and landing of the Pascal blood, that ritual step was remembered by a prayer inserted in the Passover liturgy: “the paschal offering, whose blood will come unto the walls of thy altar for acceptance” (*Pesah*. 116b2 & n.27).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Desmond Sullivan, “New Insights into Matthew 27:24–25,” *NBf* 7, no. 863 (1992): 453–57. The interpretation of Matt 27:25 that Jesus’ blood on the people meant guilt, was not the original and is an incorrect meaning. The original and correct meaning was that the people had unwittingly accepted Jesus’ covenantal offer.

¹⁰⁶ Like covenants, sacrifices are contracts with an offer and acceptance. Paul E. Dion, “Early Evidence for the Ritual Significance of the ‘Base of the Altar’: Around Deut 12:27 LXX,” *JBL* 106:3 (1987), 487–90; *Zebah*. xlii, xlvii–ii, 4b, 24b3, 25b4 & n.31, 29b2 & n.13, 34b4 & n.28, 47b2 & n. 13; *Pesah*. 78b2 & n. 19, 96a1 & n. 5, 116b2 & n. 27; Stowers, “Comparison,” 181–86.

¹⁰⁷ *The Schocken Passover Haggadah* (ed. Nahum N. Glatzer; New York: Schocken Books, 1996), 65 (thought to have been introduced by Akiva). On Talmudic attributions see, Yaakov Elman, “How Should Talmudic Intellectual History Be Written? A Response to David Kraemer’s ‘Responses,’” *JQR*, New Series 89:3/4 (1999): 371–386, cited with approval by

John also uses elements drawn from and alluding to the treaty-covenant form and the Passover liturgy, which are closely related to Matthew's elements from those same sources. First, John's formula, "friend of Caesar" (19:12), references the *Philokaiser*, which in the political context of John 19:12 means that anyone who would make himself a king (not by Caesar's blessing) is *ipso facto* antagonistic to Caesar, and exclusive loyalty to Caesar required that "friends of Caesar" oppose such an individual.

Second, John's formula, "We have no king but Caesar" is based upon the Passover liturgy, but as a parody. The *Nishmas kol chai*, "breath of life," prayer (*Pesah*. 118a1 n.2) contains the formula, "we have no king (Lord, sovereign) but (thee) Oh Lord."¹⁰⁸ In a parody, John uses that formula but changes it to, "we have no king but Caesar" (19:15).¹⁰⁹

Thus, both Matthew and John combine clauses of the treaty-covenant form with parts of the Passover ritual.¹¹⁰ As respects the treaty-covenant form, Matthew references its self-imprecatory curse-oath-including-children acceptance clause, while John references its *Philokaiser* clause. As respects the Passover ritual, Matthew references the landing of the blood prayer, while John references its breath prayer.

Jeffrey Rubenstein in David Weiss Halivni, *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud* (trans., annot. Jeffrey Rubenstein; Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 282.

¹⁰⁸ See *Schocken*, 90–91.

¹⁰⁹ Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (NovTSup 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967), 76–78; David Rensberger, "Politics of John: The Trial of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 103:3 (1984): 406; Josephus, *Ant.* 15.10.4 (368), 17.2.4 (42), 18.1.6 (23); *J.W.* 2.8.1 (118), 7.10.1 (410, 418) (prominence of revolutionaries refusal to acknowledge Caesar as lord); *Schocken*, 65; *Pesah*. 116b2 & n.27.

¹¹⁰ It has been recognized that the Jewish divine covenant is in the Hittite-Assyrian treaty-covenant form. George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *BA* 17 (1954): 49–76; Billie Jean Collins, *The Hittites and Their World* (Atlanta: SBL, 2007), 139; Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy*, 116–29.

Furthermore, the Passover “breath” prayer referenced in John and “blood” prayer referenced in Matthew are close. Breath and blood are the two words in the Bible (and elsewhere) for the essence of life.¹¹¹

ROMAN TITLES AND THEMES

John gives Jesus Roman imperial titles such as “Savior of the World” and Domitian’s notorious and highly controversial “Lord and God”¹¹² with which John prominently ends (20:28–31).¹¹³ Thus, particularly if John was intended for a noble, imperial Roman audience, John was probably composed before Domitian’s *damnatio memoriae*.

The high Christological Johannine “Son of God” (“Father” and “Son” repeated so very frequently and prominently in John) is not a Jewish concept. It is Roman, as with Jupiter’s many offspring and prominently with Caesar being a son of god, *Divi filius*, and the, felicitous to a Roman, theme of *pater et filius*.

One title, a Matthean favorite, John never uses is “Son of David” (which had anti-Roman revolutionary overtones). Mindful of the Jewish tradition to end on an upbeat note,¹¹⁴ I conclude

¹¹¹ *Nefesh* and *ruah* (“wind”) in Hebrew, *pneuma* in Greek and *anima* and *spiritus* in Latin all mean to breath. Stowers, “Comparison;” Elison Banks Finley, “Breath and Breathing,” *ER*; Gen 1:2 (*ruah elohim*); 2:7, God breathed (*neshamah*) the breath of life into Adam’s nostrils and he came alive (breathing, *nefesh*); David Biale, *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol between Jews and Christians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 16; Philo, *Worse* 22 (19); Idem, *QG* 2 59; Weinfeld, *Normative*, 34 (In Judaism, “taking upon oneself,” “receiving”), 39. Weinfeld directly connects professions of God’s kingship with the self-imprecatory curse-oath formula that includes “children.” *Zebah*. 4b, 24b3, 34b4, 25b4, 26b1, 29b2, 47b2; *Pesah*. 65b1-2, 78b2, 96a1, 116b2; Dennis J. McCarthy, “Further Notes on the Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice,” *JBL* 92:2 (1973), 205-10.

¹¹² The use of Domitian’s titles may be a case flattery by imitation.

¹¹³ Richard J. Cassidy, *John’s Gospel in New Perspective: Christology and the Realities of Roman Power* (New York: Orbis, 1992), 13–16, 29, 34–38, especially 71 and 85; Craig R. Koester, “‘The Savior of the World’ (John 4:42),” *JBL* 109:4 (1990), 665–680; Brent, *Cult*, 169–77; Kierspel, *Jews*, 195–207. “King of the Jews” much favored in John was a title decreed upon Herod by the Roman Senate. Josephus, *J.W.* 1.14.4.

¹¹⁴ Daube, “Form,” 2:218.

with an ancient humorous anecdote told by Jewish-Christian church historian Hegesippus (knowledgeable in the oral law. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 4.22), which, because it is told in the form of a standard rabbinic humorous anecdote, reveals much.¹¹⁵

Domitian ordered that all of the sons of David be killed (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.19–20.1–8). But two could be found, descendants of Jesus’ brother, Jude. Espousing the doctrine in John 18:33–37, that Christianity proclaims, “not a temporal or earthly kingdom but heavenly and angelic that appears at the end of the world,” Domitian spared them, called off his persecution, and they rose to become the leaders of the Galilean church.¹¹⁶ The humorous point of the story is that John might be used to defend Jesus’ relatives as sons of David when John shuns and disparages the notion that Jesus was the Son of David (John 7:41–42),¹¹⁷ However, the story may contain a grain of truth that John was written as an apologia for Domitian.

CONCLUSION

This article advances the thesis that John was written to appeal to a cultured, upper class, imperial pagan audience hostile to Jews, Judaism, and Jewish-Christianity, and deeply suspicious of Gentile-Christianity. And, therefore, John presents Christianity as not Jewish, and not adverse to Rome and Rome’s claimed right to rule the temporal world.

In support of this thesis several examples have been given. From a Roman perspective, Caiaphas’ speech alludes to Juturna’s speech. Rather than apt unwitting prophecy, Caiaphas and

¹¹⁵ *Ta’an.* 21a2–3; *Sanh.* 108b5–109a1. The topos is on a trip to Caesar, that badly miscarries, facing certain death, the resourceful Jew(s) play Caesar for a fool, and are handsomely rewarded. Some versions of these stories feature Clemens.

¹¹⁶ Sherman E. Johnson, “The Davidic-Royal Motif in the Gospels,” *JBL* 87:2 (1968): 136–50, especially 150. The same argument is made in Justin Martyr, 1 *Apol.* 11.

¹¹⁷ Wayne Meeks, “Galilee and Judea in the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 85:2 (1966): 159–63. “Son of David,” a favorite expression of Matthew, shunned by John, means the Jewish Messiah. J. Louis Martyn, *Historical Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (New York/Evanston: Harper & Row, 1968), 84; Edwin D. Freed, “The Entry into Jerusalem in the Gospel of John,” *JBL* 80:4 (1961): 333 and n. 25. Compare John 12:13 with Synoptic analogues.

Juturna give shamefully bad advice. Jesus' death presages a Jewish defeat and greater dispersal and Roman victory and unity. Speared by a Roman *hasta*, Jesus is depicted as under Roman domination. The Johannine theme of "signs" is culturally Roman, not Jewish. And, Peter, who, like Jesus, Rome executed, is presented as blemished and hence an illegitimate priest. John alludes to Jesus having been of illegitimate birth. John is hostile towards the covenant and Eucharist. John uses the same means as Matthew in the scene of Pilate and the crowd—alluding to a clause in the treaty-covenant form and prayer in the Passover liturgy. And, John gives Jesus Domitian's titles.

John does not reflect an actual historical state of Jewish-Christian hostility that existed, neither at the time of Jesus, nor at time John was written. Rather, in an environment of imperial persecution of noble Roman adherents to Judaism, John posits a state of Christian-Jewish hostility and difference to give the appearance that Christianity was separate from Judaism. John was written this way because Christianity was perceived as being Jewish, and there was an urgent need to counter that perception. Thus, the impetus and wellspring for John's anti-Semitism is not Christian nor doctrinal but pagan and political.

Since the Holocaust, scholars have debated what to do about John's anti-Semitism. The thesis advanced here may provide a way to view John shorn of its anti-Semitism. If John's anti-Semitism is for the ruling pagan audience, perhaps it can be disaggregated from the part of John addressed to those who commissioned John.

Finally, if the thesis here is correct, the parting of the ways reflected in John occurred relatively abruptly and late, contemporaneously with the writing of John. It was not due to an inherent internal conflict between Christians and Jews and their beliefs but rather external imperial Roman stimuli outside of Christian-Jewish interrelationships. And, the principal actors

who brought about this parting were at the pinnacle of political power and wealth rather than from among the masses.

