Chapter 3

Collective Remembering in First Century C.E. Changing Contexts

"Social memory" refers . . . to collective representations of the past
shared by a group of people. These include written and oral
narratives and representations that exist in nonlinguistic form. Since
any society consists of multiple, heterogeneous subgroups, we can
expect that distinct vantage points on the past will emerge,
interrelate, and come into conflict from multiple intersecting and
dialogically related "communities of memory." Power matters.
                              -- Andrea L. Smith, *Colonial Memory and Postcolonial*
                                                              Europe

By the rivers of Babylon -- there we sat down and there we wept when
we remembered Zion. . . . . If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right
hand wither! Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not
remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy.
                                                    --Psalm 134:1, 4-6

In the age of empires following the traumatic exiles of the northern

and southern Jewish kingdoms each successive shift in foreign power

renewed threats to Jewish survival that in turn required conscious,

innovative efforts to moderate *amnēsia* and preserve ancestral ways. What

was recollected, in which contexts, by whom, and for what purpose not only

provides a glimpse into the discursive dynamics taking place within Second

Temple Jewish communities, but it also draws attention to what specific

individuals and groups considered essential for continuity and identity,

exposing areas of agreement and tension. By listening to the kinds of

dialectical conversations taking place around the central institutions of

Judaism—God, temple, and Torah—during the vicissitudes of the first century C.E. it is possible to orient the New Testament within a larger socio-cultural context rich in diverse points of view and commitments. Those associated with the traditions of the fourth evangelist may then be viewed as conversation partners in the on-going Jewish discussions that were shaping identities as "us" and "other-than-us" toward the end of the first century.

Four Preliminary Observations

Before proceeding with an analysis of a specific biblical text, four preliminary observations afford the opportunity of setting the parameters of the socio-historical investigation and identifying the relevant data that will be used to control inquiry. The chapter is necessarily selective and does not aim to replicate the extensive social and historical studies of the late Second Temple period; nevertheless, several scholars have been influential dialogue partners in this search of the ways social memories and identities intersect within ancient mnemonic communities.[1]

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[1]. Loren T. Stuckenbruck, Stephen C. Barton, and Benjamin G. Wold, eds., *Memory in the Bible and Antiquity* (WUNT 212; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); Jacob Neusner and Bruce D. Chilton, eds., *In Quest of the Historical Pharisees* [= *IQHP*] (Waco, Tex.; Baylor University Press, 2007), Hillel Newman, *Proximity to Power and Jewish Sectarian Groups of the Ancient Period: A Review of Lifestyle, Values, and Halakhah in the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Qumran* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Alan J. Avery-Peck and Jacob Neusner, eds., *The Mishnah in Contemporary Perspective* (vol. 2 of *Judaism in Late Antiquity*; HO; Leiden: Brill, 2006); Kristin de Troyer and Armin Lange, eds.; *Reading the Present in the Qumran Library: The Perception of the Contemporary by Means of Scriptural Interpretations* (SBLSymS 30; Atlanta: SBL, 2005); Lee I. Levine, *Jerusalem: Portrait of the City in the Second Temple Period* (538 B.C.E. – 70 C.E.) (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002); Jack N. Lightstone, *Mishnah and the Social Formation of the Early Rabbinic Guild: A Socio-Rhetorical Approach* (Studies in Christianity 11; Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2002); Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 BCE to 640 CE* (Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to

To begin with, no social, cultural, or historical context is neutral. Social memory theorists recognize a dynamic interconnectedness between people and their diverse social contexts, each influencing the other in countless direct and indirect ways. Mnemonic communities are the collective environments where specific social frameworks are constructed and essential memories are shaped and embedded, thereby enabling meaning-making to take place.[2] Without these social frameworks informing the intersubjective interactions of the Second Temple era individual and collective identities would not have been possible.

The belief that God is a living, sovereign creator and redeemer, for example, is presupposed in all ancient Jewish literature and liturgy and belongs to a larger mnemonic frame narrated in the Torah and shared by all Jews. But God is also a multifaceted concept that invited reinterpretation as life situations changed and different contexts fostered other points of view. For some Jews, such as those associated with Qumran and the early Jesus movements, the nuanced frames of eschatology balanced a just, sovereign

the Modern World; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001); Lester L. Grabbe, *Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period: Belief and Practice from the Exile to Yavneh* (London: Routledge, 2000); Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainty* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck, eds., *Where We Stand: Issues & Debate in Ancient Judaism* (vol. 1, part 3 of *Judaism in Late Antiquity*; HO; Leiden: Brill, 1998); Jacob Neusner, ed., *Historical Syntheses* (vol. 1, part 2 of *Judaism in Late Antiquity*; HO; Leiden: Brill, 1995); Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); Francis Schmidt, *La pensée du Temple: De Jérusalem à Qoumrân: Identité et lien social dans le judaïsme ancien* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1994); Günter Stemberger, *Pharisäer, Sadduzäer, Essener* (SBS 144; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991); and Robert A. Kraft and George W. E. Nickelsburg, eds., *Early Judiasm and Its Modern Interpreters* (SBLBMI; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986).

[2]2. Barbara A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Maidenhead, England: Open University Press, 2003), 75-83.

God with an unjust, insecure world and became the impetus for adapting

behavior as befits the chosen recipients of redemption.[3] Drawing from the

rich ancestral traditions of God's transcendence and adding different strains

of pagan intellectualism, Philo of Alexandria used Greco-Roman philosophy

to interpret God in relation to an ordered cosmos.[4] Jewish worship and

Halakhic behavior, informed as it was by the holiness of God and the

teachings of Moses, functioned within the greater realities of the Greco-

Roman milieu that offered a variety of possibilities by which to organize and

interpret the experiences of everyday life. Wherever the earliest Christian

communities resided, they would have been one movement among other

living, memory communities engaged in meaning-making. Without knowing

anything more specific about a group's location, comparison of mnemonic

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[3]. In the *Rule of the Community*, God determines the times, seasons, and divisions of all created order that involves a future end to injustice and cleansing of the *yahad* as those "chosen for an everlasting covenant" (1QS IV, 15-17, *DSSSE*; cf. Acts 1:6-8; 17:26-29). Eschatological thought at Qumran was concerned with "patterns and structures" that posited ". . . a coherent web of relationships between past, present and future. Accordingly, the eschatological concepts of Qumran are used to express not only future hopes but an understanding of the entire structure of human life and community, which also determines the present." Behavior, therefore, grew out of belief. John J. Collins, "Patterns of Eschatology at Qumran," in *Traditions in Transformation: Turning Points in Biblical Faith. Festschrift Honoring Frank Moore Cross* (ed. Baruch H. Halpern and Jon D. Levenson; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1981), 352.   Similarly, the out-pouring of the Spirit upon Jesus' disciples at Pentecost served as evidence of the last days in which salvation accompanied God's visitation (Acts 2:14-21; cf. Joel 2:28 [MT 3:1]). As a result, those who heard the gospel and believed "devoted themselves to the apostle's teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and prayers" (Acts 2:42-47).

[4]. God is "creator and father of all," the "active cause" imminent within the cosmos, yet transcending the "passive," material world (Philo, *Opif.* 7-10). The cosmos, in turn, has an order corresponding to the revealed Torah so that one ". . . who is obedient to the law, being, by so doing, a citizen of the world, arranges his actions with reference to the intention of nature, in harmony with which the whole universal world is regulated" (*Opif.* 3). For a discussion of the philosophical underpinnings in Philo's concept of God, see Peter Frick, *Divine Providence in Philo of Alexandria* (TSAJ 77; Tübingen: Mohr, 1999), 26-32.

frameworks with groups mentioned in the texts and those known to have existed in the late Second Temple period will control interpretation.

Secondly, the material world with its physical landscapes was an essential part of the ancient Greco-Roman social context. It not only provided the materials out of which objects were created and used symbolically by mnemonic communities, but it also became a multidimensional arena in which countless human recollections were performed and ritualized.[5] Ancient landscapes were lived spaces, and, depending on the type and significance of the experiences associated with a particular place or object, certain sites became the "crucial centers" of collective memories.[6] Established patterns of remembering became associated with these sites such that ". . . changes in one raise the possibility of changes in the other."[7] Traumatic events experienced within an already memory-laden landscape initiated complex reactions in people that often translated into memory battles no authority could fully control,

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[5]. Susan E. Alcock, *Archaeologies of the Greek Past: Landscape, Monuments, and Memories* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 2, 28-32.; and Norman Yoffee, "Peering into the Palimpsest: An Introduction to the Volume," in *Negotiating the Past in the Past: Identity, Memory, and Landscape in Archaeological Research* (ed. Norman Yoffee; Tucson, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 2007), 3-5.

[6]. Centers of social memory are *lieux de mémoire*: "a *lieu de mémoire* is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community . . . . " Pierre Nora, "From *Lieux de mémoire* to Realms of Memory," in *Conflicts and Divisions* (ed. Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman; trans. Arthur Goldhammer; European Perspectives; vol. 1 of *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French* Past; New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), xvii, xv-xxiv. Temple and Torah, two main institutions of Judaism, were sacred sites invested with the holiness of God, and thus pregnant with the accrued symbolism of centuries. Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 49-66.

[7]. Alcock, *Archaeologies*, 44.

replete with counter-memories that challenged "the dominant

representation of the past."[8] Identifying and comparing attitudes toward

the main *lieux de mémoire* of Qumran and other Judean groups, Diaspora

Jews, Samaritans, the early churches, and the rabbis sheds light on the

transformation of Judaism and development of early Christianity.

Thirdly, with the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran

scholars have recognized a remarkable diversity among Second Temple

Jews usually discussed as the phenomenon of sectarianism; yet, the origins,

adherents, and halakhah of these diverse groups are largely shrouded in

mystery and subject to avid scholarly debate.[9] Part of the challenge lies

with the lack of direct evidence from the subgroups themselves regardless

of Josephus' avowal of a careful, first-hand experience (evmpeiri,a) of the

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[8]8. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering*, 158; and Alcock, *Archaeologies of the Greek Past*, 3-5. The traumatic death of Jesus at the heart of the cultic center of Jerusalem, which at the time of the final redaction of John's Gospel was in ruins, would have challenged the interdialogical conversations taking place. For the evangelist/redactors Jerusalem was forever connected with the identity and destiny of the Christ, who is Jesus. For the scribes, priests, and rabbis who survived the Roman war and its devastation, memories of "the glory and the tragedy of what once was" would have threatened continuity with disruption.   Jerusalem was still a holy city, but how would a balance be struck? Levine, *Jerusalem*, 415-16.

[9] Two different approaches to Jewish to the study of sectarianism have been presented by Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, (LEC 7; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987), 124-173; and Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* (JSJSup 55; Leiden, Brill, 1997).   As to the imprecision of historical reconstructions of the major sects, see Lester L. Grabbe, "Sadducees and Pharisees," in *Where We Stand: Issues & Debate in Ancient Judaism* (ed. Jacob Neusner and Alan J. Avery-Peck; vol. 1, part 3 of *Judaism in Late Antiquity*; HO; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 35-36; James D. G. Dunn, "Judaism in the Land of Israel in the First Century," in *Historical Synthesis* (ed. Jacob Neusner; vol. 1, part 2 of *Judaism in Late Antiquty*; HO; Leiden: Brill, 1994), 237-42; Günter Stemberger, *Pharisäer, Sadduzäer, Essener* (SBS 144; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1991); 1-8; and Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Edinburg: T & T Clark, 1989), 3-10.

Sadducees, Pharisees, and Essenes in his early youth.[10] What we know

about the major sects comes primarily from other individual and group

descriptions about them, wherein lies another difficulty.[11] It is not at all

clear whether or not the people associated with a particular Jewish sect

considered themselves to be part of a cohesive collective or what from their

perspective precisely marked one group off from another. To be a

recognizable "us" requires an "other" for comparison; however, where did

the focus of comparison lie and what boundaries were drawn as a

consequence? Recent studies linking a subgroup's proximity to the centers

of authority and their distinctives is a way forward.[12] Still, one faces the

problem of attempting to distinguish whether a Halakhic system ". . .

correspond à une *réalité* sociale ou, au contraire, représente une société

idéalisée."[13]   For these reasons, attention must be given to the literary

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[10] Josephus, *Life* 1.9-12; and "'Empeiri,a," *LSJ*. The allusion to experience is a common motif in antiquity that raises questions about rhetorical technique. See Louis Feldman, "A Selective Bibliography of Josephus," in *Josephus, the Bible, and History* (ed. Louis Feldman and Gohei Hata; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989), 341. Apart from Qumran, the early Jesus movement, and the Samaritans responsible for the additions to the Samaritan Pentateuch, no other Jewish group has been definitively connected to a literary text.

[11] For a discussion of the historical difficulties with just one sect, see William Scott Green, "What Do We Really Know about the Pharisees and How Do We Know It?" *IQHP*, 409-45.

[12] Newman, *Proximity to Power*, ix-xii. The interrelationship of ancient religion and politics supports Newman's observation that ". . . the degree of proximity to power has a decisive impact upon the life and development of Jewish groups in the Second Temple period. The proximity to power influenced the lifestyle, ideology and Halakhah of the four groups discussed . . . . ," xi. This presupposes an accepted normative center. What that normative center was needs to be determined for each group. With that said, whatever the Johannine Community's actual proximity to the Jewish temple and torah may have been, it was being informed by their proximity to Christ and his proximity to God (cf. John 20:21-23).

[13] Peter Tomson, "Les systèmes de halakha du *Contre Apion* et des *Antiquités*," in *Internationales Josephus-Kolloquium Paris 2001 : Studies on the Antiquities of Josephus* (ed. Folker Siegert and Jürgen U. Kalms ; Münsteraner judaistische Studien 12 ; Münster:

contexts that contain the information, the *Tendenz* of the source, and any corroboration from among the scattered references found in the Bible, Josephus, Philo, the DSS, or relevant rabbinic literature. Despite the methodological problems in describing these groups historically, it is a start.

Fourth, it is evident from what has already been discussed that what constitutes actual evidence regarding the socio-cultural contexts and nature of the groups who lived during the first centuries B.C.E. and C.E. is far more limited and fragile than generally presumed. All research must reckon with this same finite data, the reliability of which has been vigorously debated by modern critical scholarship.[14] In addition, the two main sources of data, written texts and archaeological evidence, depend on the interpretive skill of the scholar, whose guiding questions determine the narrative presentation of the research and construction of hypotheses, yet whose hermeneutical distance from the sources will always invite revisions. Despite the numerous socio-historical aporias, especially after 70 C.E., and

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Lit, 2002), 190.
The preliminary issues raised by Neusner and Chilton to study the Pharisees are useful when considering other first century groups. Jacob Neusner and Bruce D. Chilton, "Preface," *IQHP*, vii-ix.

[14] Assessment of the reliability of each ancient author is beyond the scope of this chapter. Recent studies have surveyed the state of the question and need not be replicated here. Josephus' reliability as a historian has been thoroughly treated by Louis H. Feldman, "Flavius Josephus Revisited: the Man, His Writings, and His Significance," *ANRW* 21.2:763-862; cf. Tomson, "Les systèmes de halakha," 189-214. For a brief list of some recent research and synthesis of primary sources for the Hasmonean and Roman periods of the Second Temple era, see Grabbe, *Judaic Religion in the Second Temple Period*, 59-128. For a discussion of the nature and use of sources for the Hasmonean period, see Tessa Rajak, "The Jews under Hasmonean Rule," in *The Last Age of the Roman Rebpublic, 146-434 B.C.* (J. A. Crook, Andrew Lintott, and Elizabeth Rawson, eds.; CAH 9; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 277-80.

these interpretive limitations on modern research, constructive statements

can be made from the available data: "I believe that it is possible to know

something about the distant past. I do not think however, that this

knowledge can ever really claim to be more than a sort of hermeneutical

model that can help us make sense of the paltry scraps of information that

have come down to us."[15] Thus, one must proceed with caution, but not

needless despair.

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[15] Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 2. Schwartz characterizes his own research as "moderately positivistic."