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Making sense of time: reconsidering the rhetoric of temporality in Johannine literature

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Dissertation

**MAKING SENSE OF TIME: RECONSIDERING THE RHETORIC OF
TEMPORALITY IN JOHANNINE LITERATURE**

by

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“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven”

Ecclesiastes 3:1

DEDICATION

For Eun Hye Kim, Benjamin, and Junia An

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**MAKING SENSE OF TIME: RECONSIDERING THE RHETORIC OF
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines temporal frames in the Gospel of John and the Johannine letters and traces the ways that these texts and those who received them constructed and employed temporality to shape belief in Christ. Building on existing scholarship on Johannine literature and temporality, I situate these writers and their readers within their contemporary Greek, Roman, and Jewish social and rhetorical contexts, exploring the use of temporal markers, calendrical calculations, and claims about the past, present, and future in ancient discourses of self-definition.

The Gospel of John uses an account of Jesus's life and deeds to assert the God of Israel's exclusive prerogative to create, control, and dominate not only time but also earthly authorities. The writer(s) of the Gospel place the Logos "in the beginning," situate events within Jewish temporal frames, and align Jesus's resurrection with solar time to portray Jesus as a sovereign, divine agent. The Johannine letters also employ temporality, but differently. The letters link the past with the present to establish an identity for the audience by assuring them of their genealogical and temporal bonds with Jesus. The letters seek to distance perceived opponents, who are labeled "Antichrist," by describing them as agents of the devil who sinned "from the beginning." A later group of Christ

believers known as the “Quartodecimans” received and adopted Johannine temporality for their own purposes. Celebrating Easter in full coordination with the Passover, for example, Melito of Sardis envisioned God’s salvific work in a continuity that directly linked salvation from the Exodus to Jesus’s death and resurrection. Melito employed temporality to create a mobile and porous boundary between Christ believers and other groups and to claim the theological superiority of his own group. This analysis of Johannine literature indicates that ancient writers widely employed claims about temporality to distinguish their perceived audiences from other groups. These writers sought to persuade the followers of Christ to adopt particular temporal outlooks and to ascribe them to concomitant theological assertions. They thus established their exclusive authority to interpret Jesus’s life and deeds and defame false teachings.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AJTh</i>	The American Journal of Theology
<i>AJA</i>	American Journal of Archaeology
<i>Antiquities</i>	Josephus, Jewish Antiquities
<i>BU</i>	Boston University
<i>BibInt</i>	Biblical Interpretation
<i>Carm. Saec.</i>	Horace, Carmen Saeculare
<i>CBQ</i>	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
<i>CBR</i>	Currents in Biblical Research
<i>ClAnt</i>	Classical Antiquity
<i>CIL</i>	Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum
<i>Dialogue</i>	Justin, Dialogue with Trypho
<i>DDS</i>	Dead Sea Scrolls
<i>Gen. Animals</i>	Aristotle, Generation of Animals
<i>ISO</i>	International Standards Organization
<i>HTR</i>	The Harvard Theological Review
<i>JBL</i>	Journal of Biblical Literature
<i>JECS</i>	Journal of Early Christian Studies
<i>JNES</i>	Journal of Near Eastern Studies
<i>JR</i>	Journal of Religion
<i>JRA</i>	Journal of Roman Archaeology

<i>JRS</i>	Journal of Roman Studies
<i>JSJ</i>	Journal for the Study of Judaism
<i>JSNT</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
<i>JTS</i>	Journal of Theological Studies
<i>LCL</i>	Loeb Classical Library
<i>LSJ</i>	Liddell, Scott, and Jones, A Greek-English Lexicon
<i>Moses</i>	Philo, On Moses
<i>Nat. Fac.</i>	Galen, On the Natural Faculties
<i>NC</i>	Hippocrates, Nature of the Child
<i>NovT</i>	Novum Testamentum
<i>NTS</i>	New Testament Studies
<i>PP</i>	Melito, Peri Pascha
<i>SBL</i>	Society of Biblical Literature
<i>Sem.</i>	Galen, On Semen
<i>Spec.</i>	Philo, On the Special Laws
<i>TynBul</i>	Tyndale Bulletin

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement and Thesis

Each city in the ancient Roman world calibrated its time in a unique way by blending aspects of the imperial calendar with other conventional temporal systems. Ancient writers adapted these temporal systems when constructing their narratives in order to shape their own particular sense of time and temporality. These presentations of time were neither fixed nor neutral, but rather displayed the rhetorical strategies of those who created, employed, and practiced them.¹ By investigating different configurations of time in ancient literary texts, this project considers what was at stake in the temporal systems of the Gospel of John in particular, and those presented in Johannine literature more broadly, by tracing the composition and reception of this literature among Christ believers.² By constructing temporal frames that place Jesus's life within divine as well as earthly time, Johannine literature presents Jesus as the savior of the world (John 4:42 and 1 John 4:14) and seeks to secure a sense of group belonging by imagining a shared experience of the past based on a particular understanding of time. In the second and

¹ Concerning the multi-dimensional aspects of time, see Michael G. Flaherty, *The Texture of Time: Agency and Temporal Experience* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2011), 2-13; William Gallois, *Time, Religion, and History* (Edinburgh: Pearson, 2007), 1-4; Robert Hannah, "Calendar," in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Ancient Mediterranean Religions*, ed. Eric Orlin, Lisbeth S. Fried, Jennifer Wright Knust, Michael L. Satlow, and Michael E. Pregill (New York: Routledge, 2015), 159-160; David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country – Revisited*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Patrick Dawson and Christopher Sykes, *Organizational Change and Temporality: Bending the Arrow of Time* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Donald J. Wilcox, *The Measure of Times Past: Pre-Newtonian Chronologies and the Rhetoric of Relative Time* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1-15; Eve-Marie Becker, *The Birth of Christian History: Memory and Time from Mark to Luke-Acts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 1-33; Katherine Clark keenly analyzes temporal frames as political, social constructs by expounding the various local frames of time in the ancient Greece. See, Katherine Clarke, *Making Time for the Past: Local History and the Polis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 27.

² Karl Gerlach, *The Antenicene Pascha: A Rhetorical History* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), xix.

early third centuries C.E., this literature was reinterpreted by a group of people known as the “Quartodecimans” (meaning “proponents of the fourteenth day”), who adopted what they considered to be the Johannine chronological arrangement of Jesus’s death and resurrection to give meaning to their Easter celebration, which they observed by correlating their own feast with the Jewish Pascha.³

The importance of temporal markers for some Christ believers is clear from the very first words of the Gospel. The Gospel of John opens by declaring that, in his role as “the Word,” Jesus was present “in the beginning” (John 1:1). This temporal marker simultaneously references primordial time in Israel’s history (Genesis 1:1 “in the beginning”) and the Roman imperial calendar, codified in the inscription commemorating the Emperor’s birthday (“beginning”), which was understood as a beneficial day for all living beings (the ruler’s birthday marks the beginning of a new epoch). Paralleling the Torah’s teaching that God was the beginning (Exod 3:14) and John’s understanding that Jesus, as “Word,” appeared at the beginning, the emperor’s birth was considered a “beginning” in the Roman context. By alluding to both beginnings, the Gospel of John constructs a distinctive, varied temporal frame that intertwines temporal references drawn from the setting in which it was composed to arrange past events in a way that shapes the

³ Leaders like Polycarp of Smyrna, Polycrates of Ephesus, and Melito of Sardis – later categorized as “the Quartodecimans” – claimed that the 14th of Nissan, the start of the Jewish Passover, was the appropriate day to celebrate Christ’s resurrection. According to these writers, the Johannine passion was the proper source for the calendrical calibration of Easter, a practice maintained by some long after other Christ believers began to celebrate Christ’s resurrection on Sunday (*Ecclesiastical History* 5. 23-24). Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb’s High Feast: Melito, Peri Pascha, and the Quartodeciman Paschal Liturgy at Sardis* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 1-29; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History, Volume I: Books 1-5*, trans. Kirsopp Lake, LCL 153 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 503-513; Roger T Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology: Jewish and Christian Biblical, Intertestamental and Patristic Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 51-70; J. A. Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West: The Commentaries and the Provenance of the Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 203-218.

portrait of Jesus. The first letter of John (hereafter 1 John) reiterates and transforms this temporal framework, also employing the temporal marker “from the beginning” (1 John 1:1), which rhetorically mirrors Genesis and echoes the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel. By invoking the time of creation as represented in Genesis 1:1, 1 John 1:1 addresses the believers’ communal origin and, by linking the past with the present and future through imaginative genealogical strategies, invites them to participate in a temporal frame that distinguishes them from other Jesus followers. This imagined genealogy situates the audience in relation to divine time and the “beginning,” and defines the status of the opponents that 1 John imagined: namely that they held no legitimate link to the ancestor to whom 1 John belongs because they belong to another ancestry – that of the devil. This literature legitimated the true believers’ self-definition through a belief in Jesus as a reconfiguration of time that collapsed the past, present, and future. Jesus is also depicted as the end of time in these writings; he is characterized as not only indestructible, but also as returning to his original glorious status following his crucifixion and resurrection (John 17:5 and 1 John 3:2).⁴

Some later Christ believers (e.g. Melito of Sardis) adopted these Johannine temporal frames for their own purposes, defining their celebration of Easter based on John’s perspective; Jesus’s death and resurrection were interpreted as a “Passover” and the observance of this day became one way to attend to the importance of temporality in the context of ritual performance. Calibrating time and inviting an audience to adopt it,

⁴ “So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed” (John 17:5). Throughout this chapter, I will consult NRSV unless otherwise mentioned.

therefore, was a central strategy for these Jesus believers, who sought to foster a sense of bonding, in part, by creating a particular frame of temporality that distinguished their own calendars from what had come before. This process, already present in the Gospel, is reaffirmed in 1 John, and became practiced in liturgical cycles as these believers grew in number and influence.

By using temporal markers and frames, the Gospel of John portrays Jesus as the true Lord of the world and describes God alone as having the prerogative to begin, end, and organize time, which is in turn reenacted in the life of Jesus. The first letter of John both employs temporal markers from the Gospel while developing its own, particular usage; the letter writer imagines that the community that the letter addressed originated at the beginning of time and uses genealogical strategies to distinguish this group from other Christ believers by linking the past with the present and future. The practices of Easter that Jesus followers developed during the second century shows that temporality remained a significant consideration and an important way to distinguish between various groups. Melito of Sardis was a particular proponent of this point of view; he asserted that Passover was the single commemoration of Jesus's passion and resurrection. He also presented an ambivalent and binary attitude towards celebrating Easter according to Jewish time, and towards celebrating Jesus as the true Paschal lamb. He recommended a framework of temporal observance distinct from that of other Jesus believers. As the following chapters argue, early Christian writers like Melito of Sardis employed various temporal frames to recommend that Jesus's followers practice and follow the will of God as the writers understood it. These authors also invited their audiences to participate in

their conceptions of time, which distinguished them from other groups and “those who do not see God.”⁵

Significance of the Problem

Ancient people organized time according to a variety of systems, arranging past events and present practices according to both Roman and local periodization schemes; it was thus a challenge for writers to express a synchronized, authoritative sense of time that their diverse audiences could understand.⁶ Those responsible for writing the Gospel of John shared this problem, which inspired a high degree of temporal intricacy on their part. Other scholars have previously noted the importance and complexity of the Johannine presentation of time; however, they have often attributed the apparent complexity of the writer(s)’s temporal frameworks to a lack of caution with chronological arrangement rather than to an intentional and clear textual strategy.⁷ I argue instead that the Gospel of John employs a distinctive, coherent temporal framework that can be situated within the world of the narrative; the writer(s) intertwine temporal references

⁵ Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha: With the Fragments of Melito and Other Material Related to the Quartodecimans*, trans. Alistair C. Stewart, 2nd ed. (New York: St Vladimir Seminary Press, 2017), 75.

⁶ D. C. Feeney, *Caesar’s Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 1-6; Michele Renee Salzman, *On Roman Time: The Codex-Calendar of 354 and the Rhythms of Urban Life in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 3-22; Molly Pasco-Pranger, *Founding the Year Ovid’s Fasti and the Poetics of the Roman Calendar* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 21-72.

⁷ Raymond E. Brown points out that some chronological descriptions of John are awkward and unsuccessful attempts to relate John to the other three Gospels. Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John (I-XII)* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 113; James D. G. Dunn, *Neither Jew Nor Greek: A Contested Identity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 356 and 774; Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary*, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 184; Charles W. Hedrick, “Vestigial Scenes in John: Setting without Dramatization,” *NovT* 47 (2005): 354-66.

drawn from contemporary cultures to arrange past events in a way that shapes belief in Jesus and defines an approach to temporality designed to unite readers into a new understanding of divine time.⁸ As I show, Johannine literature uses temporal markers to describe Jesus and his life (in particular his death and resurrection) as a world-changing temporal axis that creates a boundary between “us” and “them.” The Quartodecimans also used this temporal strategy, employing John’s temporal schemes to both associate the Pascha with the passion of Jesus and distinguish their practice of Easter from that of other Jesus followers and “the Jews,” despite various historical linkages between these groups and their ritual practices.⁹

Existing scholarship on the role of temporality in the Fourth Gospel has often called attention to the literary function of narrative time.¹⁰ Alan Culpepper’s *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, for example, points out that the Gospel’s complex temporal configuration lends meaning to the text’s narratives; he argues that characteristics of Jesus’s ministry are illuminated through literary devices like plot, time, and an omniscient

⁸ Vernon K. Robbins, “Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination,” in *Foundations for Sociohistorical Exploration: A Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Reader*, ed. Vernon K. Robbins, Robert H. Von Thaden Jr., and Bart B. Bruehler (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 329-366; George Aichele, *The Postmodern Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 272-308.

⁹ The term “the Jews” in these documents is rhetorical counterpart to “Jesus followers” and therefore cannot be interpreted as a monolithic description of Jewish beliefs or practices. For discussion, see Adele Reinhartz, *Cast Out of the Covenant: Jews and Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018), 77-78 and 103-104; Judith Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (New York: T & T Clark, 1996), 220-235.

¹⁰ Tom Thatcher, “The New Current through John: The Old “New Look” and the New Critical Orthodoxy,” in *New Currents Through John*, ed. Francisco Lozada Jr. and Tom Thatcher (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2006), 1-26; Stephen Neill and Tom Wright, *The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 433-439; Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Oxford: Blackwell, 1971); J. Louis Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 3rd ed. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003).

narrator, each of which involves the narration of a temporal framework.¹¹ This work stimulated further research on time in John, including studies by Richard Bauckham and Gail R. O’Day, both of whom address the narrator’s articulation of a Christological understanding of Jesus’s life by structuring time.¹² As Bauckham and O’Day argue, the Gospel utilizes time to develop a Christological theme and to illuminate the meaning of Jesus’s ministry and teaching. Douglas Estes offers another approach, exploring John’s multi-dimensional mode of time in his work *The Temporal Mechanic of the Fourth Gospel*. But rather than addressing Johannine temporality as a matter of narration and plot, Estes uses relativity theory from modern physics to demonstrate that the temporal dimension of the Gospel is not absolute but rather rhetorically employed for narrative ends.¹³ Likewise, in their short studies, Friederike Kunath, Eric Rowe and Jerome Neyrey examine the temporal configurations of particular passages of the Gospel.¹⁴ Their work argues that the Gospel’s temporality shapes a multi-dimensional universe, though they do not attend to the broader context of John’s temporal framework. Still, these writers do

¹¹ R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 53-75, 231; Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985); Gail R. O’Day, “‘I have overcome the world’ (John 16:33): Narrative Time in John 13-17,” *Semeia* 53 (1991): 153-166.

¹² Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 131-184.

¹³ Douglas Estes, *The Temporal Mechanics of the Fourth Gospel: A Theory of Hermeneutical Relativity in the Gospel of John* (Leiden: Brill, 2008). Concerning the critique of applying a modern conception of temporality to ancient texts see, Malina, “Christ and Time,” 28; Steve Motyer, “Method in Fourth Gospel Studies: A Way Out of the Impasse?” *JSNT* 66 (1997): 27-44.

¹⁴ Friederike Kunath, “Jesus’s Preexistence and the Temporal Configuration of the Gospel of John,” *Early Christianity* 8 (2017): 30-47; Eric Rowe and Jerome Neyrey, “Christ and Time—Part Three: ‘Telling Time’ in the Fourth Gospel,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 40 (2010): 79-92. For an examination of temporal frame in 1 Peter, see David G. Horrell and Wei Hsien Wan, “Christology, Eschatology and the Politics of Time in 1 Peter,” *JSNT* (2016): 263-276.

point out a common theme: John's temporality, they argue, attempts to construct a new framework as an alternative to contemporary, imperial time. Warren Carter and Musa Dube add another perspective, arguing in their postcolonial exploration of the Gospel that John employs temporal frames to address discourses of domination and to both subvert and negotiate power.¹⁵ None of these scholars, however, pay close attention to the wider context of John's temporal framework; as I argue, John's use of time claims absolute, divinely mediated power over the empire.

In contrast to these studies, which focus either on the writers' expression of narrative time or, in the case of scholars informed by postcolonial approaches, on implicit power discourses, I place John's employment of multiple temporal frames within a complex temporal and historical context. Time and temporal rhetoric, I show, was a cultural and historical phenomenon as well as a narrative strategy that furthered John's claim that Christ was the mediator of absolute truth and power.

1 John, which echoes themes from the Gospel (e.g., life, light and darkness), has been interpreted as describing a community of Christ believers familiar with John's Gospel. Both the Epistle and the Gospel use temporal frames to construct the "Johannine community." The "community" has conventionally been framed, in a literary sense, as a unified group belonging to and founded in a particular social environment that the writer

¹⁵ Warren Carter, *John and Empire: Initial Explorations* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 3-18; Musa W. Dube, "Savior of the World but not of this World: A Postcolonial Reading of Spatial Construction in John," in *The Postcolonial Bible*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 118-35; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Time and Timing: Law and History," in *Chronotypes: The Construction of Time*, ed. John B. Bender and David E. Wellbery (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991), 99-117.

both refracted and developed for his own purposes.¹⁶ Scholars such as Brown, van der Watt and Strecker have interpreted 1 John as presenting a polemic designed to safeguard the community from the writer's imagined opponents. They also argue that the text reflects internal schisms within a social group by focusing on the writer's references to internal, communal tension (1 John 3:8, the children of God and the children of the devil) and those who left his group (1 John 2:19).¹⁷ Judith Lieu, however, argues that even if there were a polemic against outsiders, the letter does not describe who the opponents were, but rather assures the audience of eternal life and encourages it to remain faithful to God (e.g., 1 John 1:2, 5:13 and 2:7-8).¹⁸ As R. S. Sugirtharajah correctly points out, 1 John engages with a discourse of power and hegemony to undergird the writer's authority to interpret the gospel traditions; this writer addresses and constructs different groups by reinforcing a hierarchical relation between his or her own point of view and that of the addressees while also claiming distinctive theological interpretations of the identity of Jesus in the flesh.¹⁹ Though the practice of imagining a "community" on the basis of a literary work should be undertaken with caution, it is clear that this ancient writer has some imagined audience in mind and that he or she sought to persuade that audience to

¹⁶ Hansjörg Schmid, "How to Read the First Epistle of John Non-Polemically," *Biblica* 85 (2004): 24-41; Ramio Hakola, "The Johannine Community as a Constructed, Imagined Community," in *Social Memory and Social Identity in the Study of Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Samuel Byrskog, Raimo Hakola, and Jutta Jokiranta (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 211-214.

¹⁷ Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (New York: Doubleday, 1982); Georg Strecker, *The Johannine Letters: A Commentary on 1, 2, and 3 John* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996); Jan van der Watt, *An Introduction to the Johannine Gospel and Letters* (New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 137-138.

¹⁸ Judith Lieu, *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 6.

¹⁹ R. S. Sugirtharajah, "The First, Second, and Third Letters of John," in *Bible and Postcolonialism: A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 413-423.

adopt a specific perspective. The writer also portrays the audience as threatened by an imagined “opponent.” In my own reading of 1 John, I focus on how this text projects the sovereign Christ into a divine schema by using temporal frames as a rhetorical mode of thinking to assert the self-definition of Christ believers. This thesis argues that, by presenting him or herself as a superior interpreter of Christ, the writer of 1 John endeavored to create identities of inclusion and exclusion by evoking the memory of Jesus within a shared sense of time.²⁰

Those who inherited the Gospel and the Johannine letter displayed their loyalty to these works in part by developing their own temporal frames, in this case by a calendar of feasts related to narrative temporalities of both texts.²¹ The absence of a unified calendrical system, however, created discrepancies in the Christ believers’ practice as the centuries wore on. Groups of early Jesus followers determined their holiday observances independently of one another, using particular temporal frames that reflected distinctive receptions of earlier traditions. By the fourth century, diverging modes of observance led to a controversy over the commemorative date of Easter, the celebration of the death and resurrection of Jesus.²² As earlier scholars have argued, the alternative dating of Easter by Melito of Sardis and others known as “Quartodecimans” was reinterpreted as a sign of conflict between “orthodoxy” and “heresy,” a historical process that, over time,

²⁰ Ruben Zimmermann, “Remembering Future: Eschatology in the Letters of John,” in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 529-530.

²¹ Valeriy A. Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering: Origin, Development and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 40-56.

²² Sacha Stern, *Calendar and Community a History of the Jewish Calendar, Second Century BCE-Tenth Century CE*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 65-84.

demanded the celebration's institutionalization and standardization. Though definitions of "orthodoxy," as applied to particular temporalities, are sometimes at issue, I focus instead on the significance of temporality for the diversity and fluidity of the early Christ believers' self-definition, developed on the basis of a particular interpretation of the passion and resurrection of Jesus.²³ Inspired by the passion narrative in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus believers who celebrated Easter on the Jewish Passover creatively shaped their own interpretation of the significance of Easter represented by Jesus Christ as the creator clothed in flesh. Their unique choice of ritual date occurred before concerns about "heresies" had arisen.²⁴ Based on a close analysis of the literary and historical contexts of the Quartodeciman debates and Melito's work, I contend that the Quartodeciman Easter, by embodying Johannine temporal frames, carried on the tradition of employing temporality to express group boundaries; like the authors of John and 1 John, Quartodeciman writers employed calendrical observance to convey their rivalry with other groups, particularly with "the Jews," but also with other Christ believers.

Early Christian writers (in particular Melito of Sardis and those of the Gospel of John and the Johannine letter) used temporal configurations of time to conceptualize their particular yet fluid group self-definition based on invented inter-communal boundaries. I

²³ Henry M. Knapp, "Melito's Use of Scripture in Peri Pascha," *Vigiliae Christianae* 54 (2000): 343-374; Laurence Broadhurst, "Melito of Sardis, the Second Sophistic, and Israel," in *Rhetoric and Reality in Early Christianity*, ed. Willi Baun (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 49-73; Alistair Stewart-Sykes, "Melito's Anti-Judaism," *J ECS* 5 (1997), 279-283; Judith Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 271-283; 199-240.

²⁴ For a study of this theme, see James Drummond, "The Fourth Gospel and the Quartodecimans," *AJTh* (1897): 601-57; Richard Bauckham offers a more recent assessment; see *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 38-40.

build on existing scholarly work on this Johannine literature and other early Christian texts that employed Johannine temporality to define the practice of Easter, to show that temporality was rhetorically designed to legitimate the writer's authority to represent the supremacy of Jesus over the world, create a communal temporality encompassing past, present, and future, and exemplify the self-expression of particular groups of Jesus believers through particular interpretations of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Methods

I incorporate methods of historical and literary criticism to investigate the function of temporality and the interactions between groups who used temporal frames to assert superiority over other groups.²⁵ I employ historical criticism to place ancient texts in their historical context and explicate historical landscapes that are interwoven with the multiple temporal frames invoked in the Johannine literature. In particular, I use this method to interrogate how the Quartodecimans developed their temporal framework for commemorative feasts by referencing that literature. I describe how the Christ believers' mode of thinking was based on the rhetoric of temporality, and the ways that this rhetoric of temporality defined particular Christ believing groups. I also employ literary criticism to highlight the rhetorical dimensions of temporality in these ancient texts and to examine the effects of temporal frames on the narratives in terms of the relation of temporality

²⁵ Jane Webster, "Roman Imperialism and the 'Post Imperial Age,'" in *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives*, ed. Jane Webster and Nicholas J. Cooper (Leicester: University of Leicester, 1994), 4-9.

with the literary structure.²⁶

Lastly, alongside historical and rhetorical critical methods, I use literary critical methods to highlight the subtle ways that Johannine literature (in particular the Gospel of John) interacted with the Roman imperial context. A full understanding of the temporal markers in this literature calls for consideration of the interrelations between writings from different cultures that demanded, selectively employed, and negotiated perceptions of temporality.²⁷ Accordingly, while situating Johannine temporality within the calendars, feasts, and temporal schemes of Roman, Jewish and Greek writings, I also employ literary and historical criticism to track narrative time and ancient temporality, respectively. Considering the power relations between the writers and their real or imagined audiences, I also address the ways that hegemonic assertions sought to establish the appearance of a “natural” progression of time.²⁸

This thesis begins with a close reading of four passages from the Gospel of John (John 1:1-18; 1:29-2:12; 19:14-20:23; 21:1-25). I employ historical criticism alongside

²⁶ David E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1987), 47-49; George A. Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 97-113.

²⁷ Bernhard Weisser, “Roman Imperial Imaginary of Time and Cosmos,” in *Time and Cosmos in Greco-Roman Antiquity*. ed. Alexander Jones, trans. Orla Mulholland (New York: New York University, 2016), 171-183; Feeney, *Caesar’s Calendar*, 213; Musa W. Dube and Jeffrey L. Staley, “Descending from and Ascending into Heaven: A Postcolonial Analysis of Travel, Space, and Power in John,” 1-10.

²⁸ R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 46-51; “The First, Second, and Third Letters of John,” in *Bible and Postcolonialism: A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah (New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 413-423; Musa W. Dube and Jeffrey L. Staley, ed. *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space, and Power* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002); Beth M. Sheppard, “The Fourth Gospel, Romanization, and the Role of Women,” in *An Introduction to Empire in the New Testament*, ed. Adam Winn (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 123-142; Anna Runesson, *Exegesis in the Making: Postcolonialism and New Testament Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 91-106.

rhetorical and literary criticism to argue that John developed a unique theology that intermeshed Roman and Jewish temporal frameworks to accentuate a dominant Christ. I argue that the “beginning” in the Prologue (1:1-18) does not only resonate with the archaic time of Jewish tradition but also mimics imperial references to the Emperor’s “beginning” in order to construct the temporally superb origin of Jesus.²⁹ The writer(s) also employed this rhetoric to demonstrate Jesus’s power by switching scenes from John the Baptist to Jesus based on the transition from one temporal marker, “the next day,” to another, “after that.” These phrases signal the beginning of Jesus’s earthly ministry (1:29-2:12). While the writer(s) narrate Jesus’s crucifixion according to a Jewish temporal frame—mentioning, for example, “the day of Preparation” (John 19:14, 42)—they also invoke a different temporal structure, the length of time between two midnights (“early in the morning” and “evening on that day,” John 20:1 and 19) to describe the resurrection scene. I contend that this temporal transition was specifically designed as an alternative to contemporary Roman and Jewish temporal frames. **The Gospel’s unique temporality alludes to a divine time, as opposed to an earthly time; according to John, earthly time is replaced by the time inaugurated by the coming, death, and resurrection of Jesus.** Lastly, the Johannine appendix (at 21:1) connects a new scene to the previous chapters through its setting in the Galilee (where Jesus first met the disciples) and the temporal marker “after these things,” a phrase that is repeated throughout the Gospel of John. By repeatedly employing this same temporal marker, the writer(s) rhetorically routinize the appearance of the resurrected Jesus, turning extraordinary time into ordinary time. By

²⁹ Stern, *Calendars in Antiquity Empires, States, and Societies*, 299-354.

going back to the same location where Jesus met the disciples (“Galilee,” John 1:43; 21:1), moreover, the writer(s) remind readers of Jesus’s first appearance, articulate the enduring union of Christ with his people, and interpret Jesus’s departure from the world as a return to the glorious time prior to “the beginning” when the world was created. This image of a triumphant Jesus, I argue, was created in part by the writers’ distinctive temporal framing.

The writer of 1 John, I show, also sought to establish an exclusive truth about the identity of Jesus and to construct a particular, common temporality of his imagined community by collapsing the past, present, and future. By analyzing the rhetorical function of the temporal marker “from the beginning” (1 John 1:1), I show that the writer’s rhetorical use of time set out to lend authority to the proposed Christological interpretations, to strengthen the credentials of the letter’s message, and to uphold a sense of exclusive access to the truth, all while persuading the audience to accept both these teachings and the gospel traditions. In addition, 1 John created a familial connection between the writer’s imagined audience, Jesus and God by fashioning an imagined genealogy based on a common, past time (1 John 3:1). The writer’s employment of a genealogy rooted in a divine origin establishes the intimate relationship between the writer and his audience and portrays a hierarchical relationship between God the Father and his children. Moreover, 1 John accentuates the imaginary unity of the community and distinguishes “us” from those who oppose the writer’s theological claims by labeling the opponents as “Antichrists” who do not share the writer’s temporal frames and who belong to Satan “from the beginning” (3:8). By investigating how temporal frames

differentiate “insiders” from “outsiders,” I examine the writer’s rhetoric of inclusion and exclusion based on a vision of communal time.

During the second century, some Jesus followers reemployed earlier temporal frames to differentiate themselves by using ritual practice to act out their particular understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus. These Jesus followers, known as the Quartodecimans, took part in a competitive discourse over the proper date of the celebration of Easter by employing the Fourth Gospel’s chronology. While the Quartodecimans interpret Jesus’s death as the Passover and a temporal marker to distinguish them from Jews, they differentiate their Easter from that of other groups of Jesus believers by deriving the date for Easter from that of the Jewish Passover.³⁰ This controversy calls for an historical-literary analysis to explain the linkage of the temporality of Pascha with the passion of Jesus, which re-conceptualized and designated “Israel” as the people of God in Christ to create a new sense of belonging based on the saving efficacy of the Pascha. To analyze this perspective, I explore Melito’s social context and read his homily *On Pascha* closely to illuminate how he asserts and shapes his own narrative of Jesus’s death and resurrection to define the Easter celebration.³¹ Noting that these Christ believers linked their present with events from the past to define their self-expression,³² I argue that Melito’s account of the Pascha established a rhetoric

³⁰ Strecker, *The Johannine Letters*, xxxv-xlii; Lieu, *I, II & III John: A Commentary*, 17-18; Drummond, “The Fourth Gospel and the Quartodecimans,” 601-57.

³¹ Lynn H. Cohick, *The Peri Pascha Attributed to Melito of Sardis: Setting, Purpose, and Sources* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000), 11-88.

³² Karen L. King, “Social and Theological Effects of Heresiological Discourse,” in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger M. Zellentin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 49.

of distance that addressed the unstable and fluid boundaries between Christ believers within the same community, and between Christ believers and others.

With these historical, literary, and rhetorical approaches in mind, I examine the rhetorical representations of temporal markers and structures as discursive devices that reveal the dynamic interactions between dominant and subordinate cultures as they played out in the early Christian texts.³³ I limit this study to particular uses of temporal terms and specific Jewish and Christian festivals (e.g. Passover and Easter) mentioned in the Gospel of John and 1 John (omitting references to other Jewish festivals already researched in existing scholarship).³⁴ I investigate how ancient writers used temporal frames to legitimate ideologies and self-expressions of their identity, to digest their particular understandings of the world controlled by certain human and divine authorities, and to compete with others in the Johannine historical context.³⁵

³³ Peter G. Kirchsclaeger, "Response: The Combination of a Literary and Historical Approach to the Gospel of John," in *What We Have Heard from the Beginning the Past, Present, and Future of Johannine Studies*, ed. Tom Thatcher (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 145-146; Christopher A. Frilingos, *Spectacles of Empire: Monsters, Martyrs, and the Book of Revelation* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 1-13. Concerning Foucault's influence on modern biblical studies, see Aichele, *The Postmodern Bible*, 138-144; Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 113-119.

³⁴ Gale A. Yee, *Jewish Feasts and the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publication, 2007); Michael A. Daise, *Feasts in John Jewish Festivals and Jesus's "Hour" in the Fourth Gospel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); Mary B. Spaulding, *Commemorative Identities Jewish Social Memory and the Johannine Feast of Booths* (New York: T & T Clark, 2009); Gerry Wheaton, *The Role of Jewish Feasts in John's Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

³⁵ Jörg Rüpke, *The Roman Calendar from Numa to Constantine Time, History, and the Fasti* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 146-174; Sacha Stern, *Calendars in Antiquity Empires, States, and Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 355-424.

Chapter Overview

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter two, which follows this introduction, provides a literary analysis of ancient understandings of time and temporal frames, exploring the multiple ways that ancient Greek, Roman, and Jewish writers employed time to define their own perspectives and delimit group boundaries. The chapter is divided into three sections that address temporal configurations in regard to (1) the construction of time in Jewish literature during the Hellenistic period, (2) the role of temporality in Greek and Roman literature, and (3) Josephus's and Philo's response to other configurations of Jewish time and their negotiations with Roman time as expressed through their engagement with the Jewish past. The chapter explores the construction and measurement of temporal frames while describing how ancient writers represented their groups' political and religious tenets. Using ancient texts as examples of various temporal constructions (e.g., those of Livy, Virgil, Plutarch, and Tacitus from the Greek and Roman literature and Josephus, Philo, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Jubilees from the Second Temple literature), I address how selected ancient literary sources mapped and calibrated time. This chapter asks how and for what purpose the ancients shaped their perceptions of time, and outlines the historical context within which ancient Christian writers formulated their sense of temporality. As I show, temporal frames were a site in which the fluid boundaries between Greek-Jewish, Jewish-Greek, and Jewish-Roman identities were delimited. Temporal frames also rhetorically undergirded the connections between past and present to secure a sense of the immanence of a glorious future, which was important both for Christological belief and for local, contemporary value systems.

The third chapter discusses the use of temporal markers in the Gospel of John and outlines the ways that the Gospel negotiated, assimilated, and resisted competing visions of sovereignty through temporality. The Gospel of John employs a rhetoric of time that thematically corresponds with that of its contemporary Jewish literature (1 Maccabees, Philo, Josephus, and 4 Ezra) while purposefully rearranging the memory of Jesus and past events within a reconstructed temporal frame. The Gospel of John reinforces a distinctive temporality belonging to God while also resonating with dominant structures of time. The author of the Gospel of John uses temporal strategies to reconfigure contemporary ideas of time and to legitimize his claim that Jesus, the Savior of the World, resides in and transcends earthly time.

In the fourth chapter, I examine particular temporal markers in 1 John that demonstrate thematic affinity with those of the Gospel of John, and also discuss temporal rhetoric that promotes the self-definition of the early Jesus followers. The writer's goal is to persuade insiders to invest in particular interpretations of Jesus. The writer uses the temporal marker "beginning" to represent Jesus as the true founder of his group and constructs an imagined family tree to articulate his close relationship with the audience. Imagining the coming of the Antichrist, the writer labels those who oppose his teachings as "child[ren] of the devil," distinguishing those who follow the communal values he teaches from those who do not (1 John 3:8). The examination of the writer's genealogical imagination shows his or her attempt to collapse past and present time. This exploration demonstrates that 1 John accentuates the bonding between group members in part by maximizing the temporal gap between the children of God and those of the devil, whom

the writer characterizes as corrupted from the beginning. The temporality employed in 1 John lends legitimacy the writer's arguments, reinforces the collective bonds within the writer's imagined community, and alerts his audience of possible threats by emphasizing his exclusive understanding of Jesus who physically resided in time and space.

Chapter five examines when and how the Quartodecimans practiced their celebration of Easter based on their distinctive temporal understanding. The Quartodecimans employed temporal frames used in the Gospel of John to set the date of Easter. This temporal calibration was different from other Christ believers' observances and interpreted the time at which Jesus was sacrificed in a particularly striking way. Given the temporal stakes, the Quartodeciman synchronization of Easter with the Jewish Passover in particular, as well as any one group's accusation against others who, from their perspective, miscalculated the date of Easter in general, highlights how one particular Christ believing group used Easter to link themselves with Jewish time and to constitute their own boundaries by investing Passover with new meaning. Their ritual practices also illustrate the mobile and unstable boundaries between Jesus followers and other groups.

By examining time and temporal frames in early Christian texts and other contemporary literature, I illuminate the role of the ancient rhetoric of temporality as one strategy of self-differentiation.³⁶ I argue that this rhetoric employed particular temporal systems to claim a portrait of Jesus in the flesh as the true Savior of the world and to

³⁶ I borrow this term from David Brakke, *The Gnostics: Myth, Ritual, and Diversity in Early Christianity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 112-137.

describe the God of Israel as having the lone, legitimate right to begin, end, and organize time. This claim created a sense of collective bonding and accentuated the self-definition of the early Jesus followers and their audiences who practiced the Easter based on a particular, constructed temporal frame.

CHAPTER TWO: OVERVIEW OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF TIME IN THE HELLENISTIC AND ROMAN PERIODS

This chapter explores the ancient configurations of time in Second Temple and Roman literature; temporality, I show, was a way for individuals and groups to recall the past, imagine the future, and shape a collective identity to distance themselves from others.³⁷ Individuals and groups in ancient societies lacked universally shared temporal schemes and therefore relied on charting events by referring to well-known points in time and historical figures; three issues must therefore be addressed when attempting to unravel the use and significance of ancient temporal frames: how people marked time by rearranging particular past events, how and for what purpose they imagined future time through references to past and present events, and how they employed specific commemorative dates (e.g. festivals, anniversaries and emperors' birthdays) to identify themselves as a collectivity. I consider the temporal structures employed by Greek, Roman, and Jewish writers according to these three axes, investigating their presentations of the past, present, and future. This analysis considers the multiple ways that writers measured time, shaped temporal constructions, and both perceived and constructed calendars. As I demonstrate, the structuring of past time played a formative role in

³⁷ Overall, my goal in this chapter is to describe the complicated process of framing time in discrete historical and social contexts. This chapter does not investigate every temporal marker or calendar, but rather presents the history of disputes over the idea of temporal structures as they pertain to power and group identity. I consider briefly the ways ancients (in particular Romans and Jews) perceived time and structured temporal frames based on particular political, religious, and social aims. I use my arguments in this chapter to contextualize the subsequent examination of how Christ believers used the rhetoric of time and temporal frames within their contemporary context. Clarke, *Making Time for the Past*, 7; Salzman, *On Roman Time*, 3-22; Rüpke, *The Roman Calendar from Numa to Constantine*, 109-139; Ralph M. Rosen, ed., *Time and Temporality in the Ancient World* (Philadelphia; University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology, 2004); Gary Forsythe, *Time in Roman Religion: One Thousand Years of Religious History* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 1-18; Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar*, 231-215; Alexandra Lianeri, ed., *Knowing Future Time In and Through Greek Historiography* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016).

framing the way that contemporary events were presented. By reframing and rewriting the political, mythical and religious past, writers sought to imagine social stability as well as change, marking contemporary group identity and reinforcing group bonding.

I begin my examination of how various authors marked time by discussing Jewish writers' engagements with Greek calendars and temporalities. These writers displayed their concerns over Greek-Jewish and Jewish-Greek interaction, in part by addressing the complications of intertwining lunar-solar calendrical systems.³⁸ I show that temporal calculation and framing were employed as polemical devices to define Jewish difference in a changing world. Temporal frameworks linked the present and past to delimit communal boundaries on the basis of former scriptures and practice. Next, I explore how Roman writers' constructions of time resonated with earlier Greek rhetorical and temporal tropes while also promoting an impression of Rome's preeminence, in this case, to develop the idea of genealogical connectivity and divinely appointed destiny.³⁹ Examining the works of Virgil, Ovid, and Livy, I consider the role played by celebratory and memorable dates like festivals and anniversaries in their writings; temporal frames

³⁸ When I refer to "the Jews" in this chapter, I am aware of the diversity and fluidity of Jewish identities. I also agree with Cohen, who wrote that "Jewishness is a subjective identity, constructed by individual him/himself, other Jews, other gentiles, and the state. ... The boundary was fluid and not well marked." See Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 3-4; Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Jewish-Christianity and the History of Judaism: Collected Essays* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 401-421.

³⁹ Sacha Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar, 2nd Century BCE to 10th Century CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1-46; Michael E. Stone, *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2011), 59-89; Jonathan Ben-Dov, *Head of All Years: Astronomy and Calendars at Qumran in their Ancient Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 2-7; Reimund Leicht, "Observing Moon: Astronomical and Cosmological Aspects in the Rabbinic New Moon Procedure," in *Time, Astronomy, and Calendars in the Jewish Tradition*, ed. Sacha Stern and Charles Burnett (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 27-40.

expressed future hopes and present anxieties, particularly surrounding individual and group status. I show that Jewish and early imperial practices of commemorating dates, as a particular mode of perceived time, were powerful strategies for defining group identity. I then turn to Philo and Josephus, who responded to the various ways that earlier authors framed time to persuade their audiences to avoid repeating the faults of the past and to defend and define their own presentation of Jewish identity. Through a close reading of selected passages from these two Jewish writers, I address how their arrangements of past events created genealogies of belonging that situated Jewishness within the Roman world. By identifying Jewish and Roman temporal and calendrical constructions, I outline the multiple ways that temporal measurement served the rhetorical and communal goals of these writers to create collective bonding, distinguish particular groups from others, and invite people to join the writers' constructed time reflecting their view of the world – past, present, and future.

Constructing Jewish Time

During the Hellenistic period, Jewish writers actively addressed and refashioned narratives of past time by linking them to new temporal frames.⁴⁰ These temporal frames and markers not only invited audiences to participate in particular modes of time, but also selectively rearranged past events and celebratory dates. In the context of the transition of

⁴⁰ I use the Hellenistic period in this chapter to refer to the particular period of time between Alexander the Great's defeat of Darius (332 BCE) and the rise of Roman power over the land of Judea (63 BCE). Martin S. Jaffee, *Early Judaism* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Princeton Hall, 1997), 34-41; James C. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 11-32. Concerning the complexity of Jewish engagements with the foreign rules, see Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. TO 640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 19-48.

power from Hellenistic rule and the Hasmonean dynasty to Roman control, the writers of Enoch, Jubilees and the Dead Sea scrolls (e.g. 4QMMT and 1QpHab 11. 4–8) employed temporality to define Jewish identity, craft an understanding of present circumstances, and reassure their audiences that all present events were working toward a future designed by God.⁴¹

Constructions of Time in First Enoch and the Book of Jubilees

Just as a particular historical event is temporally experienced and recollected, so too is “natural time,” the movements of the sun and moon, the changing seasons, and other celestial phenomena.⁴² Jewish writers used both human and “natural” events to measure time, employing celestial movements and the reigns of political and military leaders together to establish reference points within a cyclical map of time and, in the process, articulating myths of belonging.⁴³ Jewish calendars functioned as theological structures of temporal perception that regulated time and the world through shared practices across different geographies.⁴⁴ When they came into contact with other foreign

⁴¹ Steve Mason, “The Greeks and the Distant Past in Josephus’s *Judean War*,” in *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Gregg Gardner and Kevin Lee Osterloh (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 128; Becker, *The Birth of Christian History*, 35-39; Jonathan Klawans, *Josephus and the Theologies of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 13, 184-185.

⁴² Justus Cobet, “The Organization of Time in Histories,” in *Brill’s Companion to Herodotus*, ed. Egbert J. Bakker, Irene J. F. de Jong, and Hans van Wees (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 387-388.

⁴³ Sacha Stem, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar Second Century BCE-Tenth Century CE* (New York: Oxford University Press); Jonathan Ben-Dov, “Time and Natural Law in Jewish-Hellenistic Writings,” in *The Construction of Time in Antiquity: Ritual, Art, and Identity*, ed. Jonathan Ben-Dov and Lutz Doering (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 9-30; Jonathan Ben-Dov, *Head of All Years: Astronomy and Calendars at Qumran in Their Ancient Context* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 3-5.

⁴⁴ In this section, I do not attempt to prove the practical veracity of any calendrical structure nor will I interrogate false calculations of time according to the laws of nature. Instead, I illuminate the complexity

temporal systems, Jewish writers used the observance of their religious festivals as signposts of their identity and signals of Jewish “difference.” In particular, Sabbath, the holiest day of the week, and Passover, the commemoration of the liberation of the Jewish people from Egypt, were described as connecting the present with the past and publicly demonstrating Jewish piety to God.

During the Hellenistic period, various constructions of Jewish time were anchored in scriptural statements that related to the seasonal festivals, particularly in the list of holy days found in Leviticus 23.⁴⁵ Like the calendar practices of other Near Eastern cultures (e.g. the Mesopotamians), the Jewish calendar had become lunar-solar in orientation and periodized based on the phases of the moon. The beginning of each month was based on the observation of the new crescent, while intercalations were based on the annual course of the sun. This system of time keeping is outlined in Genesis and other sacred, authoritative Jewish texts, which served as the basis for later explanations of Jewish temporal practice.⁴⁶ Outside of the Torah, the moon sometimes received explicit preference even though the role of the sun was not ignored.⁴⁷

and rhetorical role of the diverse principles and perceptions of time embedded in each calendar. For a brief survey of Jewish calendars with a helpful bibliography, see Jonathan Ben-Dov, “Calendars,” in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 457.

⁴⁵ Roger T. Beckwith, *Calendar, Chronology, and Worship: Studies in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 2-3; Jonathan Ben-Dov, “Time and Natural Law in Jewish-Hellenistic Writings,” in *The Construction of Time in Antiquity: Ritual, Art, and Identity*, ed. Jonathan Ben-Dov (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 9-30; Sacha Stern, *Calendars in Antiquity: Empires, States, and Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 332-341; Stéphane Saulnier, *Calendrical Variations in Second Temple Judaism: New Perspectives on the “Date of the Last Supper” Debate* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 67-68.

⁴⁶ “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years” (Gen 1:14). Sacha Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of*

In the Jewish context, the first book of Enoch 72-82 (known as the Astronomical Book, composed around 2 B.C.E.) is the earliest source to mention a 364-day solar calendar that segmented time by observing the movements of the sun, moon, and stars (1 Enoch 74:10).⁴⁸ Throughout the book, 1 Enoch focused on the lunar-solar question and emphasized the theological role that the correct calendrical systems play in God's orderly creation. Placing temporal constructions within an angelic revelation, the book presents Uriel's calculation of the annual solar and lunar cycles within a 364-day year calendrical frame, and argues for the existence of a divine order that governs the luminary bodies. As the book explains, Uriel "showed me ... how every year of the world will be forever until a new creation to last forever is made" (1 Enoch 72:1). Just as there is an unchanging law that the luminaries obey, the writer also portrayed a divine revelation about the nature of

the Jewish Calendar, 2nd Century BCE to Tenth Century CE (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3-4; Beckwith, *Calendar, Chronology and Worship*, 27-28.

⁴⁷ "Blow the trumpet at the new moon, at the full moon, on our festal day" and 104:19, "You have made the moon to mark the seasons; the sun knows its time for setting" (Ps. 81:3) and 2 King 20:11; James C. VanderKam, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Measuring Time* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 5. "Hezekiah answered, "It is normal for the shadow to lengthen ten intervals; rather let the shadow retreat ten intervals." The prophet Isaiah cried to the LORD; and he brought the shadow back the ten intervals, by which the sun had declined on the dial of Ahaz" (1King 20:10-11).

⁴⁸ "All the days that result for one of those five years, when complete are 364 days" (1 Enoch 74:10). The 364-day calendar is not calculated using the laws of nature. Rather, it is a schematic calendar that divides the year into four periods of ninety-one days each, which coincide with the four seasons. The year consists of fifty-two weeks, and the 364 days are divisible by seven, which is a typologically meaningful number with significant religious significance in the Jewish tradition. The fifty-two weeks anchor the Jewish festivals to fixed weekdays year after year so as to prevent them from falling on the Sabbath. Acknowledging Klawans's suggestion to distinguish the Jewish schematic solar calendar from the modern solar calendar, I would like to clarify that all references to solar calendars throughout this section are to the solar calendar used by particular Jewish communities (e.g. the Qumran community). See Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 157. For an introductory survey of the Astronomical book, see George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. Vanderkam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 37-82* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 336-351; For the translation of the first book of Enoch, see George W. E. Nickelsburg and James C. Vanderkam, *1 Enoch: A New Translation Based on the Hermeneia Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2004), 102.

reality and the laws that humans are required to hear and obey (79:1-2).⁴⁹ In the schematic construction of time, the Astronomical Book highlighted the theological role that calendars were thought to play in connection with God's orderly creation and to reveal the divine will.

By mentioning the celestial movement "as it is" (72:1), 1 Enoch articulated what was portrayed as a correct calendrical calculation and criticized those who failed to add four extra days to the year (74:1-3; 82:4-5). In the process, 1 Enoch elucidated an ideal astronomical order governed by God. According to the writer, Enoch's calendar was established upon the knowledge given by Uriel (72: 1, 74: 2, 75: 3-4, 79: 6, 80: 1, 82: 7), as opposed to empirical observation of astronomical movements, though the correspondence between "natural" and "divine" time could be interpreted by the reader as a further certification of the writer's point of view. Contrasting the regularity of nature with humankind's sinful predilection to be ignorant (1 Enoch 75:1-2), the author implored humans to eschew sin and follow the divine law by setting their clock according to divine time. Celestial mechanics, therefore, were imbued with theological and moral implications, to the extent that all of time and history were perceived as being under God's control.⁵⁰ The calendrical frame of 1 Enoch was therefore designed to offer a consistent and unchangeable divine answer to the unstable, unfixated, and varied character

⁴⁹ "Now my son I have shown you everything and the law of all the stars of the sky is completed. He showed me all their laws for each day, each time in a jurisdiction..." VanderKam, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Measuring Time*, 13; Nickelsburg and Vanderkam, *1 Enoch 2*, 385.

⁵⁰ Paolo Sacchi, "Measuring Time Among Jews: The Zadokite Priesthood, Enochism, and the Lay Tendencies of the Maccabean Period," in *The Early Enoch Literature*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and John J. Collins (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 97-98.

of temporal frames by showing that there was an ideal, correct, and proper calendrical system.⁵¹

Like the *Astronomical Book*, *Jubilees* also adopted a description of the solar system to defend the calendar it recommends. Written around 160–150 B.C.E. during Seleucid rule, the writer witnesses the impact of the Hellenistic calendar on the Jewish calendar (1 Macc 1:41-50).⁵² Unlike the description of time in 1 *Enoch*, however, the writer of *Jubilees* took a clear position against the lunar calendrical system, stating, “...you command the children of Israel so that they shall guard the years in this number, three hundred and sixty-four days...there will be those who examine the moon diligently because it will corrupt the (appointed) times” (*Jubilees* 6:32-37).⁵³ In contrast with the annually shifting lunar calendar used by other Jews (6:36), the solar calendar of *Jubilees* was based on a 364 day year (6: 32), i.e. exactly 52 weeks (6: 30), which are divided into 4 periods of 13 weeks each (6: 29). This arrangement was, the writer argued, based on

⁵¹ Stern, *Calendar and Community*, 8; Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 157.

⁵² “Then the king wrote to his whole kingdom that all should be one people, and that all should give up their particular customs. All the Gentiles accepted the command of the king. Many even from Israel gladly adopted his religion; they sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath. And the king sent letters by messengers to Jerusalem and the towns of Judah; he directed them to follow customs strange to the land, to forbid burnt offerings and sacrifices and drink offerings in the sanctuary, *to profane Sabbaths and festivals*, to defile the sanctuary and the priests, to build altars and sacred precincts and shrines for idols, to sacrifice swine and other unclean animals, and to leave their sons uncircumcised” (1 Macc 1:41-48). Emphasis added. VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 117.

⁵³ “For there will be those who will assuredly make observations of the moon -how (it) disturbs the seasons and comes in from year to year ten days too soon. For this reason the years will come upon them when they will disturb (the order), and make an abominable (day) the day of testimony, and an unclean day a feast day, and they will confound all the days” (*Jubilees*, 6:35-37). The *Book of Daniel* hints that a Hellenistic, lunar calendar was imposed on the Jewish cult in 167 B.C.E. as part of Antiochus IV’s decrees suppressing Jewish practice (Dan. 7:25, “He will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws.” cf. 1 Macc. 1:45, “he [Antiochus] directed them [Jews] ... to profane Sabbaths and festivals”). John J. Collins, *Daniel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1993), 322.

time that was “engraved and ordained on the heavenly tablets” (6: 31). This stance, however, posed challenges. Earlier sacred texts employed lunar rather than solar measures to designate special days, and the defense of a solar calendar therefore required creative re-interpretation of various sacred texts.⁵⁴ In his account of creation, for instance, the author amended Gen 1:14⁵⁵ by writing that the sun was “a great sign upon the earth for days, Sabbaths, months, feast (days), years...and for all of the (appointed) times of the years” (Jubilees 2: 9). This polemic against the lunar calendar reflects the re-negotiation of temporality brought about by encounters between groups that employed different ways of marking time.⁵⁶ The writer of Jubilees did not seek only to coordinate calendrical time but also to re-narrate biblical events in such a way that divine dominion over all creation was highlighted, including the structure of time itself.

Jubilees also defended the sanctity and antiquity of Jewish culture by situating the Sabbath, an important marker of Jewish identity, at the moment of Creation (2:15-16, 19-20).⁵⁷ Jubilees argued that the Sabbath and the festival of Pentecost commemorate the public disclosure of the Torah by God; God’s ordinances were put in place, the writer

⁵⁴ The writer re-narrated biblical history as a repository of stories that portray God’s dominion over the world since Israel’s biblical past, insisting on the primacy of his solar calendar to help people perceive the divine order embedded in the heavenly movements (Jubilees 4:21). Michael Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 304.

⁵⁵ “God said, “Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years”” (Gen 1. 14). For a translation of Jubilees, see O. S. Wintermute, “Jubilees,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1983), 56.

⁵⁶ Stern, *Calendar and Community*, 12.

⁵⁷ “... he [God] completed all of his work on the sixth day. ... I have sanctified and shall sanctify the Sabbath day ... And I will make known to them the Sabbath day so that they might observe therein a Sabbath” (Jubilees 2:15-16 and 19-20).

claimed, when the world was created, rather than institutionalized during early phases of biblical history, as argued in the book of Exodus (Sabbath in 20:8-10, 23:12 and the festival of Pentecost in 23:16, 34:22).⁵⁸ The celestial bodies followed a prescribed pattern rooted in God's covenant (Jubilees 6:17-18), thereby suggesting that the calendrical system of Jubilees was divine and practiced by Israelites in the past (16:29).⁵⁹ In the process, Jubilees reconstructed the past to create a divinely inspired temporal frame, albeit one that differed from that of Enoch, and even from what had come before, while promoting the belief that all present events moved toward a time appointed by God, who controls the world.

Constructions of Time in the Dead Sea Scrolls

Like the writers of Enoch and Jubilees, the Jews responsible for preserving the Dead Sea Scrolls also employed temporality to articulate their group difference and to imaginatively reinforce its boundaries, in this case in dialogue with the cycle of observances taking place at the Temple in Jerusalem.⁶⁰ A number of Scrolls specify the

⁵⁸ Daniel K. Falk, "Sabbath," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 1174-1176.

⁵⁹ "Therefore, it is ordained and written in the heavenly tablets that they should observe the feast of Shebuot in this month, once per year, in order to renew the covenant in all (respects), year by year. And all of *this feast was celebrated in heaven from the day of creation until the days of Noah...*" (6:17-18) and "...it is ordained in the heavenly tablets concerning Israel that they will be observers of the feast of booths" (16:29). An emphasis is added. Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology*, 306.

⁶⁰ For an account of the Qumran calendar's role in separating the Qumran community from the rest of Jewish society, see Shemaryahu Talmon, "Yom Hakippurim in the Habakkuk Scroll," *Biblica* 32 (1951): 549-63; Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community*, 18-19; Florentino G. Martinez, "Response: The Groningen Hypothesis Revisited," in *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 315; Eshbal Ratzon and Jonathan Ben-Dov, "A Newly Reconstructed Calendrical Scroll from Qumran in Cryptic Script," *JBL* 136 (2017), 905-936;

correct observance of the Sabbath and annual festivals, for example, and actually preserve the books of Enoch and Jubilees as well (CD 6.14, 17, 1QS 1.13-15, and 1QpHab 11. 5-9).⁶¹ Practices associated with Hasmonean rule and priesthood are a particular target of critique. The Hasmonean priests adopted the Seleucid calendar and were criticized for following their lunar system, which was considered illegitimate. The Scrolls label the Hasmonean rulers as illegitimate “sons of darkness,” “wicked priests,” and “sons of pits,” and opposed those whom they perceived to be illegitimate rulers by identifying their methods of calculating dates of worship as similarly illegitimate.⁶² In particular, many of the Scrolls express the necessity of a 364-day calendar as opposed to the dominant, Hasmonean Jewish lunar calendar governing the feasts observed at the Jerusalem Temple – a calendar that was based in the Hellenistic calendar of the Seleucid monarchs.⁶³

Stern argues that the calendar does not play a significant role in the communal schism. See, Stern, *Calendars in Antiquity: Empires, States, and Societies*, 363-366; Lester Grabbe, “Digging Among the Roots of the Groningen Hypothesis,” in *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 284-285. In terms of purity, Klawans argues that the calendar has a limited role in separating the Qumran community from the rest of Jewish society. See, Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 156-157. Even though many scrolls were discovered at Qumran, they were not all necessarily composed by the ancient community that resided in that location. For a brief survey of Qumran research with an extensive bibliography, see Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins, “Current Issues in Dead Sea Scrolls Research,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 2-3.

⁶¹ “They should take care to act in accordance with the exact interpretation of law . . . to keep the Sabbath day according to its exact interpretation, and the festivals and the day of fasting. . .” (CD 6.14, 17). For a translation of the scrolls, see Florentino G. Martines and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 559.

⁶² John Joseph Collins, *Beyond the Qumran Community: The Sectarian Movement of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 103; Vered Noam, *Shifting Images of the Hasmoneans: Second Temple Legends and Their Reception in Josephus and Rabbinic Literature*, trans. Dena Ordan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 105-108.

⁶³ Sacha Stern, “Qumran Calendar and Sectarianism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 241; Stéphane Saulnier,

The fragments of the scholarly Halakhic letter known as 4QMMT, for instance, reconstructed lists of Sabbath days based on a 364-day calendar and claimed to represent an accurate interpretation of the teachings of the Torah.⁶⁴ Even though it is not clear whether or not the Qumran sect rejected the performance of sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem, the writer(s) behind 4QMMT clearly criticized what they regarded as a miscalculation of sacrificial dates. The exhortation section of 4QMMT, assuming that it was not isolated from the literary composite of the document as a whole, conveys a strong eschatological orientation by repeating the phrase “the end of time” (C. 14, 16, 21, and 30). The eschatological setting of the work is implied at the beginning when it says, “...The year is complete: three hundred s[ixty-four] days...” (A. 19), which corresponds exactly with 1 Enoch 82:6.⁶⁵ One might infer from 4QMMT that the Qumran community’s separation from Jerusalem, along with its critique of the Temple cult, were intertwined with the community’s eschatological orientation, which demanded that

Calendrical Variations in Second Temple Judaism, 207. Even though there are diverse textual sources in the Scrolls that witness the 364-Day year as the Qumran calendar, a comprehensive survey is out of this section’s scope. Apart from 4QMMT, there are explicit references to the idea of the 364 day calendar: “he (King David) wrote: psalms, three thousand six hundred... before the alter over the perpetual” (11Q5 27. 4–7), and “On that day Noah went out of the ark, at the end of a complete year of three hundred and sixty four days” (4Q252 2. 2–3). For more detail, see VanderKam, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Measuring Time*, 110; Uwe Glessmer, “Calendars in the Qumran Scrolls,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years: A Comprehensive Assessment*, ed. Peter W. Flint and James C. VanderKam, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 213–78; for a broad survey of the festival calendar from the scrolls, see Stéphane Saulnier, *Calendrical Variations in Second Temple Judaism*, 205–229.

⁶⁴ Concerning the translation of the 4QMMT, see Martines and Tigchelaar, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, vol. 2, 791; Lawrence H. Schiffman, “Miqtsat Ma’ssei Ha-Torah,” in *Encyclopedia of Dead Sea Scrolls*, vol.1. ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. Vanderkam (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 558–560. At the time 4QMMT was written, the Bible had not yet been developed as part of a cannon (this happened around the first century C.E.). However, the Torah and the books of the Prophets were regarded as authoritative literature. See Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 167–204.

⁶⁵ “Thus a year of 364 days is completed” (1 Enoch 82:6); 1 Enoch 82:19 and 4Q 209. 28: 1.

members use a distinctive and ideal calendar to observe the festivals as commanded in the Torah. The calendrical difference also signals a negative attitude toward Jewish practice in Jerusalem. In the *Habakkuk Peshar* (1QpHab), for instance, the conflict between various temporal frames appears implicitly in a description of “the Wicked Priest:”

Interpreted, this concerns the Wicked Priest, who pursued the Teacher of Righteousness to the house of his exile that he might confuse him with his venomous fury. And at the time appointed for rest, for the Day of Atonement, he appeared before them to confuse them, and to cause them to stumble on the Day of Fasting, their Sabbath of repose (1QpHab 11. 4–8).⁶⁶

1QpHab mentions that, on the Day of Atonement (according to the Qumran community’s reckoning), the Wicked Priest came out from Jerusalem to pursue the Teacher of Righteousness. The passage assumes that the differences in the measurement of the proper date of the Day of Atonement created enmity between the Jewish religious authorities in Jerusalem and the Qumran community.⁶⁷ Still, 1QpHab does not offer readers an alternative date because all “knowledge will be revealed to” the group (1QpHab 11.1). In 1QpHab, the writer delays a resolution to the current anxiety until an uncertain point in the future, repeating an eschatological orientation that is well-witnessed in the Scrolls.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 515.

⁶⁷ VanderKam, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 33.

⁶⁸ Lester L. Grabbe, “Digging among the Roots of the Groningen Hypothesis,” in *Enoch and Qumran Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 285.

The Qumran community used its calendar to unravel the eschatological meaning of future time. As such, those responsible for the Scrolls did not necessarily employ their own, separate calendar in daily, communal life, but instead used it to create an ideal, eschatological portrayal of a community eagerly awaiting an uncertain future.⁶⁹ The calendrical systems presented in the Scrolls did not provide specific alternatives for the festival dates observed at the Temple, nor did they abolish that widely accepted ritual time. They did, however, indicate displeasure with the current arrangements.⁷⁰ Regardless of whether or not the groups behind 1 Enoch, Jubilees, and the Dead Sea Scrolls employed the calendars and temporal frames outlined in each text for practical use, their discussions of time suggest that temporality was used to distinguish Jewish communities from non-Jews and even from other Jewish communities. Temporal frames were a site of contestation over the boundaries of Greek-Jewish and Jewish-Greek identity.

Constructing Time in Greek and Roman Literature

Greek and Roman writers constructed temporal schemes to give meaning to the arc of imperial power. They also leveraged temporality for their social and rhetorical purposes. Roman historians narrated past and future time by rearranging, reconstructing,

⁶⁹ Stern, *Calendars in Antiquity: Empires, States, and Societies*, 364; George Branch-Trevathan, “Why Does 4Q394 Begin With a Calendar?,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in Context: Integrating the Dead Sea Scrolls in the Study of Ancient Texts, Languages, and Cultures*, ed. Armin Lange, Emanuel Tov, Matthias Weigold (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 923.

⁷⁰ Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 157; Grabbe, “Digging among the Roots of the Groningen Hypothesis,” 284.

and revising past and present events.⁷¹ Historians, biographers, and moralists related numerous stories that involved chronological, historical, and proleptic narratives about the rise of imperial power. They stressed, for example, “the golden age” of Roman rule and remarked upon the anniversaries of key rulers. Greek and Roman temporalities were therefore both re-described and reinforced by these writers’ descriptions of festival days, which connected past moments with present practice and expectations for the future.⁷²

Greek and Roman Arrangements of Past Time

Plutarch, the Greek moralist, noted that calculating and structuring time was a baffling task, whether one wished to codify daily, calendrical time⁷³ or create a larger chronological order spanning both the past and present. As he put it, describing the failure of calendrical reforms that led to the ultimate reform initiated by the Athenian legislator Solon, “...any chronological canons, so called, which thousands are to this day revising,” have been unable “to bring their contradictions into any general agreement” (Plutarch,

⁷¹ Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country – Revisited*, 19; Luke Pitcher, “Future’s Bright? Looking Forward in Appian,” in *Knowing Future Time In and Through Greek Historiography*, ed. Alexandra Lianeri (New York: Routledge, 2016), 281-292; Jussi Rantala, “Promoting Family, Creating Identity: Septimius Severus and the Imperial Family in the Rituals of the *Ludi Saeculares*,” in *Imperial Identities in the Roman World*, ed. Wouter Vanacker and Arjan Zuiderhoek (New York: Routledge, 2017), 110-124; Daniel R. Schwartz, *Judeans and Jews: Four Faces of Dichotomy in Ancient Jewish History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 11-20; John J. Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy: On Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2015), 284-285.

⁷² Hubert Caneik, “The End of the World, of History, and of the Individual in Greek and Roman Antiquity,” in *The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Continuum, 2000), 84-125; Rowland Smith, “The Construction of the Past in the Roman Empire,” in *A Companion to the Roman Empire*, ed. David S. Potter (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2006), 411-438.

⁷³ Concerning the diverse ways of calibrating time in the ancient world, see Daryn Lehoux, “Days, Months, Years, and Other Time Cycles,” in *Time and Cosmos in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. Alexander Jones (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 95-12; Ben-Dov, “Time and Natural Law in Jewish-Hellenistic Writings,” 9-30; Salzman, *On Roman Time*, 63-115.

Life of Solon, 27. 1).⁷⁴ As Plutarch's comment indicates, the practice of time keeping was usually regulated by religious and political elites. While magicians and astrologers also attempted to observe the movement of the constellations in order to measure time, the employment of their findings in calendrical systems depended on the endorsement of religious and political authorities.⁷⁵ For their part, and to avoid confusion, historians and writers chose relevant temporal frames that situated their literary works in one temporal mode, usually naming their chosen temporal instrument, at least implicitly (and often explicitly as well).⁷⁶

In Herodotus's *Histories*, Solon was also remembered for his discussion of the difficulty of measuring time:

For I set the limit of man's life at seventy years; in these seventy are days twenty-five thousand and two hundred, if we count not the intercalary month. But if every second year be lengthened by a month so that the seasons and the calendar may rightly accord, then the intercalary months are five and thirty, over and above the seventy years: and the days of these months are one thousand and fifty; so then all the days together of the seventy years are seen to be twenty-six thousand two hundred and fifty; and one may well say that no one of all these

⁷⁴ "As for his interview with Croesus, some think to prove by chronology that it is fictitious. But when a story is so famous and so well-attested, and, what is more to the point, when it comports so well with the character of Solon, and is so worthy of his magnanimity and wisdom, I do not propose to reject it out of deference to any chronological canons, so called, which thousands are to this day revising, without being able to bring their contradictions into any general agreement." Plutarch, *Lives, Volume I: Theseus and Romulus. Lycurgus and Numa. Solon and Publicola*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, LCL 46 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 479. The second-century Christian writer Tatian agreed: "...people whose chronological records are inconsistent cannot write true history" (*Oratio ad Graecos* 31. 4). For translation of *Oratio ad Graecos*, Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos and Fragments*, trans. Molly Whittaker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 59.

⁷⁵ Stephan Hellen, "Astrology in the Greco-Roman World," in *Time and Cosmos in Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. Alexander Jones (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 123-142; Stern, *Calendars in Antiquity: Empires, States, and Societies*, 168-228; Dominique Flechon, *The Mastery of Time: A History of Timekeeping, from the Sundial to the Wristwatch: Discoveries, Inventions, and Advances in Master Watchmaking* (Paris: Flammarion, 2011), 37 and 51.

⁷⁶ Clarke, *Making Time for the Past: Local History and the Polis*, 56-57.

days is like another in that which it brings (Herodotus, *Histories*, 1. 32).⁷⁷

While telling Croesus the Lydian King about the good and bad in human life, Solon calculates the human lifespan by assuming that a year is comprised of 365 days. That said, he modifies the seventy years by counting the intercalary months, totaling 1,050 days, as a part of those calendrical 365-day periods, thus transforming 25,200 days into 26,250 days. The passage makes it clear that natural time, based on the movement of the sun and moon, does not match calendrical time due to the distinct ways of observing, calculating, and framing each of these two types of time. This short dialogue also shows that the inevitable diversity of temporal measurement made it difficult to standardize time to produce accurate historical or chronological records. Consequently, ancient writers based their temporal axes on events and figures familiar to their audience by merging historical events from different traditions while describing past time to make sense of contemporary events, which often took on valences of progress or failure and ultimately suggested the superiority of one culture (usually the author's) over another.⁷⁸

Without the availability of modern temporal axes such as A.D./ B.C. or B.C.E./ C.E., Greek and Roman writers and historians adopted temporal frames from different traditions to articulate their own cultural locations. Even before the rise of the Roman Empire, ancient writers employed famous historical events such as the Olympiad, local

⁷⁷ Herodotus, *The Persian Wars, Volume I: Books 1-2*, trans. A. D. Godley, LCL 117 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1920), 37-39.

⁷⁸ Erich S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 98-99.

Greek festivals, and the Trojan War to synchronize the past with the present.⁷⁹ The Olympiad dates were widely referenced by historians who, displaying their high esteem for Greek culture, sought to connect their time with a Panhellenic past within which local temporal chronology could be universally coordinated.⁸⁰

According to Polybius, the Greek writer, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, a Greek historian of Augustan Rome, Timaeus of Tauromenium, the Greek historian (350 B.C.E. – 264 B.C.E.), was the first person to use the Olympiad as a temporal axis to calculate historical events by synchronizing the reigns of his contemporary kings with the dates of the Olympiad games and their victors. Dionysius writes that Timaeus dated the founding of Rome to “the thirty-eighth year before the first Olympiad” (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 1. 74). Timaeus then synchronized the Olympiad timeline with other historical events to represent the spread of Hellenistic culture in the West.⁸¹ In his work *The Histories*, Polybius also identified Timaeus with the establishment of the Olympiad as a temporal axis.⁸² Using Timaeus’s chronological synchronization, Polybius leveraged

⁷⁹ For a detailed survey of the Olympiad dating system, see Feeney, *Caesar’s Calendar*, 96-97; Pamela-Jane Shaw, *Discrepancies in Olympiad Dating and Chronological Problems of Archaic Peloponnesian History* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2003), 47-99.

⁸⁰ Concerning Roman perceptions of Hellenistic culture, see Erich S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 203-249; Susan E. Alcock, “The Heroic Past in a Hellenistic Present,” in *Hellenistic Constructs: Essays in Culture, History, and Historiography*, ed. Paul Cartledge, Peter Garnsey, and Erich S. Gruen (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 20-34; Clarke, *Making Time for the Past: Local History and the Polis*, 75.

⁸¹ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, vol. I: *Books 1-2*, trans. Earnest Cary, LCL 319 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 245; Christopher A. Baron, *Timaeus of Tauromenium and Hellenistic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 25-26; Feeney, *Caesar’s Calendar*, 84; Clarke, *Making Time for the Past: Local History and the Polis*, 220.

⁸² “For this is the author who compares the dates of the ephors with those of the kings in Lacedaemon from the earliest times, and the lists of Athenian archons and priestesses of Hera at Argos with those of the victors at Olympia, and who convicts cities of inaccuracy in these records, there being a difference of three

the Olympiad to not only fashion historical events into a single temporal frame, but also to connect Hellenistic and Roman cultures.⁸³ By incorporating Rome's history into a Hellenistic temporal frame, Polybius and Dionysius suggested that the entire Mediterranean world was unified by Rome's rising power, which inherited Hellenistic culture and its temporal frames.

Like Timaeus's use of the Olympiad, ancient historians also utilized the fall of Troy as a temporal frame, employing this event in order to distinguish "history," coded as contemporary, from "myth," which occurred before recorded history began.⁸⁴ For example, Livy, the Roman historian, calculated the dates of the foundation of Rome based on the elapsed time since the Trojan War.⁸⁵ By putting the Romans on the map of shared time, Livy connected the mythical past of Troy with that of his homeland, transcending the geographic limits of individual cities to create pan-Mediterranean chronological structures. In his epic, the *Aeneid*, Virgil also described Aeneas, the Trojan

months... *Yes, and it is Timaeus who discovered the inscriptions at the back of buildings and lists of proxeni on the jambs of temples*" (Polybius, *The Histories*, 12.11). Emphasis added. Polybius. *The Histories, Volume IV: Books 9-15*, trans. W. R. Paton. rev. F. W. Walbank and Christian Habicht, LCL 159 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 373-375.

⁸³"In the 149th Olympiad so large a number of missions from Greece were assembled in Rome ... In the second year of this Olympiad upon the arrival in Rome of embassies" (*The Histories*, 23. 1). Polybius. *The Histories*, 449 and 469. The most common arrangement based on the Olympiad chronology was for a single book to span half of an Olympiad or, in other words, two years. This appears throughout the fourteen books: *The Histories* Books 7–11 (*Olympiad* 141.1–143.2); 13 (*Olympiad* 143.3–4); 16–18 (*Olympiad* 144.3–145.4). Peter Derow, *Rome, Polybius, and the East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 89. Concerning Polybius's attitude toward Roman domination, see Donald Walter Baronowski, *Polybius and Roman Imperialism* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 66-67.

⁸⁴ Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar*, 223; Felix Jacoby, *Die Fragmente Der Griechischen Historiker* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1926), 241.

⁸⁵ "First of all, then, it is generally agreed that when Troy was taken..." (*History of Rome* 1.1). Livy, *History of Rome, Volume I: Books 1-2*, trans. B. O. Foster, LCL 114 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 9.

hero, as a pilgrim in pursuit of a new home, depicting that archaic event as the origin of the city of Rome. He began his narrative with the Fall of Troy, which functions as a temporally crucial event to connect Hellenic history with that of Rome.⁸⁶ By designating the Olympiad and the fall of Troy as temporally key moments, the resulting temporal frame invited all those who shared in it to also participate in a common Hellenic heritage, reclaimed as Roman.⁸⁷ By establishing both a Mediterranean and universal history, this temporal frame created a chronological collectivity encompassing the entire Hellenistic world.⁸⁸

Dionysius also synchronized Roman time with Hellenic temporal frames by juxtaposing the Olympiad with Troy, presenting the fall of that city as a pivot dividing the historical from the mythical past. These two monumental, historical events functioned for him as Greek as well as Roman historical axes and temporal markers to calculate the chronology of the subsequent historical events.⁸⁹ By basing his chronological sequence on these historical events, he imaginatively distinguished the historical time of Greek and

⁸⁶ “Arms and the man I sing, who first from the coasts of Troy, exiled by fate, came to Italy, ... whence came the Latin race, the lords of Alba, and the lofty walls of Rome” (*Aeneid* 1.1). Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1-6*, 263; David Ross, *Virgil's Aeneid: A Reader's Guide* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 78-80; Aaron M. Seider, *Memory in Vergil's Aeneid: Creating the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 66-95.

⁸⁷ Clarke, *Making Time for the Past: Local History and the Polis*, 87.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁸⁹ “... he [Cato] places its [Roman] founding four hundred and thirty-two years after the Trojan war; and ... corresponds to the first year of the seventh Olympiad.” Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities, Volume I: Books 1-2*, trans. Earnest Cary, LCL 319 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 245-247; “First of all, then, it is generally agreed that when Troy was taken vengeance was wreaked upon the other Trojans...” (Livy, *History of Rome* 1. 1); Livy, *History of Rome, Volume I: Books 1-2*, trans. B. O. Foster, LCL 114 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 9; Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar: Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History*, 81.

Rome from “legendary time,” which he wrote was “a subject difficult to be cleared up,” and historical time, which situated Greece and Rome within a harmoniously integrated temporal frame (*Roman Antiquities* 1. 2 and 8).⁹⁰ The adoption of the Olympiad as a dating system to describe Roman history also portrayed Rome as a participant in sophisticated Hellenistic culture.⁹¹

Apart from the use of historical events, authors also used well-known figures belonging to particular past eras to structure time and create a single and consistent temporal sequence.⁹² Time was often measured according to the length of the reign of political leaders, for example, as Lucan points out in his *Civil War* “...a period of lawful government” is designated by “years named after the consuls” (7.441).⁹³ References to historical figures and events served as reminders of the past to which each figure belonged, which, in isolation or in combination with other temporal frames, enabled writers to construct their historically informed present.

The Roman historian Tacitus marked the date of Rome’s foundation using the

⁹⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus. *Roman Antiquities, Volume I: Books 1-2*, trans. Earnest Cary, LCL 319 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 7 and 25; John Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 121-122; Clarke, *Making Time for the Past: Local History and the Polis*, 81.

⁹¹ Gabba, *Dionysius and The History of Archaic Rome*, 117; Diodorus of Sicily, the Greek historian (90 B.C.E. – 30 B.C.E.), combines references to the Olympiad with references to Athenian and Roman magistrates to create a sophisticated web of chronological systems (*Library of History* 23, “The next year Chares was archon in Athens, and in Rome the consuls elected were Titus Menenius and Gaius Horatius Pulvillus, and the Eleians celebrated the Seventy-seventh Olympiad... In this year in Sicily Theron, the despot of Acragas, died after a reign of sixteen years...”). Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History, Volume IV: Books 9-12.40*, trans. C. H. Oldfather, LCL 279 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1946), 259.

⁹² Donald J. Wilcox, *The Meaning of Times Past: Pre-Newtonian Chronologies and the Rhetoric of Relative Time* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1987), 113-118.

⁹³ Lucan, *The Civil War (Pharsalia)*, trans. J. D. Duff, LCL 220 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 403; Shaw, *Discrepancies in Olympiad Dating and Chronological Problems of Archaic Peloponnesian History*, 148-152; Feeney, *Caesar’s Calendar*, 170-189.

names of political leaders and consuls, while also demarcating historical time from legendary time.⁹⁴ Tacitus used these temporal markers as a narrative device to accentuate the progression of the city's political system from Kingdom to Republic to Empire by focusing on Rome's political rather than mythical past.⁹⁵ He commenced his Roman history with the reign of kings and introduced the years of the reign of various consuls in order to refer to particular events. He correlated early Roman history with the succession of political leaders by using the expulsion of the kings as chronological markers. For instance, when he claimed Nero's reign to be illegitimate in the arc of Roman history, he recounted a public speech by the Emperor that blurred Roman history with legendary tales; Nero's distortion of history and legend, Tacitus suggested, was yet another sign of the Emperor's depravity. Tacitus sought to exclude the period of Nero's reign from the legitimate history of Rome by turning instead to the consuls for a dating system that could span both the Republican and Imperial periods.⁹⁶ In the twelfth book of *Annals*, for

⁹⁴ "Rome at the outset was a city state under the government of kings: liberty and the consulate were institutions of Lucius Brutus. Dictatorships were always a temporary expedient: the decemviral office was dead within two years" (Tacitus, *Annals* 1.1). Tacitus, *Histories: Books 4-5. Annals: Books 1-3*, trans. Clifford H. Moore and John Jackson, LCL 249 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 243.

⁹⁵ In contrast to Tacitus's description, Sallust, the Roman historian, describes the foundation of Rome all the way back to mythic ages and heroic figures in the city's archaic history. "The city of Rome, as I have learned, was at the outset founded and inhabited by Trojans, who were wandering in exile, without any fixed abodes, under the leadership of Aeneas; their cofounders were the Aborigines, a rustic folk, without laws, without government, free and unrestrained" (Sallust, *The War with Catiline*, 6. 1). Sallust, *The War with Catiline. The War with Jugurtha*, ed. John T. Ramsey, trans. J. C. Rolfe, LCL 116 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 29.

⁹⁶ "[Nero] enlarged with grace on the Trojan descent of the Roman nation; on Aeneas, the progenitor of the Julian line; on other traditions not too far removed *from fable*..." (Tacitus *Annals* 12. 58; emphasis added); Tacitus, *Annals: Books 4-6, 11-12*, trans. John Jackson, LCL 312 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 401; Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar*, 105-106. "...for the report had spread that, at the very moment when Rome was aflame, he [Nero] had mounted his private stage, and, typifying the ills of the present by *the calamities of the past*, had sung *the destruction of Troy*" (Tacitus *Annals* 15. 39; an emphasis added). Tacitus, *Annals: Books 13-16*, trans. John Jackson, LCL 322 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 275.

example, he employed the consular years to describe the rise of Emperor Nero, beginning with the year of Nero's mother Agrippina's matrimonial relationship with the emperor Claudius, a relationship that provided Nero an opening to the throne.⁹⁷ Tacitus ends *Annals* first with the dates of the unfortunate omen of Claudius's tragic end and then narrates his eventual death and Nero's succession, which was initially regarded as an error. When describing the first public appearance of Nero at the age of nine, Tacitus addressed him as "a fable retouched to resemble foreign miracles."⁹⁸ In Tacitus's chronological arrangement of time, the years of consulship were important not only as chronological markers to determine the historical order of events as contrasted with an unreachable mythic past, but also to stress particular historical events and to remind sympathetic readers of their Republican past.⁹⁹

By using familiar events, political leaders, and heroes as temporal axes around which to structure chronologies, ancient writers like Polybius, Dionysius and Tacitus developed rhetorical arrangements of historical records that placed a premium on the authority of Roman legislators (consuls) and Roman rule more broadly. As explained below, however, authors like Livy also employed temporal markers to bolster the relationships between time and temporality on one hand and kinship within and between groups on the other. A literary connection between genealogy, kinship and temporality

⁹⁷ "In the consulate of Gaius Pompeius and Quintus Veranius, the union plighted between Claudius and Agrippina was already being rendered..." (Tacitus *Annals* 12.5). Tacitus, *Annals: Books 4-6, 11-12*, 409 and 413.

⁹⁸ Tacitus, *Annals: Books 4-6, 11-12*, 267. He harshly regarded the consulship of Nero (as well as his reign) as deriving from an illegitimate beginning due to his mother's "treachery" in poisoning Claudius (*Annals*, 12. 66). "In the consulate of Marcus Asinius and Manius Acilius..." (12. 64). Ibid, 409 and 413.

⁹⁹ Wilcox, *The Meaning of Times Past*, 98.

reflected a belief in the permanent presence of past and present generations. By situating kin in genealogical proximity to divine and human heroic figures (e.g. Romulus, the Trojans, and Aeneas), some Roman writers constructed connections based on fictitious lineage and kinships to produce a present that was deeply connected with the past.¹⁰⁰

Livy, Suetonius, and Strabo each linked genealogy and temporality to establish connections between Romans and others. For example, Livy used temporal markers to establish a genealogical relation rooted in common ancestors to further his claim of Roman superiority and group identity, particularly by recalling the story of Romulus, the mythic founder of Rome (Livy, *History of Rome*, 1. 15 and 16).¹⁰¹ From this perspective, the idea of an imagined common ancestry with Romulus, the son of a god, justified the Romans' claim of superiority over other nations. Furthermore, Livy's *History* employed multilayered temporal frames that juxtaposed the mythical time of Rome's divine foundation with the historical time in which political rulers resided. In the process, Livy described what he thought the Romans should imagine themselves to be, a strategy that was also employed by Suetonius.¹⁰² In Suetonius's *Deified Claudius*, for example, the author mentioned the emperor Claudius offering "Ilians," descendants of Troy, perpetual

¹⁰⁰ Christopher P Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 81-93; Hugh Lindsay, *Adoption in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 29-34.

¹⁰¹ "Such were the principal achievements of the reign of Romulus, at home and in the field, nor is any of them incompatible with the belief in his divine origin and the divinity which was ascribed to the king after his death, whether one considers his spirit in recovering the kingdom of his ancestors, or his wisdom in founding the City and in strengthening it by warlike and peaceful measures. For it was to him, assuredly, that Rome owed the vigour which enabled her to enjoy an untroubled peace for the next forty years...his [Romulus] wisdom in founding the City... *Romulus as a god and a god's son, the King and Father of the Roman City*" (Livy, *History of Rome*, 1. 15-16). An emphasis is added. Livy, *History of Rome, Volume I: Books 1-2*, trans. B. O. Foster, LCL 114 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1919), 57.

¹⁰² Clarke, *Making Time for the Past*, 316.

exemption from paying tribute due to their shared Roman ancestry (*The Deified Claudius* 25. 3).¹⁰³ By genealogically connecting the Trojans with the Romans, he positioned Rome within Hellenic traditions and depicted Rome as the protector of past peoples, who, as it turns out, are also “kin.”¹⁰⁴ Likewise, according to Strabo’s *Geography*, Caesar provided the Ilions benefaction due to their common ancestry.¹⁰⁵ In this genealogical relation between present and past, the imagined common origin of two different nations constructed a mutual bond and offered those who participated in this shared kinship a sense of superiority over others who do not belong to the same lineage.

Constructing Imagined Future Time

In addition to the reconstruction of past time, some Roman Era writers constructed future time on the basis of the claim that the Hellenized Roman Empire was destined to remain an eternal world ruler. Preserving and applying the knowledge of past heroic figures (e.g. the Emperor Augustus) and historical events (e.g. the foundation of Rome) to imagine the future, they argued that the expansion of Roman domination inaugurated a new and eternally enduring age for all Hellenic cities, bringing future hope

¹⁰³ “He [Claudius] allowed the people of Ilium perpetual exemption from tribute, on the ground that they were the founders of the Roman race.” Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars, Volume II*, trans. J. C. Rolfe, LCL 38 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 51; Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World*, 87.

¹⁰⁴ “...reading an ancient letter of the senate and people of Rome written in Greek to king Seleucus, in which they promised him their friendship and alliance only on condition that he should keep their kinsfolk of Ilium free from every burden” (*The Deified Claudius* 25. 3). Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars, Volume II*, 51.

¹⁰⁵ “...Caesar, not only being fond of Alexander, but also having better known evidences of kinship with the Ilions, felt encouraged to bestow kindness upon them... the Romans believe Aeneias to have been their original founder...” (Strabo *Geography*, 13. 27). Strabo, *Geography, Volume VI: Books 13-14*, trans. Horace Leonard Jones, LCL 223 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929), 57.

to the civilized world. As Aelius Aristides put it, “The land and sea empire of modern times... does not disdain to glorify Athens in her role as teacher and foster parent. So abundant, indeed, are the honors” (*Oration 1. Panathenaic Oration 1. 332*).¹⁰⁶ In other words, Athens’s place in history was altered by the emergence of Rome but the city was also granted an even grander honor: freedom from any political and military responsibility. Athens’s “fortunes” are such, Aristides declared, that “one would not lightly pray for her to enjoy her former circumstances rather than her present ones” (*Oration 1. Panathenaic Oration 1. 335*).

The notion of *Roma aeterna* (literally, the eternity of Rome) was employed in many literary witnesses to highlight the works of deified emperors, beginning with the reign of Octavian Augustus.¹⁰⁷ Associating an imagined future with contemporary, imperial prosperity nurtured the expectation that the city’s future would always be as glorious as its past.¹⁰⁸ In his work, the *Aeneid*, for example, Virgil referred to Jupiter’s prophecy of an eternal Roman city (*Aeneid 1. 278-9*).¹⁰⁹ In the narrative, Aeneas asks Apollo to find a permanent home and “a city that shall abide,” a concept shared by the Augustan poet Horace (*Aeneid 3. 85*, and cf., Horace, *Carmen Saeculare*, 8-9).¹¹⁰ Apollo

¹⁰⁶ Aelius Aristides, *Orations*, vol. I, ed. and trans. Michael Trapp, LCL 533 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 279.

¹⁰⁷ Salzman, *On Roman Time*, 155-156.

¹⁰⁸ Hubert Cancik, “The End of the World, of History, and of the Individual in Greek and Roman Antiquity,” in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, ed. John Collins (New York: Continuum, 2000), 87-100.

¹⁰⁹ “...call the people Romans after his [Romulus] own name. For these I set no bounds in space or time; but have given empire without end.” Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1-6*, 281.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 379; “...may you never be able to behold anything greater than the city of Rome!” Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, ed. and trans. Niall Rudd, LCL 33 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 263.

responds to Aeneas and promises that the future Rome will dominate the world. Livy made a similar claim in his *Histories*: Rome is founded to overcome temporal limitations “for eternity and of incalculable growth, new powers, priesthoods” (*History of Rome* 4.4) and to remain a “blessed city” that is unconquerable (5. 7).¹¹¹ From this perspective, Roman eternity derives from Rome’s seamless transition from previous empires (the Greeks, Persians and Macedonians) to an ascendance that brings a new, blessed age for the world.¹¹²

The figures of individual Roman emperors were also temporal markers in some literature; in theory at least, blessed emperors witnessed the fulfillment of divine oracles by bringing good fortune to Rome, thus securing world dominion.¹¹³ Virgil described Octavian Augustus in such terms, representing him as a temporal signpost of a new epoch and golden age (*Aeneid*, 6. 794, “Augustus Caesar, son of a god, who will again establish a golden age” and cf., *Eclogues* 4.8-10). Virgil also identified the emperor as a soon-to-be deity who fulfilled a prophesied Roman triumph.¹¹⁴ Horace also praised the beginning of a new age by extolling the triumph of Augustus and regarding the subjugation of other

¹¹¹ “Rome was blest, they said, and invincible and eternal...” Livy, *History of Rome, Volume II: Books 3-4*, trans. B. O. Foster, LCL 133 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1922), 269; Livy, *History of Rome, Volume III: Books 5-7*, trans. B. O. Foster, LCL 172 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 27. Ovid also regards Rome as the eternal city (*Fasti*, 3. 72, “And now what of late had been woods and pastoral solitudes was a city, when thus the father of the eternal city spake...”). Ovid, *Fasti*, trans. James G. Frazer, rev. G. P. Goold, LCL 253 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1931), 125.

¹¹² Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*, 1.2.2–4; Aristides, *Panathenaic Oration*, 91. Doron Mendels, “The Five Empires: A Note on a Propagandistic Topos,” *The American Journal of Philology* 102 (1981): 334.

¹¹³ Cancik, “The End of the World, of History, and of the Individual in Greek and Roman Antiquity,” 99-101.

¹¹⁴ Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1-6*, 589 and 49.

nations as necessary for their own well-being.¹¹⁵ In his poetic work *Carmen Saeculare*, Horace wrote that Rome's domination was predetermined, in part by means of genealogical, divinely sanctioned links between Roman rulers and the Trojan lineage (*Carmen Saeculare* 25 and 40).¹¹⁶ Relatedly, the celebration of the Saeculum served as a signpost of the empire's past victory as well as the city's prosperous and victorious future (*Carmen Saeculare* 55).¹¹⁷ Virgil, Livy, and Horace alike focus on prophesies that predicted the inevitability of Roman hegemony in order to legitimate it.

Recurring Time: Anniversaries and Festivals in Roman Literature

Varro, Virgil, Suetonius, and Plutarch employed dates and periods of time to invest in them the meaning of past events and to synchronize the past and present.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Hannah Cornwell, *Pax and the Politics of Peace: Republic to Principate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 123; Hans-Christian Günther, "The *Carmen Saeculare*," in *Brill's Companion to Horace*, ed. Hans-Christian Günther (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 431-443.

¹¹⁶ "...add a happy destiny to what has already been fulfilled" (*Carmen Saeculare* 25) and "the glorious descendant of Anchises and Venus... may he be victorious in battle over his foes" (*Carmen Saeculare* 40). Horace, *Odes and Epodes*, ed. and trans. Niall Rudd, LCL 33 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 265.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 267; Rantala, "Promoting Family, Creating identity: Septimius Severus and the Imperial Family in the Rituals of the *Ludi Saeculares*," 118-119.

¹¹⁸ In addition to the establishment of civic anniversaries, the Roman calendar (e.g. the Julian calendar) was used to consolidate Caesar's autocratic position; it was part and parcel of wider political changes transforming the Roman State under his rule. It is no wonder then that the new calendar became, in due course, a symbol of Caesar's power in the new political order. In this section, I do not attempt to make a comprehensive review of all such strategies and festival calendars, but rather present selected Roman literary sources on measuring ritual time and anniversary dates, along with an explanation of the social role of those anniversary dates as representations of temporal arrangements. A comprehensive examination of the Roman calendar is out of the scope of this chapter. For a more detailed examination, see Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar*, 167-215; Jörg Rüpke, "Doubling Religion in the Augustan Age: Shaping Time for an Empire," in *The Construction of Time in Antiquity: Ritual, Art, and Identity*, ed. Jonathan Ben-Dov (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 50-68; Agnes Kirsopp Michels, *Calendar of the Roman Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 31-35; Rüpke, *The Roman Calendar from Numa to*

Particular dates, they suggested, routinized past events and history and enabled audiences to commemorate certain periods of the past as glorious and monumental.¹¹⁹ In Varro's writings, for example, the *Saeculum* (literally, "century") was a temporal marker that bridged the prosperous present with the city's ensured future prosperity. The *Saeculum* was celebrated at regular intervals to demarcate time and imply that the incoming *Saeculum* would be just as prosperous as the outgoing.¹²⁰ Other writers also referred to the *Saeculum*, but measured the years differently, varying the dates on which the

Constantine Time, History, and the Fasti, 1-5; Kevin K. Birth, "The Vindolanda Timepiece: Time and Calendar Reckoning in Roman Britain," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 33 (2014): 395-411.

¹¹⁹ Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 238-249; Nathanael J. Andrade, *Syrian Identity in the Greco-Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 86-87; Onno van Nijf, "Local Heroes: Athletics, Festivals, and Elite Self-Fashioning in the Roman East," in *Being Greek Under Rome: Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire*, ed. Simon Goldhill (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 318-320; Guy Maclean Rogers, *The Sacred Identity of Ephesos: Foundation Myth of a Roman City* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 136-149; Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50-250* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1996), 135-186; Simon R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 53-77; Fergus Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 B.C.-A.D. 337* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 27-79, 337-386. For a thorough study of Roman domination and its reception in the provinces, see Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 73-276.

¹²⁰ "...A saeculum 'century' was what they called the space of one hundred years, named from senex 'old man,' because they thought this the longest stretch of life for senescendi 'aging' men" (*On the Latin Language* 6.11). Varro, *On the Latin Language, Volume I: Books 5-7*, trans. Roland G. Kent, LCL 333 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 183. "Varro heard... that Romulus saw twelve vultures as an augury when he founded the City, then since the Roman people had passed 120 years unharmed, they would make it to 1,200 years" (Censorinus *De Die Natali* 17. 18). Klaus Sallmann, *Censorini De Die Natali Liber Ad Q. Caerellium: Accedit Anonymi Cuiusdam Epitoma Disciplinarum* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1983), 97; .For translation, Holt N. Parker, *The Birthday Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 40. Concerning the celebration of the Roman anniversary, see Anthony T. Grafton and N. M. Swerdlow, "Calendar Dates and Ominous Days in Ancient Historiography," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 51 (1988): 14-42; Salzman, *On Roman Time*, 139-140; Rüpke, *The Roman Calendar from Numa to Constantine*, 121-139; Michael Grant, *Roman Anniversary Issues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950); Forsythe, *Time in Roman Religion*, 52; Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar*, 142-145; Rantala, "Promoting Family, Creating Identity: Septimius Severus and the Imperial Family in the Rituals of the *Ludi Saeculares*," 110-124.

Saeculum began and ended.¹²¹ According to Suetonius, for example, Roman senators believed that Augustus would bring well-being to the Empire after his triumph over his rivals and so,¹²² after his death, they established the anniversary of that death as a new temporal marker. “All the period from the day of his birth until his demise,” they declared, would be called “the Augustan Age (*Saeculum Augustum*), and so entered in the Calendar” (Suetonius *Lives of the Caesars*, 100).¹²³ From this perspective, the death of Caesar marked the end of one period of time and the celebration of the *Saeculum* ensured that the prosperity of that period would continue into the future (*Domitian* 4).¹²⁴ The *Ludi Saeculares* was another, related way that the Romans marked time. Plutarch depicted these “secular games” as a civic festival held upon the transition from one *Saeculum* to another, once every hundred years.¹²⁵ Geoffrey Summi suggests that, to the extent that the Romans believed that history consisted of one *Saeculum* after the next, the *Ludi*

¹²¹ Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar*, 196-201; Pasco-Pranger, *Founding the Year Ovid's Fasti and the Poetics of the Roman Calendar*, 261.

¹²² “...through him that they enjoyed their liberty and their fortunes” (Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars: The Deified Augustus* 98). Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars, vol. I: Julius. Augustus. Tiberius. Gaius. Caligula*, trans. J. C. Rolfe, LCL 31 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 299.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 304-305.

¹²⁴ Suetonius suggested that this anniversary exuded confidence and triumphalism by holding up the recent past as a symbolic expression of the enduring perpetuity of the *Saeculum* and, with it, the empire's prosperity (*The Deified Claudius* 21.4-6). Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars, Volume II: Claudius. Nero. Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. Vespasian. Titus, Domitian. Lives of Illustrious Men: Grammarians and Rhetoricians. Poets (Terence. Virgil. Horace. Tibullus. Persius. Lucan). Lives of Pliny the Elder and Passienus Crispus*, trans. J. C. Rolfe, LCL 38 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 41-43.

¹²⁵ “...a change of conditions and the advent of a new age. ... All things, they say, undergo great changes, as one age succeeds another, and especially the art of divination” (*Sulla* 7. 3 and 5). Plutarch, *Lives, Volume IV: Alcibiades and Coriolanus. Lysander and Sulla*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, LCL 80 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), 347; Rantala, “Promoting family, Creating Identity,” 111; Rüpke, *The Roman Calendar from Numa to Constantine*, 134-135; Forsythe, *Time in Roman Religion*, 57-60; Melanie Grunow Sobocinski, “Visualizing Ceremony: The Design and Audience of the *Ludi Saeculares* Coinage of Domitian,” *AJA* 110 (2006): 581-602; Rantala, “Promoting family, Creating Identity,” 111-112.

Saeculares suggested that the past anticipated the future and recalled that Rome and its

prosperity were both a continuation of the past and a sign of things to come.¹²⁶ These

writers gave meaning to time by highlighting the link between successive periods through festive dates. They sought to nurture a sense of continual prosperity by celebrating the passage of fixed periods of time.¹²⁷

In addition to the calibration of periods of time such as the *Saeculum* and its celebration, the *Ludi Saeculares*, Virgil, Pliny the Elder, Plutarch, and Suetonius also registered personal dates (e.g. birthdays and funerals) as celebrations and employed them as temporal markers.¹²⁸ Unlike the *Saeculum*, which refers to a period of time to be celebrated, the personal and historical anniversary dates are rooted in one particular event that happened at one point in time. After describing Andromache's commemoration rite for her deceased husband, Hector, for example, Virgil described a celebratory rite held in remembrance of the death of Anchises, the father of Aeneas (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 5. 55, "let us solemnize the sacrifice with joy").¹²⁹ Aeneas's remembrance of Anchises's speech and his

¹²⁶ Geoffrey Sumi, *Ceremony and Power: Performing Politics in Rome Between Republic and Empire* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan press, 2005), 245.

¹²⁷ Feeney, *Caesar's Calendar*, 147.

¹²⁸ Kathryn Argetsinger, "Birthday Rituals: Friends and Patrons in Roman Poetry and Cult," *Classical Antiquity* 11 (1992): 175-93; Fritz Graf, *Roman Festivals in the Greek East: From the Early Empire to the Middle Byzantine Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 89-93; S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 54-57.

¹²⁹ "Andromache... was offering her yearly feast ...and calling the ghost to Hector's tomb" (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 3. 301-303) and "...from the foot of the shrine a slippery serpent trailed seven huge coils... Aeneas was awestruck at the sight... he renew his father's interrupted rites (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 5. 80-93). Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1-6*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G. P. Goold, LCL 63 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), 393 and 477.

works links Aeneas's present with the future that his action will create.¹³⁰ In commemorating a member of a Trojan family, Virgil further claimed that personal dates and their celebrations could become meaningful to the Roman community when linked with the city's origin and future. Similarly, according to Pliny, Pompey delayed the ceremony of his victory over the East in 61 B.C.E. to synchronize it with his birthday on the 29th of September. To do so, he waited seven months even once he returned from the campaign.¹³¹ Plutarch synchronized the date of Pompey's death with his birthday to dramatize his tragic end while linking his death with the death of King Attalus.¹³² Suetonius also described how personal anniversaries were commemorated as public festivals, explaining that, since the Julian reform of the Roman calendar, the birthday of Augustus was synchronized with the festival day of Apollo.¹³³ By aligning the birthday of Augustus with the festival of Apollo, Suetonius claimed that the personal date was

¹³⁰ "...you, Roman, be sure to rule the world (be these your arts), to crown peace with justice, to spare the vanquished and to crush the proud" (*Aeneid*, 6. 851). Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1-6*,

¹³¹ "Thus, Pompey's third triumph was held on his own birthday, September 29th of the year" (Pliny, *Natural History* 37.13). Pliny, *Natural History, Volume X: Books 36-37*, trans. D. E. Eichholz, LCL 419 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962), 173; Argetsinger, "Birthday Rituals: Friends and Patrons in Roman Poetry and Cult," 191.

¹³² "Both King Attalus and Pompey the Great died on their own birth-days" (Plutarch *Camillus* 19); "[Pompey] died in his fifty-eighth year, on the very eve of his birthday" (Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History* 2. 53. 3); Plutarch, *Lives, Volume II: Themistocles and Camillus. Aristides and Cato Major. Cimon and Lucullus*, trans. Bernadotte Perrin, LCL 47 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 141; Velleius Paterculus, *Compendium of Roman History. Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, trans. Frederick W. Shipley, LCL 152 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1924), 167.

¹³³ "Augustus was born just before sunrise on the ninth day before the Kalends of October" (Suetonius *The Deified Augustus* 5) and "he called the month Sextilis by his own surname, rather than his birth-month September" (Suetonius *The Deified Augustus* 31); Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars, Volume I: Julius. Augustus. Tiberius. Gaius. Caligula*, trans. J. C. Rolfe, LCL 31 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 157 and 197; Price, *Rituals and Power*, 106; John F. Miller, *Apollo, Augustus, and the Poets* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 193; Robert Hannah, *Greek and Roman Calendars: Constructions of Time in the Classical World* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2005), 98-130.

transformed into a public one, making it both sacred and an expression of participants' loyalty to the emperors.

These writers highlighted the supposed inevitability of Roman hegemony in various ways. Through their descriptions of the commemoration of time periods, their discussions of past events, and their descriptions of annual festivals, they intertwined the past and present in such a way that their present was reconfigured as a repetition of a glorious past and anticipation of a prosperous future. Not surprisingly, such arguments were also received, reconfigured, and repurposed by Roman Era Jews.

Responses to Jewish and Roman Time in the Writings of Josephus and Philo

Philo and Josephus, two Second Temple Jewish writers, engaged Roman arguments directly, creating temporal frames to delineate Jewish identity and convey what they represented as universal lessons.¹³⁴ Philo and Josephus recalibrated claims about the Jewish past, present, and future in light of Roman time, re-presenting the Jewish calendar, how it should be reckoned, and why. Employing various temporal frames simultaneously, Josephus created a pan-Jewish chronology that foregrounded the value of Jewish antiquity while producing a particular temporal framework that interwove Jewish time with other non-Jewish temporal traditions.¹³⁵ Philo also considered the presence of various non-Jewish temporal frames and, by engaging them, created an imagined boundary to distinguish his fellow Jews from other groups. Together,

¹³⁴ VanderKam, *An Introduction to Early Judaism*, 138-146.

¹³⁵ Stern suggests that “there is no reason, therefore, to assume that Josephus would restrict himself to a single calendar.” Stern, *Calendar and Community*, 36.

they worked to develop distinctive definitions of Jewish difference on the basis of temporal reframing.

In his writings, Josephus employed different temporalities to convey Jewish history to both non-Jewish people (*Jewish War*, 1.1-6), and Jews (*Antiquities* 4. 197).¹³⁶ He acknowledged the time-keeping traditions of non-Jews, whom he called “barbarians” (*Against Apion* 1:58),¹³⁷ and used their temporal frames to define the temporal aspects of his own work in relation to other cultures and parts of the world. For example, when he noted that the Deluge in the book of Genesis was mentioned by “all the writers of barbarian histories” (*Antiquities*, 1. 93), he used a biblical event as a temporal axis relevant to his own time and claimed that this “Jewish” story is significant for Jews and non-Jews alike. Josephus also asserted that “Berosus the Chaldean” mapped junctures in Babylonian civilization according to the span of time since key biblical events (*Against Apion* 1:131, “he [Berosus] gives us a catalogue of the posterity of Noah and adds the years of their chronology”). Josephus argued that Noah was the progenitor of all civilization, and mentions Berosus to connect Babylonian history to Jewish history through the Deluge.¹³⁸ Josephus also claimed that Berosus, a Chaldean, identified Noah, the founding ancestor of the Jewish people, as the survivor of the flood (*Against Apion* 1.

¹³⁶ Steven Mason, “Flavius Josephus in Flavian Rome: Reading on and Between the Lines,” in *Flavian Rome: Culture, Image, Text*, ed. Anthony Boyle and William J. Dominik (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 559-589; Reinhard Pummer, *The Samaritans in Flavius Josephus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 59-64; Tessa Rajak, *Josephus: The Historian and His Society* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 11-45.

¹³⁷ “...this custom of transmitting down the histories of ancient times has been better preserved by those nations which are called Barbarians...”

¹³⁸ For portrayals of Noah in the works of Josephus, see Louis H. Feldman, *Studies in Josephus' Rewritten Bible* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 17-37.

130).¹³⁹ In the process, he established a new genealogical association between Jews and Babylonians (*Jewish Antiquities* 1:143-144).¹⁴⁰ Here, Josephus was less interested in describing Jews as the conquered and Babylon as the conqueror than depicting Jews and their history as inclusive rather than isolated. Josephus evoked a particular Jewish identity by describing the temporal continuity between past and present.

Josephus's temporal structure also underscores his commitment to an image of historical unity in which Jews play a key role.¹⁴¹ When he described the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, he was interpreting history as a continual repetition of past events and biblical events in particular (*Jewish War*, 1. 9-11). From the beginning of the *Jewish War*, he stated that the Jews' national misfortune was due to their own corruption, which mitigated Rome's responsibility for destroying the Temple.¹⁴² In the beginning of the work, Josephus repeatedly used the term "tyrants" to stress the Jewish leaders' accountability for the national catastrophe (τύραννοι, *Jewish War* 1.10, 11, 24, 27–28). Josephus's use of "tyranny" also created a temporal bridge linking present tyrants with

¹³⁹ "He [Berosus] also gives us an account of that ark wherein Noah, the origin of our race, was preserved..."

¹⁴⁰ "Shem, the third son of Noah, had five sons... Arphaxad named the Arphaxadites, who are now called Chaldeans." Josephus loosely associates the Chaldeans with the Babylonians (*Antiquities* 10. 40; *Against Apion* 1. 133). "...Jerusalem was taken [were carried away] by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon and Chaldea" (*Antiquities* 10. 183).

¹⁴¹ Klawans, *Josephus and the Theologies of Ancient Judaism*, 207-209; Mason, "The Greeks and the Distant Past in Josephus's *Judaean War*," 112-113.

¹⁴² "...it was the Jewish tyrants who drew down upon the holy temple" and "the tyrants [Jewish leaders] brutal treatment of their fellow-countrymen" (*Jewish War* 1.4 and 1.11); "...the unwilling hands of the Romans" and "the clemency of the Romans towards an alien race" (*Jewish War* 1.4, and 1. 11); Josephus, *The Jewish War, Volume I: Books 1-2*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, LCL 203 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 7 and 17.

those of the biblical past.¹⁴³ Reminding readers of the destruction of the First Temple (*Jewish War*, 5. 391; 6. 435 and *Antiquity* 10:276) for example, Josephus argued that the corruption of Jewish society inevitably led to the destruction of the Second Temple, and avoided blaming the Roman army for the sacking. Josephus also represented the destruction of the Second Temple as the accomplishment of prophecy.¹⁴⁴ He compared himself to Jeremiah the prophet, and employed the ancient Israelite oracles spoken by Jeremiah to legitimate the unavailability of the destruction and necessity of the Roman conquest.¹⁴⁵ He thus depicted Jewish resistance against Roman power, the spirit of the age to which all other nations eventually acquiesce, as futile and meaningless (*Jewish War* 2. 349 and 364). Josephus also referred to prophetic biblical oracles to imbue the connection between present and past events with meaning (*Jewish War*, 6.109–10, 250, 310–15; *Antiquities*, 10. 79, 276). Arguing that divine judgment in history impacted the life of both individuals and their community, he attempted to justify the status of his

¹⁴³ “...the whole course of their [the Sons of Eli] lives was no better than tyranny” and “Solomon was fallen headlong into unreasonable pleasures” (*Antiquities* 5. 339 and 8. 193). Concerning Herod as a tyrant, *Antiquities* 17.398; Jan Willem van Henten, “Rebellion under Herod the Great and Archelaus: Prominent Motifs and Narrative Function,” in *The Jewish Revolt against Rome: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Mladen Popović (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 241-242.

¹⁴⁴ “...there was a certain ancient oracle of those men, that the city should then be taken, and the sanctuary burnt, by right of war” (*Jewish War* 4:388) and “... God, out of his hatred of these men's wickedness, rejected our city” (*Antiquities*, 20, 166); Josephus is familiar with prophetic biblical oracles (*Jewish War*, 6.109–10, 250, 310–15; *Antiquities*, 10. 79, 276), and uses this knowledge to imbue the connection between present and past events with meaning. Jonathan Klawans, *Josephus and the Theologies of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 13-14. “And this seems to me to have been the reason why God, out of his hatred of these men's wickedness, rejected our city; and as for the temple, he no longer esteemed it sufficiently pure for him to inhabit therein, but brought the Romans upon us, and threw a fire upon the city to purge it; and brought upon us, our wives, and children, slavery, as desirous to make us wiser by our calamities” (*Antiquities*, 20:166).

¹⁴⁵ “... Jeremiah the prophet, he was at once taken prisoner, and saw the city and the temple demolished” (*Jewish War* 5. 391).

contemporary Jews and the Roman victory as a demonstration of divine wrath against the Jews, who were disobedient to his advice, which represented the divine will.¹⁴⁶ In Josephus's historical setting and construction of time, Jews did not have to fight against the Romans, but should have found ways to negotiate with them for the sake of their own welfare.¹⁴⁷

Like Josephus, Philo of Alexandria also used the biblical past in his narrative to compare Jewish life under Roman authority to that of biblical stories.¹⁴⁸ The biblical past provided Philo material and noble virtues with which to guide contemporary Jews towards an optimistic future, despite the pressures of Roman rule.¹⁴⁹ Philo's interpretation of Jewish scripture was often closely related to his political and diplomatic concerns. Keenly aware of having been "an object of ridicule among many people" (*Spec.* 1.1) and involved with "the ocean of civil cares" and "civil turmoils" (*Spec.* 3.3 and 5), he encouraged Jews to remain hopeful and accused those who criticized Jewish civic status and customs of being ignorant of their glorious past (*Moses* 1.1).¹⁵⁰ In *On the Embassy to*

¹⁴⁶ Like Josephus's interest in divine intervention, the Qumran community projects a particular idea of God's intervention in human affairs by framing time and temporal markers. Devorah Dimant, *History, Ideology and Bible Interpretation in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Collected Studies* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 315-334; Beckwith, *Calendar, Chronology And Worship*, 67-90.

¹⁴⁷ Indeed, before the siege, Josephus urged Jews to stop warring against Rome, explaining that their fighting was "not only against the Romans, but against God himself" (*Jewish War* 5. 378).

¹⁴⁸ Peder Borgen, *Philo of Alexandria: An Exegete for His Time* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 14-26; Maren Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria: An Intellectual Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 1-22, 252-253.

¹⁴⁹ The Israelite past proves the deliverance of God who "has often saved the nation when in helpless straits" (*On the Embassy* 196), discussed in Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria*, 36.

¹⁵⁰ Philo, *On the Decalogue. On the Special Laws, Books 1-3*, trans. F. H. Colson, LCL 320 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 101, 477; Philo, *On Abraham. On Joseph. On Moses*, trans. F. H.

Gaius, for instance, Philo described Gaius's edict to place statues of himself in the Temple as diverging from the benevolent policies of his predecessor (*On the Embassy* 157 "...nor did he [Augustus] ever deprive them [Jews] of their rights as Roman citizens"). He denounced Gaius's likening himself to a deity (*On the Embassy* 75 and 114) and contrasted this transgression with Augustus's reverence to "the most high God," i.e., the God of the Jews (*On the Embassy* 317).¹⁵¹ Considering the Jewish laws and customs "established at the beginning" by the "Father of the universe" (*On the Embassy* 293), Philo argued that one might expect Gaius to fail in his attempt to dishonor the Israelite God at the Temple.¹⁵²

Additionally, while situating a particular Jewish temporality in the biblical past, Philo witnessed how various non-Jewish temporal frames impacted the temporal calculations made by his contemporary Jews and created an imagined boundary to distinguish his fellow Jews from other groups by encouraging his audience to stick with the Jewish measurement of time. Philo allegorically linked biblical Jews to his contemporary community through a temporal reconfiguration:

But not all (peoples) treat the months and years alike, but some in one way and some in another. ... Wherefore (Scripture) has added, "This month (shall be) to

Colson, LCL 289. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935), 277; Niehoff, *Philo of Alexandria*, 150.

¹⁵¹ René Bloch, "Alexandria in Pharaonic Egypt: Projections in De Vita Mosis," *Studia Philonica Annual* (2012): 74. Under this difficult circumstance, according to Philo, Jewish people at Alexandria must sustain "an imperishable hope and trust in God the Savior" (*On the Embassy* 196) because God takes watchful care of his people just as he guided the Israelites during the Exodus.

¹⁵² Philo's assurance of divine providence is deeply rooted in "the knowledge of the sacred scriptures" that fill people with hope (*On the Embassy* 195) and the belief that God "took compassion on us, and turned his mind to pity" (367) by creating Israel, the people who see God (this resonates with Jacob, who was granted the name Israel in the book of Genesis).

you the beginning,” making clear a determined and distinct number of seasons, lest they follow the Egyptians, with whom they are mixed, and be seduced by the customs of the land in which they dwell (Philo, *Questions on Exodus* 1. 1).¹⁵³

In the passage, Philo implicitly mentioned the significance of the lunar calendar’s marking a distinct Jewish communal identity at Alexandria.¹⁵⁴ He legitimized this calendar by quoting Exod. 12: 2. By distinguishing contemporary Jews from contemporary Egyptians through their respective usage of time, Philo collapsed time by reminding readers that biblical Israel was once in conflict with ancient Egypt. For him, the boundary between the Jews and the Egyptians in Exodus was identical to that between Alexandrian Jews and the Egyptians of his time.

Like Philo and his Roman counterparts, Josephus employed past events and persons to assert the distinctiveness of the Jewish present and, in turn, Jewish cultural superiority. By employing history to prove that the “Jewish nation is of very great antiquity” (*Against Apion* 1. 1) for example, Josephus remained close to biblical texts in evoking the retribution and intervention of God against the enemies of his chosen people in the biblical past (*Jewish War* 5. 379-389; 399-401).¹⁵⁵ Josephus seems to have hoped that the Jewish people would see a dramatic reversal of their current miseries just as past miseries were also overcome. Thus, given that the First Temple was rebuilt (*Jewish War* 6.250, 267–68, and 435–38; see also *Ant.* 10.135–42), the destroyed Second Temple

¹⁵³ Philo, *Questions on Exodus*, trans. Ralph Marcus, LCL 401 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), 4-5.

¹⁵⁴ Philo also described the particular character of the Jewish calendar as part of a larger statement on Jewish group identity and particularity (*Quaestiones ad Exodum* 12:2).

¹⁵⁵ Concerning the Jewish apologetic of the past, see John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 63; Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible*, 629.

could also be rebuilt (*Antiquities* 11.1–7). Past prophecies could also be realized in some future present. Josephus interpreted Daniel’s fourth kingdom as a reference to the Romans, for example, reading Daniel’s prophecy as predictive of the eventual triumph of Jews (*Antiquities* 4.125–30, 10.210 and 276–77; see also *Jewish War* 6.109–10).¹⁵⁶ In Josephus’s view, history was neither forgettable nor erasable, but rather constantly repeated. His narrative of the destruction of both Temples elicits the expectation of a glorious future.

Building on an earlier tradition to imagine historical continuity, Josephus also established the genealogical connections between two different groups of people. Quoting a letter from Areios, the Spartan king, to Onias, the high priest, for example, he created a fictitious genealogical connection between Jews and Spartans that strengthened the bond between those two nations. As he reported, “we have learned that the Jews and Lacedaemonians are of one race and are related by descent from Abraham” (*Antiquities* 12. 226). Josephus selectively highlighted certain ancestors in order to forge ties between the Jews and groups that were imagined to descend from them, like the Spartans, to preserve Jewish-Spartan friendship (*Antiquities* 13. 164).¹⁵⁷ This genealogical argument suggested an imaginative affiliation between Jews and others that enhanced a Jewish-

¹⁵⁶ Paul Spilsbury, “Reading the Bible in Rome: Josephus and the Constraints of Empire,” in *Josephus And Jewish History in Flavian Rome And Beyond*, ed. Joseph Sievers, Gaia Lembi (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 225–227; Eric S. Gruen, “Polybius and Josephus on Rome,” in *Flavius Josephus*, ed. Jack Pastor, Pnina Stern, and Menahem Mor (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 159–160; “Daniel did also declare the meaning of the stone to the king but I do not think proper to relate it ... yet if anyone be so very desirous of knowing truth ... let him be diligent in reading the Book of Daniel, which he will find among the sacred writings” (*Antiquities* 10. 210); “...most nations have been often subdued, and brought into subjection by others” (*Against Apion* 2. 127).

¹⁵⁷ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 29–63; Gruen, *The Construct of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism*, 105–108.

centric worldview through temporal cohesion. Josephus also mapped the matrimonial tie between Hercules, the Greek hero, and the daughter of Apher, the son of Keturah, the concubine of Abraham, to integrate the pasts of each nation into Jewish time (*Antiquities* 1. 240). The Jewish community sought stability by using this conception of historical time that was universally meaningful. By collapsing the temporal distance between past and present that would otherwise divide the two peoples, Josephus shaped a fictitious kinship with non-Jews.

Philo and Josephus's recollections of past events and rulers exemplified how contemporary political and historical events were rearranged and interpreted through biblical history to describe the present and the future. Often, the construction of the past was designed to advance a particular agenda through temporal frames;¹⁵⁸ by weaving one temporal frame and marker with those of another culture, Josephus and Philo interpreted the past and created genealogy to negotiate with other cultures while shaping a sense of collectiveness among their audiences.

Conclusion

This chapter examined how ancient writers developed temporal frames by reckoning time in various and nuanced ways. The literary evidence attests to the high value accorded to recording time for local, daily practice and also for situating local events and particular presents within a supposedly universal history. Greek, Roman, and Jewish writers used temporal frames and perceptions to demarcate the self-expression of

¹⁵⁸ Libby, "Forgetful Theseus and Mindful Aeneas in Catullus 64 and Aeneid 4," 73.

their identities based in commemoration. They also rooted their interpretative authority in these temporal narratives, augmenting past events to develop a sense of the inevitability of the present and future. Their observations of heavenly bodies, moreover, did not only determine ritual dates, but also served as a means of understanding the order of the world, with its hierarchies of difference. In a manner similar to the writings of the early Jesus followers, these authors' claims about time reflected a shared social world. This is the topic of the next three chapters.

**CHAPTER THREE: CONSTRUCTING DIVINE TIME TO MANIFEST JESUS,
SAVIOR OF THE WORLD, IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN¹⁵⁹**

This chapter investigates how the Gospel of John employs temporal markers that incorporate Jewish and Roman perceptions of time, and outlines the ways in which the Gospel of John replaces worldly time with the calendar of Jesus Christ – a calendar that the writer regards as truly divine. Beyond the visible passage of time (from day to night and season to season), the calculation and segmentation of time is organized and constructed by individuals and societies according to local traditions.¹⁶⁰ A group’s organization and management of time defines their collective sense of belonging, constructs a shared identity and, among marginalized groups, indicates degrees of assimilation, negotiation, and resistance to surrounding cultures.¹⁶¹ I argue that the Gospel of John builds on contemporary temporal practices in order to develop a sequence of events within an unfolding, dramatized memory of the past that, in turn, legitimizes certain claims about Jesus. The Gospel of John constructs this distinctive sense of

¹⁵⁹ It must be noted that the preliminary form of this chapter was inspired by my draft of the third comprehensive exam entitled “Temporal Strategies in the Narrative of the Fourth Gospel,” submitted on Nov. 27, 2016. Whole sections have been fully revised and expanded. Most of this chapter is newly written for its inclusion in this dissertation.

¹⁶⁰ Clark, *Making Time for the Past: Local History and the Polis*, 27.

¹⁶¹ Feeney, *Caesar’s Calendar*, 65-67; Andreas Mehl, “How the Romans Remembers, Recorded, Thought About, and Used Their Past,” in *Ancient World: Comparative Histories: Thinking, Recording, and Writing History in the Ancient World*, ed. Kurt A. Raaflaub (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 256-275; Douglas Charles Estes, *The Temporal Mechanics of the Fourth Gospel: A Theory of Hermeneutical Relativity in the Gospel of John* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 1-30; Harold W. Attridge, “Temple, Tabernacle, Time, and Space in John and Hebrews,” *Early Christianity* 1 (2010): 261-274; Tom Thatcher, “John’s Memory Theater: The Fourth Gospel and Ancient Mnemo-Rhetoric,” *CBQ* 69 (2007): 487-505; Eric Rowe and Jerome Neyrey, “Christ and Time—Part Three: “Telling Time” in the Fourth Gospel,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 40 (2010): 79–92; Bruce J. Malina, “Christ and Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?” *CBQ* 51 (1989): 1-30.

temporality by deploying temporal markers that adopt either Roman, Jewish, or blended characteristics. This chapter thus draws out how the Gospel of John links with these contemporary frameworks in order to reinforce its distinctive temporal scheme, both mimicking an over-arching, dominant earthly time (e.g. the Roman perception of time) and interacting more subversively with its temporal configurations.

This chapter investigates the roles of temporality employed by the Gospel narrator by conducting a close reading of temporal references in four key passages: the prologue (John 1:1-18); the scene transitioning from the proclamations of John the Baptist¹⁶² to the first sign of Jesus (1:19-2:12); the climactic shift from the death and burial to the resurrection of Jesus (19:14-20:23); and the appearance of post-resurrection Jesus (21:1-25). These passages show that God alone has the exclusive right to begin, end, and organize time, which is in turn construed in the deeds and words of Jesus. From the Gospel's perspective, those who do not possess what John would regard as a legitimate understanding of God are accordingly unable to organize time properly and therefore unable to believe in Jesus the Messiah.¹⁶³ John chapter 1 thus sets out to show that Jesus and his God are the beginning of time. The prologue (1:1-18) serves as a gateway into the narrative and a summary of the good news. I argue that the text's distinctive temporal marker, the "beginning," refers to an archaic time in order to construct the temporally

¹⁶² Whereas the Synoptic gospel describes John as the Baptist (Matt 3:1, 11:11; Mark 6:25, 8:28; Luke 7:20, 33, 9:19), the Gospel of John never calls him the Baptist nor does it describe him being baptized by Jesus. In the conventional sense, I will refer to him as John the Baptist to avoid confusing him with the traditionally assumed author of the Gospel, John. R. Alan Culpepper, *The Gospel And Letters of John* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 48; Marianne Meye Thompson, *John: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press), 42-43; Sherry L. Brown and Francis J. Moloney, *Interpreting the Gospel and Letters of John: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 184.

¹⁶³ "But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31).

superb origin of Jesus the Logos and, in turn, the superiority of his followers. John's use of "beginning" therefore challenges Roman time by mimicking imperial references to the "beginning" in the context of political propaganda.

John 1:19-2:11, which is part of the "book of signs" (to use Brown's term), uses phrases typically employed in other Jewish literature in order to show that Jesus operated within Jewish historical time and within the plane of the historical world, while heavenly time simultaneously marched along.¹⁶⁴ The temporal markers "next day" (1:29, 35, and 43) and "after that" (2:12) do not only indicate chronological movement in a sequence of events, but emphasize the narrator's claim to legitimate the authority of Jesus.¹⁶⁵ The narrator switches temporal markers to "in the third day" (2:1) and "after that" (2:12) to reinforce the transition of power from John the Baptist and his ministry to Jesus.

The account of the crucifixion places Jesus's death firmly within Israel's biblical past by referring to the Passover festival (which Jesus fulfills and thus replaces). The narrator recounts the crucifixion according to a Jewish temporal frame, "the day of Preparation" (John 19:14, 42), but depicts the resurrection scene using a different temporal frame that employs the measurement of one midnight to the next – "early in the morning," and "evening on that day" (John 20:1 and 19). The punishment of crucifixion was extremely torturous and demonstrated to the public the excruciating result of any

¹⁶⁴ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary* (Minnesota, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1988), 15-16; Sonya Shetty Cronin, *Raymond Brown, 'The Jews,' and the Gospel of John: From Apologia to Apology* (New York: T & T Clark, 2015), 34-37.

¹⁶⁵ Brown, *The Gospel According to John: I-XII*, 45.

challenge to Roman authority.¹⁶⁶ This temporal transition from a Jewish festival (which follows a local lunar calendar) to a Roman day (based in the movement of the sun) does not only reinforce the chronological movement of scenes from crucifixion to resurrection, but also rhetorically resists the apparent victory of imperial power. The temporal shift at the resurrection scene highlights Jesus's vindication by an authority superior to that of the current political regime, a shift that brings about a new "beginning." Lastly, John chapter 21, which serves as an epilogue to the Gospel, unites preceding aspects of the narrative by using the temporal marker "after these things" (21:1), thereby elaborating the story beyond its initial conclusion (20:30-31) and linking the events of the past chapters with the ongoing activities of the community of believers.¹⁶⁷

In the analysis of each passage, I argue that (1) the Gospel of John accentuates the supremacy of Jesus by manipulating the temporal movements through which the disciples, the earthly authorities, and the world at large recognize Jesus's claim and his identity, as the incarnated Word, to challenge dominant power; (2) the rhetoric of temporality is key to understanding John and his perception of past events related to Jesus and his teaching; and (3) the **temporal strategies of the Gospel of John show that the narrator seeks to establish Jesus as the Savior of the World who, while residing in this world, transcends time.** These analyses underscore the writer's sense of anxiety over, resistance to, and

¹⁶⁶ Neil Elliot, *Liberating Paul: The Justice of God and the Politics of the Apostle* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 98.

¹⁶⁷ Brown, *The Gospel According to John: I-XII*, 1079; Brown and Moloney, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 306.

negotiation with “the world” (John 1:9) and reveal his understanding of who Jesus is, who Jesus’s followers are, and how they respond to the good news that Jesus proclaimed.

The Prologue (John 1:1-18): “Beginning,” Temporal Marker of the Origin

The Gospel of John opens using archaic, mythological time, which is John’s attempt to situate Jesus in primordial and sacred time – that is to say, in “the beginning.” There, Jesus coexisted with God, and appeared to be God (John 1:1, “the Word was God”). In the lengthy prologue (John 1:1-18), the writer provides information about the origin, identity, and the mission of “the Word”¹⁶⁸ that will be identified with Jesus (John 1:1, and 14).¹⁶⁹ The Johannine prologue presents key terms like “life” (1:4), “light” (1:4, 5, 7, 8, and 9), and “glory” (1:14), which will help readers evaluate later events throughout the story. More importantly, the concept of “beginning” as “origin” articulates and strengthens the legitimacy of the author’s Christological claim that Jesus is God’s Logos; the Logos does not only grant believers access to God but also reveals the divine will. The Gospel of John depicts Jesus’s ultimate superiority over Moses, a lawgiver, by recounting the mythic past and evoking the first temporal words of Genesis 1:1 to claim

¹⁶⁸ The background of the Johannine “Logos” has been an unwavering topic of major scholarship and is still debated. But it is clear that the Gospel of John was not influenced by any particular, homogeneous strain of John’s contemporary culture, but was rather influenced to Greco-Roman culture as a whole. To avoid confusing Jesus, the incarnated Word with God’s own word, I will refer to Jesus as “Word” (capitalized). Urban C. von Wahlde, *Gnosticism, Docetism, and the Judaisms of the First Century: the Search for the Wider Context of the Johannine Literature and Why It Matters* (New York: T&T Clark, 2015), 171, 185.

¹⁶⁹ Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1971), 13; The Johannine prologue itself conveys many exegetical topics and issues but, given limited space, I would like to deal with the passage in terms of its temporality. For a full introduction to the prologue see, Brown, *The Gospel According to John: I-XII*, 4-92.

the pre-existence of Jesus (before Moses, in regard to Jewish traditions) and the Emperor (in regard to imperial traditions).

Echoing the first phrases of Genesis (1:1, LXX), the prologue of the Gospel of John (1:1-18) begins by addressing Jesus as the pre-existent Word that spatially and temporally was with God even before the Creation. While alluding to the first works of God in Genesis, the prologue establishes the temporal movements initiated by the word of God, who is beyond the current world and time:¹⁷⁰

The prologue then identifies the eternal Word with the life and light of creation (1:1-5), addressing John the Baptist as a witness to the light (1:6-8), developing the idea of the Word in the world (1:9-13), and reaching a climax with the declaration that the Word became flesh and is dwelling in us (1:14-18).¹⁷¹ While describing Jesus as the pre-existent Logos and establishing his true time and place in the divine realm (1:2, “He was in the beginning (ἐν ἀρχῇ) with God”), John also temporally and spatially depicts Jesus within the human realm by asserting his status in the flesh.¹⁷² Strongly differentiating one temporal sphere from another, the writer divides time in two: the eternal time of the Word which was with God on one hand, and the indefinite time of “men” (1:4), “world” (1:10), and “the Word incarnated” (1:14) on the other. In the Prologue, the interaction and conflict between these two different spheres is striking.

¹⁷⁰ Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 21; Brown, *The Gospel According to John: I-XII*, 4; Thompson, *John*, 28-29; Brown and Moloney, *Interpreting the Gospel and Letters of John*, 164.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 21; Gail R. O’Day, *The Gospel of John* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 516.

¹⁷² “And the Word became flesh and lived among us...” (John 1:14). Throughout this chapter, I will consult NRSV unless otherwise mentioned. Adele Reinhartz, “‘And the Word Was Begotten’: Divine Epigenesis in the Gospel of John,” *Semeia* 85 (1999): 86.

From the beginning of the Prologue, the Word is identified with God and, as an agent of God's creation, is depicted as working and transcending all temporal limitations given its closeness to God. Yet the Johannine Jesus of flesh is also the ultimate revealer who makes God known to his children. Jesus thus stands in an intermediary position that obscures the boundary between the eternal time of God and the restricted time of the earth, as long as he is the one who "is close to the Father's heart" (John 1:18) and full of divine grace. The Word both created the world and also became a part of that world through its incarnation in flesh. If the Word was God's agent participating in his works from the beginning, Jesus, as the incarnated Word, caused and continues to bring life to the world. The superiority of Jesus over all creatures is dependent on this archaic and timeless union with God, which is bolstered by his intimate relation with God (1:18).

The claim that the legitimacy of a powerful human figure depends on an archaic origin is not unique to the Gospel of John, but appears also in many other contemporary texts. In particular, Virgil's poems the *Eclogues* and the *Aeneid* appeal to a transcendent past to describe the divinely-sanctioned origin of Rome and its people. For example, when Aeneas visits the underworld, he is granted a vision of the past and future of the nation he would found:

... behold this nation, the Romans that are yours. Here is Caesar and all the seed of Iulus destined to pass under heaven's spacious sphere. And this in truth is he whom you so often hear promised you, Augustus Caesar, son of a god, who will again establish a golden age in Latium amid fields once ruled by Saturn; he will advance his empire ...beyond the path of year and sun, where sky-bearing Atlas wheels on his shoulders the blazing star-studded sphere (Virgil, *Aeneid*. 6. 788-800).¹⁷³

¹⁷³ Virgil, *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1-6*, 589.

By writing that the city originated in the mythic past and was subsequently built in historic time, Virgil articulates his ideal conception of the Romans as having a divine destiny to dominate the world (*Aeneid* 1. 276, “the Romans, lords of the world”). Virgil depicts Augustan rule as the zenith of a history that justifies him as Son of God to bring prosperity to the empire. Augustus’s revival is thus Rome’s fulfillment of the gods’ will. According to Virgil’s interpretation of his contemporary empire, the power and authority of the Augustan dynasty is established by the archaic divine promise to Augustus and thus its inevitable accomplishment.

Virgil describes a political mythology of a golden age projected into the Empire’s future (*Aeneid* 6. 788-807) that revolves around “the birth of the child” identified with Augustus’s rein, his political success, and the reinstatement of peace. Similarly, in the *Eclogues*, while appraising the Romans as “offspring of the gods, mighty seed of a Jupiter” (*Eclogues*, 4.50, *Aeneid* 3. 35, “Seed of a race divine”), Virgil identifies the current ruler as a god and connects Augustan power with an archaic, divine power (*Eclogues*, 4. 8, “Your own Apollo now is king”).¹⁷⁴ Virgil’s epics appear to establish the divinely fated character of both the Empire and Augustus, obscuring the military, economic, and political bases of that power by claiming that the Romans and their current Emperor both have a divine, archaic origin. Roman hegemony is therefore a fulfillment of ancient prophecy, not a mortal achievement of political domination. In the *Eclogues*, Virgil celebrates the arrival of a new world in which the earth will produce food without

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 49-51.

any human effort. He suggests that all things celebrate the age to come initiated by Augustus, according to the divine prophecy (*Eclogues*, 4.52, “See how all things rejoice in the age that is at hand” and *Aeneid* 4. 788, “all the seed of Iulus destined to pass under heaven’s spacious sphere”).¹⁷⁵

It is highly unlikely that those responsible for the Gospel of John would have been familiar with Virgil’s poetry. Nevertheless, the sense that the true sovereign’s destiny and rule are pre-determined and eschatological in character is shared by the evangelist and the Roman poet, through the movement of a mythic and legendary past into present time. The Roman historian Livy also shares this point of view. His lengthy book, *History*, narrates the span of Roman time from its mythological beginning to the present and describes how the Roman virtues exemplified by great figures of the past have deteriorated and urgently need to be restored.¹⁷⁶ While reflecting on Roman rule, Livy claims that Rome will reach its destined pinnacle of achievement in the future regardless of the Empire’s current success or failure. This narrative of Roman superiority is constructed by selectively choosing and remembrance of a particular archaic past.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Some scholars suggest that Virgil harbored an ambivalent attitude toward Augustan domination. I do not argue that Virgil’s view of Roman domination is singular or simplistic. Rather, I focus here on the extent to which Virgil rhetorically employs temporal frames to articulate his worldview. Concerning the nuance of Virgil’s views, see Philip Hardie, *The Epic Successors of Virgil: A Study in the Dynamics of a Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 2; Oliver Lyne, “Vergil’s *Aeneid*. Subversion by Intertextuality: Catullus 66.39-40 and Other Examples,” *Greece & Rome* 51 (1994): 187-204.

¹⁷⁶ “...morals first gave way...and finally began the downward plunge which has brought us to the present time” (*History of Rome*, 1.8) Livy, *History of Rome, Volume I: Books 1-2*, 7.

¹⁷⁷ Some ancient historians and writers fence off mythical time from their chronological work even though the distinction between myth and history was traditionally quite mobile; Livy, *History of Rome, Volume I: Books 1-2*, 5 and 9; “Such traditions as belong to the time before the city was founded, or rather was presently to be founded, and are rather adorned with poetic legends than based upon trustworthy historical proofs, I purpose neither to affirm nor to refute. It is the privilege of antiquity to mingle divine things with human, and so to add dignity to the beginnings of cities; and if any people ought to be allowed to

It is the privilege of antiquity to mingle divine things with human, and so to add dignity to the beginnings of cities; and if any people ought to be allowed to consecrate their origins and refer them to a divine source, so great is the military glory of the Roman People that when they profess that their Father and the Father of their Founder was none other than Mars, the nations of the earth may well submit to this also with as good a grace as they submit to Rome's dominion. (Livy, *History of Rome*, 1.8).¹⁷⁸

According to Livy's interpretation, Roman domination is not a result of conquest, but

was brought about by the noble origins of a consecrated people born from ancient gods

(*History of Rome*, 1. 15 "...divine origin and the divinity"). An older city of mythic

origin inspires Rome's contemporary and future supremacy, he argues, claiming that the tradition, authority, and superiority of the Empire and its rule possess a divinely inspired

cultural heritage. These contemporary strengths, in turn, will lead the city to a glorious

future.¹⁷⁹ Both Virgil and Livy claim that divinely sanctioned sovereignty begins with a

divine origin and is preserved by the pious, disciplined obedience of a city's subjects to

both divine and human rulers. In the case of Rome, the archaic past of the city influences

the present and future of the Empire, an argument that resonates with the presentation of

time in John as well, however distant first-century Roman literature and the Gospel may

be in language (Greek instead of Latin) and imagined audience (followers of Jesus

instead of literate Roman elites).

consecrate their origins and refer them to a divine source, so great is the military glory of the Roman People that when they profess that their Father and the Father of their Founder was none other than Mars, the nations of the earth may well submit to this also with as good a grace as they submit to Rome's dominion. But to such legends as these, however they shall be regarded and judged, I shall, for my own part, attach no great importance." Emphasis added.

¹⁷⁸ Livy, *History of Rome, Volume I: Books 1-2*, 5.

¹⁷⁹ Karl Galinsky, *Augustan Culture: An Interpretive Introduction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 280-87.

The term “beginning” (ἀρχή) in Roman era inscriptions, in Greek, and in contexts more familiar to John’s likely audiences also conveys the importance of the myth of a people or city’s divinely ordained archaic origins.¹⁸⁰ Provincial inscriptions also advertise the unique powers of the emperor, who knits together a world of divinely appointed cities into a single, divinely mediated, harmonious unity, in part by referencing time. When celebrating the emperor’s birthday, for example, provincial inscriptions identify the emperor as a life-provider sprung from the gods. An inscription from the Greek city Mytilene, erected around 25 B.C.E. to honor Augustus as benefactor of well-being of all nations, states:

Since the eternal and immortal nature of the universe, out of overflowing kindness, has bestowed on human beings the greatest of all goods by bringing forth Caesar Augustus, the father who gives us a happy life and father of his own native goddess Roma, the native Zeus and savior of human race. Providence not only granted all his wishes, but went far beyond them, for land and sea live in peace, cities are resplendent with the order of law, in harmony and abundance; now is the favourable zenith for all good thing – good hopes for the future, solid courage for the present state of human beings, who with feasts, statues, sacrifices and songs...¹⁸¹

As this inscription suggests, Augustus was not only a creator of life but also a preserver of life; his patronage guarantees the well-being of his subjects, a sentiment expressed in an inscription from Priene as well. The Priene inscription, written around 9

¹⁸⁰ Fredrick W. Danker, *Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field* (St. Louis, MO: Clayton Publishing House, 1982), 216-217; John Ma, “Honorific Statues and Hellenistic History,” in *Imperialism, Cultural Politics, and Polybius*, ed. Christopher Smith and Liv Mariah Yarrow (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012), 242-243; David S. Potter, “Inscriptions and the Narrative of Roman History,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Epigraphy*, ed. Christer Bruun, J. C. Edmondson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 345-465.

¹⁸¹ Cited and discussed by Hans-Josef Klauck, *The Religious Context of Early Christianity: A Guide to Graeco-Roman Religions* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2003), 296; Sheila L. Ager, *Interstate Arbitrations in the Greek World, 337-90 B.C.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 396-403; René Cagnat, *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes*, vol. 4 (Paris: Earnest Leroux, 1906), 20-21.

B.C.E., honors the emperor as a god that initiates all life. It also proposes that annual time be rearranged according to the birthday of the emperor. While expressing gratitude for Roman benefaction in the form of a new calendar, this inscription accentuates the importance of an archaic “beginning” as a rationale for Roman imperial hegemony derived from the divine.

Paulus Fabius Maximus, proconsul, sends greeting to the cities of Asia ... *the birthday of the most divine Caesar* is a matter of greater pleasure or greater benefit. We could justly consider that day to be equal to *the beginning of all things*...He gave a new appearance to the whole world, which would gladly have accepted its own destruction had Caesar not been born for the common good fortune of all. Thus a person could justly consider this to be *the beginning* (‘ἀρχή’) *of life and of existence*, and the end of regrets about having been born... Therefore, it seems proper to me that the birthday of the most divine Caesar be the one, uniform New Year's day for all the polities... A decree of the koinon of Asia should be written encompassing all his virtues, so that the action devised by us for *the honor of Augustus should endure forever*. I will command that the decree, engraved on a stele, be set up in the temple, having arranged for the edict to be written in both languages. [Greek and Latin] (Emphasis added).¹⁸²

According to the inscription, the emperor’s birthday was an epiphany of god, (“savior”) and marked the beginning of life. Though the Gospel of John’s audience might not have been familiar with these particular inscriptions, the claim that Jesus is the beginning and fundamental source of all creatures (“in him was life, and life was the light of all people”) is strikingly similar in substance. From the perspective of these two inscriptions, the emperor brings salvation, restores order to the world, and is the source of life and power. The local subjects at Priene praise the emperor’s inauguration of a new age of well-being, a claim also made for Jesus in John, albeit with different vocabulary. He is the pre-

¹⁸² Danker, *Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field*, 223-224; translated by Neil Elliott and Mark Reasoner, *Documents and Images for the Study of Paul* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2011), 126-127; Umberto Laffi, “Le iscrizione relative all' introduzione nel 9 a.C. del nuovo calendario della Provincia d'Asia,” *Studi Classici E Orientali* 16 (1967): 5-98.

existent Logos and source of life and light. These two inscriptions attribute divine titles and sacred origin to the emperor just as the Gospel of John portrays Jesus as being divine and born from God.¹⁸³

“Beginning” in the Gospel and the Writings of Philo of Alexandria

While imperial writers and city councils clearly employed archaic time to praise emperors, Jewish writers were also developing temporal frameworks of their own, often by reworking earlier Jewish scriptures. In particular, the phrase, “the beginning” (ἀρχή) in the works of Philo invokes archaic time and the pre-existing Logos as the agent of creation. The Logos in Philo’s work is described as the residing place of wisdom and serves as a medium of world governance from “the beginning” (Philo, *On the Cherubim*, 36; *On the Unchangeableness God*, 57). In his treatise *On Flight and Finding*, Philo interprets God as the source of wisdom and Logos:

Therefore he exhorts him who is able to run swiftly to strain onwards, without stopping to take breath, to the highest word [*Logos*] of God, which is the fountain of wisdom, in order that by drinking of that stream he may find everlasting life instead of death. But he urges him who is not so swift of foot to flee for refuge to the creative power which Moses calls God, since it is by that power that all things were made and arranged; for to him who comprehends that everything has been created, that comprehension alone, and the knowledge of the Creator, is a great acquisition of good, which immediately persuades the creature to love him who created it (Philo, *On Flight and Finding*, 97).¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Lance Byron Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John* (Washington, DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 2007), 123.

¹⁸⁴ Philo, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. C. D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 330.

In the passage, Philo describes that wisdom and Logos are derived from God because both are the nature of God. But in his allegorical interpretation, he equates Logos with wisdom (Philo, *On Flight and Finding*, 1:65, “now wisdom is the word of God”). Philo further refers to the Logos of God as the ideal world from which the phenomenal world is to be copied (Philo, *On the Creation*, 16-24).¹⁸⁵ By describing Logos as God’s reason, Philo presents it as the blueprint for God’s creation.

John, on the other hand, personifies Logos, not as God’s reason but as a divine agency participating in the work of creation. In both accounts, the idea of Logos parallels earlier Jewish traditions, particularly wisdom literature that describes wisdom as having an independent existence that bears some relation to the created world (Proverbs chapters 8-9).¹⁸⁶ The Word/ Logos, moreover, is regarded as the reason and wisdom of God’s creation of the world because he created the world with speech (Gen 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, and 26 “God said...” [LXX]). John’s notion of a personified Logos in the prologue corresponds with that of the Jewish wisdom traditions.¹⁸⁷ While Philo considers the Logos to express the mind of God and regards wisdom as the mother of the world (Philo, *On Drunkenness*, 8-9), the Gospel of John identifies the Logos as a male figure, alluding

¹⁸⁵ Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 153-154. The preexistence and personification of wisdom is an eminent component in wisdom literature. Also see, Proverbs 8:34; Wisdom of Solomon 7:27, 8:2-7; 10:5. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 22-36; Brown, *The Gospel According to John: I-XII*, 23-27; Jo-Ann A. Brant, *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 27-29; von Wahlde, *Gnosticism, Docetism, and the Judaisms of the First Century*, 173-175.

¹⁸⁶ Other key passages are Psalm chapter 104; Job 28; Sirach chapter 24; 1 Enoch 42:1-2.

¹⁸⁷ Sirach chapter 24, Wisdom of Solomon 7:22-23, and Proverbs 8:1, “Does not wisdom (σοφία, LXX) call, and does not understanding raise her voice?” Thompson, *John*, 37-39; John J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 50-51.

to Jesus, who was indeed in existence before the creation (John 1:14).¹⁸⁸ While Wisdom of Solomon 9:1-2¹⁸⁹ claims that God created all things with his word and wisdom, John never refers to wisdom to describe God's creative work. John's preference of "word" over "wisdom" emphasizes the relationship between Jesus the Word and the word of God (John 1:17, 45; 5:39).

During his elaboration of the wisdom tradition, John changes the gender of Logos from the feminine to the masculine to articulate the historical reality of the incarnated (masculine) body of Jesus. John's unique conception of Logos is clearer when one considers Aristotle's theory of epigenesis, outlined in *Generation of Animals* (hereafter *Gen. Animals*). According to Aristotle's theory, the masculine and feminine principles have different functions in creating a child – the female sperm has lack of formative power in contrast to the male sperm, which has creative power (*Gen. Animals* 722, "female animals do not generate out of themselves").¹⁹⁰ Aristotle asserted that the principles (ἀρχή) of each sex compete at the embryonic stages (*Gen. Animals* 766). Whichever prevails shapes the sexual, physical conditions and characteristics of the child,

¹⁸⁸ "...the Architect who made this universe was at the same time the father of what was thus born, whilst its mother was the knowledge possessed by its Maker. ... Thus in the pages of one of the inspired company, wisdom is represented as speaking of herself after this manner: "God obtained me first of all his works and founded me before the ages" (Prov. viii. 22)" (Philo, *On Drunkenness*, 8-9). Philo, *On the Unchangeableness of God. On Husbandry. Concerning Noah's Work As a Planter. On Drunkenness. On Sobriety*, trans. F. H. Colson, G. H. Whitaker, LCL 247 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1930), 333-335; John clearly represents Jesus the Messiah as always being masculine, a son of the heavenly father.

¹⁸⁹ "O God of my ancestors and Lord of mercy, who have made all things by your word, 2 and by your wisdom have formed humankind to have dominion over the creatures you have made..." (Wisdom of Solomon 9:1-2).

¹⁹⁰ Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, trans. A. L. Peck, LCL 366 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1942), 59.

and determines whether it resembled the mother or the father.¹⁹¹ In this vein, the Aristotelian epigenesis theory schematically highlights John's claim that Jesus, as Logos-incarnate, conveys the divine Logos and spirit to create a new generation of people "not of blood or of the will of the flesh ... but of God" (John 1:13).¹⁹² That Jesus the Logos-incarnate was not only the only begotten one, but also was begotten in a foundational relationship with God, articulates his supreme closeness with God and reveals his irreplaceable status and superior authority over humankind. Jesus's status as the conveyor of the divine Logos and the only son of God gives him exclusive access to God that transforms his believers into the children of God.¹⁹³ This articulation of the fundamental and vital relationship between God the Father and Jesus "the only son" (1:18, "μονογενής") who is full of the Father's Logos, means that John's "Word" does not only identify Jesus as divinely creative wisdom, but also as the principle and key initiator of divine power that caused the existence of all beings.¹⁹⁴ According to Aristotelian embryology, John's identification of the Word as a masculine noun (in contrast to the feminine Word of Jewish wisdom literature) strengthens the intimacy and resemblance

¹⁹¹ Reinhartz, "And the Word Was Begotten": Divine Epigenesis in the Gospel of John," 90; "...it may perhaps be clearer why and by what cause one offspring becomes male and another female. It is this. When the "principle" is failing to gain the mastery and is unable to effect concoction owing to deficiency of heat, and does not succeed in reducing the material into its own proper form but instead is worsted in the attempt, then of necessity the material must change over into its opposite condition. Now the opposite of the male is the female, and it is opposite in respect of that whereby one is male and the other female..." (Aristotle, *Gen. Animals*, 766). Aristotle, *Generation of Animals*, 391.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 97.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 95; Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 17-18; Brant, *John*, 37-38.

¹⁹⁴ "All things came into being through him" (John 1:3). O'Day, *The Gospel of John*, 519; Reinhartz, "And the Word Was Begotten": Divine Epigenesis in the Gospel of John," 92.

between father and son that establishes the historical reality of the incarnated (masculine) body of Jesus.¹⁹⁵ By identifying Jesus as the Word, John claims that Jesus is in close relationship with God from the beginning of creation and is the one who initiates life (John 6:63, 68). In the sense that Jesus's word is the source of life, his word corresponds with the word of God, which leads to the life of all creatures.¹⁹⁶ By blending his idea of Word with Jewish wisdom and Greek philosophical traditions, John re-defines Logos as a multivalent term that relates to God, light, life and, eventually, Jesus (John 1:1-3, 14; 8:51-52). This re-definition places Jesus at the head of all authorities and evokes God's revelation announcing the fleshly appearance of the pre-existed Word. As I will explain below, the redefinition of Jesus as Logos shows that Jesus's authority spans back to the archaic time in which he was begotten by God, thus challenging all earthly power through a claim to the beginning.¹⁹⁷

The Gospel's Imperial Ambitions

John's employment of Logos as God's wisdom situated in archaic time mimics a similar veneration of the Roman emperor in other contexts. If John was aware of this broader custom, he appears to be implicitly challenging the way in which assemblies of provincial cities sought to curry favor with Rome. At the same time, his rhetoric suggests a power relation between the emperor's subjects and God's subjects begotten by Jesus.

¹⁹⁵ Reinhartz, "And the Word Was Begotten," 95.

¹⁹⁶ Thomson, *John*, 38.

¹⁹⁷ Brown and Moloney, *Interpreting the Gospel and Letters of John*, 168; Thomson, *John*, 37.

John suggests that the power of the subdued nation's God will replace that of Rome. Moreover, by alluding to the shared memory of the creation story in the book of Genesis, John hints that his narratives are grounded in the legitimacy of the words of Israel's scripture. John's adoption of this tradition does not prevent him from claiming Jesus's exclusive status. When John proclaims "no one has ever seen God" (John 1:18), he ignores Jewish figures who were reported to have encountered God (e.g. Jacob in Genesis 32:30 and Moses in Exod 33:20).¹⁹⁸ This rhetorical twist would suggest that Jesus, as an agent of the Jewish God, has superb authority over figures of Jewish history and Roman emperors alike, fashioning Jesus as an alternative, dominant power over the world (John 1:10; 4:42).¹⁹⁹ John claims Jesus's superiority over the indigenous figures of Jewish history by identifying Jesus with the Logos, which was distinctively with God.

The Johannine prologue clearly describes that the power of God the Father existed in the beginning when all life was created. The timelessness of the Father endows Jesus with power over the world because Jesus was present from the beginning as a creator of the world and an initiator of life. The grand opening, "in the beginning," serves to legitimate the subordination of individuals and groups to Jesus, the Logos, given that Jesus occupies time and space in the world.²⁰⁰ Life begins with Jesus, who embodies an

¹⁹⁸ "So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved."" (Genesis 32:30); "Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend" (Exod 33:11).

¹⁹⁹ Warren Carter, *John and Empire: Initial Exploration* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 94.

²⁰⁰ Musa Dube, "Savior of the World but Not of This World: A Post-Colonial Reading of John," in *The Post-Colonial Bible*, ed. R. Sugitharajah (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 125.

incomparable and insurmountable authority based in the archaic past that exists outside of history and possesses the power to create life.

John 1:19-2:12: The Transition from “Next Day,” to “After This”

After the prologue, John continues to narrate the emergence of John the Baptist, his witness to Jesus, the preparation of Jesus’s public ministry, and Jesus’s first sign at Cana (John 1:19-2:12). In so doing, the narrative shifts from archaic time to the discrete time of the incarnate Word. A new spatial setting, the “Jordan River” (John 1: 28), also shifts attention from John the Baptist to Jesus the Word. Most importantly, however, the narrator uses new temporal markers like the “next day” (John 1: 29, 35, and 43), “after that” (2:12)²⁰¹ and “now” (John 1:24) to structure the narrative. John 1:19-2:12 deploys these terms to reinforce the beginning of Jesus’s earthly ministry and to reveal his divine power while also telling a story that employs stylistic devices shared with other contemporary writers, like those of the books of Tobit, fourth Ezra, and the first book of Maccabees. These temporal markers indicate schematic and spatial changes within the story from the Jordan River (John 1:28) to Cana in the Galilee (John 2:1), which build up to the first public demonstration of Jesus’s miraculous ministry in the narrative’s contemporary moment.²⁰² In this way, the evangelist utilizes temporal markers to present

²⁰¹ In contrast to the ways that ancient narrators provided a temporal and chronological movement using numbers and dates that in turn depended on certain historical figures and events, I will focus on exploring the way in which some narrators chronologically listed events without providing numeric information (e.g. dates and times) or relying on any historical figures and events which readers might have identified as chronological starting points or axes of the story.

²⁰² A. M. Bowie, “Aristophanes,” in *Time in Ancient Greek Literature: Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative*, ed. Irene J. F. De Jong and Rene Nünlist (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 308.

a temporal sequence of events within the story, transition smoothly from one idea to another, and express the narrator's point of view.²⁰³ John's arrangement of temporal markers ("the next day," "in the third day" and "after this") in John 1:19-2:12 also emphasizes the public presentation of Jesus's authority and power through the gathering of his followers, the preparation of his ministry, and his performance of miraculous signs²⁰⁴ that reveal the full glory of God.

While time in the prologue begins with the creation of God, the earth's temporal axis begins with the baptism of John, which signals the transition from the witness of John the Baptist to the ministry of Jesus. This narrative unit is divided into five sections: (1) John the Baptist tells the Jewish authorities about the one who is to come (John 1:19-28); (2) John tells the disciples about the son of God (John 1:29-34); (3) John directly points out Jesus the lamb of God to his disciples (John 1:35-42); (4) Jesus calls his disciples (John 1:43-51); and (5) Jesus performs the first sign at Cana (John 2:1-2:12). These events are given a geographical as well as a temporal dimension: The public ministry of Jesus begins in Cana in the Galilee and John the Baptist goes about his work at the Jordan River. Dividing these scenes both spatially and temporally, John 1:19-2:12 addresses individual episodes about the ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus's calling to his disciples. The preceding three sections in 1:19-43 address later actions that will bring about Jesus's public ministry in 2:1-12.

²⁰³ Jo-Ann A. Brant, *Dialogue and Drama: Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 37.

²⁰⁴ While the Synoptic gospels consistently describe Jesus's supernatural works as "power" (Matt 11:46; Mark 5:30; 8:46) and "wonders" (Acts 15:12), John distinctively prefers to call them a "sign" that reveals the divine identity of Jesus as the revealer of God's will and glory (John 4:54; 6:14; 6:30; 12:18).

Arrangements of Temporal Sequence in Jewish Literature

Early Jewish literature uses temporal markers in order to control the flow of time and to call attention to certain events within the story.²⁰⁵ At a basic level, temporal markers influence the message of the narrative by presenting a constructed temporal and chronological order. Narrators also use temporal markers to conceive of a particular reality that they seek to portray to their imagined audience. Among the Jewish writers of the Second Temple period, markers without specifying dates and times are often employed to accentuate the shifting scenes and to point out dramatic events that reveal important themes.

The book of Tobit, for instance, uses temporal markers to transition between scenes and to endorse schematic points of view. An early Jewish novel written during the second century B.C.E., the book of Tobit tells a story of the life of the Jewish diaspora in the Assyrian exile during the seventh to eighth centuries B. C. E.²⁰⁶ The book of Tobit incorporates family tales with exhortative, prayerful, and prophetic discourses and focuses on recounting the divine intervention on behalf of pious Jews in exile who devote themselves to God and his law.²⁰⁷ While the book focuses on the time period between the

²⁰⁵ Wills, *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World*, 70; Brant, *Dialogue and Drama: Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel*, 37.

²⁰⁶ Carey A. Moore, *Tobit* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 40-42; Benedikt Otzen, *Tobit and Judith* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 57; Naomi S. Jacobs, "Tobit, Book of," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 1313-1315; Rainer Albertz, *Israel in Exile: A History and Literature of the Sixth Century B. C. E.* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2003), 30.

²⁰⁷ Otzen, *Tobit and Judith*, 26.

Assyrian and Babylonian exiles (Tobit 14:4), the narrative begins with Tobit's past in Israel, before the exile (Tobit 1:3-9, "I was in my own country, in the land of Israel...") before describing his captivity (Tobit 1:8-20, "After I was carried away captive to Assyria and came as a captive to Nineveh..."). The writer continues by summarizing the time and geographic setting of these events:

This book tells the story of Tobit son of Tobiel ... who in *the days of King Shalmaneser* of the Assyrians was taken into captivity ... Tobit, walked in the ways of truth and righteousness all the days of my life. ... *One day, the seventh of Dystrus*, when she cut off a piece she had woven and sent it to the owners, they paid her full wages and also gave her a young goat for a meal. ... I called her and said, "Where did you get this goat? It is surely not stolen, is it? Return it to the owners; for we have no right to eat anything stolen." ... *On the same day*, at Ecbatana in Media, it also happened that Sarah, the daughter of Raguel, was reproached by one of her father's maids. (Tobit 1:1-2:13 and 3:7, emphasis added)

As a Jew who lost the nation to which he belonged, Tobit narrates a miserable series of atrocities. For example, when a dead Jew lying unburied on the street (Tobit 2:2) is interred, those who buried him are punished (Tobit 2:7-8). On the same night when Tobit buried the dead body, droppings from a bird fall onto his eyes, blinding him (2:9-10). For four years he remains in this condition, and his wife works at domestic chores. Because Tobit's story takes place in a diaspora that is unstable and confused (1:1, "Tobit...who in the days of King Shalmaneser was taken into captivity"), the first person narrator uses the reign of gentile kings as temporal markers (2:1, "during the reign of Esar-haddon") and utilizes the Babylonian lunar month of Dystrus, corresponding to Adar of the Jewish calendar (2:12).²⁰⁸ In the following chapter, when Tobit misunderstands Sarah's extra wages as theft, he is injured by thorny insults and makes prayerful, teary petitions to be

²⁰⁸ Moore, *Tobit*, 133; Albertz, *Israel in Exile*, 32; Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church: and Its Background in Early Judaism* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1985), 57.

released from his suffering (3:1-6, "... Command, O Lord, that I be released from this distress"). Just as the gentile setting challenges Tobit's fidelity to the law of God (1:10-11), gentile time also challenges his belief in God until God intervenes by sending an angel.

Meanwhile, the narrator employs the temporal marker "on the same day" (3:7, "on the same day at Ecbatana in Media") to temporally link Tobit and Sarah, who are separated by geography. Sarah, the daughter of Raguel, is afflicted by the demon Asmodeus (Tobit 3:7-8; 11:17), who kills her seven husbands. Asmodeus, of Persian origin,²⁰⁹ endangers Sarah's marriage, which exists in both a gentile location and temporal frame. After she is reproached for her loss by her servant girl, she begins praying to God (3:7-15, "Lord...command that I be released from the earth"), paralleling Tobit's own prayer. Suddenly, the scene moves from Tobit and Sarah's earthly afflictions to the heavenly realm, a shift that is signaled by the temporal marker, "at that very moment," which indicates that actions are always taking place on two planes simultaneously. While the main characters suffer on the earthly plane, God observes from his heavenly plane and seeks to intervene on behalf of the righteous;

At that very moment, the prayers of both of them were heard in the glorious presence of God. So Raphael was sent to heal both of them: Tobit, by removing the white films from his eyes, so that he might see God's light with his eyes; and Sarah, daughter of Raguel, by giving her in marriage to Tobias son of Tobit, and by setting her free from the wicked demon Asmodeus. ... *That same day* Tobit remembered the money that he had left in trust with Gabael at Rages in Media, (Tobit 3:16-4:1)

²⁰⁹ Moore, *Tobit*, 147; Wills, *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World*, 71.

In spite of their unbearable circumstances (Tobit's blindness and Sarah's being plagued by the demon), neither gives up praying to God. Both are eventually restored by the divine messenger. The temporal referent, "at that very moment," transforms their situation from unfortunate to hopeful and from a private memoir to a public exhortation. The moment in which God's glory is revealed functions as a temporal hinge off of which all subsequent events are temporally based. In the previous chapters, the narrator used the name of the gentile king and the Macedonian calendar as temporal axes of the narrative (Tobit 1:2, "the days of King Shalmaneser" and 2:12 "the seventh of Dystrus"). But a new temporal hinge emerges "the moment" that the God of Israel hears of Tobit and Sarah's afflictions. The narrator mentions neither the Macedonian calendar nor the names of the gentile kings that were previously used as temporal referents, but rather describes God and his angel as playing an active role in remedying all troubles. After the angel heals Tobit and Sarah, the story's narration changes from first to third person, taking on a didactic, exhortative, and prophetic tone to describe the God of Israel's restoration of the Jews (Tobit 4:7).²¹⁰ When Tobit claims that Jews living in the diaspora can hope for a brighter destiny (4:19), he speaks as a representative of the Jews as if he is speaking not only to his son Tobias, but to the entire exile.²¹¹ Instead of narrowly narrating a chronological arrangement of events, he speaks prophetically and constructs a narrative

²¹⁰ Wills, *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient World*, 88.

²¹¹ Amy-Jill Levine, "Redrawing the Boundaries: A New Look at 'Diaspora as Metaphor: Bodies and Boundaries in the Book of Tobit,'" in *A Feminist Companion to Tobit and Judith*, ed. Athalya Brenner-Idan and Helen Efthimiadis-Keith (New York: T & T Clark, 2015), 3-7.

to fulfill his ends, namely, legitimizing the future reward of the righteous (14:8-9 and 11, “... see what almsgiving accomplishes, and what injustice does”).²¹²

Tobit’s physical healing and Sarah’s new marriage with Tobit’s son, Tobias, are brought about through God’s guidance. These direct encounters with God’s message coincide with an alteration in the predominant, narrative temporal rhythms. The temporal dimension of divine revelation transforms the subsequent narrative from one of despair to one of hope even though Tobit remains in the spatial and temporal dimension of the diaspora. In other words, the temporality of simultaneous earthly/heavenly linear time is the engine that drives the expression of hope in the narrative. By constructing the imaginary geographic and historical references that destabilize Tobit and Sarah’s lives, the narrator shows that the spatial and temporal coordinates of diasporic life do not obscure Israel’s identity.²¹³

Just as the book of Tobit utilizes temporal markers without using specific dates and times to transition from one topic to the next, 4 Ezra, a Jewish apocalyptic text written after the destruction of the Second Temple, uses similar temporal markers to recount dream-visions. 4 Ezra struggles to square God’s presence and protection with the violence of Roman occupation and the subsequent devastation.²¹⁴ The narrator also aims to reaffirm the credibility of the words of God as the path to restoration and salvation despite his ancestors’ having failed to do so (9:30-33). While observing the miserable

²¹² “Your children are also to be commanded to do what is right and to give alms, and to be mindful of God and to bless his name at all times with sincerity and with all their strength” (Tobit 14:8-9).

²¹³ Levine, “Redrawing the Boundaries,” 5.

²¹⁴ Michael Stone, *4 Ezra* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 9-10.

circumstances around him and interpreting the collapse of the Jewish worldview, he undergoes a conversion from despair to hope after learning the meaning of his vision about a barren women who is transformed into a beautiful city (4 Ezra 9:26-10:59, “the city of the Most High was to be revealed”). Ezra’s change of attitude from desolation to consolation legitimates and engages his reassurance of God’s promise handed down through the Torah (4Ezra 12: 47, “the Mighty One has not forgotten you in your struggle”).²¹⁵ Ezra’s restored conviction does not only lead to his changed understanding of God but also his changed mission to God, both of which are indicated by the transition in temporal markers;

After seven days I dreamed a dream in the night. And lo, a wind arose from the sea and stirred up all its waves. ...

After this I looked and saw that an innumerable multitude of people were gathered together from the four winds of heaven to make war against the man who came up out of the sea. ...

After this I looked and saw that all who had gathered together against him, to wage war with him, were filled with fear, and yet they dared to fight. ...

After this I saw the same man come down from the mountain and call to himself another multitude that was peaceable. Then many people came to him, some of whom were joyful and some sorrowful; some of them were bound, and some were bringing others as offerings. Then I woke up in great terror, and prayed to the Most High ... Then I got up and walked in the field, giving great glory and praise to the Most High for the wonders that he does from time to time, and because he governs the times and whatever things come to pass in their seasons. And I stayed there *three days*. (4 Ezra 13:1-2, 5, 8, 12-13, and 57-58, emphasis added)

In the course of these consecutive days, Ezra experiences an internal conversion from doubt to certainty in regard to God’s plan, and then experiences two consecutive visions; an eagle rising from the sea, which is later interpreted as Roman power (4 Ezra 11:1- 46), and a man coming from the sea, who is interpreted to be a messianic figure who will

²¹⁵ David A. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message, Context, and Significance* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2004), 323-328.

reward the righteous and judge the lawless (13: 1-24). While the book of Tobit transitions from a first person singular narrative of past time to a third person singular narrative of the present, 4 Ezra is narrated entirely in the first person singular as the narrator communicates directly with God and his angelic messengers. This narrative voice reinforces the credibility of the unbroken and uniform testimony, legitimating the truthfulness of the narrator's witness to these visions because he claims to write down what he saw and heard.²¹⁶ The narrator's repetition of the same temporal markers allows the story to proceed as an uninterrupted unity lending the narrator exclusive authority and access to the divine revelation. This rhetorical strategy also concretizes a version of the past and builds a shared historical framework upon which to found a collective identity.

On the third day, while I was sitting under an oak, suddenly a voice came out of a bush opposite me and said, "Ezra, Ezra!" And I answered, "Here I am, Lord," and I rose to my feet. 3 Then he said to me, "I revealed myself in a bush and spoke to Moses when my people were in bondage in Egypt ... And now I say to you: Lay up in your heart the signs that I have shown you, the dreams that you have seen, and the interpretations that you have heard" ...

And on the next day a voice called me, saying, "Ezra, open your mouth and drink what I give you to drink." (4 Ezra 14:1-3, 7-8 and 38)

This scene places Ezra in the role of Moses by referring to "a voice from a bush" (4 Ezra 4:1 and 3), echoing the scene in Exodus in which a bush calls Moses's name (Exod 3:2-4).²¹⁷ After chapter 14 of 4 Ezra, God no longer speaks to Ezra through visions, but rather

²¹⁶ Kai Syreeni, "Eyewitness Testimony, First-Person Narration and Authorial Presence as Means of Legitimation of First-Century Delivery Practices," in *Social Memory and Social Identity in the Study of Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Samuel Byrskog, Raimo Hakola, and Jutta Jokiranta (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 89-110.

²¹⁷ "There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am"" (Exod 3:2-4).

communicates with him directly. The consistent first person speaker vividly dramatizes each encounter with God and allows for the allusion to Moses (Exod 33:11, “the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face”). Instead of using a general temporal marker like “after that,” 4 Ezra employs the temporal marker the “third day” (14:1). This usage chronologically connects with the previous chapter and also alludes to the scene in Exodus in which Israel prepared to receive the Torah for three days (Exod 19:1-10).²¹⁸ The allusion to Exodus is further confirmed by God’s command to Ezra to release the words of God (4 Ezra 4:6), just as God had commanded Moses to do so (Exod 19:3, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites”). The transition of temporal markers from “after that” to “on the third day” and “next day” therefore gives Ezra a new mission that is rooted in the story of the Exodus. The temporal referent “next day” points to the day after which Ezra was commanded to write down what he heard, just as God had commanded Moses (4 Ezra 14: 6). The transition of these terms in chapter 14 links the narrative with previous stories, and reveals new schematic concerns, such as “mak[ing] public the twenty-four books” which will be a “fountain of wisdom” (4 Ezra 14: 45 and 47).²¹⁹ The Moses-like figure and the divine commandment legitimate the urgency and necessity of the books. The transition of temporal markers from chapters 11-13 to 14 moves the sequence of events forward, while also signifying the change in

²¹⁸ Stone, *4 Ezra*, 412-413. “On the third new moon after the Israelites had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day, they came into the wilderness of Sinai. They had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to God; the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, “Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites”” (Exod 19:1-3).

²¹⁹ Bruce Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1-11* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 139.

Ezra's mission from one of passive receiver to one of active proclaimer of divine wisdom. Ezra's identification with Moses is articulated by a change in temporality, which justifies his task to bring about the deliverance of Israel as Moses had once done. Only the word of God "is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom, and the river of knowledge" (4 Ezra 14:47).

1 Maccabees (written around 1 B.C.E.), an ancient Jewish history composed to record the events that led to the consolidation of Hasmonean rule, also employs temporal markers, in this case to create a recognizable pattern of time that legitimizes the rise of the Hasmonean leaders in the same mold as the ancestral heroes of the Hebrew bible.²²⁰ The narrative recounts how Mattathias and his family delivered Israel from gentiles, who challenged Jewish customs, and describes the Jews who helped them.²²¹ After briefly summarizing the events from Alexander the Great's conquest of Judea and the Galilee to Alexander's death, the narrator describes the appearance of his successors and of the Jewish renegades who rebelled against them – in particular the heroic actions of Mattathias and his sons. The narratives then tell the story of Jewish independence and the establishment of the Hasmonean dynasty.²²² 1 Maccabees describes the political and religious independence of the people of Israel while rhetorically situating the events as a

²²⁰ For more detail, see Jonathan A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees* (New York: Doubleday, 1976), 62-63; Robert Doran, *The First Book of Maccabees* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 21-22.

²²¹ George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 102-105.

²²² Silva, *Introducing the Apocrypha: Message*, 244-245; Frederick James Murphy, *Early Judaism: The Exile to the Time of Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 112-113.

repetition of past events described in the Hebrew Scripture.²²³ Like Tobit and 4 Ezra, the narrator of 1 Maccabees often transitions from one scene to another by using temporal markers such as “after that” and “in those days:”

In those days certain renegades came out from Israel and misled many, saying, “Let us go and make a covenant with the Gentiles around us, for since we separated from them many disasters have come upon us.” ...they ... sold themselves to do evil. (1Macc 1:11-15)

In those days Mattathias son of John son of Simeon, a priest of the family of Joarib, moved from Jerusalem and settled in Modein. ... “I and my sons and my brothers will continue to live by the covenant of our ancestors.” (1Macc 2:1)

In those days a very great famine occurred, and the country went over to their [wrongdoers] sides. Bacchides chose the godless and put them in charge of the country. ... “Now therefore we have chosen you today to take his place as our ruler and leader, to fight our battle.” So Jonathan accepted the leadership at that time in place of his brother Judas. (1Macc 9:24-27)

In those days Jonathan assembled the Judeans to attack the citadel in Jerusalem, and he built many engines of war to use against it. ... Jonathan tore his clothes, put dust on his head, and prayed. Then he turned back to the battle against the enemy and routed them, and they fled. (1Macc 11:20)

In those days Simon encamped against Gazara and surrounded it with troops. He made a siege engine, brought it up to the city, and battered and captured one tower. ... he [Simon] expelled them [gentiles] from the city and cleansed the houses in which the idols were located, and then entered it with hymns and praise. (1Macc 13:43, emphasis added)

While the narrator addresses Antiochus IV Epiphanes as an archenemy of pious Jews at the beginning of the book, he also criticizes some Jews for attempting to assimilate with a foreign culture. Antiochus forces all Jews to follow new policies that, from the perspective of 1 Maccabees, threaten Jewish customs by preventing the proper

²²³ Doran, *The First Book of Maccabees*, 18-19. Qumran community, in particular the Peshar on Habbakuk treats the present events same as the past ones already appeared in the Hebrew bible.

observance of the Sabbath, sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem, and circumcision. 1 Maccabees' frequent use of temporal references without a specific date to open new scenes is striking.²²⁴ At a literary level, for instance, "in those days" introduces new stories and smoothes the sequence of the narrative. Given the Jews' betrayal of "the holy covenant" (1 Macc 1:63), the temporal marker, "in those days" prefaces the introduction to the rise and works of the Jewish heroic figures: Mattathias and his sons Judas Maccabeus (1 Macc 2-9:22), Jonathan (1 Macc 9:23-12:53), and Simon (1 Macc 13:1-15:41). In this way, 1 Maccabees presents the Maccabean family as agents of divine delivery, a common theme in the history of Israel. Repeated temporal references introduce new sections of the narrative, signal the rise and fall of new good or bad characters, and call attention to particular events. "In those days," implicitly echoes the rise of heroic figures in the Hebrew bible who reigned in renegades that broke Mosaic Law and assimilated with the practices of the nations (e.g., Judges 17:6, "...In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes").²²⁵ In this vein, this temporal marker structures the narration of the Hasmonean military

²²⁴ The narrator of 1 Maccabees prefers to use temporal markers without mentioning specific dates and deploys numeric temporal referents only seven times to refer to foreign authorities and to highlight the Maccabean victory over the gentiles (e.g. 1Macc 3:52; 9:23).

²²⁵ Concerning the schematic relation between 1 Maccabees and Judges, see Vered Noam, *Shifting Images of the Hasmoneans: Second Temple Legends and Their Reception in Josephus and Rabbinic Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 49-50; Katell Berthelot, "The Biblical Conquest of the Promised Land and the Hasmonean Wars According to 1 and 2 Maccabees," in *The Books of the Maccabees: History, Theology, Ideology: Papers of the Second International Conference on the Deuteronomical Books, Pápa, Hungary, 9-11 June, 2005*, ed. Géza G. Xeravits and József Zsengellér (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 46-47.

triumph over foreign and impious forces (1Macc 3:11, 4:22), just as the ancestral heroes defeated “foreigners” (Judges 3:31; 1Samuel 7:10).²²⁶

By describing the circumstances of Jews “in those days,” the writer indicates the social and religious anomie of Judea under Greek rule, in a manner similar to that in which Israel is described in the book of Judges. Moreover, the narrative of the Hasmonean rule echoes with that found in Judges in the Hebrew bible, which also employs the same temporal marker “in those days” (1:11, “ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις” compared to LXX Judges 17:6, “ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκείναις”). Judges serves as a precedent narrative for 1 Maccabees by featuring the appearance of a new pious Jewish leader alongside temporal markers that lack specific dates and times,²²⁷ suggesting Israel’s anarchy before the consolidated kingship. 1 Maccabees and the book of Judges also share in common a sense of general urgency under the persecution of a foreign authority. It follows that 1 Maccabees seems to regard the Maccabean leaders as equivalent to the judges in the Hebrew Scriptures. While the Hasmonean leaders were not chosen by God (unlike the judges), 1 Maccabees remedies this difference by claiming that the

²²⁶ In 1 Maccabees 3:11 and 4:22, the narrator uses the term “foreigners” (ἀλλόφυλος) to refer to the gentiles who the Hasmonean leaders attacked. This theme is found in Judges 3:31 and 1Samuel 7:10 that likewise refer to “foreigners” (ἀλλόφυλος) and narrate the triumph of the Israelites over their armies.

²²⁷ “In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes” (Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 20, and 21:25); Goldstein, *I Maccabees*, 430; Katell Berthelot, “The Biblical Conquest of the Promised Land and the Hasmonaean Wars according to 1 and 2 Maccabees,” in *The Books of the Maccabees: History, Theology, Ideology: Papers of the Second International Conference on the Deuteronomical Books, Pépa, Hungary, 9-11 June, 2005*, ed. Géza G. Xeravits and József Zsengellér (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 46. Scholarship has paid attention to the thematic correspondence between the book of Judges and 1 Maccabees in terms of the emergence of the new Jewish leadership, but has often ignored that the temporal markers in the book of Judges strengthened the legitimacy of the Hasmonean leadership by linking the present leaders with those of the past.

Hasmonean leadership was divinely elected.²²⁸ 1 Maccabees also contends that the Hasmonean family's military and political power derives from its zeal for the God of Israel, embodied in Mattathias's call for resistance against Antiochus (1 Macc 2: 24, "When Mattathias saw it, he burned with zeal..."). This dedicated zeal for God is understood to correspond with the scriptural Judges who fought for Israel "in those days." In this sense, the temporal marker strengthens the legitimacy of the Maccabean leadership and subsequent dynasty; the Hasmoneans are the family "through whom deliverance was given to Israel" (1 Macc 4:42).²²⁹ The temporal marker enhances the thematic correspondence between present and past events, suggesting that, like the biblical precedent, contemporary events will culminate with the appearance of a new leader.

Analysis of Temporal Sequence in John 1:24-2:12

The three ancient texts discussed above employ temporal markers to feature the power and concern of several main characters who, at certain junctures, are substituted one for the other. Chronology is employed as a rhetorical device to convey a message about changes in authority. By employing similar temporal markers as part of a similar narrative strategy, John signals the inauguration of Jesus's public ministry and the shift

²²⁸ Eyal Regev, *The Hasmoneans: Ideology, Archaeology, Identity* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 119-120.

²²⁹ Kenneth Atkinson, *A History of the Hasmonean State: Josephus and Beyond* (New York: T & T Clark, 2016), 26-32; Dongshin Dong Chang, *Phinehas, the Sons of Zadok, and Melchizedek: Priestly Covenant in Late Second Temple Texts* (New York: T&T Clark, 2016), 36; Regev, *The Hasmoneans: Ideology, Archaeology, Identity*, 107-108.

from John the Baptist to Jesus the incarnate Word, situating the Gospel within a broader tradition of Jewish literature that employs time to indicate the condition of God's presence in (or absence from) the world. While the narrative speed is condensed into a five-verse summary of the grandiose period of creation (John 1:1-5), the pace is decelerated after the emergence of John the Baptist through references to specific places like "Jordan" and "Bethany" (John 1:28) as well as temporal references ("on the next day" in John 1:29, 35, 43, and "after that" in 2:12). The events in John 1:19-51 occur over consecutive days during which John the Baptist brings the witness to Jesus. By transitioning from the temporal marker "next day" to "in the third day" and "after this" in John 1:19-2:12,²³⁰ the Gospel of John situates events and characters within a scheme of temporal juncture and disjuncture:

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ...

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. ... He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon....

The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me."

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ... Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

²³⁰ Brant, *John*, 79.

After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days. (John 1:24 - 2:12, emphasis added)

Because this temporal shift is based on addressing characters and events, the first “next day” (John 1:29) is connected with the works of John the Baptist and his ministry; it refers to the day after which John completed his ministry (John 1:28-29). During the three days (John 1:24-42), John the Baptist appears to bear witness to Jesus, and John’s testimony to the Messiah is progressively developed within the temporal sequence. On the first day (1:19-28), John the Baptist is asked to identify whether he is the Messiah. He clarifies that he is not. On the second day (1:29-34), he positively witnesses who the Messiah is by identifying Jesus as the lamb of God. On the third day, John the Baptist introduces Jesus as the lamb of God to his two disciples. Rather than presenting chronological and historical information, the narrator focuses on delineating the progression of characters’ identity and virtue.²³¹ John the Baptist is a witness to light, which is in fact Jesus, the lamb of God. He also addresses the coming of Jesus as a fulfillment of ancient prophecy (John 1:23), just as the appearance of the Roman emperor was believed to be a fulfillment of a prophecy.²³² In the Prologue (John 1:1-18), John the Baptist was given a clearly bounded role to testify to the light and introduce Jesus. In this respect, John is the human character bridging the narrator’s omniscient view in the prologue and the rest of the story’s discrete narrative.²³³ As soon as John reveals Jesus as

²³¹ Harold W. Attridge, “Genre Bending in the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 121(2002): 3-21.

²³² This does not mean that the Johannine reference to prophetic fulfillment was derived directly from the imperial prophecy about the coming dominion of the emperor. It is still significant to note that the Jewish prophecy of a Messianic political and religious leader schematically contested imperial propaganda. Richey, *Roman Ideology and the Gospel of John*, 133-134.

²³³ Brown and Moloney, *Interpreting the Gospel and Letters of John: An Introduction*, 187.

the lamb of God to his two disciples, John instructs them to follow Jesus (1:37). Having at this point completed his mission, John fades from the scene, though Jesus does not begin his ministry nor do his followers fully believe in him yet. Consequently, the narrator lets John the Baptist and other characters in the narrative witness the character of Jesus as a primary, heroic figure (John 1:29, “the lamb of God,” 1:34 and 49 “the Son of God,” 1:41 “the Messiah,” 1:49 “the King of Israel”).²³⁴

After Jesus gathers with his followers (John 1: 37-51), Jesus moves toward Cana on “the third day” (2:1). The sign made at Cana compels the disciples to believe in Jesus and initiates his public ministry. While the narrator introduces each day consecutively as “the next day” in chapter 1, he condenses temporal processes by using the marker “on the third day” and introduces a wedding scene at Cana in the beginning of chapter 2. The compressed temporal marker “on the third day” rapidly transforms the scene and makes Jesus’s gathering last seven days. This echoes the seven days of God’s creation in the book of Genesis (Genesis 2:2) and evokes God’s revealing his glory to the people of Israel on the third day at Mount Sinai (Exod 19:11, 16). Such thematic foreshadowing hints that Jesus will reveal the glory in the current narrative in the same sense that God did so in the history of Israel.²³⁵ Instead of using the typical Johannine temporal indicator, “after that,” the narrator uses “on the third day” in order to foreshadow the importance of Jesus’s ministry (and in so doing to prove that he is the lamb of God, the son of God, and

²³⁴ Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 91.

²³⁵ “... the LORD said to Moses: “Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Have them wash their clothes and prepare for *the third day*, because on *the third day* the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people” (Exod 19:10-11). Emphasis added.

the Messiah). This also foreshadows Jesus's resurrection on the third day at the end of the story.²³⁶

In the following chapter, another temporal marker, “after that,” creates a perceptible boundary between John the Baptist and Jesus by changing the temporal setting:

After this (Μετὰ ταῦτα) he went down to Capernaum with his mother, his brothers, and his disciples; and they remained there a few days. ... (John 2:12)

After this (Μετὰ ταῦτα) Jesus and his disciples went into the Judean countryside, and he spent some time there with them and baptized. ... (John 3:22)

After this (Μετὰ ταῦτα) there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ... (John 5:1, emphasis added)

After this (Μετὰ ταῦτα) Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. ... (John 6:1)

After this (Μετὰ ταῦτα) Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him... (John 7:1)

While Jesus's first sign at Cana reflects themes mentioned in the prologue (John 1:14, “the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory ... full of glory”), it also signifies the beginning of the ministry and the disciples' journey of faith with Jesus. These passages feature a temporal marker that constructs the narrative setting of Jesus's ministry, just as “the next day” builds up the narrative sequence concerning John the Baptist and other characters. After Jesus performs a sign (John 2:1-11), the temporal marker changes from the “the next day” to “after this” (John 2:12, 3:22; 5:1; 6:1; 7:1; 11:7; 19:38; 21:1). While “the next day” is dependent on the ministry of John the

²³⁶ Thompson, *John*, 60.

Baptist as a reference point, “after this” moves sequentially within Jesus’s ministry as a temporal axis.²³⁷ The “after this” sequences are also characterized by Jesus’s many signs and wonders, which were believed to justify his distinctive divinity.²³⁸ Indeed, the narrator tells of Jesus’s superb authority after the sign at the wedding at Cana (John 2:11, “Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him”), which is also marked by a change in temporal markers after the Prologue (John 1:1-9).²³⁹ This temporal movement reveals “a textual strategy of subordinating the authority of John the Baptist to Jesus.”²⁴⁰

²³⁷ Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 112; Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 272.

²³⁸ Signs evoke a link to imperial propaganda advertising the power of the emperor. Correspondence between a sign and imperial power appears, for instance, in the book of Revelation 13:13-15, which describes the adherents of imperial cults. In the view of the Gospel of John, however, no one can contest Jesus’s authority or power. The narrator reinforces this position by linking temporal markers and Jesus’s signs. Pliny the Elder introduces the belief that astronomical events are propitious signs justifying the deification of Caesar. See, Pliny, *Natural History, Volume I: Books 1-2*, trans. H. Rackham, LCL 330 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1938), 237; “The only place in the whole world where a comet is the object of worship is a temple at Rome. His late Majesty Augustus had deemed *this comet very propitious to himself*; as it had appeared at the beginning of his rule, at some games which, not long after the decease of his father Caesar, as a member of the college founded by him he was celebrating in honour of Mother Venus. In fact he made public the joy that it gave him in these words: ‘On the very days of my Games a comet was visible for seven days in the northern part of the sky. It was rising about an hour before sunset, and was a bright star, visible from all lands. **The common people believed that *this star signified the soul of Caesar received among the spirits of the immortal gods*, and on this account the emblem of a star was added to the bust of Caesar that we shortly afterwards dedicated in the forum.**’ This was his public utterance, but privately he rejoiced because he interpreted the comet as having been born for his own sake and as containing his own birth within it; and, to confess the truth, it did have a health-giving influence over the world” (Pliny, *Natural History*, 2.94, emphases added).

²³⁹ John Lierman, *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 293-294. “Then I saw another beast that rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon. It exercises all the authority of the first beast on its behalf, and it makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound had been healed. It performs great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of all; and by the signs that it is allowed to perform on behalf of the beast, it deceives the inhabitants of earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that had been wounded by the sword and yet lived” (Rev 13:11-14).

²⁴⁰ Dube, “Savior of the World but Not of This World,” 127.

After John the Baptist says that Jesus is the Messiah, other characters recognize Jesus as the Messiah (John 1:41) and the son of God (1:49). The prologue's claim to Jesus's glory (John 1:14) is revealed during the narrative's seven day span to be like God's revelation in glory on the third day at Mount Sinai (Exod 19:11). John's temporal markers sequentially arrange events while also evoking past events in the history of Israel and foreshadowing events yet to come within the narrative. Temporal articulation of the divine revelation completes the shift of power from John the Baptist to Jesus the Word, and the direct encounter with the glory of God at Cana alters the predominant temporal rhythms in the narrative from "next day" to "after that." Temporal markers confirm the disappearance of John the Baptist and the extension of Jesus's ministry and glory.²⁴¹ Consequently, these temporal markers ("the next day" and "after this") shape the ideological and chronological structure by which one understands Jesus, his signs, and his relation to his followers. After John the Baptist prepares the way for divine domination and demonstrates obedience to the dominating power (John 1: 27, "I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal"), Jesus justifies his divine character and power by performing a sign at Cana (John 2:11) and contests the earthly hegemonies (John 2:13-25), while establishing a new hierarchy over the world (John 4:32). Finally, this divine intervention works not only in spatial and social sites, but also in temporal ones. At Cana, Jesus the incarnate Word provides a bounty of wine to show that his power is absolute

²⁴¹ Even though John the Baptist reappeared in John 3:22 and continues to witness Jesus, he is already counted as the one who ranks behind Jesus (1:30) as a less important figure (3:30).

and an underlying source of life and joyfulness in contrast to the earthly power that does not know him and subordinates people.

The narrator in the Gospel of John establishes temporal and thematic continuity by repeating “the next day,” “after that” and “after this,” creating a vivid, first-hand report (John 21:24, “This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and has written them ...”). The temporal markers delineate the movement of events from the prologue to the preparation and beginning of Jesus’s ministry by chronologically arranging activities across a span of seven days. The distinctive shift of temporal frames signals the transfer of power from John the Baptist to Jesus.²⁴² Just as Tobit, 4 Ezra, and 1 Maccabees modulate the sequences of events by employing temporal markers to accentuate the narrator’s particular ends, John uses similar techniques and temporal frames to show how the narrative moment of divine revelation signals a change from unbelief and ignorance to belief and understanding.

John 19:42-20:31: Shifting the Temporal Axis from the Time of Death to the Resurrection and New Beginning

After Jesus’s trial before Pilate and his crucifixion and burial in John 19:1-42, John narrates a dramatic turning point by changing the temporal axis to accentuate Jesus’s vindication when he is raised from the dead by God the Father. John places the crucifixion on the day of Preparation, according to the Jewish reckoning of time, and correlates the death of Jesus with the Passover lamb slaughtered on that same day (Exod

²⁴² Larsen, *Recognizing the Stranger*, 92.

12:6).²⁴³ This temporal construction disrupts the social meaning of Jesus's trial, crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, which occur consecutively in John 19:1-20:23 and which seem, on the surface, to reveal the hegemony of Rome. Crucifixion, an official technique of execution used by Roman officials, was intended to demonstrate the force of imperial power.²⁴⁴ But in John, the scene of crucifixion is narrated within the lunar temporal frame of the Passover, "the day of the Preparation" (19: 14, 31, and 42). This temporal pattern stands until the tomb is found empty (21:1-2). This change in temporal axis emphasizes changes in authority and dominion.

Other contemporary literature also relies on similar changes in the temporal axis to signal shifts in authority. Flavius Josephus, for example, modulates temporal patterns in order to articulate the rise and fall of different authorities.²⁴⁵ In his work *Jewish War* Josephus consistently uses names (e.g. Judas, Hyrcanus and Aristobulus) as temporal hinges to mark the rise and rule of the Hasmonean leaders, and describes internecine conflicts as tyrannical brutality (*Jewish War* 1. 11, "I shall then describe the tyrants' brutal treatment of their fellow-countrymen").²⁴⁶ Contrasting the political failure of Jewish leadership with the success and "the clemency of the Romans towards" Jews

²⁴³ Gerry Wheaton, *The Role of Jewish Feasts in John's Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 83-126.

²⁴⁴ John Granger Cook, *Crucifixion in the Mediterranean World* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 233-259; Peter Claver Ajer, *The Death of Jesus and the Politics of Place in the Gospel of John* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016), 112-119.

²⁴⁵ J. W. van Henten and L. Huitink, "Josephus," in *Time in Ancient Greek Literature: Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative*, ed. Irene J. F. de Jong and Rene Nunlist (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 214.

²⁴⁶ Josephus, *The Jewish War, Volume I: Books 1-2*, trans. H. St. J. Thackeray, LCL 203 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927), 17.

(*Jewish War*, 1. 11), Josephus paints the unfortunate destiny of the Jewish people and the tragic destruction of the Temple as the unavoidable consequence of Jewish civil strife and temple defilement (*Jewish War*, 15. 267-268).²⁴⁷ Josephus uses the names of Roman officials as a new temporal axis to divide the period ruled by the Hasmonean leaders into segments. After Pompey's conquest of Judea and unlawful entrance into the Temple in Jerusalem (*Jewish War*, 1.152, "Pompey indeed, along with his staff, penetrated to the sanctuary"), the names of the Roman officials are used as temporal references to mark the politically turbulent transition from the waning of the Hasmonaean leadership to the involvement of Roman power in Jewish territory (*Jewish War*, 1. 219-220, "Cassius ... went to Syria to take command of the armies ... The Jews received orders to contribute seven hundred talents").

As Josephus reconstructs the historical events in chronological order in the narrative following the Jewish civil war, he employs multiple temporal references that mix Jewish, Roman and even Macedonian temporal frames (*Jewish War* 2. 285, "the twelfth year of the principate of Nero, and the seventeenth of the reign of Agrippa, in the month of Artemisius").²⁴⁸ While Josephus refers to the Roman 365-day solar calendar, he also uses the Jewish and Macedonian calendars, which are based on the lunar system.

²⁴⁷ Klawans, *Josephus and the Theologies of Ancient Judaism*, 192.

²⁴⁸ Josephus, *The Jewish War, Volume I: Books 1-2*, 435. Like Josephus, Philostratus of Athens also relies on diverse temporal frames from the Roman and Greek traditions according to the contextual movements of his hero, the sage Apollonius. See, T. J. G. Whitmarsh, "Philostratus," in *Time in Ancient Greek Literature: Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative*, ed. Irene J. F. de Jong and René Nünlist, (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 416-417. According to Whitmarsh's argument about temporality, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana* uses Roman time to present political changes (4. 42, 47; 6. 29, 42), Greek time to describe the preservation of civic-religious tradition (4.17-18; 23), and natural time to describe the pattern of the sun (3.33; 6.14; 7.10). But these temporally multilayered frames collide when Nero visits Greece and manipulates the Olympic. See, Philostratus, *Apollonius of Tyana, Volume II: Life of Apollonius of Tyana, Books 5-8*, ed. and trans.

As Josephus narrates the conflicts and interactions of one culture with another, he chooses temporal markers to articulate the political or cultural background of particular characters and events.²⁴⁹ For instance, when Josephus depicts the Jewish sedition after the death of Herod, he points out that it was during the feast of Passover that the Roman soldier's improper behavior against Jews infuriated the Jewish people (*Jewish War* 2. 224, "The usual crowd had assembled at Jerusalem for the feast of unleavened bread").²⁵⁰ Jewish resistance against the insult was seditious (2. 227, "the feast was turned into mourning for the whole nation"). What is worse, from his perspective, is that this sedition brought about another sedition led by the brigands, followed by conflict between Galileans and Samaritans, which was eventually quelled by the intervention of Quadratus, the governor of Syria. Quadratus sentenced Jewish prisoners to crucifixion, and Jews who fought against the Samaritans were beheaded (*Jewish War*, 2. 242-243). Quadratus also sent Cumanus, the Roman procurator of Judea, back to Rome for his failure to quell the unrest. On his way back to Rome, Cumanus saw Jews "peaceably celebrating the feast of unleavened bread" at Jerusalem (2. 244), which was interpreted to represent the Jews' wellbeing under Roman control. The emperor condemned Cumanus for his failure to

Christopher P. Jones, LCL 16 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 9-11; "According to Damis, Apollonius gave many discourses about their experiences there, but these were the ones worth recording. Once as they were sitting in the sanctuary of Heracles, Menippus burst out laughing at the recollection of Nero, and said, "What should we think about that worthy? Which of the games do you suppose he has won crowns in, and are those excellent Greeks not overcome with laughter as they attend the festivals?" ... As I see it, Nero will win at Olympia, since no one will have the courage to cast a contrary vote, but will not win the Olympics, since they are not even being held *at the proper time*. Last year was the traditional year for them, but *Nero ordered the Eleans to postpone them until his visit*, as if they were to sacrifice to him rather than to Zeus." (Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana*, 5.7). Emphasis added.

²⁴⁹ Klawans, *Josephus and the Theologies of Ancient Judaism*, 207.

²⁵⁰ Josephus, *The Jewish War, Volume I: Books 1-2*, 411.

control Judea, sentenced him to death by beheading, and appointed Felix as the new authority in Judea. After the execution of Cumanus, a new temporal marker, “after this,” introduces Felix, opening a new period of Roman rule over Judea (*Jewish War*, 2. 247, “After this, Caesar sent Felix, the brother of Pallas, to be procurator of Galilee”). Even though the Jewish sedition begins and ends with Jewish time (Passover) and takes place on Jewish land, Jews were described by Josephus as “brigand,” impotently helpless and miserable if not for Roman stewardship over their land that allowed them to “peacefully” celebrate their ethnic festival. Indeed, the Jews’ future is controlled and manipulated by Roman authority. In this episode, Josephus uses temporal referents without mentioning specific dates to indicate scenic and narrative shifts from local turmoil to Roman authority.²⁵¹ When he uses Jewish temporal markers, Josephus also indicates the presence of subordinated voices interacting with the dominant power. By employing multiple temporal frames in his narrative, one for each particular issue, Josephus claims that everything that occurs in time is intrinsically historical and establishes a unity of narrative.²⁵²

Just as Josephus varies temporal movements to establish changes in emotion, character development, and power dynamics, the Gospel of John also establishes emotional and character transformations by creating a temporal shift from Jesus’s death

²⁵¹ “Now when Caesar at Rome had heard...” (*Jewish War* 2:245) and “After this, Caesar sent Felix... and removed Agrippa” (2:247).

²⁵² Steve Mason, *Jewish War 2: Translation and Commentary*, vol. 1B (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 231.

to his resurrection.²⁵³ John spends three chapters elaborating every step from Jesus's trial to his execution.²⁵⁴ Unlike the temporal references without dates in the previous sections ("the next day" and "after that"), the narrator makes specific references to local time. In other words, in shaping the narrative of Jesus's passion based on particular temporal markers, what happened is secondary to what the narrator is suggesting happened.

On the night before the Jewish day of Preparation (John 13:1, "Now before the festival of the Passover ..."), Jesus is arrested, drawn before the Sanhedrin (John 18:13) and taken to Pilate, the Roman governor (John 18:28). He is then crucified on "the day of Preparation" (John 18:28). **When the Gospel points out that Jesus suffered and was executed on the day of Preparation, the writer aligns narrative time with the Jewish temporal frame ("it was the [Jewish] day of Preparation" John 19:14, 19:31, and 38).**²⁵⁵

Moreover, the narrator suggests that the authorities avoided leaving the dead body during the festival and the Sabbath (John 19:38, "the Jews did not want the bodies on the cross during the Sabbath").²⁵⁶ According to Exodus 12:6, the feast begins at sundown on the

²⁵³ Lawrence Kim, "Time," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel*, ed. Tim Whitmarsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 152-153.

²⁵⁴ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 72-73.

²⁵⁵ Colin Humphreys, "The Last Day of Jesus in John and the Synoptics: the Evidence from Astronomy and Chronology," in *John, Jesus, and History* vol. 3, ed. Paul N. Anderson, Felix Just, and Tom Thatcher (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 283-296.

²⁵⁶ cf. "It shall be to you a Sabbath of complete rest, and you shall deny yourselves; on the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening you shall keep your Sabbath" (Lev 23:32); 2 Maccabees 8:24-26, "With the Almighty as their ally, they killed more than nine thousand of the enemy, and wounded and disabled most of Nicanor's army, and forced them all to flee. They captured the money of those who had come to buy them as slaves. After pursuing them for some distance, they were obliged to return *because the hour was late. It was the day before the Sabbath*, and for that reason they did not continue their pursuit." Emphases added. Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology*, 4-6. Even though there are many occurrences referring to the reckoning of the day beginning at sunset, the Jewish reckoning of the beginning of the day

14th day of Nisan and lasts for eight days.²⁵⁷ John mentions that the crucifixion was “about noon” (John 19: 14, literally “the sixth hour”) on the day of the Preparation, which confirms John’s adopting a Jewish reckoning of time. Based on John’s presentation of time, Jesus was crucified in the afternoon a day before the Passover when the Passover lambs were slaughtered for the feast according to the book of Exodus 12:6.²⁵⁸

After repeating the reference to the day of Preparation three times (John 19:14, 31 and 42), the narrator unexpectedly employs the vague temporal reference “after these things” (John 19:38, “Μετά δέ ταύτα”) in order to begin narrating Jesus’s burial.²⁵⁹ In comparison with Mark’s specific temporal description of the burial of Jesus (Mark 15:42, “When evening had come, and since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath...”),²⁶⁰ Johannine temporal vagueness seems to avoid the impression that the burial was done after sunset or the beginning of the Passover, which would be a violation of Jewish law. Repetitive references to the feast make it so that the death of Jesus aligns with the slaughtering of the Passover lamb.²⁶¹ Moreover, this arrangement implies the

is sometimes based on daybreak. “It shall be eaten on the same day; you shall not leave any of it until morning: I am the LORD” (Lev 22:20). See other passages, Leviticus 7:15; Judges 19:9; Judith 6:21-7:1.

²⁵⁷ “You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight” (Exod 12:6).

²⁵⁸ Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 227; Thompson, *John*, 338; Brown, *Gospel According to John*, 556, 895.

²⁵⁹ “After these things, Joseph of Arimathea, . . . though a secret one because of his fear of the Jews, asked Pilate to let him take away the body of Jesus” (John 19:38).

²⁶⁰ Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: The Yale Anchor Bible, 2009), 1070.

²⁶¹ Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, 882-883; Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 545.

beginning of the divine deliverance by echoing the story from the Exodus of Israel (Exod 12:27, "... he [God] struck down the Egyptians but spared our houses").²⁶² While John relies on a Jewish temporal frame to describe the stages of Jesus's suffering, Jews are not the only characters involved in the narrative.²⁶³ It was the Romans who arrested (John 18:3),²⁶⁴ tried (18:28), and crucified Jesus (19:18). The Roman hegemony ruled both Jewish life and time, as the Gospel acknowledges. As colonized subjects of imperial power, Jews might expect a second liberation on the day of Passover as their ancestors had experienced the first liberation in the book of Exodus on that day. But, from the perspective of the evangelist, in spite of their differing political statuses as the dominator and the dominated, the Romans and the Jews share in common their rejection of Jesus, in contrast to those who accept Jesus and stand in his light (9:5, "I am the light of the

²⁶² Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 664-665.

²⁶³ The Greek word, Ἰουδαῖοι (literally, Jews) has been a notoriously difficult word to identify in terms of what it refers to in the Gospel of John. In this section, while interpreting it to mean "Jews" in general, I keep in mind the word's multilayered referents depending on particular narrative contexts. Following Reinhartz's suggestion, I read John's basic perception of Ἰουδαῖοι as a rhetorical device to connote those who belong to the pole of darkness and thus oppose the teaching of John's Jesus. Adele Reinhartz, "'Jews' and Jews in the Fourth Gospel," in *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel*, ed. Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, and Frederique Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 217-18; Adele Reinhartz, *Cast Out of the Covenant: Jews and Anti-Judaism in the Gospel of John* (New York: Fortress Academic, 2018), 148-151; Amy-Jill Levine, "First Take a Log Out Of Your Own Eye: Different Viewpoint, Different Movies," in *Perspectives on the Passion of Christ: Religious Thinkers and Writers Explore the Issues Raised by the Controversial Movie*, ed. Paula Fredriksen (New York: Miramax Books, 2004), 197-210. Concerning the complexities and ambiguities of the modern translation of Ἰουδαῖοι, see John M. G. Barclay, "Ἰουδαῖος: Ethnicity and Translation," in *Ethnicity, Race, Religion: Identities and Ideologies in Early Jewish and Christian Texts, and in Modern Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Katherine M. Hockey and David G. Horrell (New York: T&T Clark, 2018), 46-58. It must be noted that no matter what translation is used for Ἰουδαῖοι, this group of people is associated with those who disbelieve in Jesus (5:47-48, 6:36, and 8:45-46), seek to kill him (5:18, 7:1, and 19:15), and profess blindness (12:40) in the Gospel of John. Ruth Sheridan, "Issues in Translation of οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in the Fourth Gospel," *JBL* 132 (2013): 694-695.

²⁶⁴ "Soldiers" (John 18:3, "στειρῶν") literally refers to Roman cohorts. Jo-Ann A. Brant, *John*, 235.

world”). In this vein, both Jewish and Roman temporal systems, though they are measured differently (e.g., solar for the Romans and lunar for Jews), fall into the same category; Jesus, the writer suggests, transcends and reconstructs both temporal frames through his resurrection.

As such, the Jesus’s resurrection signifies a challenge to the Roman authorities that sentenced him to death and in turn squashed the hope of a second liberation. Just as the Jewish idea of resurrection is found in the context of foreign aggression in Jewish literature (e.g., Dan 12:1-2 and 2 Macc 7), John’s narrative places Jesus in a context in which an oppressor seizes and persecutes a member of Israel.²⁶⁵ In Second Temple Jewish literature, resurrection was often represented as the Jewish God’s faithful and powerful vindication against oppressors (2 Macc 7:1-42; Wisdom of Solomon 5:1-15; 1QH 11:19-36, 1 Enoch 25:1-7, Tobit 8:9-18).²⁶⁶ Crucifixion existed beyond official forms of state retribution as an unmerciful form of torture to death.²⁶⁷ As a corporeal demonstration of Roman power, Quintilian wrote, crucifixion was usually carried out in

²⁶⁵ George W. E. Nickelsburg, “Resurrection” in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 1142-1144; On the Persian influence on the Jewish idea of resurrection see, David Flusser, *Judaism of the Second Temple Period: Sages and Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 42-43.

²⁶⁶ “When he was near death, he said, “One cannot but choose to die at the hands of mortals and to cherish the hope God gives of being raised again by him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life!”” (2 Macc 7:14); “Then the righteous will stand with great confidence in the presence of those who have oppressed them... But the righteous live forever, and their reward is with the Lord; the Most High takes care of them” (Wisdom 5:1-15); “...from the hell of Abaddon thou hast raised me up to everlasting height” (1QH 11:19-36). Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 266-267; Claudia Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community, and Self-Definition* (Leiden: Brill, 2004); C. D. Elledge, *Resurrection of the Dead in Early Judaism, 200 BCE-CE 200* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 45-65; Lidija Novakovic, *Raised from the Dead According to Scripture: The Role of Israel’s Scripture in Early Christian Interpretations* (New York: T&T Clark, 2012), 68-113; Warren Carter, *John and Empire: Initial Explorations*, 315.

²⁶⁷ Thompson, *John*, 393-395.

public (*The Lesser Declamation* 274, “When we crucify criminals the most frequented roads are chosen, where the greatest number of people can look and be seized by this fear...”).²⁶⁸ Crucifixion was a horrific, excruciating punishment that humiliated enemies and claimed the authority to crush opposition while forcefully maintaining peace and order.²⁶⁹ John, however, marks the time of the crucifixion as the day before the Jewish feast. In John’s reinterpretation of crucifixion, the resurrection not only challenges the power of imperial execution, but also demonstrates the divine triumph over all worldly powers.²⁷⁰ Even though he will be crucified, the Johannine Jesus remains a divine agent who has complete power to control time and life because the prerogative to begin and reconstruct worldly time belongs exclusively to God (John 19:11, “You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above”). Jesus decides the timing of his death and when he will take life up again (John 13:1, “Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father”) by transcending and re-situating worldly time into his own reconstructed temporal frame.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ Quintilian, *The Lesser Declamations, Volume I*, trans. D. R. Shackleton Bailey, LCL 500 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 259.

²⁶⁹ “Upon this, Varus sent a part of his army into the country, to seek out those who had been the authors of the revolt...now the number of those who were crucified on this account ...” (Josephus, *Antiquities* 17. 295).

²⁷⁰ Edward Pillar, *Resurrection as Anti-Imperial Gospel: 1 Thessalonians 1:9B-10 in Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 41.

²⁷¹ Colleen M. Conway, *Behold the Man: Jesus and Greco-Roman Masculinity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2008), 149-152; Jennifer Glancy, “Protocol of Masculinity in the Pastoral Epistles,” in *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janice Capel Anderson (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2003), 235-264.

In chapter 20:1, the temporal marker “early on the first day of the week” breaks the silence and despair over the end of Jesus’s life and dashed hopes of liberation, awakening the reader’s curiosity about the subsequent narrative. Unlike the description of the synoptic gospel about a group of women visiting the tomb and finding it empty in Matt 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-7, and Luke 24:1-10, John depicts Mary Magdalene approaching the tomb alone early in the morning and the disciples meeting the resurrected Jesus during the evening on the same day. Apart from the conclusion in 20:30-31, the chapter is divided into two major sections – the empty tomb in 1-18, and the appearance to the disciples in 20:19-29.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb (John 20:1, emphasis added)

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." (John 20:19, emphasis added)

The two time referents (“early on the first day of the week,” 20:1; “evening on that day,” 20: 19) integrate the first appearance of Jesus in the early morning with the second appearance of Jesus in the evening during the same day and reinforce the certainty of the resurrection by witnessing the appearance of Jesus twice: once to Mary Magdalene and a second time to the disciples. Whereas the death of Jesus was based on the daily Jewish temporal axis of sun-set to sun-set, the resurrection is recounted according to the daily

axis of midnight to midnight according to the Roman method of reckoning a full day.²⁷²

This change of temporal frame concludes the memory of Jesus's torture and creates a new beginning by introducing the empty tomb within a new temporal frame. This change accentuates Mary Magdalene's finding the tomb empty and Jesus's appearance before the disciples during a single day.

By shifting the temporal frame of the resurrection scene from sunset to daybreak, the writer employs two different moments that can signal either the beginning or end of a day to expound the implication of Jesus's resurrection as vindicated by God. While the "the first day of the week" emphasizes that the third day after the crucifixion of Jesus is a day after the Sabbath, in Jewish time, it also reflects back to the reference of "the third day" on which Jesus miraculously changed water to wine in chapter 2:1, which is metaphorically interpreted as Jesus's sacrificial blood.²⁷³ While mentioning "the beginning of the week" as a temporal transition from chapter 19 to 20, the narrator calls his audience's attention to the demonstrative pronoun ("ἐκείνη") to point out that it is the day on which the disciples encountered Jesus (John 20:19, "on *that* day").²⁷⁴ Furthermore, the narrator describes the resurrection of Jesus with a historical present tense (John 20:1

²⁷² Concerning the Roman calendar in general, see Robert Hannah, "Calendar," in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Ancient Mediterranean Religions*, ed. Eric Orlin, Lisbeth S. Fried, Jennifer Wright Knust, Michael L. Satlow, and Michael E. Pregill (New York: Routledge, 2015), 159-160.

²⁷³ Bauckham speculatively assumes that John chronologically shows the daily order by calculating John 1:19-2:1 as seven days. Richard Bauckham, *Gospel of Glory: Major Themes in Johannine Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 131-135.

²⁷⁴ Emphasis added. Syd Palmer, "Repetition and the Art of Reading: KAI TH HMEPA TH TPITH, "On the Third Day" in John's Gospel," in *Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel*, ed. G. Van Belle, M. Labahn, and P. Maritz (Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2009), 416. Maritz suggests that the phrase "that day" is echoing the divine judgment in prophetic writings such as Hosea 2:16, 18, 21; Amos 2:16; Micah 4:6.

and 2, “ἔρχεται,” 20:1 ‘βλέπει’). Past events are often narrated to connect with present events. By incorporating past events within present recollection, the narrator invites the readers to read the story as their own and be a first-hand participant in Johannine Jesus’s reconstruction of time.²⁷⁵ In this case, the narrator employs Jesus’s virtues as presented in past stories (John 20:31).²⁷⁶ This is the new day on which Mary Magdalene met the resurrected Jesus and on which Jesus visited the disciples. As a consequence, the narrator’s shifting temporal frames expose a desire to dispel the anxiety and fear of the violent past dominated by worldly power by separating it from the present. While the series of days leading to Jesus’s death share a temporal frame, each day after the resurrection is schematically and temporally distinct. This is because the resurrection starts with a new temporal frame that conveys Jesus’s ascension to the Father as an unprecedented sign of God’s vindication (John 20:17).

This re-arrangement of Johannine time is strengthened by narrating Jesus’s reappearance to the disciples, in particular to Thomas “a week later” (John 20:26). The temporal marker “a week later” (literally, “after eight days”) corresponds to “the first day of the week” on which Jesus appeared to all the disciples except for Thomas.²⁷⁷

According to Brown’s analysis of this dating, John follows neither Jewish nor Roman

²⁷⁵ Brant, *Dialogue and Drama*, 40; Reinhartz, *Befriending the Beloved Disciple*, 105.

²⁷⁶ The narrator of an ancient biography expected his audience to applaud the virtues of heroic figures and to emulate them. See, Plutarch, *Plutarch: Lives, Demosthenes and Cicero, Alexander and Caesar*, 225; J. S. Kloppenborg, “The Power and Surveillance of the Divine Judge in the Early Synoptic Tradition,” in *Christ and the Emperor: the Gospel Evidence*, ed. Gilbert van Belle and Joseph Verheyden (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 149.

²⁷⁷ Culpepper, *Gospel and the Letters of John*, 242; Brant, *John*, 272-274.

time, but rather shapes a new temporal frame, which demonstrates the existence of a “Lord’s day” (Sunday), which would be adopted in later Christian tradition (*The letter of Barnabas* 15:9, “This is why we spend the eighth day in celebration, the day on which Jesus both arose from the dead and, after appearing again, ascended into heaven”).²⁷⁸

While reflecting back to the event which befell the disciples a week before, the narrator places the appearance of the resurrected Jesus within the same time period, a new seven-day cycle. On this day, the disciples transform their fear into joy when they see the tortured body of Jesus, and Thomas is asked to believe in the resurrection by encountering the same Jesus. In the new temporal setting, Thomas exalts the risen Jesus as “my Lord and my God” (John 20:17). Jesus is fully recognized as he is described in the prologue; the Word made flesh and the only begotten Son. The prologue already demonstrated how the Father bestowed to his only son life-giving authority. In the subsequent narrative, God made the son equal to God by vindicating him from death. When John sets a new seven day cycle, Thomas’s confession reflects John’s understanding of the identity of Jesus as “Lord and God.” In that this new beginning is created by the narrator rather than a character in the text, it does not fully enlighten the characters’ ignorance of Jesus’s resurrection nor does it lift the ongoing darkness of night (20:1, “while it was still dark” and 20:19, ‘when it was evening’). While those in darkness do not recognize God and understand his son (John 12:35, “If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going”), the presence of the darkness

²⁷⁸ Michael W. Holmes, ed. and trans. *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 429; Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, 1025; David Buttrick, *The Mystery and the Passion: A Homiletic Reading of the Biblical Traditions* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1989), 88.

metaphorically indicates an incapacity to be cognizant of the identity and words of Jesus throughout the narrative (John 12:46, “everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness”). This ignorance holds sway until the disciples encounter the resurrected Jesus (John 20:16 and 20). What calls the readers’ attention here is not the new chronological pattern but the way in which the Gospel of John switches between chronological patterns, in particular between those based on sunset, midnight, and daybreak. This temporal shift signals not only the duration of time in the narrative, but also the temporal juncture and disjuncture between the “timing” of Jesus’s death on the cross and the “timing” of his resurrection.

The replacement of “Jewish time,” which is relegated to the world of “the Jews” and used as a rhetorical strategy throughout the Gospel and intensified during the account of the crucifixion, by what seems to be “Roman time” makes Jesus analogous to the Roman Emperors. His death, birth, and day of resurrection mark the span of the “good ruler” whose sovereignty determines the calendar of the mortal world and who is therefore resurrected (or in the Roman case, carried into heaven) and made divine. In John, however, Jesus is divine from the very beginning (he indeed *is* the beginning). His resurrection is therefore not a reward for what he has done as a righteous Jew (an expectation shared by some Jews who believed the righteous would be rewarded, as described in Daniel 12:2, Wisdom 5:15, and Tobit 4:14) but rather the fulfillment of the divine status which he always had. As the agent of the divine sovereign, his time surpasses all times, and the calendar must shift accordingly.

The story of Jesus's salvation is not a completed past so long as John invites the audience to accept and repeat temporal frames that reflect back to previous events. Returning to and reactivating an "already happened past" is not to look backwards, but rather to forge a link between past and present.²⁷⁹ The resurrection legitimates the use of Jesus's God-given dominating power to create the children of God who believe in him (John 1:12).²⁸⁰ Even though the narrator mimics imperial time, he challenges this calendar, too, by re-ordering events and giving meaning to the resurrection as a triumph over imperial time. In other words, the Roman government cannot keep Jesus the Logos dead because he is subject to the life-giving power of God. The resurrection of Jesus and his ascent to the Father is conceived as a new beginning for the followers of Jesus (John 20:17, "I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God"). The temporal transition from Jesus's death and burial to his resurrection provides John's audience with a conception of re-structured time and, by registering the transformation of Jesus, brings about the further transformation of his followers in the narrative. Jesus's rising from the dead fulfills his words and reveals his glory and authority over the world.

John Chapter 21: "After That" and Transforming the Extraordinary into the Routine.

Chapter 21 reconsiders the reappearance of the resurrected Jesus. This is surprising given the satisfying conclusion already offered, namely Jesus's fulfilling his

²⁷⁹ Hartog, "Time's Authority," 38.

²⁸⁰ Reinhartz, "And the Word Was Begotten," 97.

promise to rise from the dead and to greet his disciples with joy (John 20:18, 20, 25), thus proving himself Messiah and Son of God (1:41, 49; 20:30-31).²⁸¹ Resurrected Jesus's third appearance connects chapter 21 with previous accounts using the chronological marker "after that" (21:1). The temporal markers in chapter 21 recast the extraordinary reappearance of Jesus as a never-ending event.²⁸² Whereas Jesus and his discourse persist to the end of his earthly ministry (his death in chapter 20), his discourse in chapter

²⁸¹As an epilogue, chapter 21 is thematically linked to descriptions of Jesus's teaching and life as well as certain Johannine emphases on Jesus's identity found in previous chapters. Many interpreters argue that chapter 21 was originally an appendix. Some interpreters even argue that chapter 21 was a later addition to the Gospel and stands in contradiction to the previous chapters. Following the common consensus that the Gospel of John ended with chapter 20 and that chapter 21 is an early or late addition to the final stage of the Gospel's composition, I will consider chapter 21 to be an epilogue given that it takes up aspects of the previous story by illustrating the consequences of the preceding chapter's climax in a manner that echoes other ancient literary forms in general, and contemporary epilogues in particular. See Sherri Brown, "What's in an Ending? John 21 and the Performative Force of an Epilogue," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 42 (2015): 29-32; Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 244-245; Gail R. O'Day and Susan E. Hulen, *John* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 199; Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2004), 583-584.

²⁸² The likely concluding words in John 20:30-31 have led scholarship to regard chapter 21 as either an epilogue and appendix or a conclusion. For comprehensive research on the major interpretative issues surrounding chapter 21, see F. Neiryneck, "John 21," *NTS* 36 (1990): 321-336; T. Wiarda, "John 21:1-123: Narrative Unity and Its Implication," *JSNT* 46 (1992): 53-71. Given that chapter 21 was always contained in all published manuscripts of the Gospel, some contend that chapter 21 was initially composed as a proper conclusion. Thompson, *John*, 43; John Breck, *Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and Its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 105. Others argue that it was added as an appendix to the original composition of the Gospel by either an author or a later editor because its interests are seemingly foreign to the previous chapters of the Gospel. See, Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 700-706; Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, 1081. Among those who consider chapter 21 to be an epilogue are Brown, "What's in an Ending? John 21 and the Performative Force of an Epilogue," 30; O'Day and Hulen, *John*, 199; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 45-49; Louise Martyn, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, 3rd ed (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003). Based on the main consensus that the seam between chapters 20 and 21 likely suggests a process of literary and theological development in the Gospel, I would argue that chapter 21 is an addition to the Gospel but coherently functions as an "afterword" or epilogue supplementing the Johannine themes and completing the stories after the climactic end of chapter 20. See, Dwight Moody Smith, *John* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 371; Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 245; Gary M. Burge, *John* (Michigan: Zondervan, 2000), 565 and 580. Brent Nongbri. "P.Bodmer 2 as Possible Evidence for the Circulation of the Gospel according to John without Chapter 21," *Early Christianity* 9 (2018): 345-360. In the article, Nongbri convincingly argues that the first exemplar of P.Bodm. 2 was compiled without chapter 21 and later added.

21 repeats his miracles (2:1-12; 6:1-13), highlights his reappearance (20:11-29), and shows how he commissions the disciples to follow him (1:43; 10:27). The temporal markers in chapter 21 routinize faith in the resurrected Jesus, legitimize the leadership of Peter and confirm the witness of the beloved disciple. While reflecting back on the words and works of Jesus in the previous chapters, chapter 21 elucidates the beliefs of the narrator and Jesus's followers, namely their unwavering belief in Jesus.²⁸³

In chapter 21, after having recounted the drama of Jesus's resurrection and reappearance, the narrator weaves another story, which is divided into two parts: first, the miracle of catching a tremendous amount of fish (21:1-14) and then the dialogue between Jesus and Peter (21:15-23). The typical Johannine temporal marker, "after that" (John 2:12; 3:22; 5:1; 6:1; 7:1; 19:28, 38), appoints the catch of fish as resurrected Jesus's first miracle and also moves the setting from Jerusalem to the Galilee. The temporal marker announces the beginning of a new episode despite the thematic repetition. When the narrator describes the reappearance of Jesus (21:1, "after these things Jesus showed himself again to the disciples... he showed himself in this way"), the verb "to show or to reveal" (φανερῶω) repeats twice in a single verse and refers to the revelation of Jesus as the revealer throughout the Gospel (John 1:21, 2:11, and 3:21). The re-usage of the word accentuates the continuing presence of the glorified Jesus and implies that the journey of faith is not finished. The vague temporal marker "after that" chronologically smoothens the sequence following the false conclusion in chapter 20. John 21, in particular 21:1-14, is not isolated from the previous chapters, but is full of literary devices and symbols that

²⁸³ Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, 1082.

recall Johannine themes.²⁸⁴ For instance, when John describes Jesus preparing for breakfast, he lists “charcoal fire” and “bread” (John 21:9, “they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread”). The former reflects back to the scene of the last supper, and the latter recalls the scene in which Peter betrayed Jesus before the charcoal fire (John 18:18). The appearance of disciples Peter, Thomas, and Nathanael also strengthens the continuity between chapter 21 and previous chapters. The naming of these three disciples function as a temporal referent that juxtaposes Jesus’s past with their present without him. The presence of Peter and Thomas in chapter 21 reminds readers of the resurrection scene in chapter 20 because Peter arrived at the tomb first and Thomas attempted to touch the resurrected body of Jesus. Moreover, the reappearance of Nathanael who disappeared after John 1: 43-51 serves as a temporal referent to Jesus’s promise to him; “you will see greater things than these” (John 1:50). The inclusion of his name in chapter 21 connects the miraculous catch of fish and the meal offered by the resurrected Jesus with his promise to Nathanael in John 1:50 (“You will see greater things than these”). It also establishes the link between the beginning of the community and that of Jesus’s ministry (John 2:12, “After this he went down to Capernaum”) by reminding readers that “after that” used to announce Jesus’s ministry and his disciples’ faith in him since the wedding at Cana (2:10-11).²⁸⁵ Since they witnessed the revelation of Jesus’s glory, they believed in him (John 2:11). “After that,” the focal point of the public ministry is moved from the

²⁸⁴ Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 246-247; Martin Hasitschka, “The Significance of the Resurrection Appearance,” in *The Resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, ed. Craig R. Koester and Reimund Bieringer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 312-313.

²⁸⁵ O’Day and Hylan, *John*, 200.

witness of John the Baptist to the public work of Jesus (2:12). The structuring of time legitimated Jesus's authority, confirmed by the disciples' first positive response to Jesus (2:11, "his disciples believed in him"). Moreover, deployment of the temporal marker "after that" at Cana (2:12) and Golgotha (19:28) presents an *inclusio* for the beginning and end of Jesus's ministry. "After that" is John's characteristic temporal marker for Jesus's entire ministry. Whereas "after that" signifies the beginning of Jesus's ministry and the disciples' belief in him at Cana (2:11), another "after that" in chapter 21 introduces the disciples' unbelief after encountering the resurrected Jesus. The disciples stayed along the Tiberius River close to Cana and even after ("after that") encountering the resurrected Jesus, they stopped doing their ministry and returned to their routine life. In chapter 21, "after that" introduces the disciples' returning to their old ways, which shows who they are, who they believe in, and who they must follow.²⁸⁶

The description of the disciples' catching nothing presents a narrative opportunity to describe the change in their fortunes through the appearance of Jesus, marked by another temporal marker, "after daybreak" (John 21:4). The temporal reference suggests the passage of time while the disciples worked throughout the night, and implicitly dramatizes the appearance of Jesus as light overcoming darkness (John 1: 5; 8:12) that enlightens everyone (John 1:9). The "light" that only Jesus can bring enables his followers to complete their work (John 9:4, "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work."). In this vein, the miraculous story of the fish shows that obeying the instructions of Jesus leads to an abundant life and

²⁸⁶ Brown, "What's in an Ending?," 35-36.

the survival and expansion of the community. It also echoes the scene of the empty tomb found “early on the first day of the week” (John 20:1) and signifies to readers that the resurrected Jesus will continue to undertake miraculous deeds. For instance, only Jesus, after breaking the darkness, could produce fish from the sea in the early morning light.²⁸⁷ Jesus, as “the true vine,” can make the sea fruitful after an unproductive night (John 15:1, 4-6).²⁸⁸

By bridging the present and the past, the temporal markers fashion the identity of the believers in Jesus, who live as witnessing followers, feeding shepherds, and the dedicated children of God.²⁸⁹ John narrates the disciples’ meeting Jesus and experiencing his miracle in the midst of routine life (John 21:3), and claims that the God of Israel who sent his only Son still works through faith in Jesus the Word (John 5:19-21; 21:6). John also uses a repeating temporal marker to narrate Jesus’s reconciliation with Peter (who betrayed Jesus three times), which he accomplishes by passing his authority to Peter and instructing him to feed his sheep (21:15-17).

The text states that, “This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead” (21:14). The reference to temporal frequency, the “third time,” recalls Peter’s three betrayals. Jesus’s three appearances (20:11-18; 20:19-25; 20:26-29) and John’s counting those appearances echoes Peter’s three-time betrayal and prepares readers for Jesus’s three questions and Peter’s three answers, soon

²⁸⁷ Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 246-247.

²⁸⁸ Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, 1071.

²⁸⁹ Brown, “What’s in an Ending?,” 41-42.

to come.²⁹⁰ While the conversation between Peter and the resurrected Jesus legitimates Peter's authority, Jesus's responses (21:15-17, "feed my lambs... tend my sheep... feed my sheep") evoke the good shepherd that Jesus mentioned in John 10:1-18.²⁹¹ Johannine temporal construction of the past does not only rule over the present life, but it also shows Jesus followers' concerns and anxiety regarding their position in relation to the boundary of Jesus's sheepfold (John 10:1, "... anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit," 10:7, "I am the gate for the sheep," and 10:14, "I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me").²⁹² The authority which belongs to Jesus as a good shepherd is transferred to Peter, facilitated by temporal references connecting past and present.²⁹³ A similar set of temporal references are the sign at Cana (John 2:11-12) and Jesus's being raised from the dead (John 21:14, "Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead"). While reflecting back to the first sign at Cana, the verb "to appear or reveal" (John 21:14) is reminiscent of when Jesus "revealed his glory at Cana" (John 2:11). The phrase "raised from the dead" (21: 14, ἐγερθεὶς ἐκ νεκρῶν) is the same as 2:22 ("raised from the dead,"

²⁹⁰ According to the early Christian tradition, the resurrected Jesus revealed himself to Peter first (1 Cor 15:3-5; Mark 16:7; Luke 24:34), so it is likely that chapter 21 was a later, additional attempt to harmonize the existing source by ignoring Johannine Jesus's appearance to Mary the Magdalene. Brown, *The Gospel According to John XIII-XXI*, 1077; Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 247; Thompson, *John*, 440.

²⁹¹ "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

²⁹² "And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world ... they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world" (John 17:11 and 14).

²⁹³ Hasitschka, "The Significance of the Resurrection Appearance in John 21," 324.

ἡγέρθη ἐκ νεκρῶν), which is a narrator's comment on Jesus's prediction of the Temple's destruction (John 2:19).²⁹⁴

These two cases show readers how Jesus as the Word fulfills his promises while at the same time asking readers to decide whether they believe in Jesus's accomplishments. After the disciples saw Jesus resurrected, they came to remember and comprehend what Jesus meant by his previous statements. By referring to the resurrected Jesus's third appearance, John implies that Jesus's appearance is not his last because Jesus promised not to abandon his own followers (John 14:16-20). By reminding readers of Jesus's petition before the crucifixion – the manifestation of his glory (John 17:1, 5), the protection of his people (John 17:9-11), and the purposeful statements in John 20:30-31 – John asks readers to communally share the life of Jesus and consent to Jesus's authority and instruction (John 21:15).²⁹⁵

In chapter 21, the Gospel of John clearly sets out to build a concrete boundary of group identity by pointing out the life of faith espoused by Jesus's followers after the resurrection. The disciples meet the resurrected Jesus in a new and distinct place even though the temporal referents relate back to previous Jesus narratives. Not only does Jesus reappear and reconcile with Peter and the beloved disciple in chapter 21, but the chapter also reinforces the call to follow Jesus. The temporal markers turn chapter 21 into

²⁹⁴ “After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.” This is an ancient literary device called *anagnorisis*, which occurs when the audience is provided with information to which the characters in the story are not yet privy. Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 72.

²⁹⁵ Tat-Siong Benny Liew, “Ambiguous Admittance,” in *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space and Power*, ed. Musa W. Dube and Jeffrey L. Staley (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 207.

a conclusion that resonates with the previous chapters by bridging the present and the past. The repeated temporal markers “after that” and “again” make it clear that the third is not the last of Jesus’s appearances. As promised, the resurrected Jesus remains with his people under any circumstance. Meeting and deciding to follow him is the starting point to understand his past deeds and ministry, and the temporal markers integrate the past to render present events legible.

Conclusion

The temporal markers in the Gospel of John serve not only to shape the structure and compositional flow of the narrative, but also to sharpen John’s claims about the sovereignty of God and Jesus, God’s Word. The temporal frames signal both Jewish and Roman ideas about time while advancing those of John’s narrator, who arranges events within his own structured narrative time. The varied temporal markers examined in this chapter articulate Jesus’s ability to dominate earthly power (including the Jewish and Roman authorities), and the legitimacy of Jesus followers by making thematic connections between historic events and archaic pasts that foreground Jesus’s earthly ministry.²⁹⁶

From the perspective of the Johannine narrative, Jesus’s domination over history derives from his identity as the temporal hinge of God’s beginning, which simultaneously invokes and challenges other Jewish and Roman notions of power and legitimacy based in their own presentations of key “beginnings.” The Johannine Prologue implies that

²⁹⁶ Palmer, “Repetition and the Art of Reading,” 416.

existing earthly power conflicts with the God-given power of Johannine Jesus (John 1:5), and at the same time proclaims his universally superb power to rule over the world (John 1:3). Jesus is the pre-existent Logos, the son of God, and the Messiah to whom John the Baptist bears witness and who the earthly rulers reject.²⁹⁷ John establishes this position by developing a new sense of time, which challenges all earthly authorities and counts Jesus as a divine agent and initiator of a new temporality.²⁹⁸ The Johannine understanding of Jesus openly counters the existence of earthly sovereignty. The narrative sustains this inward tension through subordinated characters.²⁹⁹ The Baptist's encouraging his followers to obey Jesus articulates the harmonious but hierarchical relationship between John the Baptist and Jesus (John 1:29-30; 3:30). The narrator uses repetitive patterns of time (John 1: 29, 35, 43, "the next day") to refer to the consecutive witness of John the Baptist and to stabilize John's authority. While John the Baptist challenges the Jewish authorities from Jerusalem, he willingly obeys and defends the divine sovereignty of Jesus, which he asserts has been engendered by God. The temporal movement from "the next day" to "after that" dramatizes the shift from the ministry of John the witness to that of Jesus the witnessed while expressing the waning of the Baptist's role (John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease").

John reconstructs past memory in the present through temporal movements that negotiate and challenge Roman time and power. John's use of "beginning," for instance,

²⁹⁷ Danker, *Benefactor: Epigraphic Study of a Graeco-Roman and New Testament Semantic Field*, 217.

²⁹⁸ Carter, *John and Empire*, 117.

²⁹⁹ Carter, *John and Empire*, 185-197; Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John*, 151-152.

leverages a temporal marker that is at once an element of imperial propaganda and a reference to Genesis to point out God's creative power. The fact that Jesus's crucifixion by the Romans occurs in the narrative according to the festal calendar of the conquered Jews rhetorically overcomes the imperial force of the punishment.³⁰⁰

John repeats temporal markers to interrupt routine life, challenge earthly powers, and echo Jesus's previous deeds. The narrator's structuring of time and understanding of the past reflects a desire to define belonging and identity for Jesus's followers.³⁰¹ In the Gospel of John, Jesus's followers lose Jesus, the beloved disciple and, as the implied audience knows, the Temple in Jerusalem and the Jewish nation that worshiped there.³⁰² The narrator bridges the gap of space and time between Jesus and his followers by using temporal references to inaugurate what he identifies as a new beginning that continues to reverberate in the lives of his imagined audience.

³⁰⁰ Tod D. Swanson, "To Prepare a Place: Johannine Christianity and the Collapse of Ethnic Territory," in *John and Postcolonialism: Travel, Space and Power*, ed. Musa W. Dube and Jeffrey L. Staley (New York: T&T Clark, 2002), 21.

³⁰¹ Joan W. Scott insightfully shows that collective terms like "identity" and "community" are constructed according to perspectives of difference. See Joan W. Scott, *Politics of the Veil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 19-20; "... we need to acknowledge difference in ways that call into question the certainty and superiority of our own views. Instead of assimilation we need to think about the negotiation of difference ... it is wrong to think of community as a shared essence, a common being, because that "it in effect the closure of the political." Instead, we must recognize that we all are "being-in-common," which "has nothing to do with communion with fusion into a body, into a unique and ultimate identity." Common being presupposes sameness while "being-in-common" says only that we all exist and that our very existence is defined by our difference from others. Paradoxically, it's difference that is common to us all. We must stop acting as if historically established communities were eternal essence."

³⁰² Carter, *John and Empire*, 3-18; Richey, *Roman Imperial Ideology and the Gospel of John*, 27-65; Bill Salier, *Challenging Perspectives on the Gospel of John* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 284-299.

CHAPTER FOUR: MAKING COMMUNAL TIME IN THE FIRST LETTER OF JOHN - BELONGING, CONFLICT, AND BOUNDARIES

The Johannine letters employ temporal markers to convince the writer's audience to remain faithful to certain teachings, describe the origin of the author's imagined community and distinguish it from other Jesus believers by linking the past with the present and future by means of imaginative and genealogical strategies.³⁰³ In this chapter, I examine how the first and second letters of John (hereafter 1 and 2 John) represented the past and present in order to describe the meaning of Jesus and to de-legitimize those with whom the author(s) disagreed.³⁰⁴ I analyze the rhetorical function of these temporal frames to argue that 1 and 2 John collapsed the present and the past in order to convince members of the audience that they are genealogically and temporally linked to Jesus and

³⁰³ Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of Past* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), 55-81; Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country – Revisited*, 84-85, and 562; Elizabeth A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory: Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 10-32; Caroline Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kindship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 67-78; Denise Kimber Buell, *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 79-94; Todd S. Berzon, *Classifying Christians: Ethnography, Heresiology, and the Limits of Knowledge in Late Antiquity* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016), 120-124; David G. Horrell, *Becoming Christian: Essays on 1 Peter and the Making of Christian Identity* (New York: T & T Clark, 2013), 158-160; Eric S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 253-307.

³⁰⁴ Lieu points out that “temporality is also integral to the letter genre.” Judith M. Lieu, “Letters and the Construction of Early Christian Memory,” in *Memory and Memories in Early Christianity: Proceedings of the International Conference held at the Universities of Geneva and Lausanne (June 2-3, 2016)*, ed. Simon Buttica, and Enrico Norelli (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 140; Lutz Doering, “Configuring Addressee Communities in Ancient Jewish Letters: The Case of the Epistle of Baruch (2 Baruch 78-86),” in *Letters and Communities: Studies in the Socio-Political Dimensions of Ancient Epistolography*, ed. Paola Ceccarelli, Lutz Doering, Thorsten Fogen, and Ingo Gildenhard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 281.

therefore to the Father as well.³⁰⁵ From this perspective, the audience stands outside of time, in a sense, since they too are eternal. By contrast, the opponents (who may well be figments of the writer's imagination) remain bound by time to be judged, linked as they are to evil. They also exist outside of time because their punishment is eternal.³⁰⁶ I also show how, in 1 John in particular, the temporal marker "beginning" discursively creates a shared past and a collective bond that underscores the writer's authority to reference and interpret Jesus and his tradition. The writer designates the followers of Jesus as those who

³⁰⁵ The issue of whether 1 and 2 John were composed by the same author is beyond the scope of this chapter. While I acknowledge that many ideas and themes in 2 John derive from those in 1 John, I am aware of "the nature of inconclusive evidence" as to the common authorship of the two letters. I assume the anonymity of the author of 1 John. I refer to the author of 2 John as either the Elder, as the author is described in 2 John 1 ("The Elder to the elect lady and her children..."), or simply as another author, who might or might not share the same identity as the author of 1 John. Instead of focusing on the issue of authorship, I focus on exploring the use of rhetoric to include, exclude, and persuade. See, Judith Lieu, *I, II, and III John* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 8-9, 32, and 240. Concerning the difficulty of identifying the writer of 1 John with 2 John, Culpepper, *The Gospel And Letters of John*, 275; Smith, *First, Second, and Third John*, 18. Brown insists that all three letters were written by one author while assuming that differences between the letters are "instances of the vagaries of Johannine style." In favor of the common authorship of 1 and 2 John, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John* (New York: Doubleday, 1982), 19; Urban C. von Wahlde, *The Gospel and Letters of John, Volume 3: The Three Johannine Letters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 9; David Rensberger, *1 John, 2 John, 3 John* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 19; Robert W. Yarbrough, *1-3 John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 329; George L. Parsenios, *First, Second, and Third John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 26; Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 264-265. Strecker and Painter disagree with the theory of common authorship due to the different form and content of each text. Georg Strecker, *The Johannine Letters* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1996), xl; John Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 52. Lieu and Kysar remain undecided. Lieu, *I, II, and III John*, 7; Robert Kysar, *I, II, III John* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 12-13.

³⁰⁶ Concerning arguments about internal conflicts between the Jesus believers, see Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 69-71; Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1984), xxiii-xxxii; Colin G. Kruse, *The letter of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 14-27; Parsenios, *First, Second, and Third John*, 20-26; Terry Griffith, *Keep Yourself from Idols: A New Look at 1 John* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 166-170. I approach the letters as a response to internal conflict by employing a rhetorical and literary reading of the texts while imagining the dynamics of conflict and hegemony. The chronological order of the composition of the Johannine letters remains a matter of debate. I will follow the interpretation of Raymond Brown that the Gospel of John was composed before the rest of the Johannine letters. Discussing the chronological arrangement of the Fourth Gospel and the letters is beyond the scope of this research.

heard and received the Gospel from the beginning, recalling for them Jesus's acts. The writer's temporal configuration of the Jesus followers' origin legitimates his interpretations of Jesus and his life and promotes an imagined sense of group unity.

The writer of 1 John then builds on this argument by attempting to bond people together by imagining a common ancestor (e.g. 1 John 3:1, "we should be called children of God").³⁰⁷ This genealogical frame further shapes the self-definition of Jesus followers by defining the community's temporal, ancestral connection with God. The condition of genealogical severance between the children of God and the children of the devil, on the other hand, defines the status of 1 John's imagined opponents as complete outsiders. As I argue, the writer asserts that the opponents hold no legitimate link to the community's common ancestor because they derive from another ancestry, that of the devil.

The writer's own participation in creating internal schisms, however, is met in 1 John by an assurance that the "true" Jesus followers will prevail.³⁰⁸ Internal conflict is also found in 2 John, which encourages audience to remain truthful to the teaching of the elder, who is identified as the author of the letter; the elder warns the audience to avoid

³⁰⁷ Judith M. Lieu, "The Audience of the Johannine Epistles," in *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 127; Paul R. Trebilco, "Engaging – or Not Engaging – the City: Reading 1 and 2 Timothy and the Johannine Letters in the City of Ephesus," in *The Urban World and the First Christians*, ed. Steve Walton, Paul R. Trebilco, and David W. J. Gill (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2017), 160-162.

³⁰⁸ While acknowledging the debates over whether a particular group existed in association with the author(s) of the letters, this chapter will use the Johannine community to refer to a group of loosely associated Jesus followers in fellowship with one another and with the author(s) of the letters. Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 4-5; Paul N. Anderson, "The Community that Raymond Brown Left Behind: Reflections on the Johannine Dialectical Situation," in *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*, eds. R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 47-93; Raimo Hakola, *Reconsidering Johannine Christianity: A Social Identity Approach* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), 4-21.

the false teachings of false teachers and avoid extending any greeting towards the opponents.³⁰⁹ Thus, both letters claim exclusive access to the truth, and label opponents (real or imagined) as deceivers and the Antichrist. In particular, the accusation of “Antichrist” alludes to the end of time as an eschatological context for which each community waits; this waiting, however, also stakes a claim against those who would deny the humanity of Jesus and his existence in earthly time and space as in 1 John 4:2-3 and 2 John 1:7. The use of the label Antichrist in 1 and 2 John therefore depicts a particular view of the world that places the audience within a specific moment in time — one of threat and danger — and forces the audience to make a decision: side with the writer or side with the Antichrist. This frame also asserts a temporal connectedness between the believers, Jesus, and God that justifies the privileged status of the members of the imagined audience, whom the writer contends will be like Christ. This chapter shows that temporal markers and frames are a central aspect of the rhetorical construction of the believers’ self-expression. These markers and frames also apprise them of a conflict within their own group, real or imagined, while creating continuity between the past and present to strengthen the collective bonding between the members of the writer’s audience.

“Beginning” as Temporal Marker, Communal Origin, and Validation of Authority

In contrast to the conventionally epistolary form of the second and third letters of

³⁰⁹ Culpepper, *The Gospel And Letters of John*, 275; Parnenios, *First, Second, and Third John*, 26-27.

John (e.g. greeting, salutation, and closing),³¹⁰ the first letter (hereafter 1 John) expounds on theological and pastoral concerns that resonate with the prologue of the Gospel of John (1:4, 2:12).³¹¹ The addresser claims the legitimacy and veracity of this interpretation of Jesus’s message while also warning the audience of the danger of targeted opponents’ false teachings by constructing for the community a shared common past and origin.³¹² The writer uses the rhetoric of temporality to demonstrate the community’s common origin (imagined or real), create a family tree to justify the status of the Jesus believers as legitimate members of the community, and alerts the audience to possible threats through universalizing temporal frames.

“Beginning” as the Origin of the Community

The opening of 1 John echoes the prologue of John (John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word”) by employing the same temporal marker, “beginning.” The words of 1

³¹⁰ Hans-Josef Klauck, *Ancient Letters and the New Testament: A Guide to Context and Exegesis* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2006), 9-42; Lutz Doering, *Ancient Jewish Letters and the Beginnings of Christian Epistolography* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 406-427; Matthew Jensen, “The Structure and Argument of 1 John,” *JSNT* 35 (2012): 54–73; Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 87.

³¹¹ For a discussion on the letter’s audience, see Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 88-91; Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, xxx-xxxii; Kruse, *The letter of John*, 14; Parsenius, *First, Second, and Third John*, 20-26; Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 251-252; D. Moody Smith, *First, Second, and Third John* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1991), 18-24; Judith M. Lieu, *I, II, & III John: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), 6-9; Peter Rhea Jones, “The Missional Role of ὁ πρεσβυτήρς,” in *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 141-154.

³¹² Despite the correspondence between the language used in the Johannine letters and the Gospel of John, the differences are striking. The Gospel of John begins with a narrative about the Word by focusing on its preexistence and relation with God the Father, its departure to the human world, and its role in shining on darkness. Smith, *The First, Second, and Third John*, 38; Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 757-759; R. Alan Culpepper, “The Relationship between the Gospel of John and 1 John,” in *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 95-116.

John thematically correspond to those of the Johannine prologue in other ways as well, incorporating phrases such as “the words of life” (1 John 1:1, John 1:4, cf. 6:68) and “fellowship with the Father” (1 John 1:3, John 1:14).³¹³ Whereas “in the beginning,” in the Gospel of John, universalizes Jesus’s domination over all historical time and includes all people of the world (John 3:16), the scope of inclusivity of the temporal marker “from the beginning” in 1 John is restricted to the addresser’s imagined community of Jesus followers. The writer displays his commitment to using time to legitimate the collective memory he interpretively describes in order to hold the past in the present and convey acceptance of Jesus:

We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us (1 John 1:1-2)

In other words, the letter claims the theological truth of and connection with the Jesus tradition by describing the teachings of Jesus himself. The images of life and wisdom (1 John 1:1, 4, “Word,” and “life”) present Jesus as the Word that brought about all beings (cf. John 1:3, “All things came into being through him”). The thematic connection between 1 John and the Gospel of John seeks to persuade the audience to believe that past knowledge is still effective in the present. By chronologically aligning his message with the origin, the writer of 1 John also establishes a stark contrast between legitimate and

³¹³ The resemblance between the language in 1 John and that in the Fourth Gospel does not determine the chronological priority of one over the other, which remains an issue of debate. In support of the Gospel of John’s priority, see Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 70-71; Parsenius, *First, Second, and Third John*, 31-32; In favor of the letter’s earlier composition, see J. L. Houlden, *The Johannine Epistles* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 24-25; L. Michael White, *From Jesus to Christianity* (New York: Harper One, 2004), 418-419.

illegitimate groups by declaring that the close association of the faithful with the writer provides fellowship with God.³¹⁴

The prologue of 1 John describes the message's reality in vivid imagery based in sensory experience. The entire body is implicated in the experience of Jesus's revelation. When the writer conveys "what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes ... and touched with our hands" (1 John 1:1), he describes a way to "have fellowship with us" through his own sensual experiences (1 John 1:3). The original concern with the word of life echoes the theme of what came to life in the Gospel of John saying "All things came into being through him" (John 1:3).³¹⁵ This "Word of life" appears to everyone and furthers eternal life, which refers to Jesus's permanent relation with God, which was revealed to the writer and his audience. John describes Jesus as the incarnate Word ("Logos") who brought eternal life. Likewise, 1 John employs the Word not only as the personified Word that brings true life and Jesus's message but also that which initiates the faith of believers (1 John 1:1-2, cf. John 6:68).³¹⁶ While the writer temporally associates God, Jesus, and the community through the beginning of the Gospel message, he suggests that there is a false teaching in opposition to his proclamation.³¹⁷

³¹⁴ "...you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

³¹⁵ John Paul Heil, *1-3 John: Worship by Loving God and One Another to Live Eternally* (Cambridge, MA: James Clark and Co Ltd, 2010), 60-61.

³¹⁶ "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life." (John 6:68); Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 164.

³¹⁷ "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

Given their relationship with the distant past, both the addresser and addressees are placed within two sets of binary relations, that between God and the addressees, on one hand, and between Jesus and the addressees, on the other. By blurring the boundary between past and present, the writer creates a self-definition for the Jesus followers that invite them to join in a temporality that collapses past and present by mediating the source of eternity.³¹⁸ As the source of life, Jesus mediates eternal life, establishes the fellowship of God with the believers, and brings his new age. This fellowship does not only employ a horizontal communion between the addresser and addressees, but also a vertical communion between the audience, God and Jesus.³¹⁹ Chronologically, the single temporal point, “beginning,” coalesces two separate, temporal points into one that merges Jesus and his teaching. The temporal marker, “beginning” resonates with the twofold connection between the time in which the community is grounded and that of the past.³²⁰ The writer also recalls the community’s need to defend this teaching against challengers.³²¹ This use of “beginning” surveys the community’s past and present from the perspective of a long, communal temporality (1 John 2:13).³²² The temporal setting

³¹⁸ Sandra Huebenthal, “Reading Gospel of Mark as Collective Memory,” in *Social Memory and Social Identity in the Study of Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Samuel Byrskog, Raimo Hakola, Jutta Maria Jokiranta (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2016), 74-75; Concerning the preservation of past memory, Castelli points out that portraying past time contributes to the “maintenance of Christian collective memory” and “self-crafting or self-formation.” Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 70-71.

³¹⁹ “...truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3)

³²⁰ “This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you” (1 John 1:4, cf. John 1:2)

³²¹ “They went out from us, but they did not belong to us” (1 John 2:19). Anthony Kelly and Francis J. Moloney, *Experiencing God in the Gospel of John* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 33.

³²² “... you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.”

that unifies the community members in the writer's constructed timeline is designed to produce a strong sense of collective identity by integrating historical time into the writer's present to address the community's concerns over the past.

Jesus, who initiated the beginning of the Jesus believing groups, ensures the life of those who see and hear him at the last judgement (1 John 2:24 and 4:17). Jesus's authority to provide eternal life and to make the final judgement are identified as powers granted to him by God the Father (1 John 2:12, c.f. John 5:26).³²³ The temporal constancy between the community in the present and Jesus in the past is fulfilled by having contact with the Son who is life.³²⁴ For the writer of 1 John, the collective communion of the group with God and the Son is exclusively linked with the temporally consistent fellowship between God and Jesus. The explanation of that exclusive relationship heightens the tension that differentiates those who are in fellowship with the writer and receive his truth from those who refuse it.

Accordingly, the "beginning" also serves to place readers' present within the past events of Jesus's ministry, as the writer claims to hear, see, and touch the Words of life. The writer closes the gap between past and present by arguing that the "beloved" community encounters God by following Jesus's instruction to confess to the Son and to therefore remain in the presence of the Father (1 John 2:7). The creation of "we," as addressed by the writer, transforms individual recollections of the past into the living

³²³ "... he [Jesus] is the beginning ... so that he might come to have first place in everything" (Col 1:18) and "... he has granted the Son also to have life in himself" (John 5:26), Painter, *1, 2 and 3 John*, 181.

³²⁴ Lieu, "The Audience of the Johannine Epistles," 134.

tradition of the community which is also affirmed by the exercise of group membership, namely observing and recalling the divine commandment.³²⁵ Only those who obey the commandments of God, the writer insists, can say “I know God” without being a liar. In other words, the writer argues, one can be cognizant of the present communion with God only by knowing the life-giving Word that was already revealed by Jesus.³²⁶ Thus, in adopting God’s commandments in present time, the writer collapses past and present in order to legitimize a communal confession that, he asserts, has been challenged by the dissenters. The community’s adherence to the old commandments, which were given at the beginning, temporally places the community within Jesus’s new commandment, linking past and present within an unbroken line of time and succession:

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had *from the beginning*; the old commandment is the word that you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new command; its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining. (1 John 2:7-8, emphasis added)

In 1 John 2:3-11, in order to challenge those who would boast that “I have come to know him [God]” (2:4) without obeying him, the author writes that to obey God’s commandment to love each other is to abide in and to know God (1 John 2:5, cf. John 14:

³²⁵ Jens Schröter, “Memory and Memories in Early Christianity: The Remembered Jesus as a Test Case,” in *Memory and Memories in Early Christianity: Proceedings of the International Conference held at the Universities of Geneva and Lausanne (June 2-3, 2016)*, ed. Simon Buttica, and Enrico Norelli (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 80-81.

³²⁶ Lieu, *I, II & III John: A Commentary*, 71; Parsenios, *First, Second, and Third John*, 70-71; Gerard S. Sloyan, *Walking in the Truth: Perseverers and Deserters: The First, Second, and Third Letters of John* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995), 17-18.

21-24).³²⁷ The new and old commandment, as living tradition, presents the shared knowledge of the imagined group while integrating new events with the past. Jesus's new commandment is actually that which Jesus commanded since the beginning, enabling the community to "abide in the Son and in the Father" if "what they heard from the beginning abides in them" (1 John 2:24).³²⁸ Just as Jesus brought truth and light into the world once and for all, the commandment derived from him is new as long as it is related to the events that Jesus initiated, and has a futuristic quality that warrants an eschatological hope for the end time.³²⁹

In 1 John 2:7-8, the writer uses a twofold temporal frame to describe present obedience to Jesus's new commandment and the future expectation of life. The passage's temporal view describes an eschatological reality that envisions the defeat of darkness by light, discernible in the present time. God's saving activity will be made known.³³⁰ That said, the writer insists that the sphere of falsehood and darkness is still opposed to that of belonging to God in which light and truth expresses the divine will and purpose to be

³²⁷ "They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them. Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, 'Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us, and not to the world?' Jesus answered him, 'Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; and the word that you hear is not mine, but is from the Father who sent me.'" (John 14:21-24).

³²⁸ Cf. "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another" (John 13:34). Lieu, *I, II & III John: A Commentary*, 108-110; Smith, *First, Second, and Third John*, 71.

³²⁹ Strecker, *The Johannine Letters*, 49-50.

³³⁰ Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Cosmic Trial Motif in John's Letters," in *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 166-168; D. A. Carson, "The Three Witnesses and the Eschatology of 1 John," in *To Tell the Mystery: Essays on New Testament Eschatology in Honor of Robert H. Gundry*, ed. Thomas E. Schmidt and Moises Silva (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 216-232.

victorious over darkness (1 John 2:8 and 2:27).³³¹ The contrasting images of darkness and light symbolize a cosmic conflict between God and evil, imaginatively intensifying the conflict between the believers and “those who would deceive you” (1 John 2:26). The writer declares that light expels the darkness out of the believers’ world, though the eventual judgment of darkness remains in the distant future (1 John 4:17). The writer tells his audience how to avert this judgment that will only befall the unbelievers. Indeed, the believers’ expectation of salvation is secured by the appearance of Jesus who is “the atoning sacrifice for our sins” (2:2). The believers’ future is rooted in their persistent faith in Jesus, who will destroy the evil power.³³² Jesus will judge the darkness and its evil mediators and honor those who endure at his second coming.³³³ The future that belongs to God revealed in Jesus thus becomes part of the present when Jesus’s divine love connects the believers with God, securing their hope for salvation.³³⁴ Accordingly, the writer understands “true light” to represent the presence of God shining before those who obey his commandments and convinces the readers that “the darkness is passing away” (1

³³¹ In the Hebrew Bible, God’s teaching, commandment and the expression of the divine will are referred to as light (Ps. 119:105; Isa. 2:5) and shining light (Ps. 18:28; Neh. 9:19; Hosea 6:5). “For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life” (Proverbs 6:23); “The unfolding of your words gives light” (Psalm 119: 130). “My justice for a light to the peoples...” (Isaiah 51:4)

³³² “The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8).

³³³ “...abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence and not be put to shame before him at his coming.”

³³⁴ “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life, and does not come under judgment, but has passed from death to life” (John 5:24). Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 1994), 132; David Rensberger, *1 John, 2 John, & 3 John* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1997), 42.

John 2:8). The newness of Jesus's commandment is reproduced by its continual fulfillment.

Given the communal obedience to commandments that bridge old and new, the past remains meaningful in the present. This temporal connectedness becomes evident when the old and new commandments are practiced and actualized to advance the self-understanding of the group. The writer reminds the audience to remember what they received in the past and encourages them to reproduce it in the present. As he states, "For this is the message you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another" (1 John 3:11).³³⁵ The commandments are evidence of the living tradition granted by Jesus from the beginning, and give meaning to the imagined community's past and present. The commandments, however, are not described as stable entities, but rather as in a continual state of reinterpretation for each new circumstance. The writer claims that, if the Jesus followers kept themselves from committing sins and listening to false teachings, they would "abide in the Son and in the Father" (1 John 2: 24) because their correct relation with God would be mediated through Jesus the Son (1 John 5:1).³³⁶ In other words, the writer's construction of time linking God and Jesus also closes the temporal distance between the past and the present, as the believers' relationship with God is mediated by the Son who had been with God and has now revealed himself.

³³⁵ Smith, *First, Second, and Third John*, 74-75; Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 375.

³³⁶ "To receive" occurs six times in the Johannine letters (1 John 2:27, 3:22, 5:9, 2 John 1:4, 10, and 3 John 1:7). "To abide" appears throughout the Johannine letters, in particular in 1 John (1 John 2:10, 14, 17, 19, 24, 27, 28; 3:6, 9, 14, 15, 17, 24; 4:12, 13, 15, 16 and John 1:2 and 9). The repetition shows how eagerly the author encourages his audience to abide by his theological teachings.

“Beginning” as the Temporal Marker Validating the Writer’s Authority

Against this portrayal of a shared origin and communal past, the writer employs strategic references to bolster his authority to interpret the Jesus tradition. Whereas the Gospel begins with primordial time (“in the beginning”) and situates Jesus, the Incarnate Word, within that time, the writer of 1 John begins his message in “the beginning,” a rhetorical move that imitates the Gospel but changes the significance of the chosen temporal marker. Whereas, in the Gospel, Jesus is “the beginning,” in 1 John, Jesus’s *message* is “the beginning,” and the writer is the one who is certifying the validity and content of that message.³³⁷ The writer considers the gospel tradition, which readers have heard from the beginning, to be an absolute truth based in God’s commandment. This commandment, from the “beginning,” serves as a temporal bridge to the writer’s own present. Thus, when the community listens to God’s commandment to imitate God’s love, God’s having sent his son links the past with the present.³³⁸ From this perspective, one cannot abide with the Father unless one also abides with the Son. When the writer conveys his theological truth to “you” in that pronoun’s plural form, he makes a claim for the community rather than for the individual and thus demands that the audience (“we”) sustain the collective bond (1 John 5:2, “we love the children of God”).

Furthermore, when the believers establish the fellowship with the Son just as the Son did with the Father, they create a fellowship with the Father. Their relation with the Father

³³⁷ Jeffrey E. Brickle, *Aural Design and Coherence in the Prologue of First John* (New York: T & T Clark, 2012), 86-87.

³³⁸ “... he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins... since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another.”

provides them with “the eternal life” that God the Father offered (1 John 2:27).

In addition to the temporal alignment of the community’s origin with Jesus’s initiation of the tradition, the writer seeks to establish his authority as an interpreter of Jesus and his significance as well as of God’s former commandments. To do so, he articulates his sensory experience of the “Word of life” to validate his interpretation of the Jesus tradition (1 John 1:1-3; 2:7-8). The sensory language plays an imaginative role in visualizing the presence of Jesus in the world. Jesus is, the writer asserts, touchable, visible, and palpable. The writer uses images that correspond to the body parts associated with each sense (1 John 1:1), implying that he was a direct witness to the origin of the gospel tradition, that he too “heard, saw, looked” (1 John 1:1, 3).³³⁹ The writer’s linkage of the historical origin of Jesus’s appearance in flesh with the present solidifies the community’s shared origin by imaginatively situating the audience at a particular point in the story.³⁴⁰ Consequently, the writer claims that he is the one who witnessed Jesus and conveyed Jesus’s teachings to the writer’s audience from the beginning and up to the present. The writer’s bodily perceptions enable readers to inhabit the time of the faithful when they abide in his teaching by imitating the love of God. Accordingly, the sensory language does not only promote the credibility of the writer’s witness, but also collapses

³³⁹ Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 135; Schnackberg, 13-14; Merritt, *Devil and Deviants*, 114. Concerning eyewitness records, see Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 158-63. Concerning the role of sensory descriptions, see Alexandre Vincent, “Tuning into the past: Methodological perspectives in the Contextualised study of the sounds of Roman antiquity,” in *Senses of the Empire Multisensory Approaches to Roman Culture*, ed. Eleanor Betts (New York: Routledge, 2017), 148.

³⁴⁰ Karen L. King, “Mackinations on Myth and Origins,” in *Reimagining Christian Origins: A Colloquium Honoring Burton L. Mack*, ed. Elizabeth A. Castelli and Hal Taussig (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 158-159.

past and present by making the embodied Jesus present to the audience by means of the writer's own encounter.³⁴¹ The writer's employment of sensory words invites the group to engage in a new area of God's salvific work and establishes a direct fellowship with God through belief in Jesus.³⁴² Based on his direct witness and reports about Jesus, the writer claims that his teaching and knowledge of Jesus is legitimate and only accessible to his community. The writer reinforces this notion by projecting his assertion about the truth into his constructions of past experiences, which are imagined as a common past shared with his audience (1 John 1:2, "... this life was revealed, and we have seen it ... the eternal life that was ... was revealed to us").³⁴³

Throughout the letter, the writer also asks the audience to accept his teachings about humanity and the sacrificial role of Jesus, which he places in opposition to what he characterizes as the teachings of "false prophets." In so doing, he encourages the audience to wait for God's vindication.³⁴⁴ Accordingly, the writer claims that his readers adhere faithfully to God's commands in the same way that God and his love have consistently abided with them. To practice in the manner that 1 John suggests is not only

³⁴¹ Becker, *The Birth of Christian History*, 28-29.

³⁴² In the Johannine literature, "fellowship" points out that the fatherhood of God is based upon Jesus's Sonship, which describes a close intimacy between God and Jesus. This relation is shared with the believers through their fellowship with Jesus (John 1:10; 14:10-11; 15:7-10). Brickle, *Aural Design and Coherence in the Prologue of First John*, 66; Smith, *First, Second, and Third John*, 37.

³⁴³ The writer's historical understanding reconstructs an interactive past and present. See, Barry Schwartz, "Christian Origins: Historical Truth and Social Memory," in *Memory, Tradition, and Text: Uses of the Past in Early Christianity*, ed. Alan Kirk, and Tom Thatcher (Atlanta: SBL press, 2005), 50-51.

³⁴⁴ Lieu, *I, II & III John*, 109; Shively T. J. Smith, *Strangers to Family: Diaspora and 1 Peter's Invention of God's Household* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 40-41.

to accept a particular teaching, but also to be obedient to Jesus's authority, as gained through "the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 2:2). By repeating the theme that the message has been "heard from the beginning" (1 John 3:11), the writer asks the audience to adhere to what he describes as a living tradition whose followers "have been anointed by the Holy One," and who "have knowledge" (1 John 2:20).

The writer argues that only what he proclaims is legitimate and truthful. His temporal analogy — that the past is linked to the present and future in an unbroken chain upheld by Jesus and the message he conveyed — transcends chronological specificity, freeing him from the constraint of the temporal separation. This rhetorical strategy of collapsing past, present and future validates the writer's own authority, while also authorizing the temporal simultaneity he is claiming for Jesus and Jesus's message. By integrating the believers' non-consecutive time into the consistent time of God the Father and Jesus the Son, the temporal marker "beginning" temporally invites those who confess in Jesus Christ to join the present fulfillment and to anticipate the final fulfillment, as they "shall be like him" (1 John 3:1-2). The connection between God and the believers through Jesus creates a single temporal span that affirms the believers' collective identity and legitimizes the writer as a mediator conveying "the message you have heard from the beginning" (1 John 3:8).

The Imagined Family Tree and Time in 1 John

The writer also uses the image of kinship to link the past with the present and to create group identity and boundaries. The community's bloodline, as the writer presents it,

imbues a natural connectedness because descendants embody fragments of their ancestors.³⁴⁵ 1 John's images of kinship, family, and religious membership invent a strong sense of fellowship among the Jesus followers, rhetorically differentiating those who deny the truth from those who receive it and who are "born of God" (1 John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1, 4 and 18).³⁴⁶ Based on his rhetorical construction of family, the writer creates a boundary between his group and those he describes as his community's opponents and, in so doing, assures his audience of eternal life through their genealogical connection with God (1:2, 5:13).³⁴⁷

Imagining the Family in Ancient Roman and Jewish Literature

In antiquity, communities and their gods were often presented as family groups who shared a single genealogy that extended the natural and biological association of

³⁴⁵ Hall notes that genealogy integrates different groups into an imagined family while establishing a familial hierarchy between the founding fathers and their descendants. Jonathan M. Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 25-29; Eviatar Zerubabel, *Time Maps*, 56; Stan Harstine, "The Children of God and the Son of God in the Johannine Gospel and Epistles," in *Anatomies of the Gospels and Beyond: Essays in Honor of R. Alan Culpepper*, ed. Mikeal Carl Parsons, Paul N. Anderson, and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 374-375.

³⁴⁶ Lieu, *I, II, and III John*, 11-12; Elizabeth A. Clark, *The Origenist Controversy: The Cultural Construction of an Early Christian Debate* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 16; Todd Berzon, "Ethnicity and Early Christianity: New Approaches to Religious Kinship and Community," *Currents in Biblical Research* (2018) 2: 191-227.

³⁴⁷ Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kindship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul*, 67-78; Denise Kimber Buell, *Making Christians: Clement of Alexandria and the Rhetoric of Legitimacy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 79-94; Berzon, *Classifying Christians*, 120-124; Paula Fredriksen, "How Jewish Is God?: Divine Ethnicity in Paul's Theology," *JBL* 137 (2018): 193-212; David G. Horrell, *Becoming Christian: Essays on 1 Peter and the Making of Christian Identity* (New York: T & T Clark, 2013), 158-160.

kinship beyond the immediate family to the group.³⁴⁸ Regardless of actual, biological belonging, imaginatively constructed family trees that established linear, genealogical relations were a common feature of ancient Greek, Roman and Jewish cultures.³⁴⁹ The constructed genealogy was used as a tool to shape familial relations between people from different locations, ethnicities, and histories as they became “kin.”³⁵⁰ Such imagined kinship relations appear, for example, in 1 and 2 Maccabees and are repeated by Josephus in his writings as well as in other sources. In 1 and 2 Maccabees, the writers claim that, thanks to Heracles’s relationship with one of Abraham’s granddaughters, Judeans and Spartans were able to establish diplomatic συγγένεια (1 Macc 12:21; 2 Macc 5:9; cf. Josephus, *Antiquities* 1. 240–241). Similarly, Josephus preserves what he describes as an official letter of the king of the Lacedemonians to Onias in which the king acknowledges that, “both the Jews and the Lacedemonians are of the same family (γένους), and are derived from shared kin (οἰκειότητος) of Abraham” (Josephus, *Antiquities* 12. 226).³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ Erich S. Gruen, *The Construct of Identity in Hellenistic Judaism : Essays on Early Jewish Literature and History* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 110-111; Gary N. Knoppers, “Nehemiah and Sanballat: The Enemy Without or Within?” in *Judah and the Judeans in the Fourth Century B.C.E.*, ed. Oded Lipschitz, Gary N. Knoppers and Rainer Albertz (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 306; Kenton L. Sparks, *Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Israel: Prolegomena to the Study of Ethnic Sentiments and Their Expression in the Hebrew Bible* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998), 328-329.

³⁴⁹ Christopher P. Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 132-136; Rawson, Beryl, ed., *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell Pub., 2011); John S. Kloppenborg, “Associations in the Ancient World,” in *The Historical Jesus in Context*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine, Dale C. Allison Jr., and John Dominic Crossan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 323-324.

³⁵⁰ Eric S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 253-307; Kristopher Fletcher, “Systematic Genealogies in Apollodorus: Bibliotheca and the Exclusion of Rome from Greek Myth,” *Classical Antiquity* 27 (2008): 59-91.

³⁵¹ “Areus, king of the Lacedemonians, to Onias, sends greetings. We have met with a certain writing, whereby we have discovered that both the Jews and the Lacedemonians are of *the same family*, and are

Particular words like “people, race” (γένος), “brothers” (ἀδελφός), and “kinship” (συγγένεια) conceptualize an understanding of familial relations, shared customs, collective respect for the same gods, and common connection to an ancestral land.³⁵²

According to Josephus, “kinship” (Συγγένεια) also referred to civic citizenship, by which residents of a particular city were imagined as members of the same γένος (Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.125–126).³⁵³ The genealogical reasoning of 1 John therefore stands within a long tradition of Greek, Israelite and Greek-Jewish writing and thought.

As early as the fifth century B.C.E., Herodotus was constructing imagined family relations to define “Greekness” (τὸ Ἑλληνικόν). To do so, he emphasized the importance of a single language and shared blood (ῥμαίμων), paralleling the criteria of common ancestry found in the book of Genesis (Gen 3:11, “the whole earth had one language and the same words”).³⁵⁴ These connections were conceived so concretely that a common, divine forefather was presented as an appropriate basis for intercity diplomacy. If one wanted diplomatic relations, one figured out a way to be “kin.” These ancient, family

derived from the kindred of Abraham. It is but just, therefore, that you, who are our brethren, should send to us about any of your concerns as you please.” Emphasis added.

³⁵² Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World*, 6-16.

³⁵³ “...for when the people of Ionia were very angry at them, and besought Agrippa that they, and they only, might have those privileges of citizens, which Antiochus, the grandson of Seleucus, (who by the Greeks was called The God,) had bestowed on them...” (*Antiquities* 12.125–126); “But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20); “For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come” (Heb 13:14). John Dunnill, *Covenant and Sacrifice in the Letter to the Hebrews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 29-32; Smith, *Strangers to Family*, 20.

³⁵⁴ “...the kinship of all Greeks in blood and speech, and the shrines of gods and the sacrifices that we have in common, and the likeness of our way of life” (*Hist.* 8. 144) and Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture*, 34; Jones, *Kinship Diplomacy in the Ancient World*, 65. I am not suggesting that Herodotus was aware of Genesis, but rather noting that there is a common rhetorical strategy.

links, fictitious or not, were employed to normalize relations between cities while placing each community in a temporal frame of rhetorical construction. Thus, Herodotus sought to bring allies of the Greeks into a Greek genealogical family tree whereas the writers of Genesis pulled their neighbors into a genealogical relationship with the God of Israel.

These purported family connections existed not only between citizens of various cities, but also between heaven and earth. The books of the Torah constructed an imagined family relation between Israel, its leaders, and God by genealogically connecting the Israelites to God within an uninterrupted temporality. They are his people, Israel, and he, their god and father. This God shares many of the people's ethnic identifiers (their land, language, locality, and customs). For instance, Deuteronomy 7:7-8 foregrounds the language of love (*ἀγάπη*) that characterizes Israel's relationship: God "chooses" Israel because he "falls in love" with them.³⁵⁵ By separating his people from all the other peoples of the world,³⁵⁶ God specifically grants them his instruction (Lev 20:22–24), becomes the "father" of Israel, and calls Israel his "son" (e.g., Exod 4:22). The historical books take this argument a step further: with the nearly synchronous founding of two Jerusalem-based "houses" (that of the Davidic dynasty and that of God on the Temple Mount), the father-god also becomes the "father" of the anointed rulers of

³⁵⁵ "It was not because you were more numerous than any other people... It was because the LORD loved you" (Deut 7:7.). This is strikingly similar to the Johannine community's relation with God based on his granting his love to his people before they loved him. "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us" (1 John 4:16).

³⁵⁶ "You shall keep all my statutes and all my ordinances, and observe them, so that the land to which I bring you to settle in may not vomit you out. You shall not follow the practices of the nation that I am driving out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them. But I have said to you: You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey. I am the LORD your God; *I have separated you from the peoples*" (Leviticus 20:22-24). Emphasis added.

David's genealogical line.³⁵⁷ The imagined family tree creates stories of belonging that connect present with past and narrate the origin of the community and its close relationship with its deity.

Assertions about the genealogical connections between humans and God show how the ancients conceptualized (hierarchical) family relationships. By integrating human time with divine time to establish an archaic (and therefore superior) communal origin, believers imagined themselves to be in relation to particular ancestors with which they felt a connection. This imagined genealogy integrated people from different ethnicities and social statuses into one family tree. Shared genealogy was therefore a primary source of social solidarity, which was rooted in a shared past and the production of a collective present. The genealogical connectedness between humans and divinities strengthened the unity of a community composed of diverse individuals.³⁵⁸

Constructing a Sense of Belonging through Imagined Family Trees

A common forefather strengthened a community's collectivity; it also rationalized intra-communal competition. For example, in 1 John 3:1-10, the writer first explains what it means to become the children of God, and then contrasts this relationship with the devil as a duality of light and darkness.³⁵⁹ The writer defines the children of God as those who

³⁵⁷ "He [Lord] said to me, 'You are my son; today I have begotten you'" (Ps 2:7) and 2 Sam 7:14. Cf. Matt 1:1.

³⁵⁸ Fredriksen, "How Jewish Is God? Divine Ethnicity in Paul's Theology," 202-205.

³⁵⁹ "Whoever says, 'I am in the light,' while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness" (1 John 2:9); "The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way" (1 John 3:10). 1 John's metaphorical language referring to a child (child, little child, and boy and son) occurs 16 times in the three

are born of God, and calls for familial bonding by reminding the brothers in the community of the love of God which is the ground for Jesus's sacrifice. The writer reassures his audience that "we should be called children of God," presenting as evidence God's sending Jesus in flesh:

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. (1 John 3:1-3).

While articulating the divine love as a free gift to the believers, the writer warns that some would not acknowledge God's child. Non-believers' failure to acknowledge the writer's group results from their ignorance of God and his Son. Though the believers are the children of God, their future is uncertain. But this uncertainty is outweighed by the concrete present belief that "we are God's children now" (1 John 2:2), which inspires mutual love that mirrors the divine love and transforms the believers' status.³⁶⁰ The familial relation between God and the Jesus followers is exhibited as evidence that God's promise is active in the present time through the appearance of Jesus "to take away our sins" (1 John 3:5 and 5:11). Collective uncertainty about the future inspires believers with a hopeful expectation for something better. This hope is supported by their inclusion in

letters. 1 John already labeled the epistolary audience as children (1 John 2:1, 12, 14, 18, and 28) but did not describe what the children looked like until chapter 3. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 213-214.

³⁶⁰ Jan G. van der Watt, "On Ethics in 1 John," in *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 208; Smith, *Strangers to Family*, 77-78.

God's family through the earthly coming of Jesus.³⁶¹

The believers' belonging to the same family tree as the Father and Son is rooted in the temporally intimate association of past with present. The genealogical construction articulates power by incorporation and exclusion; those who are born of God are members of the divine family through Jesus rather than the world of evil influence. John's claim of genealogical roots is formulated through an understanding of the communal present that is based on his reconstruction of the past, and assurance to readers about the future.³⁶² By juxtaposing present with future, the writer assures the community that becoming the child of God is a work in progress that temporally incorporates the present communal experience of divine love with an imagined future of divine reward.³⁶³ In the passage, nowhere is this circuit more conspicuous than in the description of Jesus's death. Jesus's death, by which God sent him for the sinful, was the revelation of God's love, the meaning of which is consistently good.

By repeating the word, "message" (ἀγγελία), which first appears in the beginning of the letter, the writer subtly shifts from confirming Jesus as Christ to exhorting the

³⁶¹ Judith M. Lieu, *The Theology of the Johannine Epistles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1993, 28-29.

³⁶² "We are God's children now..." (1 John 3:2a) and "...when he is revealed, we will be like him" (1 John 3:2b). Lieu, "The Audience of the Johannine Epistles," 135; van der Watt, "On Ethics in 1 John," 216; Reinhartz, "'And the Word was Begotten': Divine Epigenesis in the Gospel of John," 91-92; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 101.

³⁶³ "See what love the Father has given us" (1 John 3:1). Matthew D. Jensen, *Affirming the Resurrection of the Incarnate Christ: A Reading of 1 John* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 142-143.

audience to love one another.³⁶⁴ The divine love manifested in the life and messages of Jesus, which is what the community heard from the beginning, is vital for the writer of 1 John because the message of Jesus is the basis of his authority.³⁶⁵ He shifts his audience from “us,” who initially heard the Word of life and shared it with him, to “you” (3:7, “let no one deceive you”). The writer reminds the audience that Jesus’s old commandment to practice brotherly, mutual love is vital proof of one’s being “born of God” (1 John 3:9). Those who know that God existed “from the beginning” are essentially different from those who are of Satan because only those who are of God hear and obey their father’s instructions.

The further back the writer looks for a common ancestor and the more people his imagined narrative encompasses, the more inclusive his genealogical identity becomes. By announcing, “We are the children of God,” the writer does not only open a wide genealogical umbrella that extends even to prospective believers, but also maintains the community’s cohesion by promoting a single, common value. There is a close collective fellowship with God at the center of the fictional encounter between the Son of God and the descendants of God. When the writer identifies a common ancestor to concretize the community’s identity, he presents the community’s continuity by encouraging the audience to practice a brotherly love that reflects divine love. Thus the “we” refers to a conglomerate of those who “have fellowship with God” (1 John 1:6-7) and “abide in him”

³⁶⁴ “This is the message we have heard from him” (1:5) and “this is the message you have heard from the beginning” (1 John 3:11); Lieu, *I, II, and III John*, 142; Brown, *The Epistle of John*, 126.

³⁶⁵ Brown, *The Epistle of John*, 441-443; Smith, *First, Second, and Third John*, 89; Parnsenios, *First, Second, and Third John*, 95.

(1 John 4:16). The addresser reminds the audience to obey the commandments by imitating the love God showed them through Jesus, because the wider the historical gap between the community and its forefathers is, the more distant the members of the community feel from the messenger. In so doing, 1 John erases individual differences among community members by collapsing time in the person of Jesus, and presents disobedience to the commandments as a threat to the community's cohesion.³⁶⁶

Kinship-Making Boundaries

The writer's creation of a divine origin for his followers shapes a fictive family tree that collapses the past and present while also serving to assure insiders of the validity of the writer's teaching and authority.³⁶⁷ First John's reference to the children of God evokes the caring, affectionate relationship between the writer and his audience while articulating the constancy of collective sameness through time and persuading them to remain faithful to God. The fictive construction of God's family does not only optimize the life-saving practice of becoming the child of God, but also excludes illegitimate divergences of origin. It is therefore reasonable, from the writer's perspective, that only members of the community would enjoy the hospitality described in 1 John 5:2.

The father – child relationship creates a hierarchical boundary that demands that the community obey God and his Son, Jesus, as founding fathers of the imagined family

³⁶⁶ Parnsenios, *First, Second, and Third John*, 94; van der Watt, "On Ethics in 1 John," 208; Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power*, 124-125.

³⁶⁷ Knust, *Abandoned to the Lust*, 143; Sharon Betsworth, *Children in Early Christian Narratives* (New York: T & T Clark, 2015), 129.

tree. From the writer's perspective, the family is a vertical relation rooted in subordination to and dependence on the head of the household.³⁶⁸ While the believers, who are the children of God, anticipate the future reward of eternal life, they are also asked to accept the father's instruction and guidance,³⁶⁹ and may be corrected by the messenger if they err. Lest they go astray, the children depend on the father's firm hand to instruct them so that they are not lured by another community's false teachings. The familial unity of the believers with God is also based on their rejection of the false teacher.³⁷⁰ The child's future is dependent on the instruction and gifts of the father who, with his power to forgive sins, gives the child his innocence.³⁷¹

Not all are included in this same lineage nor are all called "my little child" (1 John 2:1). Rather, 1 John separates the collective "family," who share both time and kinship, from others, who are described as genealogically and temporally distant; there is a wide temporal gap between the two different groups of "children." It is only through the writer's community that the promise of eternal life is sustained because this is the only group that accepts "the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you" (1 John

³⁶⁸ Parnsenios, *First, Second, and Third John*, 94-95; Carolyn Osiek, "What We Do and Don't Know about Early Christian Families," in *A Companion to Families in the Greek and Roman Worlds*, ed. Beryl Rawson (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2011), 210-211. Rensberger argues that the Johannine epistles do not describe this familiar hierarchy. That said, he does not consider the social, historical implication of ancient familial and household language when making this egalitarian claim. Rensberger, *1, 2, & 3 John*, 42-43.

³⁶⁹ Sugirtharajah, "The First, Second, and Third John," 417.

³⁷⁰ "...whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son ... Do not receive into the house or welcome anyone who ... does not bring this teaching." J. G. van der Watt, "Ethics in First John: A Literary and Socioscientific Perspective," *CBQ* 61 (1999), 494.

³⁷¹ "...little children.... your sins are forgiven on account of his name" (1 John 2:12)

1:5 and 2:25). The opponents whose disgraceful genealogy continues to characterize their corruption and impurity are not only denied the writer's claims to the teaching of Jesus but also, by extension, all such claims and obligations on their far more illegitimate ancestry.³⁷² These children who derive from an evil origin are genealogically isolated from the true and legitimate origin. Because their ancestry was erased, the children of the devil are not allowed to anchor the living present that secures the eternal life of the future and that is guaranteed to the writer's Jesus-believers. By creating genealogical discrepancies between Jesus's followers, the writer highlights a fundamental discontinuity between cultural and theological identities.

1 John 3:8-10 presents a concrete example of the distinctions between "the children of God" and "the children of the devil" (1 John 3:10) according to whether they belong to the group that accepts the writer's theological truth. Jesus is seen as the Son who achieved the promise by becoming "the atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 2:2). Alluding to "the deceivers," the writer considers the possibility that the community might be deceived by dissenters, of which he was already aware (1 John 2:18, 2:19, 2:26).³⁷³ There are two types of alliances "from the beginning" – alliance with Jesus and, therefore God, or alliance with the devil. From this perspective, consecutive time disappears – one is either always with God or always and eternally with the devil, in the past, present, and future. This discrepancy of genealogical time between the children of God and those of

³⁷² Lieu, *I, II, and III John*, 171; Knust, *Abandoned to the Lust*, 146. I fully agree with Knust's analysis about the primary role that opponents play in establishing group boundaries. Alexandra Robinson, *Jude on the Attack: A Comparative Analysis of the Epistle of Jude, Jewish Judgment Oracles, and Greco-Roman Invective* (New York: T & T Clark, 2017), 88-94.

³⁷³ Smith, *First, Second, and Third John*, 83-84; Lieu, *I, II, and III John*, 132-133.

the devil demands that the audience choose either to be righteous or sinful.

Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning *from the beginning*. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God. The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters. (1 John 3:7-10)³⁷⁴

The “beginning” in the passage does not refer to the origin of Christian tradition but to primordial, past time.³⁷⁵ The writer constructs some members’ real or imagined deviation as a result of the essential nature of the devil, their father, who had sinned “from the beginning.” Because the devil had always sinned, he becomes the genealogical forefather of evil. The writer presents a primordial temporality that produces the credibility of his theological truth, showing believers that these teachings are relevant and true. By depicting the believers as the children of God, the writer situates them in one temporal frame that links them with the Father, and situates all those with connection to the devil in another. This internal schism promotes the view that there is an essentially unavoidable dichotomy between those of God and those of the devil who, like the Antichrist, lied against God “from the beginning.”³⁷⁶ It is therefore not surprising that the opponents separate themselves from the community. Genealogy provides the believers with both a

³⁷⁴ Emphasis added.

³⁷⁵ “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God...” Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 405; Smith, *First, Second, and Third John*, 85.

³⁷⁶ “...the devil has been sinning from the beginning” (1 John 3:8) and “You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

communal orientation and boundaries that are drawn on the basis of family relations between the two groups and their primordial founders.³⁷⁷ The believers' lineage and temporal frame does not only explain the transitional situations that the writer seeks to construct, but also offers guidance as to how to relate to others within a social and symbolic universe that the writer has configured.

The writer's strategy of spatial and temporal distancing is strengthened by his hostility towards the opponents and their exclusion from the "us" group (1 John 4:4-5).³⁷⁸ While the world that the writer characterizes in 1 John is filled with challenges to God and his people, there will be a final judgement when Jesus comes in the final time. This temporality has to do with sequence rather than simultaneity; the world and any desire belonging to it "are passing away" (1 John 2:17) because they do not come from God. Jesus's appearance at the end of time will lead to the defeat of the diabolical system. The world is not a place for the children of God; those who reside in it will become God's enemy and the messengers of the devil.³⁷⁹ Their temporal distance from the origin of the community makes clear the dissenters' distinct family tree and their diabolic lineage. The opponents' genealogical origin promotes the fundamental schism between the two groups, each of which stems from a temporally distinct origin.

From the writer's perspective, inclusion in the lineage of God the Father and Jesus

³⁷⁷ van der Watt, "Ethics in First John: A Literary and Socioscientific Perspective," 499-500.

³⁷⁸ "They are from the world; therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and whoever is not from God does not listen to us." Emphasis added.

³⁷⁹ Jensen, *Affirming the Resurrection of the Incarnate Christ: A Reading of 1 John*, 106; Daniel R. Streett, *They Went Out from Us: The Identity of the Opponents in First John* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 143.

the Son means to become a bearer of the promise actualized through the love of God.³⁸⁰

The writer assures the audience that those who do not believe in false teachers but rather who abide in God will see the fulfillment of the future promise. Both divine benevolence granted to his child across time and familial love practiced by each child, in imitation of divine love, collapses the temporal gap and proves who truly belongs to the group.³⁸¹

This is the writer's strategy to welcome those who abide in God and to shun those who do not.³⁸² The person and sacrifice of Jesus serves as a reminder of the connection between the benevolent action of God who sent his son and the sacrifice of Jesus who fulfilled the will of God as well as between the believers and God in their common virtue.³⁸³

The Antichrist as Temporal Reminder of the First and Last Times

The writer(s) of 1 and 2 John bolsters accusations against the Antichrist by defining other believers as theologically and temporally distinct from the audience, seeking to persuade readers of the veracity of the teachings found in the two documents

³⁸⁰ Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 269-270

³⁸¹ "... everyone who loves the parent loves the child. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments" (1 John 5:1-2).

³⁸² "How does God's love abide in anyone who has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need and yet refuses help?" (1 John 3:17). Lieu, *I, II, and III John*, 151; Streett, *They Went Out from Us*, 237.

³⁸³ "... he [Jesus Christ] is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2); "... whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection" (1 John 2:5); "God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9). Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 551; Smith, *First, Second, and Third John*, 109-110.

by alerting them to a real or imagined danger.³⁸⁴ In 1 and 2 John, the Antichrist is described as the figure who denies the humanity of Jesus, negates the Word incarnate, and is excluded from the true believers' future of eternal life (1 John 2:18, 22, 4:3; 2 John 7).³⁸⁵ By inventing internal tension among the believers and de-legitimizing the perspectives of the Antichrist, 1 and 2 John promote the self-definition of the legitimate believers by demanding that their members obey the authority of the theological truth conveyed in each writing.³⁸⁶ The letters exclude the opponents by refusing to call them "children" (1 John 2:18, 28, and 2 John 1) and "beloved" (1 John 2:7 and 3:2) and by labeling them the Antichrist, collapsing time into a single moment. Thus, the Antichrist motif demonizes imagined or real others in part by creating temporal frames that link the past with the present and future, defaming the opponents' authorities, persuading insiders

³⁸⁴ 1 and 2 John are the only letters to use the term "Antichrist". In order to articulate their rhetorical use of the term, and to distinguish its use in 1 John from that in 2 John, I refer to the author of 1 John as the "writer", and that of 2 John as "the Elder" in spite of the general agreement that 1 John and 2 John were composed by the same author. Ernst R. Wendland, "'Dear Children' Versus the 'Antichrists': The Rhetoric of Reassurance in First John," *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 11 (1998): 40-84; It must be noted that the prefix ('anti') attached to Antichrist is generally understood to refer to replacement, though most Johannine scholars understand it primarily in the sense of opposition. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 332-336.

³⁸⁵ The New Testament contains figures similar to the antichrist, which represents the incarnation of evil in the gospel tradition: (Matt 6:13; Mark 13; John 8:44), Paul (2 Thess 2:1-12; 3:3), Revelation (11:7;13:1-10), and other letters (1 Peter 5:8; Jude 4, 13). This figure's role is to deny that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and persecute the faithful who worship Jesus as Messiah. See, Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Cosmic Trial Motif in John's Letters," in *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*, eds. R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 167; Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination With Evil* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1994), 9-32; G. W. Lorein, *The Antichrist Theme in the Intertestamental Period* (New York: T&T Clark, 2003); L. J. Lietaert Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist: A Traditio-Historical Study of the Earliest Christian Views on Eschatological Opponents* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Gregory C. Jenks, *The Origins and Early Development of the Antichrist Myth* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991).

³⁸⁶ Wendland, "'Dear Children' Versus the 'Antichrists': The Rhetoric of Reassurance in First John," 54.

to adopt the interpretations of 1 and 2 John and strengthening the legitimacy that the arguments the letters present.³⁸⁷

The Antichrist as the Negative Herald of the Time to Come

The notion of the Antichrist as an invented opponent within eschatological time is modeled on various figures from earlier Jewish traditions who opposed God and his messengers (1 Enoch 80:2-7; Jubilees 23:14-21; Dan 7:19-21).³⁸⁸ 1 and 2 John resonate with these ancient literary sources by describing an adversarial threat that is already known proleptically. In this way, the letters use the Antichrist to collapse the past, present, and future. The Antichrist is portrayed as a temporal marker that alerts the audience to the appearance of evil figure(s) already described in previous literary sources. In Deuteronomy (13:1-5 and 18:20), false prophets are identified as deceivers who challenge God's messengers and lead people astray to worship other deities. During the Hellenistic and Roman periods, other ancient Jewish writers describe adversarial figure(s) as evil, atrocious, and prevailing over the world as a mediator of the Devil (e.g. 1QM 13:11-14; CD 8:2-4).³⁸⁹ In some cases, the writers depict these figures as political authorities

³⁸⁷ Concerning the rhetorical role of invective speech, see Knust, *Abandoned to Lust*, 144; Henriette van der Blom, "Character Attack and Invective Speech in Roman Republic: Cicero as Target," in *Character Assassination Throughout the Ages*, ed. Martijn Icks and Eric Shiraev (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 37-57; Kimberly B. Stratton, *Naming the Witch: Magic, Ideology, and Stereotype in the Ancient World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 107-141.

³⁸⁸ Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 98-99; Parsenius, *First, Second, and Third John*, 83-86; Strecker, *The Johannine Letters*, 236-241; Tom Thatcher, "Water And Blood" in AntiChrist Christianity (1 John 5:6)," *Stone-Campbell Journal* 4 (2001): 235-248.

³⁸⁹ "... the Prince of Light Thou hast appointed from ancient times to come to our support ... But Belial, the Angel of Malevolence, ... his [rule] is in Darkness and his purpose is to bring about wickedness and iniquity" (1QM 13:11-14); "...They shall be visited for destruction by the hand of Belial. That shall be the

that dominate the earth during the final times and oppress those who are faithful to God (e.g. Dan 11:36).³⁹⁰ These figures were represented as seemingly invincible; yet they also argued that God and his agent(s) would ultimately triumph in an eventual judgment that would see the antagonist(s) meet a fiery end. In these scenarios, sequential and linear time exists within a flattened, eschatological, predestined temporal chronology, but only insofar as current time leads to God's final vindication.

While "Antichrist" would have been a new term in 1 and 2 John, it is likely that the audience was already familiar with other, similar figures, most likely due to their appearance in past Jewish literatures as well as in the gospel traditions (Mark 13:5-6; Matt 24:24).³⁹¹ The first and second letters of John identify the Antichrist as an eschatological adversary heralding the approach of the end time (1 John 2:18, "it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come," and 2 John 1:7). Matthew and Mark also warned of false messiahs and false prophets at the end of days (Matt 24:24, Mark 13:6).³⁹² In this configuration of

day when God will visit. The princes of Judah have become; wrath shall be poured upon them..." (CD 8:2-4). Geza Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin Books, 2004), 179 and 135.

³⁹⁰ "The king shall act as he pleases. He shall exalt himself and consider himself greater than any god, and shall speak horrendous things against the God of gods. He shall prosper until the period of wrath is completed, for what is determined shall be done" (Dan 11:36).

³⁹¹ "Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray" (Mark 13:5-6); "For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and produce great signs and omens, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Matt 24:24); Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 333 and 336; "the Johannine School may have coined the term 'Antichrist'... He probably meant 'heard' not only from Jewish tradition but also from Jesus tradition." Strecker argues that the Antichrist is "either a creation of the presbyter, or else it comes from the existing tradition." Strecker, *The Johannine Letters*, 241.

³⁹² In 1 John, the opponents are variously characterized as "liars" and "deniers" (1 John 2:22), "the children of devil" (1 John 3:10), "murderers" (1 John 3:15). Described as "those who deceive others" (1 John 3:7)

eschatological time, past threats become present realities and the future that was once mentioned in warning is described as the audience's present. Rhetorically, 1 and 2 John use the charge of Antichrist against those who, each alleges, have already left the community (1 John 2:19) and spread illegitimate teachings (2 John 9). In so doing, the letters create boundaries between those who are of Christ and those who are not. 1 and 2 John seek to demonize those who hold illegitimate positions in relation to the past to collapse all three dimensions of time into a single whole.

In particular, the writer of 1 John situates the present in an eschatological context to display the struggle between God and Satan, who sinned "from the beginning" (1 John 3:8), and reminds his audience that the Antichrist will bring about a battle in the present time. 1 John uses the temporal adverb, "now" (1 John 2:18, "as you have heard... *now* many antichrists have come") to link his opponents' current acts with past events that are already known to the believers.³⁹³ 1 John recalls how the believers were taught about the coming of the Antichrist from and through Jesus and summarizes the content of the tradition as a revelatory project for a future time in which the community must reside (1 John 2:27-28).³⁹⁴ While describing the present reality of the community, the writer of 1 John transforms the idea of the Antichrist from an imagined figure from past traditions to

and "those who are from the world" (1 John 4:5), they are contrasted with those who "are from God" and remain in the Spirit of truth (1 John 4:6). Lieu, *I, II & III John*, 99-100 and 255-256; Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist*, 43-45; Ruben Zimmermann, "Remembering the Future: Eschatology in the Letters of John," in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 520.

³⁹³ Emphasis added.

³⁹⁴ "...just as it has taught you...now, little children, abide in him, so that when he is revealed we may have confidence." Jensen, *Affirming the Resurrection of the Incarnate Christ*, 165.

a present reality that brings about conflict in the community.³⁹⁵ By alluding to an eschatological leader of evil shared by a broader Jewish apocalyptic tradition (e.g., Dan 8:9-12; 1 Enoch 80:2-7; 1QM 14:8-10; 1QS 4:18-20; CD 8:2), the writer connects the idea of the Antichrist who challenges Jesus and his community with the idea of the eschatological adversary who challenges the authority of God.³⁹⁶ Accordingly, the purported emergence of the Antichrist is an occasion for the reiteration of a communal experience that endows time with a particular character; that is, a mode of temporality that is not calculated chronologically but rather in a linear manner from the emergence of the Antichrist, to the final stage of the divine judgment to the Antichrist's attack.³⁹⁷

By proclaiming that evil was present since archaic time, 1 John expects his audience to recall that a resolution to the problem was already revealed in the past (1 John 3:8 and 12).³⁹⁸ When the adversary, who appeared in past warnings, emerges on the scene, the future turns into the present. From this perspective, God sent his Son to conquer evil and to destroy the works of Satan that produced unbelief and false teachings. The Son whom God sent to the world already engaged in battle and will fulfill his

³⁹⁵ Craig R. Koester, "The Antichrist Theme in the Johannine Epistles and Its Role in Christian Tradition," in *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper and Paul N. Anderson (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 194-195.

³⁹⁶ "Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning" Strecker, *The Johannine Letters*, 237; Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte, "Antichrist," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 333-334.

³⁹⁷ Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 336; Zimmermann, "Remembering the future: Eschatology in the letters of John," 528.

³⁹⁸ "Cain who was from the evil one" (1 John 3:12) and "The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

military mission to destroy all evil (1 John 3:8).³⁹⁹ Jesus and his sacrifice open the eschatological future in which the believers will be rewarded so long as they remain united and unshaken by the Antichrist. The triumph over the Antichrist is achieved by carrying out God's commandment to remain faithful to Jesus. By labeling the opponents as Antichrist, the writer actualizes an old tradition by portraying eschatological opponents as deceivers who are empowered by evil (1 John 4:1).⁴⁰⁰

In this respect, the writer conveys news of a cosmic conflict, as had earlier Jewish writers, working to convince believers that they will be victorious so long as they maintain fellowship with God and his Son (1 John 5:4-5).⁴⁰¹ In spite of the coming and sacrificial death of Jesus, the believers remain in danger from evil and its agencies (1 John 5:19). The believers can expect to encounter spiritual warfare because the world has been under the domain of devil from the beginning. Reframing the origin of the Antichrist in the archaic past, the writer recalls, reassesses, and dramatizes past time in an attempt to show the negative effects of deviant teachings and to warn those in the present about a doomed future.

³⁹⁹ Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 197-198, 406-407; Koester, "The Antichrist Theme in the Johannine Epistles and Its Role in Christian Tradition," 193; Karen H. Jobes, *1, 2, and 3 John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 66-67.

⁴⁰⁰ Jason L. Merritt, *Devils and Deviants: Religious Schism in 1 and 2 John* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2017), 131; Lieu, *The Theology of The Johannine Epistles*, 88-89.

⁴⁰¹ Strecker, *The Johannine Letters*, 276; Koester, "The Antichrist Theme in the Johannine Epistles and Its Role in Christian Tradition," 192-193.

The Antichrist as Rhetorical Tactic to Control the Present

Given that situating the Antichrist in eschatological time resonated with ancient Jewish sources, 1 and 2 John also redefined and reformulated ideas from inherited traditions about Jesus to describe the presence of opponents who refused to accept Jesus as a bodily sacrifice and thus to warn their audience to avoid possible dangers.⁴⁰² From this perspective, the Antichrist both encapsulates what believers should avoid and denies the universal effectiveness of the bodily sacrifice of Christ across time.⁴⁰³ Refusing to confess that Christ came in the flesh (1 John 4:2 and 2 John 7), the Antichrist denies Jesus's temporality and spatiality, thus standing in opposition to legitimate tradition.

The believers, 1 John argues, abide in God through Jesus's "atoning sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 2:2), which furthers the need to clarify the bodily work of Jesus; Jesus's humanity in flesh has existed across time because he will come again as he was.⁴⁰⁴ When the writer of 1 John responds to the opponents' claims and warns his audience of the deceivers who are of the spirit of falsehood and oppose God, he does not only eliminate real and possible rivals, but also works to enforce a boundary that he created by claiming

⁴⁰² Concerning the relationship between 1 John and 2 John, I read some themes in 2 John as derivative of those in 1 John. Lieu, *I, II, and III John*, 240.

⁴⁰³ Lieu, "Authority to Become Children of God," 222-224; Zimmermann, "Remembering the Future: Eschatology in the Letters of John," 528; Duane F. Watson, "1 John 2.12-14 as Distribution, Conduplication and Expolition: A Rhetorical Understanding," *JSNT* 35 (1989): 97-110.

⁴⁰⁴ "What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is." (1 John 3:2). The 'atoning sacrifice' (ἱλασμός) clarifies how John interprets the role of Jesus's death for our sins. John's reference to "sacrifice for our sins" (1 John 2:2) articulates the effective rather than triumphal nature of Jesus's suffering and death. The Antichrist and his adherents are the deniers who refuse to believe the sacrificial effect of Jesus's death in flesh. Maarten J. J. Menken, "The Secessionist of the Johannine Epistle and Docetism," in *Docetism in the Early Church: The Quest for an Elusive Phenomenon*, ed. Joseph Verheyden, Reimund Bieringer, Jens Schröter and Ines Jäger (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 129-130.

the necessity of Christ's fleshly sacrifice. In particular, when he asserts that the adversaries are already in the world, he suggests that the Antichrist is a present threat:⁴⁰⁵

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus[a] is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and *now* it is *already* in the world. (1 John 4:1-3, emphasis added)

In this passage, the writer calls his legitimate group⁴⁰⁶ “beloved,” reassures it of the coming of Jesus the Messiah in flesh, and claims that his theological truth comes from the spirit of God. According to the writer's perspective, the believers are challenged by a hostile, alienated world that is home to the Antichrist, who is a representative of evil. The believers thus inevitably engage in conflicts with the world because of the pervasive activity of adversaries.⁴⁰⁷ Moreover, the writer shows that believers who seek to abide in the community's old tradition are susceptible to the Antichrist's deception. The legitimate message of tradition that was heard from the beginning upholds Jesus's words and contrasts with the false teachings.⁴⁰⁸ His encouragement and disciplining words articulate the validity of Jesus's tradition. In order to not be led astray by the Antichrist into isolation from Jesus, the believers must be vigilant and stick with the eschatological temporal frame engendered by the expectation of battle with the Antichrist. By

⁴⁰⁵ Maarten J. J. Menken, *Studies in John's Gospel and Epistles* (Leuven: Peeters, 2015), 236.

⁴⁰⁶ Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 264.

⁴⁰⁷ Strecker, *The Johannine Letters*, 133.

⁴⁰⁸ The New Testament displays the value of the past over the present (Luke 5:37-39, “And no one after drinking old wine desires new wine, but says, ‘The old is good’”). In the Jewish tradition, teachings are more authoritative when they are based on older traditions. See, Lieu, *I, II & III John*, 77-74.

employing the temporal marker, “now,” the writer creates a present, urgent danger among the believers and imagines a current, ongoing temporal frame in which he seeks to alert his audience to avoid possible conflict.⁴⁰⁹ There is always the danger, while preparing for the future that is already present, to capitulate to darkness – even for the sons of light. The writer’s consistent desire to hold both the past tradition and his own truth seems to express his fear of losing influence over the community to the Antichrist because the opponent has rejected the writer’s interpretation of Jesus’s bodily death.

According to the writer’s depiction, the Antichrist does not physically persecute the faithful nor does he demand that they worship him. Rather, he is described as a figure that challenges and negates the communal confession that Jesus came in the flesh and from God. Since Jesus performed his ministry by publicly drawing people’s attention, according to the writer’s assertion, his followers witness his messages audibly, visibly and palpably. By denying the physicality of Jesus, the Antichrist denies Jesus’s physical presence in time and space, thus conflicting with the teaching of the writer who asserts the physical presence of Jesus. 1 John demonizes events and figures in order to label some people and groups as illegitimate and disgraceful, a strategy 2 John also adopts.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁹ “...now many antichrists have come” (1 John 2:18) and “the spirit of the antichrist ... now is already in the world” (4:3). Byrskog, *Social Memory and Social Identity in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, 44-45.

⁴¹⁰ Merritt, *Devils and Deviants: Religious Schism in 1 and 2 John*, 115-116; Raimo Hakola, “The Believing Jews as the Children of the Devil in John 8.44: Similarity as A Threat to Social Identity,” in *Evil and the Devil*, ed. Ida Frohlich and Erkki Koskennie (New York: T&T Clark, 2013), 116-126; Stratton, *Naming the Witch*, 125-128; David Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate: Rumors of Demonic Conspiracy and Ritual Abuse in History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), 129-167.

In what is another reception of earlier Johannine themes and vocabulary, 2 John assigns the label “Antichrist” to some believers who deny the physical presence of Jesus in time and space. Unlike the anonymous identity of the writer of 1 John, 2 John identifies its writer as the Elder and addresses Jesus followers using the unique collective referent, “the elect lady” (2 John 1).⁴¹¹ After reminding the believers that the Father commanded them to love each other “from the beginning” (2 John 4-5), the test resonates with the same commandment in 1 John (1 John 3:11) when the Elder asks that they remain in a relationship of mutual love to strengthen collective bonding and root out false believers who are deceivers and the Antichrist. In the middle of the letter, in order to caution his audience against losing their reward, the Elder explains the Antichrist’s false belief, which the true believers must avoid to not lose their reward.⁴¹²

Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist! Be on your guard, so that you do not lose what we have worked for, but may receive a full reward. (2 John 7-8)

After expounding on the commandment given by Jesus (2 John 6, “this is love, that we walk according to his commandments”), the Elder’s warning does not only reveal the identity of the deceivers, but prepares the reader to encounter and respond to the deceivers who refuse the truth of Jesus.⁴¹³ By referring to collectives by using singular

⁴¹¹ Judith M. Lieu, *The Second and Third Epistles of John: History and Background* (New York: T&T Clark, 1986), 52-100; Judith M. Lieu, “The Audience of the Johannine Epistles,” 127; Kelly Anderson and Daniel Keating, *James, First, Second, and Third John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 245; Sloyan, *Walking in the Truth*, 62; Smith, *First, Second, and Third John*, 139.

⁴¹² Culpepper, *The Gospel and Letters of John*, 275.

⁴¹³ Smith, *First, Second, and Third John*, 143; Painter, *1, 2, and 3 John*, 351-552.

forms (2 John 7, “deceiver,” “Antichrist”) the writer likely implies that while “many deceivers” have appeared in the world, what he is explaining is the work of “the deceiver,” namely “the Antichrist.” In the eyes of the Elder, faith in Jesus includes accepting the communal belief as “what they have heard from beginning:” namely that Jesus the Messiah physically was present in time and space. Labeling anyone who refuses the values of Jesus’s humanity and his earthly ministry as the Antichrist, the writer reinforces his definition of what true believers must believe. Denying the physical presence of Jesus is impossible for true Jesus followers who walk in truth, which is equated with abiding in the teaching of Jesus.⁴¹⁴ Thus, the Elder encourages his audience to avoid losing communal, legitimate faith in Jesus and failing to receive their reward by condemning the deceivers for not abiding in the Father. The opponents, by abandoning the physicality of Christ in time and space, show that they do not walk in truth and do not have a God who sent his son (2 John 9). According to 2 John, danger is avoidable so long as the believers do not welcome the deceivers and the Antichrist into their houses and thus deny them the opportunity to propagate their false teaching.⁴¹⁵

1 and 2 John seek to alert their audiences to the stance that the Antichrist and its adherents are wrong. By reworking the past time from which the Antichrist emerged, these letters invoke the past to stabilize a sense of communal belief and unanimity. In this construction of sequential time, these two letters articulate a flattened, eschatological, and predestined time ahead of God’s final judgment while also conjuring a coming battle

⁴¹⁴ Strecker, *The Johannine Letters*, 222; Knust, *Abandoned to Lust*, 118.

⁴¹⁵ Sloyan, *Walking in the Truth*, 65.

between Jesus and the evil power. The believers' tradition, which they "heard from the beginning," is represented as an effective, eternal weapon capable of eliminating rivals and strengthening the writers' authority.⁴¹⁶ This castigating label is meant to alert the community to possible conflicts and to demonize those who do not share the same views. The Antichrist and his followers are said to reside outside of the community and its legitimate time and so therefore also to be excluded from the promised future. As long as the believers practice communal charity and hospitality, 1 and 2 John insist, the Antichrist and his followers remain outside the community and its temporal frame because they do not share the community's communal truth or familiar bond. By anticipating the Antichrist's challenge to communal belief in Jesus, 1 and 2 John also endeavor to persuade the audience to disregard anyone who rejects their own claims concerning the person of Jesus, in particular in regard to his humanity (flesh). By placing the entire reality of Jesus's earthly presence in time and space, these letters assert that Jesus's sonship is physically revealed by birth.⁴¹⁷ Jesus's physicality in time and space

⁴¹⁶ Michael Labahn, "The Dangerous Loser: the Narrative and Rhetorical Function of the Devil as Character in The Book of Revelation," in *Evil and the Devil*, ed. Ida Frohlich and Erkki Koskennie (New York: T&T Clark, 2013), 163-167; Knust, *Abandoned to Lust*, 132; Frankfurter, *Evil Incarnate*, 31-32. While the idea of the Messiah as a deliverer sent by God comes from the Jewish tradition, the Johannine gospel and letters expand the Messiah's close relationship with God, his father (John 10:24-25). Concerning the development of the idea of the Messiah in Jewish and Christian traditions, see Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 48-74, 123-148; Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008), 89-107; Thompson, *John*, 54-55 and 236.

⁴¹⁷ "This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ..." Concerning the significance of the physicality of Jesus, Thatcher, "'Water And Blood'" in *AntiChrist Christianity* (1 John 5:6)," 235-248.

contravenes the Antichrist's alternative teaching that denies that God sent his son in flesh.⁴¹⁸

1 and 2 John both call Jesus the Christ as well as the Son who resided in earthly time and space, the one who God works through by working in the flesh.⁴¹⁹ The Antichrist, on the other hand, is said to spread words of untruth from house to house and to gain access to the community given his previous status as a member thereof. The Antichrist challenges the writer's understanding of Jesus's physical presence. Consequently, the writer employs the figure of the Antichrist to strengthen a collective bond by means of a shared hatred; the community is exhorted to abhor the activity of the Antichrist. These letters demand that readers adhere to their own unique origin by recognizing that other views are illegitimate from the beginning and for all time.⁴²⁰ Thus, the Antichrist, as an agency of the devil, is characterized as recreating the initial rebellion of the devil against God by negating all truth from God. The Antichrist's opposition to the teaching of 1 and 2 John leads to his dissociation from the community they seek to control.

Conclusion

The Johannine letters assert a mode of communal time that legitimates communal belief in the flesh of Jesus, strengthens the authority of the writer(s), and defines the

⁴¹⁸ Lieu, *I, II, and III John*, 76.

⁴¹⁹ Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 16-19.

⁴²⁰ McGinn, *Antichrist*, 16.

identity of the true believers by collapsing time, creating an imagined family tree, and distinguishing their temporal frame from that of the Antichrist. In particular, the writer of 1 John uses a temporal distinction as a theological barrier to prevent his community from encountering possible threats. In the rhetoric of 1 John, the community is genealogically refashioned as a divine family that has existed since archaic time. Defining the group by rhetorically employing constructed, temporal frames, the writer of 1 John presents his perceptions of the world and the community. The writer's constructions of the past are described as true, authentic and authoritative. For the writer of 1 John, one source of the past's stability is the value of truth and its resistance to any kind of revision. The writer endeavors to legitimate his constructed tradition as an effective device to define "true belief," in part by sharply distinguishing his views from that of opponents. His characterization of the Other as distant, hostile, and separate employs genealogy to situate readers at the center of the social and symbolic worlds in which they live. The Antichrist of 1 and 2 John supplements this argument by repurposing the traditional idea of the counter-figure that challenges God and creates conflict, reminding readers of a past expectation of divine intervention and a present of faithful restoration.⁴²¹ 1 and 2 John therefore encourage believers to resist the teaching of the Antichrist and to side with the reward, that is, future salvation.⁴²² The hope for an eschatological salvation, they insist, is

⁴²¹ Peerbolte, *The Antecedents of Antichrist*, 108, 258, and 298; Brown, *The Epistles of John*, 469; Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, 184; John Byron, "Slaughter, Fratricide and Sacrilege Cain and Abel Traditions," *Biblica* 88 (2007): 535; Heil, *1-3 John*, 119-120.

⁴²² "...this is what he has promised us, eternal life," and 2 John 8 "... [you] may receive a full reward" (1 John 2:25)

anchored in a belief in the physical presence of Jesus in time and space that enables believers to overcome a transitional present.

CHAPTER FIVE: USING THE QUARTODECIMAN EASTER TO CONSTRUCT PRACTICAL TIME

Some early Jesus followers commemorated the resurrection of Jesus by celebrating Easter on the 14th day of Nissan, which was the first day of the Jewish Passover,⁴²³ these Jesus followers were later called “Quartodecimans,” deriving from the word “fourteenth day,” by those who disagreed with their practice;⁴²⁴ other Jesus followers celebrated Easter on Sunday, which eventually became customary practice.⁴²⁵ This chapter focuses on how a particular understanding of Easter practiced by some Christ believers shaped the movement that became “Christianity” and considers how “Christians” made their

⁴²³ Thomas J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (New York: Liturgical Press, 1991), 1-78; Paul F. Bradshaw, “The Origins of Easter,” in *Passover and Easter: The Symbolic Structuring of Sacred Seasons*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 81-97; Thomas J. Talley, “History and Eschatology in the Primitive Pascha,” in *Between Memory and Hope: Readings on the Liturgical Year*, ed. Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2016), 99-110; Urban C. von Wahlde, “The References to the Time and Place of the Crucifixion in the Peri Pascha of Melito of Sardis,” *JTS* 60 (2009): 556–69; Gregory Hagg, “Passover Controversies in Church History,” in *Messiah in the Passover*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (New York: Kregel Publications, 2017), 131-140.

⁴²⁴ The term is derived from the Latin term for the Christian practice of fixing the celebration of Passover on the fourteenth (Latin: *quarta decima*) day of Nisan according to the Old Testament's Hebrew Calendar (for example, Lev 23:5, “In the first month, on the fourteenth day (quartadecima) of the month, at twilight, there shall be a passover offering to the LORD”). According to the Gospel of John (for example, John 19:14), this was the day that Jesus was crucified in Jerusalem. Alistair Stewart, “Quartodecimans,” in *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Ancient Mediterranean Religions*, ed. Eric Orlin, Lisbeth S. Fried, Jennifer Knust, Michael Satlow, and Michael E. Pregill (New York: Routledge, 2016), 792; Olivier Melnick, “Passover and Antisemitism,” in *Messiah in the Passover*, ed. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (New York: Kregel Publications, 2017), 146.

⁴²⁵ Concerning the practice of the early Christian Easter and its temporal development, see Andrew B. McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship: Early Church Practices in Social, Historical, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 217-260; Maxwell E. Johnson, “Imagining Early Christian Liturgy: The Traditio Apostolica- A Case Study,” in *Liturgy's Imagined Past/s: Methodologies and Materials in the Writing of Liturgical History Today*, ed. Teresa Berger and Bryan D. Spinks (Minnesota, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016), 93-120; Daniel Stokl Ben Ezra, “Seasoning the Bible and Bibliifying Time through Fixed Liturgical Reading Systems (Lectionaries),” in *The Construction of Time in Antiquity*, ed. Jonathan Ben-Dov and Lutz Doering (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 227-247.

version of temporality persuasive.⁴²⁶ The term “Quartodeciman” only came to be applied as a heretical label by orthodox Christians in the fourth century. This term had no heresiological connotations during second-century for Christ believers who observed Easter on the 14th of Nissan (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*. 5. 23). Still, I employ this term with caution in a conventional and heuristic way to signal the diversity of early practices while also representing the fluid boundary between Jesus followers who celebrated the resurrection in this manner and Jews who did not believe in Jesus.⁴²⁷ As I demonstrate, Christ believers’ temporal practice, as expressed by basing the commemoration of the death and resurrection of Jesus on the Jewish calendar, played a formative role in their self-definition by illuminating the continuity of God’s salvific work from the Passover to Jesus’s passion. By typologically interweaving present practice with a Jewish past and using these practices to reveal the harmony between God’s mighty acts of salvation in the Exodus and during Jesus’s time, those who celebrated Easter on the Jewish Passover sought to produce a fluid, mobile, and porous

⁴²⁶ The terms “Christian” and “Christianity” were not in use during the early years of the Jesus movement. I use these terms to describe the self-definition of later Jesus followers during the second and third centuries. Namely, I refer to “Christians” as those people who believed in and worshiped Jesus as the Messiah and to refer to “a mode of thinking” that represented group self-expression. I also interchangeably use these terms with “Christ believers,” “Christ followers,” “Jesus worshipers,” and a number of other similar constructions. I avoid the term when discussing the writings of Jesus followers who did not use it. Averil Cameron, “Jews and Heretics- A Category Error?” in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Adam H. Becker, Annette Yoshiko Reed (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 360; Judith M. Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 13-17.

⁴²⁷ I do not refer to “Quartodecimans” to suggest a stereotypical dichotomy between orthodoxy and heresy, as later heresiologists understood it, because Christianity’s locality and fluidity during the second and third centuries renders the concept of heresy erroneous. Concerning the mobility of group boundaries, see Cameron, “Jews and Heretics- A Category Error?” 345-360; Judith M. Lieu, *Christian identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 305-307.

communal boundary while sustaining their own self-expression and reinforcing the legitimacy of their temporality, which enabled them to see God.

I begin by exploring how Jesus followers understood and fashioned the temporal configurations of the death and resurrection of Jesus in relation to the Jewish Passover in various ways. Gospel writers related different chronologies and ways of commemorating Jesus's passion. My examination of these literary sources shows the centrality of temporality in configuring the passion and resurrection of Jesus in informing various Easter practices. I then investigate the particular aspects of the Quartodeciman Easter practice by examining various texts – the *Chronicon Paschale*, *Refutation of All Heresies*, *Epistula Apostolorum*, and Eusebius's recollection of the Quartodeciman practice in *Ecclesiastical History*. Close readings of these writings demonstrate that this Easter practice sought to portray Jesus's passion as a continuous act of God's salvific work that began with the Paschal lamb, and also to reinforce the physical suffering and resurrection of Jesus in time and space.

I then explore Melito's *Peri Pascha*, in which he writes that Easter should commemorate Jesus's suffering and death on the Passover, and defines Christ believers as "the beloved" and heirs to the old and new covenants.⁴²⁸ Reading *Peri Pascha* within

⁴²⁸ Concerning Melito's anti-Judaism, see Alistair Stewart Sykes, "Melito's Anti-Judaism," *J ECS* 5 (1997): 271–283; A. Thomas Kraabel, "Melito the Bishop and the Synagogue at Sardis: Text and Context," in *Studies Presented to George M.A. Hanfmann*, ed. David Gordon Mitten, John Griffiths Pedley, Jane Ayer Scott (Cambridge: Fogg Art Museum, 1971), 77–84; Stephen Wilson, "Melito and Israel," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity: Separation and Polemic*, ed. Stephen Wilson (Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University, 1986), 81–102; Miriam S. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Scholarly Consensus* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 52–74; H. M. Knapp, "Melito of Sardis' use of scripture in 'Peri Pascha' - Second-Century Typology," *Vigiliae Christianae* 54 (2000): 343–74; Judith Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (New York: T&T Clark, 1996), 199–240.

the social context of second century Sardis suggests that Melito intended to create a generative temporality by using the story of the Exodus to conjure Israel's past; from this perspective, the Exodus is meaningful because of its typological association with the suffering and death of Jesus. By identifying Melito's stance, I highlight the ways that temporality typological associated the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb with that of Jesus. Both were described as God's unwavering work of salvation in time that enabled Melito to rhetorically encourage collective bonding, differentiate particular groups as "beloved," and persuade people to join his temporal frame in order to see **God. Melito's arguments can therefore be read as "anti-Jewish" in the sense that they exclude Jews who do not believe in Jesus from the true benefits of the Exodus.** Melito's focus was on the assertion that Easter observance must be understood both in light of the Exodus and in concert with current Jewish practice.⁴²⁹ Easter practices call attention to the importance of temporality in the context of ritual performance: the various practices at Sardis exemplify the instability, mobility, and fluidity of self-definition rooted in diverse understandings of the meaning of the suffering and resurrection of Jesus.⁴³⁰ I argue that Melito's temporal construction of the Quartodeciman Easter joins two temporally distinct events (the

⁴²⁹ Gerlach points out that "... Christian writers are often shadow-boxing a chimera image with no substantial counterpart in contemporary Jewish thought and practice that may have otherwise been familiar to them. Early Christian anti-Judaism [including Melito] is first and foremost theologically... determined." Karl Gerlach, *The Antenicene Pascha: A Rhetorical History* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 50. Concerning Melito's anti-Judaism, see Kraabel, "Melito the Bishop and the Synagogue at Sardis: Text and Context," 72-85; Alistair Stewart Sykes, "Melito's Anti-Judaism," *J ECS* 5 (1997): 271-283; Miriam S. Taylor, *Anti-Judaism and Early Christian Identity: A Critique of the Scholarly Consensus* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 67-74.

⁴³⁰ Annette Yoshiko Reed, "'Jewish Christianity' after the 'Parting of the Ways,'" in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Adam H. Becker, Annette Yoshiko Reed (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 189-231.

sacrifice of the Paschal lamb and the passion of Jesus) to rhetorically re-define the identity of the Israel as “those who see God” by means of their affiliation with Christ.⁴³¹

Melito also challenges those who, from his perspective, **misunderstood, misused, and misinterpreted the timing of the Pascha. In so doing Melito seeks to invite his beloved audience to participate in a temporality that enables them to see God (*Peri Pascha*, 82).**

Jewish Passover and the Varied Memories of Jesus’s Passion

Various literary sources and records of Easter practices witness the Jesus followers’ varied understandings of the chronology of Jesus’s passion. It is likely that Jesus followers were actively participating in Jewish Passover observance during the first two centuries and that they closely associated the death of Jesus with that of the Passover lamb, a perspective that, as we have already seen, appears in the Gospel of John. The Gospel traditions describe Jesus and his disciples as actively engaging in various Jewish festivals and practices (Mark 6:2; Luke 13:10; John 4:45). According to Acts, the apostles and Jesus followers observed Jewish festivals and presupposed that such practices were both respected and in part necessary (Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:42; 13:14; 17:2; 18:3; Gal 4:9-11; Col 2:16).⁴³² In the second century, Justin Martyr critiqued Christian

⁴³¹ Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha: With the Fragments of Melito and Other Material Related to the Quartodecimans*, trans Alistair C. Stewart, 2nd ed. (New York: St Vladimir Seminary Press, 2017), 82; Melito, *On Pascha and Fragments*, trans. Stuart George Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979); Lynn H. Cohick, *The Peri Pascha Attributed to Melito of Sardis: Setting, Purpose, and Sources* (Providence, RI: Brown Judaic Studies, 2000). Throughout this chapter, I will follow Stewart’s translation unless otherwise mentioned.

⁴³² Paul F. Bradshaw, “The Origins of Easter,” in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times*, ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 81-97; Thomas J. Talley, “Liturgical Time in the Ancient Church: The State of Research,” in

participation in Jewish festivals, and distanced himself from Jews and their customs. That said, we do not know how widely his views were shared (Justin *Dialogue*, 18. 2). Among the Jewish festivals, Passover was particularly important and, according to the Gospels and Acts, respectfully observed by Jesus and his followers well into the second century (Mark 4:14; Luke 22:8; John 2:13; Acts 20:5).

The literary evidence suggests that some early Christ followers continued to link the observance of Jesus's death with the observance of Passover, and portrayed Jesus's death as sacrificial by means of a typological link between Jesus and the lambs sacrificed during Passover (John 1:29, 19:36-37; 1 Peter 1:19; Justin *Dialogue* 40. 1, 111.3; Melito *Peri Pascha*, 1-10; Origen *Peri Pascha* 2).⁴³³ According to the book of Exodus chapter 12, God commanded the head of each Israelite household to slaughter a lamb (Exod 12.3) and spread the sacrifice's blood on the doorposts of his house (Exod 12.7) on the night before the Israelites' escape from Egypt.⁴³⁴ Each family was ordered to roast the lamb and eat the meat during the night in haste with "unleavened bread and bitter herbs," and

Between Memory and Hope: Reading on the Liturgical Year, ed. Maxwell E. Johnson (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000), 25-48.

⁴³³ Concerning the association of the Paschal lamb with Jesus, see Raniero Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church: An Anthology of Jewish and Early Christian Texts* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1993), 38-40; "The mystery of the lamb, then, which God ordered you to sacrifice as the Passover was truly a type of Christ" (Justin, *Dialogue* 40.1). For translation, Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Thomas B. Falls and rev. Thomas P. Halton (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 61; "the mystery of the Pascha, who is Christ" (Melito, *On Pascha* 65), Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha*, 69: "... the passover takes its name from the suffering of the Savior" (Origen, *Peri Pascha* 1). Origen, *Treatise on Passover*, trans. Robert J. Daly (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 27.

⁴³⁴ Concerning the biblical passages that mention the Passover narrative, see Exod 12-13; 23:15; 34:18; Lev 23:4-8; Num 9:1-15; 28:16-25; 33:3; Deut 16:1-8; Joshua 5:10-12; 2 Kings 23:21-23; 2Chronicle 8:12-14; 30:1-27; 35:1-19; Ezekiel 45:21-25; Ezra 6:19-22. For an overview of the biblical narratives of Passover, see James C. VanderKam, "Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread" in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4. Ed. Katharine D. Sakenfeld (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 338-392.

to dress to travel (Exod 12. 8-11). The festival designed to recall these events started on the fourteenth of Nissan and ended on “the evening of the twenty-first day” (Exod 12:18; Lev 23:5; Num 9:3-4; Ezra 6:19), reminding later generations of their ancestor’s past experience of God’s deliverance from Egypt; the yearly commemoration of the Exodus was also associated in some quarters with an expectation regarding the arrival of a Messiah (Jer 31:8 LXX; Josephus *Antiquities* 4. 203).

In the Gospels, the Passover was described as not only a feast in which Jesus and his followers participated (Matt 21:1; Luke 2:41-43; John 12:12),⁴³⁵ but also as a festival that inspired hope of divine restoration of his kingdom and deliverance from the current earthly power, mirroring Israel’s deliverance out of Egypt by divine hands (Luke 22:16, cf. Josephus *Antiquities* 2. 14, 314-315; 18. 29).⁴³⁶ Unlike the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which describe Jesus’s arrival in Jerusalem to keep the Passover only once, the Gospel of John portrays Jesus joining the Passover three times over the course of his life (John 2:13; 6:4; 13:1), which, by associating Jesus with the Passover, accentuates a symbolic association between Jesus and the Passover lamb (John 1:29). Yet Paul had also associated Easter, the first annual feast celebrating the suffering and resurrection of Christ, with the Jewish Passover: “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

⁴³⁵ Craig S. Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 299-300.

⁴³⁶ Gerry Wheaton, *The Role of Jewish Feasts in John's Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 86-87. Wheaton argues that “Passover was indeed the occasion for much anti-Roman sentiment,” and notes that the Gospel traditions provide readers with a case of Jewish insurrection during Passover, when Jesus was crucified in Mark 15:7 (“Now a man called Barabbas was in prison with the rebels who had committed murder during the insurrection”). Concerning the association of Jewish liberation from Rome with the Exodus, see William Horbury, *Jewish War under Trajan and Hadrian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 142. R. Alan Streett, *Subversive Meals: An Analysis of the Lord's Supper under Roman Domination during the First Century* (Eugene, OR: Picwick, 2013), 76-79.

Therefore let us keep the Festival” (1 Cor 5:7-8; cf. John 1:29; 1 Peter 1:19).⁴³⁷ Each of these texts symbolically identified the Passover as the day of God’s delivery, featured Jesus as the deliverer, and claimed a typological connection between the sacrifice of the Passover lamb and Jesus the Messiah. Though the manner of Passover observance changed over time,⁴³⁸ persistent interpretative engagement with passages in Exodus and the depiction of the Passover sacrifice as connected to Jesus’s death continued to serve as a starting point for ritual engagement with the culture, themes, and, ultimately, date of the Jewish Passover.

Apart from a common, symbolic identification of Jesus with the Passover lamb among multiple Christ believers, there was no consensus about how and when this death should be commemorated. This temporal ambiguity is already evident in different chronologies of Jesus’s suffering and crucifixion in the Gospels. The chronological contradiction, however, was not signaled as a problem until the second century, perhaps when the fourfold Gospels began to circulate as a collection and greater harmony was

⁴³⁷ “Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29); “...with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish” (1Peter 1:19). Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 2-5; McGowan, *Ancient Christian Worship*, 229-230.

⁴³⁸ Jews disagreed about how and where the Passover ritual should be performed, though they did agree on when it should be observed, even though the way to measure the date was still ambiguous. The Passover sacrifice was performed during the first century C.E. not only in Jerusalem, as Josephus witnessed, but also as a domestic ritual in the Diaspora (*Antiquities* 14: 259-260, “The decree of the Sardians...they may offer, as did their forefathers, their prayers and sacrifices to God”; also see Josephus *Antiquities* 2. 312-313; Philo *Spec.* 2:145; *Qe.* 1:10). The Mishnah describes Passover practice outside the Temple; “The Passover-Offering is roasted neither on a [metal] spit nor on a grill. R. Zadok said: Rabban Gamaliel once said to his slave Tabi, ‘Go and roast the Passover-offering for us on the grill’... If some of its juice dripped on to the flour, he must take a handful away from that place [and burn it]” (*m. pesahim* 7:2). Danby Herbert, *The Mishnah* (London: Oxford University Press, 1938), 145.

sought among them.⁴³⁹ The Gospels describe the chronological order of Jesus's crucifixion differently, which in turn likely reflects the diversity in rites among the Jesus believers. While John writes that Jesus was crucified on the fourteenth of Nissan on the preparation day of the Jewish Passover according to the Jewish calendar (John 19:14, "Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon"), Matthew, Mark, and Luke mention that Jesus ate a last meal with the disciples on the day before Passover and then was executed on the Passover, which is the fifteenth of Nissan (Matt 27:62, Mark 14, and Luke 22:16-18).⁴⁴⁰ It is therefore not surprising that the Jesus followers were divided in their reconstruction of Jesus's suffering and resurrection: By the time the four Gospels were ostensibly harmonized, one group of Christ believers celebrated the resurrection of Jesus on Sunday, in accordance with the Gospels (Mark 16:1; Matt 28:1; Luke 24:1; cf. John 20:1), but, following the Johannine chronology of Jesus's passion, another group began the feast by commemorating Jesus's suffering, death, and resurrection on the day of his crucifixion, that is, on the day of Preparation (John 19:14, 31, and 42). This practice emphasized the typological connection between the sacrifice of Jesus and that of the Passover lamb (John 1:29, 36

⁴³⁹ Concerning the harmonization of the gospel traditions, see William Lawrence Petersen, *Tatian's Diatessaron: Its Creation, Dissemination, Significance, and History in Scholarship* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 9-36.

⁴⁴⁰ It remains a controversy as to whether Jesus's last meal was the Passover meal. For an argument in favor of the Passover meal, see Joel Marcus, "Passover and Last Supper Revisited," *New Testament Studies* 59 (2012): 303-342; contra. Jonathan Klawans, "Was Jesus's Last Supper as Passover Meal?" *Biblical Review* 17 (2001): 24-33; Lawrence A. Hoffman, "The Passover Meal in Jewish Tradition," in *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to Modern Times*, eds. Paul Bradshaw and Lawrence A. Hoffman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), 9-26. I am fond of Klawans's argument against the last supper being the Jewish Seder; to see the last supper of the Synoptic gospels as the Jewish Seder assumes the later tradition of the Haggadah that developed following the destruction of the Temple. The last supper in the gospels does not include the full Haggadah.

and 19:31-37. cf. 1 Cor 5:7, 1 Peter 1:19, and Rev 5:12). Those who began Easter on the fourteenth day of Nissan stopped their fast in commemoration of Jesus's bodily suffering at midnight, after which they celebrated his resurrection. In so doing, they believed they fully understood Passover's meaning (Melito *Peri Pascha*, 56-58, "the Paschal mystery completed in the body of the Lord").⁴⁴¹ These Jesus followers synchronized with the Passover festival to remind themselves of what Jesus had done for them through his suffering (John 1:29, 2:13, 5:1, cf. Acts 2:46, 1 Cor 5:7).⁴⁴² All Jesus followers recognized the importance of commemorating Jesus's resurrection, though the choice of the actual day of celebration depended on how particular groups interpreted the event.

At the intersection between Jesus traditions and other Jewish practices, some Christ believers promoted the uniqueness of their version of ritual temporality from that of other believers.⁴⁴³ Since there was no single institution capable of unifying the dates of Easter practice for all Jesus followers, ritual variation was inevitable.⁴⁴⁴ It is in this interpretative space that the Quartodecimans promoted their version of Easter. This form

⁴⁴¹ Herald Buchinger, "Breaking the Fast: The Central Moment of the Paschal Celebration in Historical Context and Diachronic Perspective," in *Sanctifying Texts, Transforming Rituals: Encounters in Liturgical Studies: Essays in Honour of Gerard A. M. Rouwhorst*, ed. Paul van Geest, Marcel Poorthuis, and Els Rose (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 192-193.

⁴⁴² "And you remember celebrate the remembrance of my death, which is the Passover" (*Epistula Apostolorum* 15).

⁴⁴³ Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb's High Feast: Melito, Peri Pascha, and the Quartodeciman Paschal Liturgy at Sardis* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 36-41; Concerning the symbolic connection between the Gospel of John and the Jewish Passover, Susan Hylen, *Allusion and Meaning in John 6* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), 157-197.

⁴⁴⁴ This circumstance continues to this day, Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox communions observe Easter differently, and on different days. Rosemary D. Hale, "Christianity," in *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*, ed. Michael David Coogan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 82.

of celebration made Jesus's suffering and death more present, while emphasizing the continuity between their practices and those observed by earlier Jews. This lasted for centuries until various practices and beliefs were gradually consolidated as the appearance of Christ believers' unity became more important than preserving ritual variants in continuity with past practice.⁴⁴⁵

Christ Believers' Ritual and Its Proper Time

Christ believers, who included adherents of diverse cultural backgrounds as well as, most prominently, Jews, sought to invent a distinctive self-definition capable of producing and defending their beliefs. Jesus believers' interactions with multiple interlocutors contributed to a rhetoric of temporality that led some early Christ followers to recommend celebrating Easter on the date of the Jewish Passover. During the second century, some early "Christians" (some Christ believers now claimed this label) presented their belief as philosophy and attempted to persuade other people to respect their beliefs, show piety to God of Israel, and recognize the benefit of the Christ believers to society

⁴⁴⁵ Robert L. Wilken, *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 38-39. These diverse practices coexisted until the fourth century when the ecclesiastical unity of Christian theologies and practices became a more important priority. The consolidation of time during the later fourth century to create a single, simultaneous festival across the Christian world was an attempt to unify Christian identity. Robert M. Royalty, *The Origin of Heresy: A History of Discourse in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 147-171; Karen L. King, "Social and Theological Effects of Heresiological Discourse," in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*, ed. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger Zellentin (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 28-49; Berzon, *Classifying Christians*, 218-246; Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: the Partition of Judaeo-Christianity, Borderlines* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 37-44. The Nicæan Council's decision regarding the date of Easter came to play a substantial role in shaping the political unification of Christian communities, the eradication of calendric discrepancies, and the orthodox normalization of Christian calendars. See, John Moolan, "Early Christianisation of Jewish Days," *Christian Orient* XXXV(1/2): 60-65.

(e.g. Justin, *Dialogue* 2. 1; *First Apology* 3.3; Athenagoras of Athens *A Plea for Christians*, 2.5 and 13.1; Tatian *Oratio ad Graecos*, 31.1).⁴⁴⁶ In this vein, some Jesus believers who emphasized the Pascha in their memorial calendars attempted to mark their piety as distinctive by rooting their ritual performances on what they understood to be “proper time,” as identified in the ancestral traditions of Jewish culture. Observance of Easter on the fourteenth day of Nissan was part of this effort. For example, in Melito’s petition to the emperor Marcus Aurelius (160-180 C.E.) the bishop at Sardis defended his Christ belief by contending that this belief was beneficial to the Empire. While characterizing violence and theft targeting Christ followers in Asia Minor as unprecedented, he sought the Emperor’s good will and urged him to take a close look at the imperial decrees at stake before determining if the group should be punished. He stated:

Our philosophy first grew up among the barbarians, but its full flower came among your nation in the great reign of your ancestor Augustus, and became an omen of good to your empire, for from that time the power of the Romans became great and splendid. You are now his happy successor, and shall be so along with your son, if you protect the philosophy which grew up with the empire and began with Augustus. Your ancestors nourished it together with the other cults, and the greatest proof that our doctrine flourished for good along with the empire in its noble beginning is the fact that it met no evil in the reign of Augustus, but on the

⁴⁴⁶ “Philosophy is indeed one’s greatest possession, and is most precious in the sight of God” (*Dialogue*, 2.1). Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 5; “Indeed, one of those of ancient times once said, unless the rulers as well as the ruled are philosophers their cities cannot truly prosper” (*First Apology* 3.3). For the Greek text and translation of the *First Apology*, see Denis Minns and Paul Parvis, *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 85. Robert M. Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1988), 11, 53, and 110. “Now I think it is appropriate that I should prove that our philosophy is older than Greek practices” (Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 31.1). Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos and Fragments*, trans. Molly Whittaker (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1982), 55-57; “Such is what we observe in the case of defendants who pursue philosophy” (*A Plea for Christians* 2.5) and “the majority of those accusing us of atheism... are ignorant of scientific or theological doctrine” (Athenagoras, *A Plea for Christians* 13.1). Athenagoras, *Legatio and De Resurrectione*, trans. William R. Schoedel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 7 and 27.

contrary everything splendid and glorious according to the wishes of all men....
(Melito, as cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*. 4.26.7–8)⁴⁴⁷

By characterizing Christianity as a “philosophy,” Melito was clearly seeking public acceptance for his religious belief and practice. He defended those who followed Christ as pious (like other cults), and explained that their philosophy derived from a “barbaric” origin - a political reference to those who might be punished by “Roman powers.”⁴⁴⁸

While acknowledging the origin of Christ belief as outside of the broader Roman community, Melito attempted to secure a positive relationship between those who follow Christ and local imperial officials. Given that this belief was already respected by the previous ruler, Marcus Aurelius, Melito asserts that as such belief was a philosophy rather than a superstitious and harmful invention, and that it was based on an honored past. In order to mitigate antagonism between the two communities, Melito explained that Rome should benefit and protect those who follow Christ by virtue of their residing among Romans.

Romans took the existence of gods for granted and the welfare of the community was thought to be ensured through ritual performances at specific times to secure divine good will.⁴⁴⁹ According to Cicero, while people understood the relationship between man

⁴⁴⁷ Eusebius. *Ecclesiastical History, Volume I: Books 1-5*, trans. Kirsopp Lake (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 389-391; Andrew Michael Manis, “Melito of Sardis: Hermeneutics and Context,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 32 (1987): 388-389; Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, 50-55.

⁴⁴⁸ Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 184; Reidar Aasgaard, “Among Gentiles, Jews, and Christians Formation of Christian Identity in Melito of Sardis,” in *Religious Rivalries and the Struggle for Success in Sardis and Smyrna*, ed. Richard S. Ascough (Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 162.

⁴⁴⁹ James B. Rives, *Religion in the Roman Empire* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 43-53; Castelli, *Martyrdom and Memory*, 50-51.

and the gods to be one of patronage, they were also interested in finding ways to deal with the difficulties of everyday life (Cicero, *On the Nature of Gods*, 1.2).⁴⁵⁰ Cicero claimed that one has to sustain a particular opinion about the gods in order to engage in meaningful ritual practice because “Piety ... like the rest of the virtues, cannot exist in mere outward show and pretense; and, with piety, reverence and religion must likewise disappear” (*On the Nature of the Gods* 1.2).⁴⁵¹ Cicero argued that belief and ritual practices were central in securing well-being. Since the Romans did not distinguish between religion and politics, both of which nurtured the well-being of public and private life, religious matters such as ritual performance were often regarded as political acts and were supervised by officials because, as Stavrianopoulou puts it, “the orderly course of religious life could guarantee an orderly course of individual life for the community.”⁴⁵² Incorrect ritual therefore signified an incorrect belief that could threaten society.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵⁰ “But if on the contrary the gods have neither the power nor the will to aid us, if they pay no heed to us at all and take no notice of our actions, if they can exert no possible influence upon the life of men, what ground have we for rendering any sort of worship, honour or prayer to the immortal gods?” Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods. Academics*, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1933), 5-7; Richard P. Saller, *Personal Patronage Under the Early Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 23; Michael Lipka, *Roman Gods: A Conceptual Approach* (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 75-76; David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship & Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academics, 2012), 130-131.

⁴⁵¹ Cicero, *On the Nature of the Gods. Academics*, 7.

⁴⁵² Eftychia Stavrianopoulou, “Ensuring Ritual Competence in Ancient Greece: A Negotiable Matter: Religious Specialist,” in *When Rituals Go Wrong: Mistakes, Failure, and the Dynamics of Ritual*, ed. Ute Hüsken (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 185; Philippa Townsend, “Bonds of Flesh and Blood,” in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice*, ed. Jennifer Wright Knust and Zsuzsana Varhelyi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 214.

⁴⁵³ Jacob A. Latham, *Performance, Memory, and Processions in Ancient Rome: The Pompa Circensis from the Late Republic to Late Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 39-40.

According to Plutarch, a Greek writer who addressed Roman as well as Greek audiences (46-119 C. E.), it was most important to know the gods because only a correct understanding of the deity would enable the correct performance of the ritual.⁴⁵⁴ In other words, only a person who correctly understands the deity can perform the right ritual. He explains:

The fact is that nothing of man's usual possessions is more divine than reasoning, especially reasoning about the gods; and nothing has a greater influence toward happiness. ... There is engendered a dangerous belief, which plunges the weak and innocent into sheer superstition, and in the case of the more cynical and bold, goes off into atheistic and brutish reasoning. (Plutarch, *On Isis and Osiris*, 378c-379)⁴⁵⁵

To “act ridiculously in their processions and festivals” was therefore to show ungodliness and weaken ritual efficacy (*On Isis and Osiris*, 378d).⁴⁵⁶ Choosing the wrong time and place for a ritual and thus not performing it correctly was equivalent to becoming superstitious or, even worse, atheistic (Plutarch *On Isis and Osiris*, 379d, *On Superstition*, 167d-168f).⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ Rainer Hirsch-Luipold, “Religion and Myth,” in *A Companion to Plutarch*, ed. Mark Beck (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 165.

⁴⁵⁵ Plutarch, *Moralia, Volume V: Isis and Osiris*, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt, LCL 306 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1936), 159, 167.

⁴⁵⁶ The Qumran community criticized the rest of Jewish society for performing sacrifices incorrectly and suggested that the sacrifices be reformed according to a new calendar (1QS 1.13-15; 4QMMT A20-21). Ritual success and accuracy is substantially related to time, which was a major concern of the priests. See, Steven Fraade, *Legal Fictions: Studies of Law and Narrative in the Discursive Worlds of Ancient Jewish Sectarians and Sages* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 255-285.

⁴⁵⁷ Plutarch, *Moralia, Volume V: Isis and Osiris*, 163, 165; “...not believing in the existence of gods is not to fear them” (Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.13; Plutarch, *Superstition*, 2); “They bring three, charges against us: atheism, Thyestean banquets, and Oedipean unions” (Athenagoras *A Plea for Christians* 3.1). The exclusive worship of a single God would have been considered atheism for its neglect of all other gods. Christ believers were therefore sometimes called “the destroyer of gods” (*Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 12.6) and were considered for punishment (Justin, *First Apology* 25.1; cf. Tertullian, *Apol.* 10.1). Throughout his apologetic work,

A link between rituals and temporality is also found in some Jewish writings. Philo of Alexandria, for example, writes that the correct understanding of God is necessary for the proper performance of rituals.⁴⁵⁸ Philo mentions the importance of correct ritual practice and timing, and points out that most ancient Jews performed rituals incorrectly due to their ignorance (Philo, *Spec. Leg.* 4. 137-139). The concern with ritual practice and timing appears also in the Mishnah, which, though dated to the very beginning of the third century, likely preserved some first-century attitudes.⁴⁵⁹ According to the Mishnah, a ritual is invalid when not performed at the proper time and place (M. *Zeb.* 2.2-3); for example, if a priest “drained the blood outside proper time,” the sacrifice would be invalid (M. *Zeb.* 6.7).⁴⁶⁰ As McClymond points out, even after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem weakened the spatial centrality of Jewish ritual practice, the

Athenagoras argued that his belief in Christ was not atheism, but rather monotheism. Anders-Christian Jacobsen, “Athenagoras,” in *In Defence of Christianity: Early Christian Apologists*, ed. Jakob Engberg, Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jörg Ulrich (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2006), 81-100; Jan N. Bremmer, “Atheism in Antiquity,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Atheism*, ed. Michael Martin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 11–26; Plutarch, *Moralia, Volume II: How to Profit by One's Enemies. On Having Many Friends. Chance. Virtue and Vice. Letter of Condolence to Apollonius. Advice About Keeping Well. Advice to Bride and Groom. The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men. Superstition.* trans. Frank Cole Babbitt (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), 457. It must be noted that while Roman persecution was always a potential threat to Christ believers during the first three centuries C.E., not all Christians experienced it. Paul Keresztes, “Marcus Aurelius a Persecutor?,” *HTR* 61 (1968): 321–41; Paul R. Trebilco, “Engaging – or Not Engaging – the City Reading 1 and 2 Timothy and the Johannine Letters in the City of Ephesus,” in *The Urban World and the First Christians*, ed. Steve Walton, Paul R. Trebilco, and David W. J. Gill (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2017), 160-186.

⁴⁵⁸ “...if the man who made the offerings was foolish and ignorant, the sacrifices were no sacrifices” (Philo, *On Moses*, 2. 107)

⁴⁵⁹ “From what time in the evening may the Shema be recited?” (*Ber.* 1.1); Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1933), 2.

⁴⁶⁰ Danby, *The Mishnah*, 476.

Mishnah continued to sustain the significance of temporality so that the “ritual penalties outlined...[therein]...protect sacred time more seriously than sacred space.”⁴⁶¹

Likewise, some early Christ followers held the significance of proper time and place in ritual performance, whether or not their practices were considered “superstitious.”⁴⁶² They too sought to observe their rites correctly and to attract God’s good will.⁴⁶³ By commemorating the passion of Jesus on the Jewish Passover, they might also have been trying to avoid transgressing ancestral traditions, which would have isolated themselves from fellow Jews who did not believe Jesus as well as from the broader Roman society.⁴⁶⁴ Since ancestral traditions were considered an important component in the proper service of the gods, the Romans understood any cult or religious practice that was alien or violated these traditions as an indication of lack of piety and a

⁴⁶¹ Kathryn McClymond, “Don’t Cry Over Spilled Blood,” in *Ancient Mediterranean Sacrifice*, ed. Jennifer Wright Knust and Zsuzsanna Varhelyi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 240-241.

⁴⁶² Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, 50; Mary Beard, John North, Simon Price, *Religions of Rome: Volume I, A History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 228; Bernard Green, *Christianity in Ancient Rome: The First Three Centuries* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 1-59; James Christopher Walters, *Ethnic Issues in Paul’s Letter to the Romans: Changing Self-definitions in Earliest Roman Christianity* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1993), 43.

⁴⁶³ S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3.

⁴⁶⁴ A number of Christian writers mention the importance of proper worship, in conformity with antiquity. As Paul put it, he remained “...exceedingly zealous for my ancestral traditions...” (Gal 1.13). Justin Martyr states, “It was rather to demand that you give judgement in accordance with careful and exacting reason, instead of being held fast by preconception or the desire to please superstitious men...” (*First Apology* 2. 3); “while we worship only God we serve you joyfully in other respects, acknowledging you as kings and rulers within the human sphere and we pray that you are found to have prudent discernment along with the kingly power” *First Apology* 17. 3); Denis Minns and Paul Parvis, ed. and trans. *Justin, Philosopher and Martyr: Apologies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 81-83 and 121. Tatian expressed a similar sentiment: “The emperor orders me to pay. taxes; I am ready to pay. The nobleman commands me to serve and do service; I acknowledge my obligation” (4.1), Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos and Fragments*, trans. Molly Whittaker (Oxford: Oxford University Press 1982), 9.

potential threat to the community.⁴⁶⁵ Celsus, a critic of the Christ believers addressed by Origen, for instance, encouraged his readers to perform “their proper rituals according to custom and pray to them [gods] so that they may be kind” (Origen, *Against Celsus*, 8.24),” and attacked Christ belief for being rooted in superstitious myth (4. 51) and Christ believers for forsaking the religions of their own people by appropriating that of the Jews (5.33 and 65).⁴⁶⁶ The charge that the Christ believers forsook their ancestral gods, either by adding to Jewish practice or by abandoning the gods of their own cities, was a serious accusation.

It is therefore no wonder that the Christ believers, who followed and worshipped a Jewish man who had been crucified as punishment for treason, were seen by outsiders as superstitious and nonsensical (Suetonius, *Nero* 16).⁴⁶⁷ One response was to portray their practices as similar to other “legitimate” religious groups. Just as other ancient Jews in the Diaspora negotiated, challenged, and interacted with Roman and local cultures,⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁵ Dale B. Martin, *Inventing Superstition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 130-131; Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, 131. Potter astutely points out that “...no Roman would worship a god, either new or alien, unless that god had been officially recognized, and a Roman would worship the gods whose cults had been established by their ancestors.” See, David Stone Potter, “Roman Religion: Ideas and Actions,” in *Life, Death, and Entertainment in the Roman Empire*, ed. David Stone Potter and D. J. Mattingly (Grand Rapids, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 119-118.

⁴⁶⁶ The third century Roman philosopher, Porphyry, also criticized Christ believers for forsaking their ancestral traditions. See, Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, 131; Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, 133-139.

⁴⁶⁷ “... the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition.” Suetonius. *Lives of the Caesars, Volume II: Claudius. Nero. Galba, Otho, and Vitellius. Vespasian. Titus, Domitian. Lives of Illustrious Men: Grammarians and Rhetoricians. Poets*, trans. J. C. Rolfe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), 107.

⁴⁶⁸ John M. G. Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE 117 CE)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 103-124; Seth Schwartz, “Jewish Communities in the Roman Diaspora: Why Salo Baron Still Matters?” in *Jewish and Christian Communal Identities in the Roman World*, ed. Yair Furstenberg (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 225-242; Eyal Baruch, “Adapted Roman Rituals

Christ followers attempted to make their way in a shared religious and cultural milieu, in part by defending their beliefs as harmless, by minimizing their cultural alienation from mainstream religious observances, and by portraying their practices as piety that nurtured the well-being of a society.⁴⁶⁹

Melito entered this conversation by arguing that his belief was based on ancient tradition. He also defended his beliefs as philosophically sound by describing the meaning of Easter as a Christian feast appealing to “all families of people” for the purpose of “receiving forgiveness of sin.”⁴⁷⁰ He contended that those who follow Christ were not isolated from other publicly esteemed Roman rites and cults. He claimed that, “our doctrine flourished for good along with the empire.”⁴⁷¹ He presented his Christ belief as a philosophy that prospered under the Roman Empire’s protection during the reigns of two of Marcus Aurelius’s predecessors – Hadrian (117-138 C.E.) and Antoninus

in Second Century CE Jewish Houses,” in *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: The Interbellum 70-132 CE*, ed. Joshua Schwartz and Peter J. Tomson (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 71-74.

⁴⁶⁹ Justin, for example, operated within this framework by showing his respect for the tradition and upholding Christianity as harmless and valuable to all humankind. As he stated, “...we cultivate piety, justice, brotherly charity, faith, and hope” (Justin, *Dialogue* 110). And “...truly pious men.... follow the beliefs of their forefathers” (Justin, *First Apology* 2); “the seed of reason [the Logos] implanted in every race of men” (Justin, *Second Apology* 8). Justin, *Writings of Saints Justin Martyr*, trans. Thomas B. Falls (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948), 34. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, rev. ed. (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 165; James B. Rives, “The Decree of Decius and the Religion of Empire,” *JRS* 89 (1999): 135-54; Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Christian Responses to Roman Art and Architecture: The Second-Century Church Amid the Spaces of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 151-152; Stanley K. Stowers, “Kinds of Myth, Meals, and Power: Paul and the Corinthians,” in *Redescribing Paul and the Corinthians*, ed. Ron Cameron and Merrill P. Miller (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011), 135-136. According to Augustine, the notion of religious practice as nurturing piety to God is consistent with the Manichean practice. “In that way they zealously exercise piety...” (Augustine, *The Manichean Debate* 1. 72); Augustine, *The Manichean Debate*, trans. Roland Teske (New York: New City Press, 2006), 65.

⁴⁷⁰ Melito, *Peri Pascha*, 103.

⁴⁷¹ As cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 26. 8; Athenagoras, *Oratio ad Graecos* 3.1.

Pius (138-161 C.E.) – though it suffered under Nero and Domitian, who were “persuaded by malicious men.”⁴⁷² Melito argued that his philosophy was the “greatest proof” of the Empire’s welfare given that, if his philosophy had never met any evil, the Empire would not either if it adopted it as its new religion. Like his contemporary and the apologist Athenagoras (*Oratio ad Graecos* 2.6), Melito reminded Aurelius that his imperial predecessors tolerated those who followed Christ, suggesting that welcoming them would be a continuation of a “glorious and splendid” past.⁴⁷³

A closer link with Jewish temporal framing, as in Melito’s work, would have affiliated Christ believers’ practice with ancient practice and thereby defended these believers from the charge that their practice was “new.” If the practice was not “new” but “old,” then those who followed Christ were not “barbarians” or “atheists,” but pious observers of an ancient and therefore respected practice. Melito’s attempt to defend Christ belief and practice as less alien, in part by means of observance, would have portrayed his Christ believing group as a cult like any other. The timing of Easter was therefore critical to the holiday’s efficacy, from his perspective, not only because it preserved a typological connection between the Exodus and Christ’s death and resurrection but also because a close affiliation with Jewish practice could have preserved a veneer of antiquity, thereby protecting Christ believers from the charge of “superstition.” Melito wanted to distinguish his group from other Jews who did not believe in Jesus, and

⁴⁷² Cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 26. 9; Aasgaard, “Among Gentiles, Jews, and Christians Formation of Christian Identity in Melito of Sardis,” 161.

⁴⁷³ Cited in Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*. 4.26.

yet preserve their connection with the temporality of Jewish antiquity while also identifying their status as a “philosophy,” thereby signaling camaraderie with the Romans against “barbarians.”

The Quartodeciman Construction of Easter Time

The Quartodeciman⁴⁷⁴ adoption of Jewish time highlighted this community’s emphasis on the continuation of God’s work from Exodus to the life of Jesus. The timing of the Easter celebration did not reject the heritage of Israel, but rather adjusted the celebration of the resurrection to consolidate a particular theological sensibility. In this respect, the Quartodeciman timing of Easter relied on precedent to construct a communal identity as “Christian” or “Christ-following,” but also “Jewish.” This practice not only demonstrates the porous, flexible, and mobile boundaries between Christ believers and Jews who did not believe in Jesus, but also shows how certain Christ followers self-defined by complicating, blurring, and engaging the intersection between their practices and those of other Jews.⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷⁴ In this section, I do not aim to explore the distinct boundary between Jews and Christ believers as the so called “parting of ways,” but rather to accentuate the fluidity and complexity of the boundary, especially in terms of the temporal frames adopted by the Christ believers during the second and third centuries. These Christ believers did not hesitate to utilize Jewish and Roman traditions to prove the superiority of their belief and philosophy. Cameron, “Jews and Heretics – A Category Error?” 348. Concerning the fluidity of the boundary between Jews and Christians, see Charlotte Fonrobert, “The *Didascalia Apostolorum*: A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus,” *J ECS* (2001): 483-509. She points out that ““Christian” was not a stable category until late into the Christianization of Roman imperial power and the consolidation of political-institutional Christian power.” (485).

⁴⁷⁵ Reed, ““Jewish Christianity” after the “Parting of the Ways,”” 202-203.

In his *On the Pascha* (as quoted in *Chronicon Paschale*, compiled around the early seventh century),⁴⁷⁶ Apollinarius, a second century bishop at Hierapolis and apologist, reported that some Christ believers commemorated the passion of Jesus on the fourteenth day of Nissan and claimed the celebration to be the “true Easter” on account of its capturing the full meaning of Jesus’s suffering and resurrection. These believers defended the superiority of their practice:⁴⁷⁷

Now there are some who through ignorance love to quarrel about these matters: but what they maintain in this affair is forgivable. . . . And they say that on the fourteenth day the Lord ate the sheep with the disciples. . . . [but] The fourteenth is the true Pascha of the Lord, the great sacrifice, the son of God standing in place of the lamb. The one being bound is the one who bound the strong man, and the one being judged is the judge of the living and the dead. And the one who is betrayed into the hands of sinners to be crucified is raised above the horns of the unicorn. And the one whose hold side was pierced poured forth from his side the two purifications: water and blood, word and spirit. He is buried on the day of Pascha, and a stone is put over his tomb (*Paschal Chronicle* 92. 80-81).⁴⁷⁸

In his own account, Apollinarius criticized those who thought that the fourteenth day of Nissan aligned with the date of Jesus’s last supper, and held that his celebration of Easter was the “true Pascha,” the fulfillment of salvation through which Jesus shed his blood on the cross. Favoring the Johannine chronology, Apollinarius also claimed that the full meaning of the Passover was fulfilled in the death and resurrection (“the one who . . . is

⁴⁷⁶ Concerning the brief construction of *Paschal Chronicle*, see Reinhard Pummer, *Early Christian Authors on Samaritans and Samaritanism: Texts, Translations, and Commentary* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 362-368.

⁴⁷⁷ Alistair Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb's High Feast: Melito, Peri Pascha, and the Quartodeciman Paschal Liturgy at Sardis* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 151-152; Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Michigan, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 40.

⁴⁷⁸ Ludovicus Dindorfius ed., *Chronicon Paschale* (Bonn: Weber, 1832), 6. I will follow Stewart’s translation unless otherwise mentioned. Melito, *On Pascha*, 105.

raised”) even though he did not refer to the Easter itself and associates the death of Jesus with the sacrifice of Paschal lamb.⁴⁷⁹ According to Apollinarius, Jesus’s judgment and binding develops, in turn, the idea of his ability to judge and bind both the living and dead. Apollinarius’s interpretation symbolically associates the death of Jesus with the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb, and his blood and water with words and spirit. By linking the resurrection of Jesus with Passover, he endeavored to show that the implication of death was not an invention, but rather demonstrates a typologically persistent connection between the emergent Jesus believing group and the Jewish community. Apollinarius did not only accentuate the bodily suffering of Jesus but also depicted Jesus’s body being buried “on the day of Pascha,” which symbolically related to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb.

That some Christ believers were fond of adhering to the date of the Jewish Passover for their Easter celebration is also mentioned in the *Refutation of All Heresies*, allegedly written during the second or third centuries by Hippolytus of Rome or an anonymous author.⁴⁸⁰ Contrary to Apollinarius’s argument that his practice accomplished the true meaning of Easter, Hippolytus criticized those who observed the Easter on the Jewish date in accordance with Mosaic law, which he argued did not apply to Jesus followers:

Certain others, contentious by nature but simpletons in knowledge and rather belligerent in character, concoct the view that Easter must be observed on the

⁴⁷⁹ Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 142.

⁴⁸⁰ Concerning the authorship and the date of the manuscript, see Hippolytus, *Refutation of all Heresies*, trans. and intro. M. David Litwa (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), xxvii-liii.

fourteenth of the first month—on whatever day it falls—according to the ordinance of the Law. They focus on the statement in the Law that whoever does not keep the festival as it is appointed will be utterly cursed. They fail to note the fact that this point was legislated for Jews, who would later kill the true Passover. This Passover came to the Gentiles and is understood by faith, not observed literally. Those who cling to this one commandment do not regard what was said by the apostle: “I testify to every man circumcised that he is a debtor to perform the whole Law.” In other matters, however, these people agree entirely with the apostolic traditions given to the church (*Refutation of All Heresies* 8.18).⁴⁸¹

While blaming “Jews” for killing Jesus, Hippolytus claims that those who want to keep the Mosaic law by observing Easter according to the Jewish date must keep “the whole law.”⁴⁸² According to him, the Quartodeciman practice is not harmonious with the apostolic tradition that demands that Jesus followers refrain from abiding by Mosaic law. Both Apollinarius’s positive and Hippolytus’s negative views of the Quartodeciman practice display various exegetical applications of Jesus followers’ understanding of the Gospel traditions through their practice. That said, according to Hippolytus, the Quartodecimans did remain in agreement with other Christ followers when it came to a variety of other practices.

The *Epistula Apostolorum*, which was translated into Coptic during either the fourth or fifth centuries,⁴⁸³ also describes the efficacy that Quartodecimans expected from their ritual, and supports the Quartodeciman Easter date. The writer uses Jesus’s

⁴⁸¹ Hippolytus, *Refutation of all Heresies*, 611-613.

⁴⁸² Cantalamessa, *Easter in the Early Church*, 130.

⁴⁸³ The work was originally composed in Greek, but only the Coptic translation remains. See, J. K. Elliott, *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1999), 555-556.

authoritative speech as evidence of the observance's ritual efficacy and regards Jesus as a special figure who exerts power to save his people:

And you therefore celebrate the remembrance of my death, which is the Passover; who stands beside me be thrown he will be very grieved and sorrowful, for while you celebrate the Passover he who is in custody did not celebrate it with you. And I will send my power in the form of (my) angel, and the door of the prison will open, and he will come ... And when you complete my Agape and my remembrance at the crowing of the cock, he will again be taken and thrown in prison for a testimony. ... And we said to him, 'O Lord, have you then not completed the drinking of the Passover? Must we, then, do it again? And he said to us, 'Yes, until I come from the Father with my wounds' (*Epistula Apostolorum*, 15).⁴⁸⁴

According to *Epistula Apostolorum*, the risen Jesus came to his disciples to announce the second coming, the resurrection of the body, the Last Judgment, and the untruth of the Gnostic teachers Simon and Cerinthus. There is a thematic emphasis in the Quartodeciman Easter on the reflective remembrance of Jesus's suffering and death as liturgical legitimation ("...celebrate the remembrance of my death, which is the Passover"). In terms of the actual ritual itself, Christ followers were encouraged to celebrate the communal festival meal as a realization of the "Agape" and then take time to reflect on the suffering and resurrection of Jesus until "the crowing of the cock." This practice is strengthened by Jesus's proclamation that "I shall send my power in the form of my angel" when they commemorate him in the proper time and way.

From a Jewish perspective, the Passover in Exodus derives its efficacy from the slaughter of the lamb and the drawing of its blood on a particular night before the flight

⁴⁸⁴ C. Detlef G. Muller, "Epistula Apostolorum," in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. R. McL. Wilson (Louisville, KY: James Clarke & Co, 1991), 257. Emphasis added; Elliott, ed., *The Apocryphal New Testament*, 556-588.

from Egypt (Exod 12:6-7). The Quartodeciman Easter, on the other hand, derives its efficacy from the power of the risen Jesus's promise while commemorating him and his deeds on a day that aligns with the Jewish Passover. The Jewish Passover and the Quartodeciman Easter are distinct in that the latter holds Jesus to be the origin of Passover. The timing of the fast's end further distinguishes the Quartodeciman Easter from other Christ believers' observances.⁴⁸⁵ According to the *Epistula Apostolorum*, Easter is followed by a celebratory meal that links the death of Jesus to the sacrifice of the Passover lamb as a token of God's consistent work through those "in Christ" (cf. 1 Cor 5:7; John 1:29, 36). The Christ believers presented in Apollinarius, Hippolytus, and the *Epistula Apostolorum* appear to have seen their celebration of the Easter as a certification of the continued validity of God's eternal covenant residing with them.⁴⁸⁶

Early evidence of the Quartodecimans' ritual practices and beliefs remains fragmentary, and is largely contained in later texts preserved by others. During the fourth century, however, Eusebius of Caesarea sought to systematize their perspective, identifying them as a distinctive "heresy" or "sect" that he labeled "Quartodeciman." This literary practice fit within his broader effort to establish the appearance of

⁴⁸⁵ The practice of the Quartodeciman fast is found in the Syriac source as well, even though it is not clear how pervasively it was performed. According to the Syriac *Didascalia*, written in the fourth or fifth century, Christ believers were encouraged to fast when Jews celebrate the Passover meal. "... so mourn for them on the day of Sabbath of the Pascha until the third hour in the night following ... when that people [Jews] keep the Passover, do you fast; be careful to perform your vigil within (their feast) of unleavened bread" (*Syriac Didascalia*, 21). R. Hugh Connolly ed. *Didascalia Apostolorum: The Syriac Version Translated and Accompanied by the Verona Latin Fragments* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publication, 2010), 192.

⁴⁸⁶ Reed, "'Jewish Christianity' after the 'Parting of the Ways,'" 189.

ecclesiastical unity of practice and theology.⁴⁸⁷ In the context of narrating the controversy between Polycrates, a bishop of Ephesus, and Victor of Rome, Eusebius quotes Polycrates's letter to Victor defending the Quartodeciman celebration of Easter, as observed by many local church leaders in Asia Minor. Despite his assessment that the Quartodeciman practice was controversial, Eusebius interpreted it through the Gospel and emphasized the close association between the Quartodecimans and the Johannine tradition. According to Eusebius's recollections, it was difficult to find evidence for the fixity and unity of "the Quartodecimans" as a group, and the practices Eusebius associated with them appear to have been widespread. He explains:

At that time no small controversy arose because all the dioceses of Asia thought it right, as though by *more ancient tradition*, to observe for the feast of the Saviour's passover *the fourteenth day of the moon*, on which the Jews had been commanded to kill the lamb. Thus it was necessary to finish the fast on that day, whatever day of the week it might be. Yet it was not the custom to celebrate in this manner in the churches throughout the rest of the world, for from apostolic tradition they kept the custom which still exists that it is not right to finish the fast on any day save that of the resurrection of our Saviour.... Polycrates himself in a document which he addressed to Victor and to the church of Rome, expounds the tradition which had come to him as follows. "Therefore we keep the day undeviatingly, ... Moreover, there is also *John, who lay on the Lord's breast*, who was a priest wearing the breastplate, and a martyr, and teacher. He sleeps at Ephesus" (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 5. 23-24. emphasis is added).⁴⁸⁸

By preserving sources relevant to the Quartodeciman controversy, Eusebius, the great recorder of earlier traditions, explained the debate and considered the arguments of his predecessors. In that context, while citing Polycrates's letter to Victor at length, he notes that the Quartodeciman celebration of Easter was observed at the beginning of the Jewish

⁴⁸⁷ Cyril C. Richardson "A New Solution to the Quartodeciman Riddle," *JTS* 24 (1973): 74-84.

⁴⁸⁸ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 1, trans. Kirsopp Lake, LCL 153 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926), 503-507.

Passover, at which time Jesus was executed, while non-Quartodecimans observed Easter on “the eighth day” (Sunday). Polycrates listed as proof of the extensive observance of the Quartodeciman practice the account of church leaders including John,⁴⁸⁹ Polycarp of Smyrna, Thraseas of Eumeneae, and Melito of Sardis who were in favor of the Quartodeciman Easter (Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 5. 24).⁴⁹⁰ Polycrates referred to John as an authoritative source to strengthen the historical legitimacy of the Quartodeciman Easter and argued that the temporal frame was calculated “according to the gospel.” His “gospel” suggests that Johannine sources and tradition sustained the core Quartodeciman beliefs.⁴⁹¹ Eusebius therefore recalls that the chronology of the Johannine passion narrative was the source for the Quartodeciman calendrical calibration of Easter, a practice that was maintained by some long after other Christ believers began to celebrate Christ’s resurrection on Sunday (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5. 23-24).⁴⁹² In this letter, Polycrates claimed that the Quartodeciman practice had apostolic precedent, and defended their practice against this precedent by claiming that their practice was acknowledged even by those who disagreed with them. The letter also acknowledges that

⁴⁸⁹ It is not clear whether Eusebius’s John was John the son of Zebedee, John the Elder, or someone else. Regardless, it is likely that Eusebius was attempting to link the Quartodeciman movement with the Johannine tradition.

⁴⁹⁰ Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb’s High Feast*, 1-29; Stuart George Hall, *On Pascha and Fragments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979).

⁴⁹¹ Richard Bauckham, “Papias and Polycrates on the Origin of the Fourth Gospel” *JTS* 44 (1993): 24-69; Allen Brent, *Hippolytus and the Roman Church in the Third Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 64-65.

⁴⁹² Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 503-513; Roger T. Beckwith, *Calendar and Chronology: Jewish and Christian Biblical, Intertestamental and Patristic Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 51-70; J. A. Cerrato, *Hippolytus between East and West: The Commentaries and the Provenance of the Corpus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 203-218.

the Quartodeciman practice was legitimized by “more ancient” practice.⁴⁹³ Eusebius accurately described the diversity of Easter celebrations: certain Christ believers observed Easter on the fourteenth of Nissan based on traditions associated with John, and did not understand themselves as anything other than simply “Christian.” In spite of Eusebius’s straightforward criterion that practice is acceptable only when apostolically sanctioned churches observed it,⁴⁹⁴ Irenaeus’s letter, preserved by Eusebius, who called him a “Christian leader,” shows that the Quartodeciman Easter shared an unfixed boundary and existed “in peace” with the practices of other Christ believers (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5. 24).⁴⁹⁵ In addition to Melito’s writings, these practices are both defended and critiqued in a set of second and third century texts, though these texts are largely preserved as excerpts in later writings. These writings make clear that this Easter practice sought to reinforce the continuation of God’s salvific work from the book of Exodus to the life of Jesus, value the death of Jesus as that of Paschal lamb, and emphasize the physical suffering and resurrection of Jesus in time and space. Finally, Melito’s sermon is the most significant surviving remnant of what would later be identified as a “Quartodeciman” point of view. These literary witnesses show that those who celebrated

⁴⁹³ Based on the assumption that the *Ecclesiastical History* was revised after the council of Nicea, Petersen speculates that “...the portion of Eusebius’ *History* which *agrees* with the sentiments and language of the *Vita Constantini* but *disagrees* with the overall thrust of Eusebius’ report on the debate in the *History* is the product of a post-Nicene revision of Book 5 of the *History*. Prior to the Council of Nicea, the Quartodeciman dossier perfectly suited Eusebius’ needs” (Italics original). William L. Petersen, “Eusebius and the Paschal Controversy,” in *Patristic and Text-Critical Studies: the Collected Essays of William L. Petersen*, ed. Jan Krans and Joseph Verheyden (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 217.

⁴⁹⁴ Karl Gerlach, *The Antenicene Pascha: A Rhetorical History* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 325.

⁴⁹⁵ “... they immediately made peace, having no wish for strife between them on this matter”

Easter according to Jewish time were not troubled by their dating practice, nor by those who refuted it.

Easter in the *Peri Pascha* of Melito of Sardis

In his treatise, *Peri Pascha* (hereafter PP), Melito expounds on how commemorating the Pascha links the suffering and death of Jesus with the Paschal lamb of the book of Exodus by temporally linking the Pascha with the passion of Jesus and making it present for contemporary believers.⁴⁹⁶ He argues that the Pascha is a bridge that evokes God's past salvific works projecting Jesus as the key participant in those earlier events. Melito's homily was initially presented within the complex cultural, religious, and social milieu of Roman Sardis, where Jews, Christ believers, Sardinians and others mixed on a daily basis.⁴⁹⁷ In reconfiguring the temporality of Pascha into the passion of Jesus, Melito re-conceptualized and imagined "Israel" as the people of God in Christ, creating a new sense of belonging by augmenting the saving efficacy of the Pascha. As he argued,

⁴⁹⁶ Grant, *Greek Apologists of the Second Century*, 92-99; Richard A. Norris, *The Christological Controversy* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980), 9-10; S. G. Hall, "Melito in the Light of the Passover Haggadah," *JTS* 22 (1971): 29; Lynn Cohick, "Melito of Sardis's 'PERI PASCHA' and Its 'Israel,'" *HTR* 91 (1998): 351-372.

⁴⁹⁷ I agree with Knust's point that Christian writers' opponents identification with "pagan," "the nations," and "Jews" are "potent rhetorical moves" and that their documents are not necessarily to be read as attacking any "real" enemies but rather as attempting to ensure that "others" are condemned as "bad Christians" and non-Christians. Jennifer W. Knust, *Abandoned to Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 140. The point is therefore not to acquit Melito of anti-Judaism so much as to situate him as a Christ believer who sought to claim the mantle of Jewish heritage while at the same time distancing himself from Jews and those who did not agree that Jesus was the crucified and resurrected Messiah

Israel was fulfilled in the body of Jesus through the biblical present and future time.⁴⁹⁸

Melito's account of Pascha worked to establish a rhetoric of difference that addressed the unstable and mobile boundary between Jews who follow Jesus and those who do not, between Christ followers of various backgrounds and non-believing Jews, and even between his Christ believing group and other rival Christ believers.

Melito of Sardis in Context

Roman Sardis was home to a large Jewish community, a fact that likely contributed to Melito's endorsement of the idea that Christ followers should celebrate Easter according to Jewish time.⁴⁹⁹ Interactions between and intermingling among Christ following Sardinian Jews and non-Christ following Jews, as well as Christ followers with other cultural affiliations, should be assumed.⁵⁰⁰ Josephus recounts the arrival of Jews in the city and states (*Antiquities*, 12-148-153), that the Seleucid king, Antiochus III, forced 2,000 Jewish people to move into major cities of Lydia and Phrygia in 205 B.C.E.; Josephus assumes that the Jews living there in his own day were connected to this first settlement.⁵⁰¹ According to Josephus, Jews in Sardis were allowed to "assemble together,

⁴⁹⁸ Cf. Fonrobert, "The Didascalia Apostolorum: A Mishnah for the Disciples of Jesus," 490-491; Boyarin, *Border lines*, 74-75; Berzon, *Classifying Christians*, 1-26.

⁴⁹⁹ Eusebius. *Ecclesiastical History*, 4. 26; Pieter W. van der Horst, *Studies in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 143-160.

⁵⁰⁰ Tessa Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome: Studies in Cultural and Social Interaction* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 461.

⁵⁰¹ Given that Obadiah 20 states that "the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad" (Aramaic for Sardis), it is probable that there was a Jewish settlement in the city earlier than the Seleucid dynasty. Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome*, 461.

according to their ancient legal custom” and to make “their prayers and sacrifices to God.” Some Jews with Roman citizenship even enjoyed an exemption from obligatory military service on account of their religious practice (*Antiquities* 14. 236-237 and 259-260). The Jewish community was well established when the “good news about Christ” reached Sardis.

Josephus also states that Sardian Jews were able to meet in a designated location called “a place,” not a synagogue (*Antiquities*, 14. 260-261, “...they [Jews] may assemble together, according to their ancient legal custom... a place may be given to them where they may have their congregations”), but later evidence suggests that a synagogue was eventually built.⁵⁰² This structure, however, was constructed long after Melito’s homily, and thus it is highly probable that the first and second century Jews gathered together in a private building (or buildings) shared by the community, perhaps only at certain times. If so, these gathering were likely similar to those of the early Jesus believers’, which were also hosted in private dwellings.⁵⁰³ Sardis was therefore a culturally diverse city with a

⁵⁰² The most remarkable Jewish ruins at Sardis are the remnants of a synagogue built in the South Hall of the bath-gymnasium during the third century C.E. Jodi Magness argues that the synagogue was constructed around 6 C.E. Jodi Magness, “The Date of the Sardis Synagogue in Light of the Numismatic Evidence”, *AJA* 109 (2005): 443–75.

⁵⁰³ Magness, “The Date of the Sardis Synagogue in Light of the Numismatic Evidence,” 460–68; Lynn H. Cohick, “Melito’s Peri Pascha: Its Relationship to Judaism and Sardis in Recent Scholarly Discussion,” *Evolution of the Synagogue: Problems and Progress*, eds. Howard Clark Kee and Lynn H. Cohick (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1999), 123-140; Barclay, *Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora*, 103-124; Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 109; Hayim Rapin, “The Law of Moses and the Jews: Rabbi, Ethnic Making, and Romanization,” in *Jews, Christians, and the Roman Empire*, ed. Natalie B. Dohrmann, Annette Yoshiko Reed (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 79-92; Ophir Munz-Manor, “Narrating Salvation: Verbal Sacrifices in Late Antiquity Liturgical Poetry,” in *Jews, Christians, and the Roman Empire*, ed. Natalie B. Dohrmann, Annette Yoshiko Reed (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 167-181.

strong Jewish presence and, later, emerging groups of Christ followers who may (or may not) have met separately for religious observance. Envisioning this scenario, Tessa Rajak argues that “the Sardinian Jew” likely held “a powerful attraction for the Christian of his day, causing considerable anxiety to the local leaders of the church at the time of Melito.”⁵⁰⁴

Jews who did not believe in Jesus’s Messianic status and Jesus believers, however, remained interconnected and differences between the two groups were obscure both to non-believers and to members. For the Romans in particular, it was hard to distinguish Jews who did not believe in Jesus from Christ followers based on what each claimed to believe and practice.⁵⁰⁵ Some Christ followers, however, did seek to create rhetorical if not actual differences between themselves and “the Jews” by marking themselves off from others and claiming a superior cultural status. The distance that these writers sought to create between themselves and those who did not believe in Jesus often involved the claim that Jesus followers, not “the Jews” per se, were the true heirs of Israel’s heritage.⁵⁰⁶ Given the diversity of ritual practices in Sardis during the first and second centuries C.E., however, this argument must be interpreted as more rhetorical than

⁵⁰⁴ Rajak, *The Jewish Dialogue with Greece and Rome*, 449; Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 144-145; Louis H. Feldman and Meyer Reinhold, eds., *Jewish Life and Thought Among Greeks and Romans: Primary Readings* (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1996), 137–38; Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb’s High Feast*, 9.

⁵⁰⁵ Galen, for instance, saw Jews and Christ believers as a single group, which he called the “school of Moses and Christ” (*Depulsuum differentiis* 3.3). Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans saw them*, 72.

⁵⁰⁶ Agnes Choi, “Boundary Crossing in Christian Baptism” in *Early Christian Ritual Life*, ed. Richard E. DeMaris and Steven C. Muir (Routledge, 2017), 81; Theodore de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 20–21.

actual.⁵⁰⁷ Reidar Aasgaard points out that *Peri Pascha* “is not a case of ‘either/or’ but of ‘both/and’” and, moreover, that “Melito is, more or less directly, concerned with marking boundaries in relation to various groups at the same time.”⁵⁰⁸ As such, Melito invited non-believers and those who (from his perspective) misunderstood Jesus’s passion to celebrate Easter according to his unique temporal frame, which differentiated Christ-affiliated and Jewish Pascha celebrations and yet structured the former according to the latter.

Old and New Temporal Frames

Melito’s *Peri Pascha* (hereafter PP) does not only seek to uncover the representational nature of events in the book of Exodus⁵⁰⁹ as a model for the life of a Christ believer, but also to explain the role of Pascha in his understanding of the Christian Easter ritual as a hermeneutical tool to understand the historical events of Israel’s past.⁵¹⁰ To bolster the credibility of his theological argument about the Pascha, Melito

⁵⁰⁷ Heidi Wendt, *At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 221.

⁵⁰⁸ Aasgaard, “Among Gentiles, Jews, and Christians Formation of Christian Identity in Melito of Sardis,” 172.

⁵⁰⁹ According to the records of Eusebius, Melito attempted to compose a list of Old Testaments texts that seemed to align with the old Jewish texts (with the exception of the Book of Esther). In this section, I prefer to use the “Old Testament” to indicate these efforts to shape Christian cannon instead of using “Hebrew Bible” or “Jewish Bible.” Edmon L. Gallagher and John D. Meade, *The Biblical Canon Lists from Early Christianity: Texts and Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 78-82; Edmon L. Gallagher, *Hebrew Scripture in Patristic Biblical Theory: Canon, Language, Text* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 23-24.

⁵¹⁰ A. Wifstrand, “The Homily of Melito on the Passion” *Vigiliae Christianae* 2 (1948): 201-223; Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 199-240; Andrei-Dragoş Giulea, *Pre-Nicene Christology in Paschal Contexts : the Case of the Divine Noetic Anthropos* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 24-28.

interweaves various narratives drawn from the scriptural past with representations of the ritual present, culminating in a reassessment of the Pascha's implications for ritual performance.⁵¹¹ Melito's interest in the ritual temporality of Easter comes through not only in his typological association of the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb with that of Jesus (similar to Paul in 1 Cor 5:7), but also in the alignment of the fourteenth day of Nisan as both the date of the Paschal slaughter in Exodus chapter 12 and Jesus's crucifixion according to the Johannine chronology.

Melito's homily envisions a liturgical setting that typologically links the celebration of the Pascha in the book of Exodus with that of Jesus's passion. The book of Exodus is the only document Melito explicitly mentions, and he regards it as offering the ritual background against which the implications of Easter can be interpreted:

The Scripture of the exodus of the Hebrews has been read, and the words of the mystery have been declared; how the sheep was sacrificed, and how the people was saved, and how Pharaoh was flogged by the mystery. Therefore, well-beloved, understand, how the mystery of the Pascha is both new and old, eternal and provisional, perishable and imperishable, mortal and immortal. It is old with respect to the law, new with respect to the word. Provisional with respect to the type (τύπος), yet everlasting through grace. It is perishable because of the slaughter of the sheep, imperishable because of the life of Lord. (PP 1-3)

Addressing his audience as "beloved," he describes his version of the Paschal ritual by combining present practice with a biblical narrative that transmits power from a legendary realm to his narration in the present.⁵¹² Melito employed his scriptural interpretation to lend authority to his own point of view, namely that the Pascha is

⁵¹¹ Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb's High Feast*, 172–205.

⁵¹² Ophir Munz-Manor, "Narrating Salvation: Verbal Sacrifices in Late Antique Liturgical Poetry," in *Jews, Christians, and the Roman Empire*, ed. Natalie B. Dohrmann, Annette Yoshiko Reed (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 160.

intrinsically true and that Jesus is the fulfillment of both the Scriptures and the festival's observance. Melito's juxtaposes the new, eternal, and mortal with the old, temporal, and immortal, a temporal framework that links particular stories to larger master narratives in order to explain the suffering and resurrection of Jesus. On the one hand, the Pascha is provisional because it is ordered in the Mosaic law, which, Melito argued, is not reality. On the other hand, it is eternal because Christ as Logos becomes "the Pascha of our salvation" (PP 69). The Pascha therefore serves as a dual indicator throughout the homily,⁵¹³ bringing past events into the present to create two different, parallel worlds. Melito etymologically argues that Pascha (πάσχα) comes from the Greek word, "πάσχω," meaning "suffering,"⁵¹⁴ to define "Lord" as the one who "shares in the suffering of one's suffering" (PP 46). Melito's new definition draws a link between the Lord, the Passover lamb that takes on the suffering of Israel, and the Christ who restores humanity after Adam's sinful corruption. Melito temporally and thematically situates the origin of Pascha, an atoning sacrifice, with the fall of Adam in Genesis 2-3 in order to explain why Jesus suffered for all humankind. After the fall, humans who suffer and die need a savior who "shares in the suffering of one's suffering" (PP 46). The efficacy of Jesus's death reaches all humankind (PP 56). According to Melito, the death of Jesus is already prefigured and exemplified in the events and figures of the sacred texts and thus, "the mystery of the Lord is both new and old" (PP 58). This thematic combination of Pascha

⁵¹³ Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 210.

⁵¹⁴ Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb's High Feast*, 73–75; Michael de Brauw, "The Parts of the Speech," in *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric*, ed. Ian Worthington (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 193–94.

with human restoration creates a fictive integration of time and constructed memory that allows the texts' audience to imagine a shared past. In this temporal frame, the efficacy of Jesus's sacrifice extends to all humankind because he was with God from the beginning. It also collapses the temporal distance between the past and present. The archaic presence of Jesus thus embodies all temporal periods from the beginning of the world to Melito's present time. Melito presents Pascha as a revelatory process of typological interpretation that uncovers its mystery. By reconfiguring the Pascha in association with the passion of Jesus, Melito creates an Easter ritual that invites participants to pass from the mundane time of the Paschal celebration to eternal time in the celebration of Jesus's passion and resurrection.

Melito tied the ritual date of the Paschal slaughter, as in the Johannine chronology, to Jesus's crucifixion, bolstering the link between the Paschal celebration and that of Jesus's passion ("...you killed your Lord at the great feast," PP 79). The lamb was eaten during slavery on the night of the tenth and last plague in Egypt and reminds Israelites of God's deliverance (Exod 12:12, 26-27). Thus envisioned, the lamb embodies two moments of the biblical past: the time immediately before and the time immediately after the Exodus. However, *Peri Pascha* exhorts its audience not only to remember a distant time, but also to partake in a present moment. Melito's audience participates in the Pascha by referring to an "us" that includes the historical Israelites. The audience is therefore connected with the first eve of Pascha, the fourteenth day of the month of the Exodus, and also to the redemption following the flight from Egypt. These moments are brought to life through the slaughtering and eating of the Paschal lamb. The lamb is thus

both a reminder of the last night of slavery and also of divine deliverance (the moment after the Exodus) for those who remember it, even in Melito's present. The sacrificed body of Jesus, when it is analogized to the Paschal lamb of Exodus, accomplishes the same for Melito's audience (PP 103, "I am the lamb slaughtered for you"). The past event from Exodus coexists with the present, which embodies the image of the Paschal lamb, creating a typologically consolidated construction that blurs the temporal and spatial distinction between both times.

The affinity between Melito and John's linkage of Jesus and the Paschal lamb furthers Melito's ability to link the timeframe of Jesus's death with that of the Paschal lamb (PP 71, "he was sacrificed in the evening and buried at night and was not broken on the tree"; John 19:14 "the day of Preparation for the Passover").⁵¹⁵ As Alister C. Stewart argues, Melito adheres closely to the Johannine tradition in terms of the thematic correspondence between Jesus and the Paschal lamb (John 1:29, 36).⁵¹⁶ For instance, Melito's reconstruction of the biblical process to sacrifice and consume the Paschal lamb that links the death of Jesus with the Paschal tradition also appears in the Fourth Gospel. Whereas Exod 12:10-11 (LXX) commands that the Israelites not break the bone of the slaughtered lamb and then eat it in haste,⁵¹⁷ the homily reverses the order of the

⁵¹⁵ Even though Melito adopts the Johannine tradition's temporal frame to describe the suffering of Jesus, it does not chronologically order Jesus's crucifixion. Rather, it contributes to Melito's theological explanation of Jesus's death. Urban C. von Wahlde, "The References to the Time and Place of the Crucifixion in the *Peri Pascha* of Melito of Sardis," *JTS* 60 (2009): 556–69; Strand, "John as Quartodeciman: A Reappraisal," 251–58; R. Alan Culpepper, *John, the Son of Zebedee: The Life of a Legend* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 120.

⁵¹⁶ Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb's High Feast*, 36–42.

⁵¹⁷ "...ὄστοῦν οὐ συντρίψετε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ... καὶ ἔδεσθε αὐτὸ μετὰ σπουδῆς..." (LXX, Exod 12:10-11)

instruction in PP 12 (“eat it at night with haste and not a bone of it shall you break”). In Melito’s work, Jesus was buried “at night” just as the lamb was consumed at night, though neither’s legs were broken. Melito’s variation of the ritual temporality reflects the particular description of how Jesus’s dead body was treated in John 19:31-33 (“...they did not break his legs”), namely that no bones were broken after Jesus died on the cross, corresponding to the slaughter of the Passover lamb.⁵¹⁸

According to Melito, the Pascha takes place in its ritual performance;⁵¹⁹ he makes an implicit reference to the celebration of the Pascha, writing that the Lord “...delivered us from slavery to freedom...from darkness to light” (PP 68). Melito is likely implying that his own celebration opens with darkness after the fast to reflect on Jesus’s suffering (PP 71, “he was sacrificed in the evening”).⁵²⁰ Melito links his Pascha to Israel’s past experience of the works of God, which he uses as a thematic backdrop for the suffering of Jesus, and creates a rhetorical opposition between the Pascha of the Lord and that of his contemporary Jews.

Melito’s typological construct obscures the division between the past of Israel and his present world by linking events from the book of Exodus to create a coherent picture of humanity’s deliverance from sin through Christ. Melito connects events and heroic

⁵¹⁸ Melito’s flexibility as to the order of Passover is consistent with other contemporary writers such as Philo. When Philo discusses the ten plagues, for example, he groups and rearranges them into three constructed categories (Philo, *On Moses*, 1:96). Ronald P. Byars, *The Sacraments in Biblical Perspective* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 203.

⁵¹⁹ Stewart-Sykes, *The Lamb’s High Feast*, 43.

⁵²⁰ Harald Buchinger, “Breaking Fast: The Central Moment of the Paschal Celebration in Historical Context and Diachronic Perspective,” in *Sanctifying Texts, Transforming Rituals: Encounters in Liturgical Studies*, ed. Paul van Geest, Marcel Poorthuis, and Els Rose (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 202.

figures of the biblical past with the suffering and death of Jesus to prove that he is Christ. In this respect, Melito displaces the traditional understanding of Pascha as a prototype of God's deliverance of Israel with a newly reinterpreted identification of Pascha with Christ, the incarnate Logos who revealed God and who must be "hung on the tree" and "raised from the dead" (PP 104). Melito tells his audience that they can experience resurrection by linking the death of Jesus with that of the Paschal lamb. He thus reorganizes the Israelites' past to establish his Christ following community using a Christology that employs the Pascha to embrace both past and present. For Melito, the ultimate meaning of Pascha is the mysterious transformation of man who receives a remission of sin and who is able to see God (PP 103-104) who grants him deliverance from the alienating power of evil. By using temporality to structure the celebration of Easter to bring about the union with God, Melito is calling attention to the temporality of the ritual itself to emphasize the temporal connection he creates between Christ and the Paschal lamb of Exodus.

"Israel" and the Twofold References to Those Who See God and Those Who Do Not

In his homily, Melito writes that "Israel," rather than the "Jews" killed Jesus, establishing his redefined concept of "Israel" as an imagined opponent.⁵²¹ His redefinition plays a significant role in constituting a binary referent to those who

⁵²¹ Melito's "Jews" are not historical enemies, but are rather used as a literary device. Melito would have been familiar with Jews, given their presence in Sardis, and able to portray them to shape his writing. Concerning the use of imagined opponents as a rhetorical device, see Knust, *Abandoned to Lust: Sexual Slander and Ancient Christianity*, 113-141; Henriette van der Blom, "Character Attack and Invective Speech in Roman Republic: Cicero as Target," in *Character Assassination throughout the Ages*, ed. Martijn Icks and Eric Shiraev (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 37-58.

misunderstood the full meaning of the Pascha and to those who concur with his own theological interpretation and practice of Easter. The redefinition also secures the effectiveness of his temporality to commemorate the passion of Jesus as enabling the participants of his constructed time to “see God” (PP 82). His accusation of failing to follow the divine will manifested in the suffering and resurrection of Jesus targets both Jews and some rival Jesus followers who do not agree with this temporal frame. Based on his reclassification and redefinition of Israel, Melito does not only attack those who might misread, misinterpret, or malpractice the Pascha, but also distances his audience from other Jews. His rhetoric of temporality secures the benefits of a full understanding of the meaning of Jesus’s sacrifice and enables those who partake in his temporality to see God.

Israel as Those Who Fail to See God

Melito’s homily also employs temporal frames to create opponents, whom he attacks as “failed Israel.” He analyzes the narratives of Exodus to show that there are members of the successful and failed Israel in the present, living in his contemporary Sardis, arguing that they do not fully recognize God. Other Jesus followers also used the label “Israel” to refer to the Jewish community in general (Matt 27:42; Luke 24:21; John 1:49; Acts 13:24) and others to refer to the community of Jesus worshipers (Rom 9:6-7; Gal 6:16; Eph 2:12), but Melito uses the term, “people” (λαός) interchangeably with “Israel” to designate those who fail to recognize the Lord (PP 31).⁵²² The “people” and

⁵²² As he states, “the slaughter of the sheep was Israel’s salvation and the death of the sheep was life for the people.” See discussion in Lieu, *Image and Reality*, 215.

“Israel” are juxtaposed in terms of each group’s response to the death of the Lord; the people’s failure to tremble, fear, and lament are typologically connected with Israel’s failure to “fear the Lord” and Israel’s having “smashed the Lord to the ground” (PP 98-99); both groups offend the same Lord. According to Melito, Israel’s core sin is not living up to the God-given name “Israel” on account of some members’ repeating past transgressions in the present.

Melito’s new classification creates new sets of categorical frameworks to mark the character of his community and retain an imaginary order of inclusion and exclusion. Melito chooses to celebrate the Easter on the same date as the Pascha because, in his account, Jesus’s suffering and resurrection reveals the meaning of Pascha, an Easter ritual that befits the true Israel (PP 93, cf. 1 Cor 5:7-8). His interpretation of “Israel” as the people who do not “fear God” and who are blind to God’s workings allows him to condemn those who disagree with his temporal frame and his celebration of the passion and resurrection of Jesus.⁵²³ Regardless of whether or not the tension in Melito’s work was an historical, social reality at Sardis, Melito constructs a particular typological genealogy to legitimate his group. This classification creates a new sense of belonging that is connected with the past and reflects discernibly fragile boundaries. The rhetoric of temporal frames that Melito constructed engages with the religious and cultural multiplicity of Sardis by privileging his own point of view.

⁵²³ In his thematic exegetical work, *On the Change of the Names*, Philo also interprets “the name Israel” as “the man who sees God” (1. 81), while commenting on what it means to be a fully dedicated member of the community. See, Graham Harvey, *The True Israel: Uses of the Names Jew, Hebrew and Israel in Ancient Jewish and Early Christian Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 220-221; Laurence Broadhurst, “Melito of Sardis, the Second Sophistic, and ‘Israel,’” in *Rhetoric and Reality in Early Christianities*, ed. Willi Braun (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 62.

Melito's "True Israel" That Sees God

Melito imaginatively constructed the identity of Israel as those who conceive of the divine will and remain unadulterated by sin by inviting Jesus followers to join the temporality of the Pascha that he linked with the suffering of Jesus (PP 103).⁵²⁴ In the construction of time that commemorates the continuation of God's salvific intervention from the Exodus to the death and resurrection of Jesus, Israel's special status as the chosen people is described as extending to "all families of people," who are able to see God after they transgress God's commandments. Israel's (the Jews') repentance and participation in Christ's invitation is not annulled (PP 103, "come ...and receive forgiveness of sins"). Melito also borrowed the biblical idea of Israel from Exodus to typologically apply the Israelite past of affliction and deliverance from Egypt to humankind's present corruption and the misery and salvation through the same Paschal lamb.⁵²⁵ While declining to use "Israel" to refer to the Jews who "did not see God,"

⁵²⁴ Melito is not the first follower of Jesus to attempt to redefine who the Israelites truly are. There are antecedents that define them as Christ believers. Paul says "for not all Israelites truly belong to Israel," (Rom 9:6, cf. 1 Cor. 10.18) and denotes groups of Jesus followers as "the Israel of God" (Gal 6: 16). The Gospel of John notes that not all Jews are Israel, but rather that a true Israelite (John 1:43-51) perceives the revelation of God. James wrote about the Jesus followers' adopted identity within "the twelve tribes" (1:1), a reference to the twelve ancestral groups of Israel. Justin Martyr also develops the idea of Christian Israel. In his apologetic work, the *Dialogue with Trypho*, Trypho states that Christ believers are the genuine Israelites (Justin, *Dialogue* 135.3) and that Christ is the true carrier of Israel's name (Justin, *Dialogue* 130.3,134.6, 135.3). By explaining the dichotomy between Jews who define themselves by descent and Christ believers who define themselves by faith, Justin argues that his group of Christ believers is the truer incarnation of Israel and that the requirements of membership are rooted in neither race nor ethnicity. Erich S. Gruen, "Christians as a 'Third Race': Is Ethnicity at Issue?" in *Christianity in the Second Century: Themes and Developments*, ed. James Carleton Paget and Judith Lieu (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 245-246.

⁵²⁵ "...the sheep, slaughtered in the land of Egypt, which saved Israel..." (PP 60) and "...humanity was doled out by death...for this reason is the paschal mystery completed..." (PP 56).

Melito echoes the biblical scene in which Jacob encounters the deity before meeting his older brother Esau in Gen 32:29-31 to create his own interpretation of the meaning of Israel (PP 82; Gen 32:30).⁵²⁶ The understanding of Israel as those who see God also appears in the dialogue of Jesus with Nathanael in John 1: 45-51.⁵²⁷ While John declares that “no one has ever seen God” (1:18), Jesus promises that Nathanael will see God and discloses the heavenly secret that will be revealed in his life, death, and resurrection.⁵²⁸ Jesus says to Nathanael that he is “truly Israelite” (John 1: 47), and will “see the heaven open and the angels of God” (John 1:51). In the Gospel of John, Jesus bestows upon a disciple the unprecedented benefit of seeing God; true Israel alone is the ultimate recipient of Jesus’s gift (John 14:9, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father”). In resonating the Johannine notion of Israel as those who see God, Melito portrays Jesus as the revelator of the God of Israel and further argues that no one may come to understand God and become a member of true Israel without recognizing and without commemorating Jesus as the Paschal lamb.

When he transitions from a long excursus on the mystery of Pascha (PP 1-71) to accusing Israel (PP 72-99), Melito uses the first person “us” when defending his position,

⁵²⁶ “Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, ‘For I have seen God face to face’” (Gen 32:30). Philo of Alexandria also understood the name “Israel” to be rooted in the capability to see the deity (*On the Change of Names* 81, “...the name Israel signifies the man who sees God”). This understanding, however, does not match the etymological explanation found in Genesis (Gen 32:28, “You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed”). Genesis 32 mentions a place called Peniel, which means “to see God”, which is where Jacob encountered the deity. “So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.” (Gen 32:30).

⁵²⁷ Interestingly, “to see” occurred 6 times in John 1:45-51. In the dialogue between Jesus and Nathanael, “to see” the divine revelation though Jesus is a central theme. John Paul Heil, *The Gospel of John: Worship for Divine Life Eternal* (Cambridge, MA: James Clarke Company, 2016), 23-25.

⁵²⁸ Thompson, *John*, 53.

and the second person “you” when referring to those who did not see God; Melito’s rhetoric distances “us” from “you” reveals the identity of his opponents.⁵²⁹ His analysis supports my assertion that the name “Israel” is used to revise definitions of identity by distinguishing those who correctly understand the meaning of the Paschal lamb from those who do not (PP 82, “you did not perceive the Lord”). There is no clear boundary between the Jesus believers on the one hand and “Jews” on the other, as the former existed as a sect within the community of the latter. Indeed even those writers who explicitly identified as “Christian” employed “Jewish” terminology (e.g. Justin, *Dialogue with Trypo* 47.4 and *Epistles of Barnabas* 13. 7). Both Justin Martyr, who adopts the label “Christian,” and the writer of the *Epistles of Barnabas*, who does not, employ particular phrases to describe “Jews” (“the descendant of Abraham” and “Abraham, the father of the nation”) and to develop a boundary between Jesus believers.⁵³⁰ Melito’s dual “Israel” functions as a double-edged sword by defining both those who agree and disagree with him and his temporal frame, while creating an alternative, true Israel that

⁵²⁹ Broadnurst, “Melito of Sardis, the Second Sophistic, and “Israel”,” 64.

⁵³⁰ Boyarin points out that the boundary between Jesus believers and Jews was porous and unfixed. See, Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 8-12. “...The same can be said of those descendants of Abraham who follow the Law and refuse to believe in Christ...” (*Dialogue with Trypo* 47.4) and “Behold, I have established you, Abraham, as the father of the nations who believe in God without being circumcised” (*Epistles of Barnabas* 13. 7). St. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 72; Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 423. Also see the Book of Revelation, which witnesses how early Jesus followers adopted Jewish language to compete against their rival Christians. One passage, for instance, warns Jesus believers in the city of Philadelphia; “I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but are lying” (Rev 3:9). John of Patmos charges his opponents of spiritually contaminating the Philadelphian community while confirming their Jewishness. David Frankfurter points out that the use of the term “Jews,” as deployed to attack the enemies of John, “reflects the micro-disputes and schisms of a sectarian movement within... [the] Jesus movement.” David Frankfurter, “Jews or Not? Reconstructing the “Other” in Rev 2:9 and 3:9,” *HTR* 94 (2001): 422-423.

exemplifies his own Jesus-believing community and links Jesus, the Paschal lamb, with God of Israel.

Melito's reconstruction of Israel as an umbrella term also takes the genealogy of Genesis and applies it to all of humankind (PP 103, "...come all families of people"). PP 59 and 69 thematically connect Israel's afflictions in history with Christ's passion by mentioning heroic figures from the history of Israel. Melito highlights that "this is the lamb slain (φονευόμενος)... this is the one born of Mary" (PP 71), by using the same verb ("to slay") as in the passage of Abel's death, "if you wish to see the mystery of the Lord, look at Abel who is likewise slain (φονευόμενον)" (PP 59). Here "slain" serves as a temporal reminder of the Lord who worked as the Paschal lamb to save the historical Israel and who will be "the lamb slaughtered" for his people. Just as the "the Passover of the Lord" is "a commemoration of Israel forever" commanded by God (PP 13), Melito argues that the fulfilled Passover of Christ the Lord must be commemorated by those who are free (PP 103, "...I am your freedom"). This temporally genealogical expansion to the pre-Exodus period broadens the family tree beyond historical Israel and alludes to a more archaic and universal time as a "common shared heritage," which includes the newly defined Israel.⁵³¹ Melito marks Israel's identity by moving back through time to the death of Abel, which he then thematically links forward in time with the death of Jesus.

Having identified Jesus as the murdered lamb ("to murder," φονεύω), Melito further defines Jesus as the just One, using language from Psalm 25:12 and Isa 3:10. His allusions to the book of Exodus show his understanding of Jesus's death as the death of a

⁵³¹ Clark, *Making Time for the Past: Local History and the Polis*, 246; Zerubavel, *Time Maps*, 76-77.

sacrificial lamb and confirm that the saving efficacy of Jesus's death reaches beyond the past of Israel through Jesus's connection with the Law and Prophets. Melito's argument extends to all humankind by appealing to all who must seek the Lord's forgiveness.

Melito's extension of "Israel" to anyone that "see[s] God" broadens the scope of "a new priesthood" beyond any particular group of people.⁵³² Melito's fluid sense of temporal differentiation between Jesus believers and "Israel" suggested that, within the Jesus movement, there were rhetorical codes for rejecting and marginalizing different groups that were drawn from Jewish traditions themselves.⁵³³ Melito's employing "Israel" displays his attempt to produce the self-expression of his group of Jesus followers which legitimates and strengthens a sense of belonging to create a fictitious family. By inventing the self-identity of Jesus believers as "a new priesthood," he reveals the nuanced boundary between this group and those who did not believe in Jesus and reclassifies the name "Israel" as his in-group while at same time denouncing anyone (Jews and non-Jews alike) who do not perceive Jesus as the Paschal lamb and therefore fail to see God.⁵³⁴ His construction of temporality to reveal the true meaning of the Pascha serves as a rhetorical strategy to distinguish those who see God from those who do not,

⁵³² "...[he] made us a new priesthood and a people everlasting for himself" (PP 66), cf. "...you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood" (1Peter 2:9).

⁵³³ David Frankfurter, "Beyond "Jewish Christianity": Continuing Religious Sub-Cultures of the Second and Third Centuries and Their Documents," in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Adam H. Becker, Annette Yoshiko Reed (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 131-140.

⁵³⁴ Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 73.

while urging his audience to commemorate the passion of Jesus according to his constructed temporal frames.

Conclusion

I have shown that the debates over temporality surrounding the celebration of Easter suggest the diversity of and rivalry between early Christ following groups on the one hand, and an unstable and mobile boundary among Christ believers as well as between Christians and other groups (in particular non-Christ following Jews) during the second century on the other. Celebrating Easter in accordance with the fourteenth day of Nissan displays the theological and social stakes of the Christ believers' temporal practice. Noting that communities interpret past events as a vehicle of social differentiation,⁵³⁵ I have argued that the Christ followers later identified as "Quartodecimans" used time to create a porous and mobile border between themselves and others, over which they claimed superiority by narrating their group's origin in an imaged past. Namely, the Quartodeciman reconstruction of the biblical past in the ritual of Easter typologically linked the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb in Exodus with the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The construction of Easter time by different groups of Christ followers reveals an active debate about how to interpret the passion and resurrection. The strength of various interpretations upheld a writer's claim to superiority over other groups. In *Peri Pascha*, for example, while interpreting narratives of Exodus to create a collective past, Melito

⁵³⁵ King, "Social and Theological Effects of Heresiological Discourse," 49.

sought to establish the continuity of the Paschal mystery from Exodus to Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection. In the process, Melito re-defined and universalized the identity of "Israel" as "those who see God" and performed the divine will by correctly commemorating the Pascha of the Lord. Melito thus understood the typological association of Easter with Pascha as a fruitful encounter with the risen Christ.⁵³⁶

The temporal proximity between Melito's celebration of Easter and the Jewish Passover called to mind the continuous acts of God in the history of Israel and linked the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb with the passion and death of Jesus. Other "Quartodecimans" like Apollinarius made similar claims, understanding Pascha as a reinterpreted past that transcended the group boundaries and reconstructed them at the same time. The discourse of temporality surrounding the Easter practice shows how unstable and various interpretations sprouted when Christ believers' identities and boundaries remained fluid. Whatever the Quartodecimans intended when they defended the value of observing Easter based on "Jewish time" – typological "spiritualization, appropriation, cultural attention within cosmopolitan religious landscape, a rebuke, ... or some other purpose" – their observances created particular, disruptive formulations of Christ believers' identity among their contemporary affiliations.⁵³⁷ Temporal differences in Easter practice and ritual endure even today, replaying this ancient effort to construct identities by means of

⁵³⁶ As in PP 103, "I am the Passover of salvation."

⁵³⁷ A similar phenomenon that spiritualizes and historicizes the Jewish tradition appears in the Christian adoption of the Maccabees' story of Jewish martyrdom. Jennifer Knust, "'Who Were the Maccabees?' The Maccabean Martyrs and Performances of Christian Difference," in *Martyrdom, Canonization and Contestation*, ed. Jan Willem van Henten and Ihab Saloul (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, in press), 13.

distinctive practice; as the fourth-century rejection of the “Quartodecimans” also shows, distinctive temporal practice can exacerbate social separations and even lead to explicit excommunication.⁵³⁸

⁵³⁸ Wilken, *The First Thousand Years: A Global History of Christianity*, 88-98; Alistair Kee, *Constantine versus Christ: The Triumph of Ideology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016), 113. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops*, 268-269; Peter Brown, *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity, A.D. 200-1000* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 78-79. Even after the Council of Nicaea castigated the Quartodecimans as “Judaizers” and “dissenters”, there remained a lasting trace of the Quartodeciman date. A later document witnesses that the Quartodeciman practice did not completely disappear after the ecclesiastical decision at Nicaea and continued to affect later Christian orthodox ritual in terms of the reflective emphasis on the suffering and death of Jesus as the Paschal lamb.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

As I have argued in the previous four chapters, the authors who created temporal frames and markers did not do so in a vacuum. They actively created, employed, and changed inherited and shared temporalities in order to shape the interpretative perceptions of their past, present, and future. Writers also sought to render their temporal frames persuasive to other people and, in the process, to foster a strong sense of collective bonding among their intended audience. Christ believers participated in this project by imagining, employing, and constructing time and temporal frames to represent their perceptions of Jesus's life.

Ancient writers from every background developed temporal frames in ways that suited their rhetorical aims. Local, daily practices were highly valued, and employed to situate particular presents within a supposedly universal history. By recollecting and commemorating past events and heroic persons, writers rooted interpretative authority in temporal narratives, augmenting past events to develop a sense of the inevitability of the present and the future. Observations of heavenly bodies were said to determine ritual dates and also to offer a means of understanding the order of the human world, with its hierarchies of difference. Temporal construction therefore created group identity, and temporal frames were part and parcel of ongoing cultural negotiations between different groups. Claims about time, therefore, reflected a social worldview.

The discourse on temporality was a discourse concerned with the rhetorical role of the power to create, control and transcend time. The Gospel of John employed this discourse both to structure the narrative and to reinforce a particular understanding of the

sovereignty of God. The writer(s) intertwined temporal references to arrange past events in a way that shaped belief in Jesus and defined an approach to temporality designed to unite readers in a new understanding of divine time. The varied uses of temporal markers in this Gospel assert Jesus's power to transcend earthly power and also establish thematic connections between historic events and archaic pasts, created by temporal rhetoric. In John, the narrative strategy of temporality furthered the Gospel's claim that Christ was the mediator of absolute truth and power.

The rhetoric of temporality was re-fashioned in the Johannine letters through the construction of a shared, communal temporality that produced inter-communal tension to create a sense of bonding. 1 John invited its audience to identify with a common temporal orientation received at the beginning of time. The past therefore authorized the teachings of 1 John as eternally valid, stabilizing the author's version of the truth and justifying resistance to opposition. The conflicts described in 1 and 2 John intensify the ostensibly evil character of the opponents, who are labeled "Antichrist" and distanced from the audience. By depicting the contemporary Antichrist in light of warnings in past apocalyptic texts and the gospel traditions, the Johannine letters interpreted the Antichrist as the fulfillment of prophecy and as an allusion to an eschatological end time. The community's expectation of an end time also staked a claim against those who would deny the physicality of Jesus in time and space. By inventing these internal conflicts, 1 and 2 John exhorted the audience to adhere to their teachings.

Temporality remained a central strategy of differentiation among later Jesus followers as well. Debates over the celebration of Easter during the second century

demonstrate just how important temporality could be: a varied understanding of the timing of Jesus's death and resurrection contributed to diversity and rivalry, with time serving as a boundary between Christ believers, Jews, and other groups. The Christ believers later known as "Quartodecimans" employed time to create a porous and mobile boundary between themselves and others, including Jews, while also asserting their theological superiority over other Christ believers. Reinforcing the continuity of the Paschal mystery from the Exodus to Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection and adopting a Johannine chronology, Melito of Sardis attempted to refashion an identity for "Israel" as "those who see God." Reckoning the Jesus followers' Easter celebration according to Jewish/Johannine time memorialized the sacrifice of Jesus as the Paschal lamb. This argument also provided a typological warrant for a sacred past in the ritual present that bound individuals into a collective that waited expectantly for God's salvific works. Measuring time and persuading an audience to adopt it therefore fostered a sense of bonding.

I have argued that time was fundamental to how ancients, Jesus followers among them, articulated and re-fashioned identities. I have shown how ancient writers constructed time in continuous negotiation with, as well as resistance to, their broader literary and cultural contexts. Christian writers in particular used temporal frames to fashion stories (and histories) by linking the past to the present, which shaped their worldview and witnessed the changing character of their audiences. Christ believers, in turn imagined, explained, commemorated, and temporally negotiated their origin and significant events from the past to further their self-expression.

While the passage of time is so clearly beyond human control, ancient writers strategically used it in their own stories and practices to convey their anxieties about the world and devise ways to live within it. Temporal frames mediated the relationship between time and stories to coherently portray the past, present, and future, define groups according to their temporal allegiances, and imagine collective bonding. While the passage of time is so clearly beyond human control, ancient writers strategically used it in their own stories and practices to convey their anxieties about the world and devise ways to live within it. Temporal frames mediated the relationship between time and stories to coherently portray the past, present, and future, define groups according to their temporal allegiances, and imagine collective bonding. Just as Christ believers crafted, framed, and mapped time to create collective memory and define their communities, some modern readers might interpretatively employ the rhetorical dimension of temporality to (re)fashion generative meanings out of the (sacred) texts cited in this dissertation. As it was for the ancients, so it might still be. Temporality and its rhetoric remain central to how the readers who regard and nurture it as a productive mode of thinking legitimate their assertions, ground claims to authority, and make, receive, and dispute claims over our past, present, and future – today.

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