CHAPTER TWO

APOSYNAGŌGOS, THE BIRKAT HA-MINIM, AND CONTEMPORARY SYNAGOGUE STUDIES

2.1 An Initial Orientation

This chapter will examine how the classic and neo-Martynian traditions have approached, as well as consider how a post-Martynian alternative might approach, the ancient synagogue. Employing what Meyer calls an oblique pattern of inference, this chapter argues that the *aposynagōgos* passages are historically plausible *vis-à-vis* the matter of the ancient synagogue. If it can also be established via what Meyer calls the direct pattern of inference that John intended factuality and was plausibly knowledgeable on what he reports, then this plausibility (as well as plausibilities established on other matters, namely Christology and empire, in Chapters Three and Four) can be converted reasonably into probability, if not certainty, as it will have been demonstrated that John did intend to report factually about events of which he was plausibly knowledgeable. The implementation of this direct pattern of inference is reserved for Chapter Five.

2.2 Synagogue in Allegory: The Martynian Traditions

As seen in Chapter One, the Martynian tradition was pioneered by J. Louis Martyn’s *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel*, originally published in 1968 and now in its third (2003) edition. In *History and Theology*, Martyn argues for both the two-level reading strategy, and the integral position of the *Birkat ha-Minim* in the interpretation that issues from his implementation of this strategy. Section 2.2., and its sub-sections, will engage not

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only with Martyn’s seminal presentation of the two-level reading strategy in *History and Theology* and the work of several classic Martynian scholars such as Raymond E. Brown (1979),5 John Ashton (1991 and 2007),6 Paul N. Anderson (2006),7 Lance Byron Richey (2007),8 Joel Marcus (2009),9 and Marius Heemstra (2010),10 but also, and more importantly, critically evaluate and judge the relevance of the *Birkat ha-Minim* to the study of the *aposynagōgos* passages. It will also consider whether the neo-Martynian tradition offers a more adequate account of the *aposynagōgos* passages. It will be judged that neither tradition adequately accounts for the data of these passages.

### 2.2.1 Allegory and History: The Classic Martynian Tradition

Insofar as the *Birkat ha-Minim* was, and remains, central to the Martynian tradition, any post-Martynian alternative for reading the *aposynagōgos* passages must critically evaluate Martynian understandings of the *Birkat ha-Minim*. As such, our task here is not to render judgment on all matters relevant to the *Birkat ha-Minim*, but only on those matters that relate most immediately to the interpretation and analysis of the *aposynagōgos* passages. Given that the final judgment will be that the *Birkat ha-Minim* is wholly irrelevant for the proper interpretation and analysis of the *aposynagōgos* passages, it will be sufficient for us to demonstrate reasonable grounds for acceding to any of the following propositions: that the *Birkat ha-Minim* likely did not exist in the first century; that it did not function to exclude people from the synagogue; or, that it is insufficiently analogous to the *aposynagōgos* passages to warrant the conclusion that each stems from the same situation.

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