

Reading Texts and Reading Practice: Luke 4 in the Context of First-Century Synagogue Reading Practices

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Assumptions and inferences play a key role in the cross-cultural and historical study of all human endeavor. They allow us to fill holes in knowledge through either unconscious expectations or comparative and analogical judgements that lack direct proof, in order that we might compare and better understand times about which the historical record may not provide full witness. However, when the historical record includes contrary evidence or when analogical and comparative judgments cannot logically hold the weight of these assumptions, they must be questioned and ultimately rejected. A prime example of this need to reject past assumptions may be found in the study of Jesus's synagogue reading at Nazareth in Luke 4:16–22. While scholars have previously used later Rabbinic and even modern synagogue practices and socioeconomic realities in order to explain this pericope's historical context, better interpretation of contemporary literature and the profusion of relevant material evidence should force us to question many of these previous understandings of this text. However, when common activities such as reading are involved, it is often difficult to move beyond our own realities and to accept the different circumstances of readers in culturally and historically remote contexts.

In this study, I will seek to problematize many of the historical and sociocultural assumptions that have commonly been applied to the reading of this text, and to its witness regarding Jesus's reading of Isaiah in his hometown synagogue. Combining insights from recent studies on the institution of the synagogue, ancient reading practices and communities, and contemporary Jewish hermeneutical methods, I will argue that Jesus's actions fit with ancient synagogue expectations to a degree, though that some of Jesus's activity should be treated as an innovative use of these traditions. I will thus caution against generalizing all these actions as normative synagogue activity even within the narrower Second Temple Period in Galilee.

Jesus, Son of Joseph, and the Synagogue in Luke 4:16–22

After a brief summarizing preface that narrates Jesus's itinerant movement through the Galilee and teaching in the synagogues to much praise, the basic scene of the passage is set as Jesus returns to his hometown of Nazareth, where he is immediately said to go to the synagogue, "as was his custom" (κατὰ τὸ εἰωθὸς αὐτῷ), and he is promptly described as standing to read. He is handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah, which he unrolls and finds his place (ἀναπτύξας τὸ βιβλίον εὗρεν τὸν τόπον). Jesus reads a composite text that includes primarily Isa 61:1–2, though with an insertion from Isa 58:6 and multiple omissions. Jesus then returns the scroll and sits down. He then states to the gathering that the text is fulfilled in their hearing. The crowd is said to be astonished and impressed with his delivery of the exposition (καὶ πάντες ἐμαρτύρουν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐθαύμαζον ἐπὶ τοῖς λόγοις τῆς χάριτος τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ). Following this, however, we find much of the same negative reaction from the shorter versions of this tradition in Mark 6:2–6 and Matt 13:54–58. Scholars have rightly noted that the positioning of this passage is likely meant to summarize Jesus's teachings and their delivery during his Galilean period of ministry.¹ Thus, we should follow Jordan Ryan in affirming that this passage is a patently Lukan pericope that is nonetheless constrained by Luke's understanding of actual synagogue practice.²

Many scholars have, with little proof, argued that this reading would have been a component part—that of the reading of the *haftarah*—of a larger liturgy which likely matched that of the Rabbis in the Mishnah (e.g., m. Meg. 4:2; m. Sot. 7:7–8; m. Yoma. 7:1).³ This is nowhere better exemplified than in Shmuel Safrai's assertion that Jesus's standing up proves that he delivered the Torah reading as well, though it has been left out due to its lack of relevance for the

¹ François Bovon, *Luke 1*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 152; Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 203–204; John Nolland, *Luke 1–9:20* (WBC 35A; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1989), 191.

² Jordan J. Ryan, *The Role of the Synagogue in the Aims of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2017), 37–78.

³ Bovon, *Luke*, 153; Nolland, *Luke*, 195–196; Asher Finkel, "Jesus's Preaching in the Synagogue on the Sabbath," in *The Gospels and the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. Craig A. Evans and W. Richard Stegner (JSNTSup. 104; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994), 325–341 (here, 328); R. Steven Notley, "Jesus's Jewish Hermeneutical Method in the Nazareth Synagogue," in *Early Christian Literature and Intertextuality, Volume 2: Exegetical Studies*, ed. Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias (LNTS 392; London: T&T Clark International, 2009), 46–59 (here 47).

teaching narrated.⁴ Jesus's standing is also commonly generalized as the normative posture in the reading of Scriptures in Second Temple Period synagogues. However, as John Nolland has shown, the standing/sitting, being handed/handing, and unrolling/rolling the scroll in this passage form a verbal inclusio around the reading, which would likely have been more of a literary indication of completion.⁵ Furthermore, despite the fact that all of the elements of a Rabbinic liturgy (including blessings, the Shema, comparable readings, etc.) have been found at Qumran and most *haftarah* texts may be found in the works of Philo of Alexandria,⁶ we have no proof that these elements of liturgy had widespread institutional usage at this time. Indeed, as scholars have generally accepted, the Rabbis would not have any substantive authority in synagogues until the third or fourth centuries CE, which is evident in their distaste for the institution in their earliest mentions of it.⁷ As both Anders Runesson and Stefan

⁴ Shmuel Safrai, "Synagogue and Sabbath," *Jerusalem Perspective* 23 (1989): 8–10. Likewise, Carl Mosser unconvincingly claims that the use of "he began to say" (ἤρξατο δὲ λέγειν) in 4:21 proves that other texts were read as well; see Carl Mosser, "Torah Instruction, Discussion, and Prophecy in First-Century Synagogues," in *Christian Origins and Hellenistic Judaism: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts (TENTS 10; Leiden: Brill, 2013), 523–551 (here 540).

⁵ Nolland, *Luke*, 191.

⁶ Regarding Qumran, see Daniel K. Falk, "Qumran and the Synagogue Liturgy," in *Ancient Synagogues: From Its Origins until 200 CE*, ed. Birger Olssen and Magnus Zetterholm (CBNTS 39; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell International, 2003), 404–434. Subsequently, Jeremy Penner has shown quite convincingly, in my opinion, that the Shema (Deut 6:5–7) had not yet gained wide acceptance as a prayer to be recited, despite some instances of its copying on scrolls and *tefillin*; Jeremy Penner, *Patterns of Daily Prayer in Second Temple Period Judaism* (STDJ 104; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 54–67, 98–99. Regarding Philo's use of the *Haftarah*, see Naomi G. Cohen, *Philo's Scriptures: Citations from the Prophets and Writings: Evidence for a Haftarah Cycle in Second Temple Judaism* (JSJSup 123; Leiden: Brill, 2007). However, Jutta Leonhardt-Balzer has correctly challenged Cohen and others who see common use of texts that would later be included in the *Haftarah* as reflecting institutional traditions at this time, see Jutta Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship in Philo of Alexandria* (TSAJ 84; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 90.

⁷ See Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 135–173; Anders Runesson, *The Origins of the Synagogue: A Socio-Historical Study* (CBNTS 37; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell International, 2001), 193–235; idem, "Synagogues without Rabbis or Christians? Ancient Institutions Beyond Normative Discourses," *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 38.2 (2017): 159–172. While some parallels exist, the fact that this is the only unambiguous first-century instance of this practice is problematic for this assumption. As Seth Schwartz has illustrated well, the later

Reif have convincingly argued, the reading of sacred texts is the primary liturgical element of the institution of the synagogue in the Second Temple Period.⁸ It is the only performative element with any demonstrable supra-local diffusion in synagogues at this time.

The opening of this passage states that Jesus attended his hometown synagogue, as was his custom. Scholars have generally taken this statement to reflect Jesus's religious devotion and to represent the pious upbringing he received in his hometown.⁹ However, given the preceding summary, which stressed Jesus's teaching programme, we should question whether Jesus's regular synagogue attendance or his actions therein are being referred to as 'his custom'. Contrary to its usual English translation, the synagogue participation and the reading are spoken of in the same sentence, likely in apposition, as relating to Jesus's customary way of operating in the synagogue, and in a way that connects the language of this passage to Jesus's commissioning in 3:21–4:13.¹⁰ Thus, we are best served in seeing the content and delivery of Jesus's teaching as that which was his custom.

Howard Clark Kee has argued that, among other things, an illiterate carpenter speaking in a sacred assembly simply does not make sense and should cause us to question how this could be a sacred institution in the first century CE.¹¹

Rabbinic synagogues not only had little continuity with the synagogues of the first century, they actively subverted the practices and understandings of the previous, independent institutions, which is enough to place any apparent parallels into question. See Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 BCE to 640 CE* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 215–239, 275–289. This lack of continuity led, for example, to Arnaldo Momigliano incorrectly arguing that Josephus knew nothing of the synagogue as an institution because the historian does not provide the expected normative description of a Rabbinic synagogue; see Arnaldo Momigliano, "What Flavius Josephus Did Not See," in *Essays on Ancient and Modern Judaism*, ed. Silvia Berti, trans. Maura Masella-Gayley (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 67–78 (here 70–74).

⁸ Runesson, *Origins*, 193–196, 213–232; Stefan C. Reif, "Prayer in Early Judaism," in *Prayer from Tobit to Qumran*, ed. Renate Egger-Wenzel and Jeremy Corley (DCL; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 439–464 (here 442). For later synagogues, see also Zeev Weiss, "Actors and Theaters, Rabbis and Synagogues: The Role of Public Performances in Shaping Communal Behavior in Late Antique Palestine," *JAJ* 8.2 (2017): 271–279.

⁹ E.g., Finkel, "Jesus's Preaching," 326; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Gospel of Luke* (Sacra Pagina 3. Collegeville: Liturgical, 1991), 78.

¹⁰ Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 203.

¹¹ Howard Clark Kee, "The Transformation of the Synagogue after 70 CE: Its Import for Early Christianity," *NTS* 36 (1990): 1–24.

However, the assertions and conclusions of Kee's study were systematically refuted in the following decade.¹² While the factuality of this critique has been questioned, the greater reason for rejecting this view of the synagogue "service" is because it anachronistically assumes the expectations of Rabbinic and modern synagogues on what was a fundamentally a civic institution in Galilee and Judea, which had just as much political importance as religious sanctity. These public synagogues were not controlled by priests or scribes, but rather were led by *archisunagōgoi* and the town *boulē*. In this context, public and political disputation were what we would expect,¹³ and claims to messiahship were deeply political in the context of first century CE Palestine. These institutions were translocal, in that they were geographically diffuse with some shared traits, but in ways that fit their local purposes and traditions with no supralocal authority structures to regulate them.¹⁴ This translocal, civic element also led to the population of the town forming their own reading and textual communities with limited inter-synagogal connections.¹⁵

We must therefore take care not to expect too much homogeneity in synagogues at this time. Synagogues appear to have developed out of multiple assembly traditions, including Graeco-Roman associations, local temples, city-

¹² See esp. Richard E. Oster, "Supposed Anachronisms in Luke's Use of ΣΥΝΑΓΩΓΗ: A Rejoinder to H. C. Kee," *NTS* 39 (1993): 178–208; John S. Kloppenborg, "Dating Theodotus," *JJS* 51.2 (2000): 243–280. Kee made two attempts to counter Oster's work, though the results have been viewed as generally unconvincing; see Howard Clark Kee, "The Changing Meaning of the Synagogue: A Response to Richard Oster," *NTS* 40 (1994): 281–283; idem, "Defining the First Century CE Synagogue," *NTS* 41 (1995): 481–500.

¹³ Jordan J. Ryan, "Jesus and Synagogue Disputes: Recovering the Institutional Context of Luke 13:10–17," *CBQ* 79 (2017): 41–59.

¹⁴ See Clemens Greiner and Patrick Sakdapolrak, "Translocality: Concepts, Applications, and Emerging Research Perspectives," *Geography Compass* 7.5 (2013): 373–384. Greiner and Sakdapolrak define translocality as a sociogeographic phenomenon that integrates "fluidity and discontinuity associated with mobilities, movements and flows on the one hand with notions of fixity, groundedness and situatedness in particular settings on the other" (376).

¹⁵ See Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 139–145; Runesson, *Origins*, 213–223; Ryan, *Role of the Synagogue*, 37–78; Samuel Rocca, "The Purposes and Functions of the Synagogue in Late Second Temple Judaea: Evidence from Josephus and Archeological Investigation," in *Flavius Josephus: Interpretations and History*, ed. Jack Pastor, Pnina Stern, and Menahem Mor (JSJSup. 146; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 296–313.

gate meetings, and *ekklesiasteria*.¹⁶ By the first century, many of these traditions had begun to coalesce into *sunagōgoi* and *proseuchai*. It was only later, following the First Jewish Revolt, that authors such as Flavius Josephus and later the early Rabbis began to use this pre-existent institution as a singular rallying point for the now landless Jewish people.¹⁷ As Tessa Rajak astutely argues, when we simply seek out that which looks like a modern synagogue, we will merely reconstruct a modern synagogue; we must eschew such “synagogue maximalism.”¹⁸ We must instead reconstruct a descriptive, phenomenological picture of the various assembly traditions that might be categorized as official Jewish institutions.

In the discussion below, I will seek to address these issues in two distinct sections. First, I will address the realities and expectations of public reading in first century CE Galilee and the wider Roman East. I will pay special attention to the availability and status of texts, reading community formation, and ritual practice in reading. Second, I will address the exegetical and hermeneutical strategies of Jesus in their first-century context. Special focus will be placed on actualizing exegesis,¹⁹ hybrid or harmonized texts, and the place of memory.

Reading Communities, Practices, and Competencies in the Galilean Synagogue

As William A. Johnson has persuasively argued, reading is not merely a neurophysiological act of cognition in which we either participate (literate) or do not (illiterate). It is socially and culturally contextualized; it is a complex, social

¹⁶ See Runesson, *Origins*; Margaret H. Williams, “The Structure of Roman Jewry Reconsidered – Were the Synagogues of Ancient Rome Entirely Homogenous?” *ZPE* 104 (1994): 129–141; Andrew R. Krause, “Diaspora Synagogues, Leontopolis, and the Other Jewish Temples of Egypt in the Histories of Josephus,” *Journal of Ancient History* 4.1 (2016): 88–112.

¹⁷ Lester L. Grabbe, “Synagogues in Pre-70 Palestine: A Re-Assessment,” *JTS* 39.2 (1988): 401–410; Nadav Sharon, “Setting the Stage: The Effects of the Roman Conquest and the Loss of Sovereignty,” in *Was 70 CE a Watershed in Jewish History? On Jews and Judaism Before and After the Destruction of the Second Temple*, ed. Daniel R. Schwartz and Zeev Weiss (AJEC 78; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 415–445; Andrew R. Krause, *Synagogues in the Works of Flavius Josephus: Rhetoric, Spatiality, and First-Century Jewish Institutions* (AJEC 97; Leiden: Brill, 2017).

¹⁸ Tessa Rajak, “The Ancient Synagogue,” *SPhila* 15 (2003): 100–108.

¹⁹ “Actualizing exegesis” here refers to the application of scriptural prophecies to contemporary events with the expectation that the individual or group is illustrating their immediate fulfillment through their authoritative reading of the text.

system.²⁰ According to Johnson, different “reading events” were occasioned when either a given group read a new text or when a common text was read in new contexts; thus, a “reading event” is contingent upon the interaction between the assembled “reading community” and the text that is read.²¹ Cultural elements such as class, status, and region will affect reading events, and none of these cultural traits remain static, as

...there are important differences that arise in communities as we move in time and place, even among communities in the same time and place. The ‘reading system,’ that is, turns out to be an ever-changing thing; like all social systems, the details and even the structure of interactions are subject to continual negotiation by the community. Despite a general sense of continuity, the ways that people interact with texts are no more stable than other social conventions.²²

Thus, generalizing meaning and practices in reading among even culturally proximate groups must be done carefully. Following Johnson, Joseph Howley has gone one step further in arguing that even within specific reading communities we find that different individuals will have vastly different textual encounters within these cultural constraints. According to Howley, the place of the individual as interpreting the text and undertaking specific reading practices must also be taken into account, especially as many of the changes over time in reading communities are the result of such innovative readings and the production of new knowledge.²³

In a recent article, Mladen Popović surveys the insights of William A. Johnson and other classicists who study ancient reading habits and communities, and he applies them to various Second Temple Period Jewish reading

²⁰ William A. Johnson, *Readers and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire: A Study of Elite Communities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 9–14; idem, “Toward a Sociology of Reading in Classical Antiquity,” *AJP* 121.4 (2000): 593–627.

²¹ Johnson, “Sociology,” 602.

²² William A. Johnson, “Constructing Elite Reading Communities in the High Empire,” in *Ancient Literacies*, ed. William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 320–330 (here 321).

²³ Joseph A. Howley, *Aulus Gellius and Roman Reading Culture: Text, Presence, and Imperial Knowledge in the Noctes Atticae* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 66–111.

communities, especially those represented at Qumran.²⁴ Following Brian Stock, Popović speaks of the *Yahad* movement as a “textual community,” which are “micro-societies organized around the common, shared understanding of texts.”²⁵ While the provenance of the documents at Qumran is often secondary, we are left with various texts either compiled, copied, or even written by members of this group which defined itself through continual study of their sacred texts (1QS VI 6–8).

But what has Qumran to do with Nazareth and its synagogue? Whether we think of the groups that collected, copied, and wrote the so-called Dead Sea Scrolls as a movement, a community, or even a synagogue themselves, their textual fervor and the place of the Jewish Scriptures are often matched by certain Jewish writers when speaking of synagogue meetings. For example, in *Hyp* 7.13 Philo of Alexandria speaks of a priest or elder reading and interpreting the holy Law, “point by point,” while the audience remains silent. Likewise, in *V.Mos.* 2.215, he refers to Sabbath meetings as places in which Torah is read and the “philosophy of the fathers” is expounded. In Philo’s *Somn.* 2.127, a non-Jewish official speaks of the synagogue participants reading their holy books and expounding the unclear points in order to learn their “ancient philosophy.” Clothing these traditions in philosophical language was a natural part of Philo’s programme of cultural hybridity.²⁶ In perhaps his clearest presentation of scriptural reading events in the synagogue, Philo states, “they [i.e., the Jewish people] had prayer halls (*προσευχὰς*) and met in them, especially on the Sabbath,

²⁴ Mladen Popović, “Reading, Writing, and Memorizing Together: Reading Culture in Ancient Judaism and the Dead Sea Scrolls in a Mediterranean Context,” *DSD* 24 (2017): 447–470.

²⁵ Popović, “Reading,” 450; see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh to Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 522.

²⁶ See Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship*, 90–97; *eadem*, “What Were They Doing in Second Temple Synagogues? Philo and the *προσευχή*,” in *Synagogues in the Hellenistic-Roman Period: New Finds—New Theories—New Reconstructions*, ed. Lutz Doering and Andrew R. Krause (SIJD; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Academic, forthcoming). On cultural hybridity, see Homi K. Bhaba, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 102–122; James M. G. Barclay, “The Empire Writes Back: Josephan Rhetoric in Flavian Rome,” in *Flavius Josephus and Flavian Rome*, ed. Jonathan Edmondson, Steve Mason, and James Rives (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 315–332 (esp. 317–318). “Hybridity” allowed the conquered to conflate their culture with the dominant culture in a way that seeks to destabilize power imbalances through the use of the dominant culture’s sources and symbols of power against them.

when they receive public instruction in their national philosophy” (*Legat.* 156).²⁷ In a very similar text, though not speaking of the synagogue or prayer hall specifically, Flavius Josephus claims that “every week men should desert their other occupations and assemble (*συλλέγω*) to listen to the Law and to obtain a thorough and accurate knowledge of it, a practice which all other legislators seem to have neglected” (*C.Ap.* 2.175).²⁸ As with the above-listed works of Philo, Josephus is here defending the Jewish people against what he views as slanderous lies about their status as a rebellious nation. Instead of being a lawless people, Josephus argues that the textual knowledge that results from this constant institutional reading of their laws means that the Jews are the most law-abiding of all peoples by Roman standards. In contrast to other ethnic groups who never know their law until they have broken it, Josephus goes so far as to claim that a common Jew is able to recite the entirety of the Law faster than they might recall their own names (*C.Ap.* 2.176–78; cf. *AJ* 16.43).²⁹ It is notable that Josephus here utilizes the same ideals, including those that speak of the Jewish reading community, as he does for the Essenes, his exemplary community of Jews in his earlier *BJ* 2.119–66.³⁰ It is also notable that, as in Luke 4 and *Legat.* 156, such reading is specifically understood as taking place on the Sabbath.³¹ In the various Roman *acta* of *AJ* 13–16, Josephus quotes several decrees and letters that were purportedly written by local and imperial rulers and that report special allowances given to the Jewish people. In every letter or decree that speaks of synagogues and other assembly places being built for Jewish groups, these places are specifically spoken of in relation to the ancestral customs and laws of the Jewish people, which are to be taught there.³² In all of these cases, if we are able to look past the considerable hyperbole, we find that many Jewish writers believed that their entire

²⁷ Ramsey, LCL.

²⁸ Translation from Thackeray, LCL; see also John M. G. Barclay, *Against Apion* (FJTC 10; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 101.

²⁹ See John M. G. Barclay, “The Politics of Contempt: Judaeans and Egyptians in Josephus’ *Against Apion*,” in *Negotiating Diaspora: Jewish Strategies in the Roman Empire*, ed. John M. G. Barclay (LSTS 45; London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 109–127; idem, “Constructing Judean Identity after 70 CE: A Study of Josephus’ *Against Apion*,” in *Identity and Interaction in the Ancient Mediterranean: Jews, Christians, and Others*, ed. Zeba A. Crook and Philip A. Harland (New Testament Monographs 4; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2007), 99–112.

³⁰ See Krause, *Synagogues*, 207–220.

³¹ Contra Heather A. McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue: The Question of Sabbath Worship in Ancient Judaism* (RGRW 122; Leiden: Brill, 1994).

³² E.g. *AJ* 14.213–216; 235, 256–258, 259–261; 16.162–165; See Krause, *Synagogues*, 55–87.

ethnic and national body was defined by a compunction to hear and to learn their national law, the Torah, and that places of assembly were needed for the study of these laws.

In terms of inscriptional evidence, we may turn to the Theodotus Inscription (*CIJ* 2.1404), a Greek inscription found on the southern slope of the Ophel during the City of David excavations in 1913–14. It can reliably be dated to the first century CE.³³ It states,

Theodotos, son of Vettenus, priest and ruler of the synagogue, son of a ruler of the synagogue, grandson of a ruler of the synagogue, built the synagogue for the reading of the law and the teaching of the commandments, and also the guest chamber and the upper rooms and the ritual pools of water for accommodating those needing them from abroad, which his fathers, the elders, and Simonides founded.

It is notable here that the first mentioned activities for which the synagogue was built were the reading of the Law and teaching of the commandments. Despite being constructed in Palestine, this would not have been the seat of civic power and it is clearly a priestly, family-run establishment, so we should reject it as a potential public synagogue in favor of an association synagogue, following Kloppenborg, Runesson, and Ryan.³⁴

In all of the above mentioned texts, we find that the public reading of the Law was of prime importance in relation to the synagogue, even if none of them give any substantive detail about how these readings took place.³⁵ Even when we account for the apologetical aims of Josephus and Philo, the unifying theme of synagogues that we find in literature from this period is that of the reading and learning of the Jewish Law. While the terminology for both the law and the institution may vary widely, as indeed do the other activities discussed, this literature points to an institution dedicated to the Jewish sacred Scriptures and their instruction. It should not be surprising then, that this is precisely what we

³³ See Kloppenborg, “Dating,” 243–280.

³⁴ John S. Kloppenborg, “The Theodotus Synagogue Inscription and the Problem of the Synagogue Buildings,” in *Jesus and Archaeology*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 236–282; Runesson, *Origins*, 226–231; Ryan, *Role of the Synagogue*, 50.

³⁵ For summary and more detailed connections, see Brian J. Wright, *Communal Reading in the Time of Jesus: A Window into Early Christian Reading Practices* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 102–103; Lawrence H. Schiffman, “The Early History of Public Reading of the Torah,” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction during the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Steven Fine (London: Routledge, 1999), 44–56.

find in the ever-growing material record: an institution that is literally built for discussion. As James Strange has illustrated well, the many variations on the theme of stepped benches on 2–4 walls and pillars in between these benches that we find in Gamla, Masada, Qiryat Sefer, Modi'in (Um el-Umdan), and Herodium seem to point to discussion and teaching as the primary purpose for these public buildings in the Land.³⁶ Even in more recently excavated synagogues such as Khirbet Majduliyya, Khirbet Qana, Magdala, and Tel Rekhesh, the outer benches with central pillars points to a premium on dialogical interaction and performance, even over visual performance, which would have been obscured by the pillars.

Another datum that leads in this direction is the recent discovery of one or two potential reading podiums at Magdala/Taricheae. Not long after the discovery of the so-called Magdala Stone in the Magdala Archaeological Project, Mordechai Aviam opined that the corners of top register of this ashlar stone may have held a wooden podium for the scrolls that were being read.³⁷ Aviam cites both Nehemiah 8 and Luke 4:17, both of which include the standing reading of sacred texts and the former speaking of a wooden podium, in order to support this claim. Subsequent scholars have questioned this purported usage, especially as it would obscure much of the imagery on the upper register, imagery which Aviam himself viewed as being the primary data of the find.³⁸ Unfortunately, the

³⁶ James F. Strange, "Archaeology and Ancient Synagogues up to about 200 CE," in *Ancient Synagogues: From Its Origins until 200 CE*, ed. Birger Olssen and Magnus Zetterholm (CBNTS 39; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell International, 2003), 37–62. This is acknowledged by Green (Green, *Gospel of Luke*, 209), which is somewhat unique amongst commentators. For a similar look at contemporary public institutions in the Greek world, see Barbara Burrell, "Reading, Hearing, and Looking at Ephesos," in *Ancient Literacies*, ed. William A. Johnson and Holt N. Parker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 69–95.

³⁷ Mordechai Aviam, "The Decorated Stone from the Synagogue at Migdal: A Holistic Interpretation and a Glimpse into the Life of Galilean Jews at the Time of Jesus," *NovT* 55.3 (2013): 205–220; idem, "The Book of Enoch and the Galilean Archaeology and Landscape," in *Parables of Enoch: A Paradigm Shift*, ed. James H. Charlesworth and Darrell L. Bock (Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related studies Series 11; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 159–169.

³⁸ E.g., Steven Fine, "From Synagogue Furnishing to Media Event: The Magdala Ashlar," *Ars Judaica* 13 (2017): 27–38 (esp. 31); Judith H. Newman, "Contextualizing the Magdala Synagogue Stone in Its Place: An Exercise in Liturgical Imagination," in *Synagogues in the Hellenistic-Roman Period: New Finds—New Theories—New Reconstructions*, ed., Lutz Doering and Andrew R. Krause (SIJD; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Academic, forthcoming).

slant on the top of the stone and the faintness of the proposed space also make this argument difficult to affirm. Alternatively, Anders Runesson has identified the raised ashlar stone in the centre of the so-called “study room” as a scroll podium, because of its deep grooves that would have facilitated the rolling and unrolling of a scroll, though for a kneeling reader.³⁹ Unlike Aviam, Runesson questions the normative nature of reading while standing that is found only in Luke 4:17 prior to the Rabbinic literature of the third century CE.

Likewise, we find scant material evidence for scrolls in the synagogues. While Torah shrines only became common in the third or fourth century CE, the extant synagogues of both Gamla (first century CE) and Nabratein (second century CE) contain potential arks. The former is ambiguous, while the latter had a decorative pediment placed above it in the early fourth century CE, which points to the likelihood that this structure was understood as a Torah shrine, though we cannot be sure when this understanding was established.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, neither of these possible Torah shrines was found to contain scrolls. We do, however, have one first-century CE synagogue that did contain scrolls: Masada. During the Masada excavations, portions of two scrolls, one of Deuteronomy and one of Ezekiel, were found buried in the floor of a room adjacent to the synagogue. Levine opines that this room was likely used as a *genizah* by the fleeing rebels for their synagogue texts.⁴¹ While some might add the Ein-Gedi Leviticus Scroll to this conversation, Ada Yardeni’s first–second centuries CE dating of this scroll has been vigorously and conclusively challenged by Drew Longacre, who dates it to the third–sixth centuries CE.⁴² Thus, we find very little proof of scriptural libraries or arks in these public buildings.

The two texts found at Masada, however, raise another more important set of questions for our present purposes: how many scrolls do we expect to find

³⁹ Anders Runesson, private conversation.

⁴⁰ Eric M. Meyers, “The Torah Shrine in the Ancient Synagogue: Another Look at the Evidence,” in *Jews, Christians, and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction in the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Steven Fine (London: Routledge, 1999), 201–223 (esp. 210–213).

⁴¹ Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 61–62; Shemaryahu Talmon and Yigael Yadin, ed., *Masada IV: Hebrew Fragments from Masada* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1999), 17–19, 51–75.

⁴² Drew Longacre, “Reconsidering the Date of the En-Gedi Leviticus Scroll (EGLev): Exploring the Limitations of the Comparative-Typological Paleographic Method,” *Textus* 27.1 (2018): 44–84; cf. Michael Segal, Emanuel Tov, William Brent Seales, Clifford Seth Parker, Pnina Shor, and Yosef Porath, with an appendix by Ada Yardeni, “An Early Leviticus Scroll from En-Gedi: Preliminary Publication,” *Textus* 26 (2016): 1–30 (here, 20).

in such synagogues and how extensive would they be? It is often implicitly assumed that synagogues at this time would contain a significant portion of the Jewish Scriptures, if not all of them. Even if we set aside the considerable issues of canon during this period,⁴³ the issue of archival holdings is significant for understanding the synagogue reading communities of the Galilee. Few texts give any notion of such collections. In Josephus' *Vita* 134, Jesus, the ἄρχων of Tiberias, is spoken of as holding "a copy of the Laws of Moses" (χεῖρας τοὺς Μωυσέως νόμους)⁴⁴ as he leads the assembly, with the clear implication that possession of this scroll buttresses his authority. *BJ* 2.228 speaks of the (singular) book (βιβλίον) of law being taken from an unnamed village in order to be burned as punishment after bandits attacked a slave of Caesar and took his belongings. Likewise, the scroll of "sacred Law(s)" from the synagogue in Caesarea Maritima was removed in *BJ* 2.292, which speaks of the Caesarean Jews fleeing violence in front of the synagogue. Intriguingly, this scroll is not only spoken of as the holy laws, but is also treated as a holy, cultic object by the Roman authorities, who arrested the

⁴³ For more general treatments of this issue, see Steve Mason, "Josephus and his Twenty-Two Book Canon," in *The Canon Debate*, ed. Lee M. MacDonald and J.A. Sanders (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2002), 110–127; William Schniedewind, *How the Bible Became a Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Emanuel Tov, "Some Thoughts About the Diffusion of Biblical Manuscripts," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Transmission of Tradition and Production of Texts*, ed. Sarianna Metso, Hindy Najman, and Eileen Schuller (STDJ 92; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 151–172; Eugene Ulrich, "The Evolutionary Production and Transmission of the Scriptural Books," in *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 209–225; David M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 153–179; Timothy H. Lim, *The Formation of the Jewish Canon* (ABRL; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 17–34. Lim notes the danger of reading too much into statements such as "Writings" and the "Prophets" in Second Temple literature. He also argues that we must rethink linear theories regarding the formation of a Jewish canon and the idea of a canonical library in the Temple. Carr notes the issue of power and subversion were at work in the area of delimiting authoritative literature during the Second Temple period, with many groups rejecting the centrality of Jerusalem through the production of rival texts and actualizing interpretations of the mutually agreed upon texts. For Carr, the Hasmonean monarchy was the watershed period for the canonization process among mainstream Jews. More recently, Michael Satlow has argued that the Judaeans and Alexandrian Jews progressed towards such clear demarcations of canon at different rates, with the translation of the LXX leading the Alexandrians to hold a firmer concept of "Scripture" as over against the ongoing Judaeans primacy of the ancestral customs until the beginning of the first century CE. See Michael L. Satlow, *How the Bible Became Holy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 136–170.

⁴⁴ Thackeray, LCL.

Jewish leaders for removing sacred implements from the city.⁴⁵ As inscribed objects, cultic books held high levels of iconic and ritual significance, which Martin Jaffee identifies as one of the reasons for their scarcity.⁴⁶ He argues that in the pre-Rabbinic period, we should only expect a small number of texts being taught to very few individuals, as the few scribal schools and centers would not have been able to produce sufficient texts for the entirety of Palestine.⁴⁷ Beyond these economic and labor considerations, one had to deal with the authority of the scribes, who were able to copy sacred texts, and this gave them power as the conduit through which the Scriptures were made accessible.⁴⁸ Scribes were one of the few groups who obtained some level of upward mobility, even though rote copying was considered laborious and unaristocratic.⁴⁹

We should also acknowledge that the possession of a singular Torah Scroll did not necessitate the entirety of the Torah as we know it being contained in that scroll. The longest “biblical” scroll we have from this period contained the entirety of Isaiah but would be entirely insufficient to contain the Torah as a whole. Such “deluxe scrolls,” as they are called by Emmanuel Tov,⁵⁰ would be extremely expensive, and we should thus question whether remote fishing towns

⁴⁵ It should be noted, however, that this is still far from the Mishnaic teaching that the entire synagogue is holy based on proximity to the Torah scrolls (m. Meg. 3.1–3), as the synagogue itself is said to be defiled, and the Law only seems to be removed to save it from harm. See Krause, *Synagogues*, 185–187.

⁴⁶ Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism 200 BCE–400 CE* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 16.

⁴⁷ Jaffee, *Torah*, 20–22. See also Pieter J. J. Botha, “New Testament Texts in the Context of Reading Practices of the Roman Period: The Role of Memory and Performance,” *Scriptura* 90 (2005): 621–640 (esp. 626).

⁴⁸ Chris Keith, *The Pericope Adulterae, the Gospel of John, and the Literacy of Jesus* (NTT 38; Leiden: Brill 2009), 94, 117. The scribes became text-brokers, who mediated holy texts and therefore held authority through their control of the texts; this makes Jesus’s “out-interpreting” of the scribes and Pharisees even more noteworthy, as even Jesus is shown as grapho-literate in John 8:6, 8.

⁴⁹ E.g. Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.1.28–29, “The art of writing well and quickly is not unimportant for our purpose, though it is generally disregarded by persons of quality. Writing is of the utmost importance in the study which we have under consideration and by its means alone can true and deeply rooted proficiency be obtained.” (Butler, LCL).

⁵⁰ Emanuel Tov, *Scribal Practices and Approaches Reflected in the Texts Found in the Judean Desert* (STDJ 54; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 125–129.

in the north would own one, let alone several.⁵¹ We should expect instead excerpted texts (e.g., 4QTestimonia), harmonized Torah texts (e.g., 4QPentateuch^{a-c}), or a combination of the two forms (e.g., 4QDeutⁿ) such as we find at Qumran.⁵² Thus, we should not expect that the public synagogue at Nazareth had much more than the Isaiah Scroll, and we should not even assume that they had the entire book; it is noteworthy that the two primary texts that Jesus quoted were both from Trito-Isaiah. Even in larger cities, such resources would be scant; while Acts 13:13–15 speaks of reading from the law and prophets (a noted rarity in the Second Temple literary record), this would more likely have been a comment on the richness of the synagogue’s archival holdings rather than a statement of normative synagogue reading practices.

In sum, the idealized picture of the Jews as a nation of elite readers and students of law is problematized by the scarcity of resources, especially in Galilean fishing villages and towns. Synagogue structures were purpose-built for study and disputation, but few participants could have read from the limited texts available. In this context, Jesus’s reading as it is presented in Luke 4:16–22 illustrates mastery over a small spectrum of texts in a context defined by reading and dialogical exposition, though with little indication of normative performative practice beyond the reading itself. The synagogue was a public, civic institution in which a so-called “craftsman” or “peasant” who had shown facility for such texts could

⁵¹ See Charlotte Hempel, “Reflections on Literacy, Textuality, and Community in the Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Is there a Text in this Cave? Studies in the Textuality of the Dead Sea Scrolls in Honour of George J. Brooke*, ed. Ariel Feldman, Maria Cioată, and Charlotte Hempel (STDJ 119; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 69–82 (esp. 75–79).

⁵² Popović, “Reading,” 462. Regarding excerpted and harmonized texts, see Esther Eshel, “4QDeutⁿ – A Text That Has Undergone Harmonistic Editing,” *HUCA* 62 (1991): 117–154; Emmanuel Tov, “Excerpted and Abbreviated Biblical Texts from Qumran,” *RevQ* 16.4 (1995): 581–600; Brent A. Strawn, “Excerpted Manuscripts from Qumran: Their Significance for the Textual History of the Hebrew Bible and the Socio-Religious History of the Qumran Community and its Literature,” in *The Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Vol. 2, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Qumran Community*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2006), 107–167; Stephen Reed, “Physical Features of Excerpted Torah Texts,” in *Jewish and Christian Scripture as Artifact and Canon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and H. Daniel Zacharias (LSTS 70; London: T. & T. Clark International, 2009), 82–104. On the unique issues of 4QPentateuch (formerly 4QReworked Pentateuch), see Molly M. Zahn, “The Problem of Characterizing the 4QReworked Pentateuch Manuscripts: Bible, Rewritten Bible, or None of the Above?” *DSD* 153 (2008): 315–339; Andrew B. Perrin, “Towards a New Edition of 4QReworked Pentateuch (4Q158): Text, Translation, Variants and Notes,” in *Celebrating the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Canadian Collection*, ed. Jean Duhaime, Peter Flint, and Kyung Baek (SBLEJL 30; Atlanta: SBL Press, 2011), 59–76.

conceivably be called upon to read. This translocal institution had little in the way of hierarchical or supralocal structure, though clear expectations of public readings. Jesus's familiarity in town opens the door to the reading, though also occasions increased surprise at the claims of his actualizing exegesis.

Jesus's Exegetical Practices in Second Temple Context

As noted above, Jesus's actualizing exegesis fits well with his previous messianic and prophetic presentation in the opening sections of this gospel. Luke 4:15 makes clear that Jesus was already beginning to travel amongst local synagogues in order to teach. Thus, while this was likely not Jesus's first public reading and teaching event, it is presented at the outset of Luke's presentation of Jesus's ministry as a representative teaching with several correspondences to Jesus's messianic and prophetic presentation in the introductory sections of the gospel. As written in Luke, Jesus reads,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18–19, NRSV)

In this section, I will contextualize the exegetical practices of Jesus as he makes these claims to exceptional status; in so doing, I will note that the hybrid text and expository practices are not what occasion the crowd's ire. Quite the contrary, the crowd is said to marvel at Jesus's exegetical and performative virtuosity.

As we seek to explicate Jesus's reading practices, we are met immediately with the issue of language. While we know that some Greek reading was common in Palestine, we would expect a synagogue in the Land to include readings from Hebrew or Aramaic texts.⁵³ This is complicated by Luke's own "septuagintalizing" language, which ambiguates semiticisms in the gospel's Koinē.⁵⁴ Thus the language being read has been one of the key discussions, with scholars such as J.A. Sanders claiming a LXX text, while others such as Steven Notley have claimed a

⁵³ For focused, if somewhat dated, treatments of this issue, see Emmanuel Tov, "The Text of the Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek Bible Used in the Ancient Synagogues," in *Ancient Synagogues: From Its Origins until 200 CE*, ed. Birger Olsson and Magnus Zetterholm (CBNTS 39; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wicksell International, 2003), 237–259; Jonathan M. Watt, "Language Pragmatism in a Multilingual Religious Community," in *Ancient Synagogues*, 277–297.

⁵⁴ See Nolland, *Luke*, 192.

Hebrew original. According to Sanders, Luke follows the LXX verbatim, with the exception of omitting the fourth of the six colons in 61:1 and reading κηρῶσαι rather than καλεσαί at the beginning of 61:2.⁵⁵ Given the tendentiousness of these changes, Sanders claims that the base-text should be understood as the Greek Bible. Additionally, Darrell Bock notes that the Lukan text, like the LXX, twice leaves out renderings of the Tetragrammaton.⁵⁶

Conversely, Steven Notley has challenged this identification in a pair of recent studies. According to Notley, the text's preservation of certain "non-Septuagintal Hebraisms" confirms Hebrew sources not found in the other Synoptic Gospels. Two phrases which particularly confirm this for Notley are "the book of the prophet Isaiah" (βιβλίον τοῦ προφήτου Ἰσαΐου) in 4:17, which is a markedly Semitic way to reference a book, and the verbal link between the MT version of Isa 61:2 and 58:5–7 with "the Lord's favor" (רצון ליהוה), which is not comparable in the LXX.⁵⁷ Jesus's alteration of his source text is threefold according to Notley.⁵⁸ He omits "to bind the broken-hearted" and "the day of vengeance of our God" from Isa 61:1–2. He also inserts "and let the oppressed go free" from 58:6. As Joseph Lear has recently illustrated, the syntactic and thematic parallels between the clause he adds from Isa 58:6 and the remainder of the reading show careful literary structuring.⁵⁹ Interestingly, the context of Isaiah 58:6 as a text speaking of social justice work as taking the place of fasts also emphasizes Jesus's own movement away from traditional cultic practice and in the very institution in which Jesus would so often accomplish these aims. What we find is a purposeful, conceptual addition, as Jesus uses Isa 58:6 as a complementary text to emphasize his salvific work, while omitting the more exclusive elements of his base-text,

⁵⁵ James A. Sanders, "From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4," in *Christianity, Judaism, and Other Greco-Roman Cults, Part One: New Testament*, ed. Jacob Neusner (SJLA 12.1; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 75–106.

⁵⁶ Darrell L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern: Lucan Old Testament Christology* (JSNTSup. 12; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 106.

⁵⁷ Notley, "Jesus's Jewish Hermeneutical Method," 46–59; R. Steven Notley and Jeffrey P. Garcia, "The Hebrew Scriptures in the Third Gospel," in *Searching the Scriptures: Studies in Context and Intertextuality*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Jeremiah J. Johnston (LNTS 543; London: T & T Clark International, 2015), 128–147 (here, 131–134).

⁵⁸ See Notley and Garcia, "Hebrew Scriptures," 133. Cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke I–IX*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 531.

⁵⁹ Joseph M. Lear, "The Hybrid Isaiah Quotation in Luke 4:18–19," in *Ancient Readers and their Scriptures: Engaging the Hebrew Bible in Early Judaism and Christianity*, ed. John Anthony Dunne and Garrick V. Allen (JSJSup. 107; Leiden: Brill, 2018), 159–172.

which is entirely consistent with Jesus's political and prophetic purposes in the Gospel of Luke.⁶⁰

But how is this accomplished, exegetically speaking? Early commentators often noted the use of the resumption of ἀφ᾽εσῆς in the two texts as a midrashic element or a seemingly purposeful homoioteleuton using these two verses. However, it is only if we understand the reading coming directly from the LXX that we can assume that it was a direct use of either element at the verbal level. The combination of texts for clarification of a base-text was a common element of ancient Hebrew exegesis, especially among the exegetical texts from Qumran. Such exegesis did not have a single method, but could include both changes in the reporting of the base-text, or *lemma*, and extra-textual explanation, often using other biblical texts for the explanation.⁶¹ Thus, Carl Mosser refers to Jesus's exegetical method as analogous to the Qumran *pesharim*, due to the reading of a prophetic text followed by an explanation regarding how it is being fulfilled.⁶² However, while Jesus does explain the fulfillment and uses a secondary text, the technical language of the *pesharim* is absent, as is the use of Torah texts in the explanation. Fortunately, two other non-*peshar* exegetical texts from Qumran contain similar uses of Isa 61:1–2 for comparison: 11QMelchizedek (11Q13) and 4QMessianic Apocalypse (4Q521). In the former, this text is tellingly combined with elements of Isa 58 in order to claim that an apocalyptic year of Jubilee is being enacted, here by Melchizedek as a priestly messiah. Unlike Luke 4:18–19, this text keeps the language of judgement for enemies and only applies the salvific language for a specific in-group.⁶³ In the latter text, Isa 61:1–2 also has several correspondences with Luke 4, especially in its addition of the dead being raised, which would have been tied most closely to Elijah (cf. Luke 4:25).⁶⁴ As in

⁶⁰ John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 34–37; Mosser, "Torah," 540–541.

⁶¹ For a basic introduction to the wider set of exegetical phenomena, see Daniel A. Machiela, "Once More with Feeling: Rewritten Scripture in Ancient Judaism – A Review of Recent Developments," *JJS* 61 (2010): 308–320.

⁶² Mosser, "Torah," 541.

⁶³ See Peter Mallen, *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts* (LNTS 367; London: T&T Clark International, 2008), 74–77; Notley, "Jesus's Jewish Hermeneutical Method," 54–55; Sanders "From Isaiah 61," 90–92.

⁶⁴ Sean Freyne, *Jesus, a Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus-Story* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 92–93; following John J. Collins, *The Sceptre and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 117–122.

the Gospel of Luke, the Qumran Scrolls in general made heavy use of Isaiah for actualizing prophecies.

As noted above, Isaiah is the one text that is mentioned as being present in the public synagogue of Jesus's hometown. In the Lukan portrayal of this tradition, this was a text that Jesus would have heard with some regularity, and thus we should not be surprised that he could combine two texts from Trito-Isaiah in his reading. That memory played a key role in ancient reading is beyond doubt. According to Aulus Gellius' *Noctes Atticae* 1.7, literate acquaintances were able to recall verbal constructions from various texts from pluriform genres in order to argue a point in their leisurely discussions; even correcting for the famous hubris of this text, we find that memory was an important part of argumentation at this time, especially given the scarcity of written texts.⁶⁵ In such a context, *paideia* throughout the ancient Mediterranean would have depended more on memory than writing and note-taking.⁶⁶ According to Pieter Botha, memory played a primary role in the learning and study of sacred texts in early Judaism and Christianity, as continual corporate reading would have developed and solidified such knowledge.⁶⁷ The use of excerpted and harmonized texts mentioned above would also have aided in the mnemonic acquisition of scriptural knowledge. This primacy of memory in ancient education and argumentation likely accounts for Jesus's detailed knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures. Jesus's travels and other travelling teachers in Nazareth help to explain Jesus's detailed knowledge of these texts; even if we question the historical veracity of stories such as the Lukan narrative of Jesus's legal disputations in Jerusalem as a child (Luke 2:41–52), such movement would have introduced Jesus to the key texts and debates by the time of his ministry. Such recall would have made complex harmonizing such as that of Jesus in Luke 4:18–19 possible, if still somewhat surprising. However, even with Jesus, we must resist modern notions of "comprehensive knowledge" of a still-nascent scriptural corpus.

Given these correspondences in terms of both method and text, we should not be surprised that the audience of Jesus were not angered by his use of such common methods and texts. As stated above, it was Jesus's claims to fulfill these texts himself that incensed the crowd. Jesus was a member of their community and the son of a carpenter, who was seeking to claim exceptional prophetic and messianic roles, though using common exegetical techniques.

⁶⁵ Johnson, "Constructing," 320–321.

⁶⁶ Popović, "Reading," 456–461.

⁶⁷ Botha, "New Testament," 632–633.

Conclusions and Implications

Like our understanding of the synagogue itself, our notions of what Jesus accomplished through his synagogue reading have changed over time. My purpose in this paper has been admittedly modest: to problematize past understandings of Jesus's reading that have relied on normative and anachronistic ideas of synagogue practice. The synagogue in this period was still very much a nascent institution with little supralocal consistency or organization. As a public institution and the seat of civic administration in the Land during the Second Temple Period, emphasis was placed on public debate and with none of the liturgical normativity that the later Rabbis would institute. Thus, as we address the public reading of Scripture, which we have good reason to treat as the primary liturgical element of synagogues in the Land during this period, we must take care not to retroject medieval or modern expectations.

In terms of the act of reading, I have argued that Jesus drew from memory, a surprisingly limited set of texts, and a pragmatic set of social cues in his reading. While this is the most detailed description of such a synagogue "service" from this period, I have contended that the liturgical choreography (i.e., sitting and standing) and the reading of prophets should not be treated as normative without further corroboration from pre-Rabbinic texts. Also, given the scarcity of texts, we cannot be certain which other scriptural texts, if any, were read in this Sabbath synagogue meeting. It is clear, however, that synagogue buildings were built in a way that facilitated reading and disputation as their primary uses. Jesus's dual role of local artisan and travelling teacher also further ambiguate expectations and precisely what we may generalize from this text.

In terms of interpretive method, Jesus's textual alterations and actualizing interpretation were representative of what we might expect from Hebrew exegetical texts in this period. The crowd's negative reaction was to the content of this interpretation, not its methods. Jesus utilizes a common text for claiming messiahship, though in a way that fits the Lukan portrayal of Jesus.