

Blasphemy and the Jewish Examination of Jesus

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IBR Jesus Project 5. This article represents another contribution to the IBR Jesus Group and covers issues of background, historicity, and significance associated with the Jewish examination of Jesus by the leaders of Judaism. It argues that the core of this account is historical by working systematically through Mark's use of the theme of blasphemy, the question of whether the Jews had the right to execute Jesus legally, and potential witnesses, as well as examining the themes of Jesus' potential blasphemy and how Jews saw the potential for exaltation. The work represents an updating of my *Blasphemy and Exaltation* monograph by interacting with issues raised since it was published.

Key Words: historical Jesus, Jesus' trials, blasphemy, exaltation, Son of Man, Caiaphas, Mark 14:53–72

INTRODUCTION

There is little doubt that if one is to treat the historical Jesus, then one must consider Jesus' relationship to the Jewish leadership and the issues that led him to be crucified. No scene is more important for this topic than the Jewish leadership's examination of Jesus. In fact, this scene is of such importance that John Meier argues that the criterion of rejection and execution is a category one can appeal to for examining authenticity, even as he notes

Author's note: This work, part of the IBR Jesus Project, is an update of my earlier treatment of this theme in *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism and the Final Examination of Jesus* (WUNT 2/106; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1998). I have added sections discussing the extrabiblical gospel evidence as well as interaction with key studies since the release of the book, including studies by Robert Gundry in *The Old Is Better: New Testament Essays in Support of Traditional Interpretations* (WUNT 178; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2005), 98–110; Adela Yarbo Collins, "The Charge of Blasphemy in Mark 14.64," *JSNT* 26 (2004): 379–401; Timo Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Exaltation Discourse* (WUNT 2/142; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2001); my "Jewish Expressions in Mark 14.61–62, the Authenticity of the Jewish Examination of Jesus," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 1 (2003): 147–59; Maurice Casey's review of my work, in *JTS* 52 (2001): 245–47; and the assessment of Casey and especially Mark in Anna Maria Schwemer, "Die Passion des Messias nach Markus und der Vorwurf des Antijudaismus," in Martin Hengel and Anna Maria Schwemer, *Der messianische Anspruch Jesu und die Anfänge der Christologie* (WUNT 2/138; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2001), 133–63.

that it cannot authenticate a specific saying or deed. That the Jewish leadership had a role in Jesus' death is something Josephus implies as well in his *Ant.* 18.3.3 §64, where "the principal men among us" (τῶν πρώτων ἀνδρῶν παρ' ἡμῖν) gave the suggestion to Pilate that Jesus be condemned. The Jewish examination of Jesus is the topic of this article. In this introductory section, I will explain why the nature of our sources leads us to concentrate on the event as it is presented in Mark. Second, I shall consider the factors one must consider in looking at the event's historicity and defend the scene's essential historicity. Third, I will consider, given its historicity, what the event's significance is. How does the trial scene contribute to an understanding of Jesus' work and ministry.

Jesus' examination by the Jewish leadership appears in the Synoptic tradition in Mark 14:53–65, Matt 26:57–68, and Luke 22:54–71. There is no real parallel to the Jewish examination in John's Gospel, because the fourth evangelist merely presents a short exchange between Jesus and the high priest in John 18:19–23. This exchange in John has no corroboration and merely records Jesus' statement that he taught openly, not in secret. As such, this uniquely attested exchange would offer little of significance to the discussion of the historical Jesus and the significance of his death. So we shall not consider the Johannine scene. However, one should also note implications in other texts that suggest a Jewish role in Jesus' death. Here texts such as Acts 4:23–26 and 1 Thess 2:14–15 offer a generic charge against the Jews, likely as an allusion to the leadership's role. Then there is the parable of the vineyard in Matt 21:33–45 and the *Gos. Thom.* 66. It points to the recognition of this role for the leadership. Any claim that the leadership of the Jews had no role in Jesus' death must ignore multiple attestations that go beyond Christian and biblical texts and thus is not credible.

When one looks at other gospels that we possess, there is not much additional information to be found. *The Gospel of Peter* begins with the Roman examination. It mentions that the Jewish leadership was involved, saying "none of the Jews washed their hands," but this type of summary statement also adds little, even if we could establish that it had roots in historically based tradition. In 1:2, Herod orders Jesus sent to the cross. The likely mid-second-century text, which alludes to Pilate's washing of his hands from Matt 27:24, places more blame on the Jewish leadership.¹ The remark could simply reflect the generally held belief that the Jewish leadership was involved in Jesus' death, as well as increasing tension between Christians and Jews, while trying to stay out of trouble with the Romans. So it also has little to add. However, if the tradition it reflects is

1. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, "The Gospel of Peter," in *New Testament Apocrypha* (2 vols.; rev. ed.; ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; trans. R. McL. Wilson; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990–1991), 1:216–22. Raymond E. Brown (*The Death of the Messiah* [2 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994], 1:379) notes this *Tendenz* in commenting on this passage. He goes on to note on p. 382 that the Christian apocryphal writings on this scene "have no independent historical value" but does not discuss their contents in any detail (pp. 381–82).

independent of Matthew, then we have multiple attestation for Pilate's hesitation to crucify Jesus, which means the pressure to do away with him came from elsewhere.²

The *Gospel of Nicodemus* (also known as *The Acts of Pilate*) also assigns a major role to the Jewish leadership when it begins with the trial before Pilate. This is the appeal of yet another source, pointing to multiple attestation for the generic scene. The account opens with the accusations the leadership brings against Jesus in terms of his self-claims as Son of God and a king, as well as his healing of "the lame, the bent, the withered, the blind, the paralytic, and the possessed" on the Sabbath, which it interprets as acts of sorcery in association with the authority of Beelzebul, as well as wishing "to destroy the law of our fathers" (1:1).³ The leaders note that healing on the Sabbath is a violation of their law. These remarks about sorcery echo Synoptic charges that appear in another context (Mark 3:22, Matt 12:24, Luke 11:15) and echo the kind of summary of the charges we see in Luke 23:3. The leaders are named: "Annas and Caiaphas, Semes, Dathes and Gamaliel, Judas, Levi, and Nephtholim, Alexander and Jairus and the rest of the Jews." Pilate responds, "This is not to cast out demons by an unclean spirit, but by the god Asclepius." Pilate's reply appeals to the Roman god of healing, while the list of Sabbath healings looks like a summary of the gospel tradition. The fact that Pilate is present means that the scene does not belong to the same tradition strand or event as the Synoptics, being set at a time when Rome is considering what to do with Jesus.

So when we come to the actual sayings of the scene versus the generic event, we are left with the material we find in the Synoptic tradition. One should recall that this kind of scene would likely have been much discussed and circulating in an oral context (that is, even Mark's version is likely not the only form of this scene in circulation). However, it also should be noted that the traditions we do have are fairly close to each other in what this scene entails, supporting the suggestion of Dunn that the gist of the event is what the tradition reflects.⁴ The role of the twelve in being

2. The roots of this gospel are difficult to establish. The gospel fragment was published in 1892, having been found in Akhmim in Upper Egypt in 1886/87. Since then, two of the Oxyrhynchus papyri published in 1972 were found to contain portions of the gospel. The gospel's mention by Serpion places its date before 200 (*Eccles. Hist.* 5.22.1). The tradition history has been variously assessed with the early view being that it was dependent on the four Gospels. The current status is summarized in Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* [Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1990], 216–20, where he questions the theory on this gospel of John Dominic Crossan that this was the earliest passion source. On pp. 220–22, Koester argues that the washing of hands tradition, although rooted in Deut 21:6–8, goes in different directions in the two Gospels and so reflects independent traditions. If so, there is an element of multiple attestation for the Jewish leaders' role implied for Jesus' death.

3. Citations are from Felix Scheidweiler, "The Gospel of Nicodemus, Acts of Pilate and Christ's Descent into Hell," in *New Testament Apocrypha* (ed. W. Schneemelcher; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990–91), 1:501–36. Scheidweiler notes how the gospel reflects Matthew at many points.

4. Here we are appealing to the basic claim of what oral tradition of the time did, as J. D. G. Dunn argues in *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003).

involved in bearing this church tradition is also worth noting, although as we shall see the potential sources for this scene are actually more extensive than this group.

These accounts are fairly parallel with the key exchange involving the high priest and Jesus. All three parallels have this exchange. I shall focus on this portion of the account, especially as it appears in what is likely to be the earliest form of this tradition, namely, Mark 14:61–64, if the two-document hypothesis is correct. The key part of the scene involves a question by the high priest as to whether Jesus is the Christ, a question all three Synoptics raise. Mark and Matthew have a descriptive addition to the question about the Christ. Matthew has the high priest ask, “If you are the Christ, the Son of God” (εἰ σὺ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ), while Mark has “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” (σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ). It is this question from the account and Jesus’ response that have always garnered the most intense debate as to its potential value for understanding a part of what led to Jesus’ death. It is this exchange and its result that I am considering in this article: namely, can we determine if Jesus was seen by the Jewish leadership as a blasphemer and as a result took Jesus on to Pilate? Mark 14:64 and Matt 26:65 describe the leadership’s response to Jesus as being based on blasphemy, while Luke 22:71 simply speaks of testimony adequate to indict.

In sum, we have the generic scene meeting two criteria: that of rejection and execution (from Meier) and that of multiple attestation (as we see it reflected not only in the Synoptic tradition but also in *Thomas*, *Peter*, and the *Gospel of Nicodemus*). However, none of this can give us evidence of the authenticity of any details about the scene. Can we go further than a mere declaration that Jesus was examined and condemned in some way that led to his crucifixion and caused him to be tried by Rome? What about the evidence for and against the authenticity of the blasphemy remark?

HISTORICITY OF THE BLASPHEMY REMARK

The Issue in Overview

Donald Juel states our problem and the current state of the discussion most clearly and succinctly as he reflects on the Jewish background. The mishnaic charge of blasphemy as recorded in *m. Sanh.* 7:5 requires pronouncement of the divine name for blasphemy to be present:

If this second-century conception of blasphemy is an appropriate reflection of early first-century legal standards, it is impossible that Jesus could have been legally condemned for this offence. In fact, his response to the question of the high priest contains clear indications of respectful avoidance of the name of God (“The right hand of power”). Most scholars insist, therefore, that the legal definition of blasphemy must have been considerably broader in the first century. The difficulty with such proposals is the lack of source material for re-

constructing legal practice prior to A.D. 70. . . . Even if the broadest definition of blasphemy be accepted, however, the problem is far from solved. It is still unclear precisely what in the question of the high priest or Jesus' response would constitute a blasphemous statement or claim.⁵

Juel's remark is stated with care. What we lack are sources that give us details of the *legal* practice before 70 C.E. However, we do have, as my earlier full monograph on the subject of blasphemy shows, a significant amount of material that describes Jewish views of blasphemy in this period as a *cultural* matter and with a consistency that suggests it was a widely held view, even among Judaism's religious leaders.⁶ This article will contend that this cultural background is pervasive enough to indicate what in Jesus' response "would constitute a blasphemous statement or claim" for his distinguished inquisitors. In doing so, it will appeal to a criterion similar to Theissen and Winter's "historical plausibility."⁷ However the lack of multiple attestation for this exchange plus its specific nature means that we shall need to proceed very carefully piece by piece. The exchange is basically Markan, so it is with this version that I will be most concerned. This event is instructive, because it shows that even in texts where multiple attestation is lacking there can be grounds for making a case for the credibility of the gospel tradition. Single attestation need not preclude authenticity.

The consideration of Mark's account proceeds in five major steps, though the first is in many ways a prolegomena. First, I consider the general function of the account in Mark's Gospel, apart from issues of detailed historicity. This is to get at the claim, sometimes made, that this scene is

5. Donald Juel, *Messiah and the Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 31; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 97–98. In fact, little changes as far as the impact on historical questions, if one accepts Matthean priority, because Mark and Matthew run very close together in terms of content.

6. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism*, 30–112. The first chapter reviews the state of the debate regarding the blasphemy passage before 1995, evaluating studies by Hans Lietzmann (1931), Paul Winter (1961, 1974), Josef Blinzler (1969), David Catchpole (1971), August Strobel (1980), Otto Betz (1982), E. P. Sanders (1985), Martin Hengel (1991, 1995), Robert Gundry (1993), Raymond Brown (1994), J. C. O'Neill (1995), and Craig Evans (1995). These works are cited individually at the relevant places in this article. Lietzmann questioned the Jewish involvement in Jesus' death because he regarded the crucifixion as evidence of both Roman responsibility and Jewish noninvolvement. He also rejected the high priest's question as reflecting a Jewish concern; nor did Jesus' answer reflect a blasphemous response (Lietzmann mostly appealing to *m. Sanh.* 7:5). Most who reject this scene do so on this basis or by rejecting the possibility of an early juxtaposition of Ps 110:1 and Dan 7 going back to Jesus, partly on the basis that there were no disciples present at this examination to know what Jesus said. This article will examine all of these issues in turn, plus some others that are mentioned against historicity. Little has changed in this basic debate over historicity in the last ten years, as is shown by the updated discussion from Schwemer, "Die Passion des Messias nach Markus."

7. Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria* (trans. M. Eugene Boring; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002). This work discusses the criteria of authenticity and develops the idea of a criterion tied to plausibility in some detail.

only theologically motivated. By showing what Mark is doing, we can begin to see what these concerns are and ask if the trial scene is only addressed to these pastoral concerns. I pursue this question because for some this is the key value of the event, namely, what it does for Mark theologically and pastorally, *not historically*. I argue that Mark has two major concerns. The nature of at least one of these concerns suggests a need for a historical base to his account.

(1) There is Marcan interest in detailing how Jesus came to be executed. What issues were at the center of the storm between him and the Jewish officials? Mark does have a broad historical concern in his account to show both Jesus' innocence and the basis of his execution. Mark has traced these concerns in his gospel. This is a macro concern for Mark. The theme represents his attempt to detail the various disputes that undergirded the ongoing tension between Jesus and the leadership during his ministry. Issues such as the authority to heal and forgive sins, purity, legal disputes, the tensions surrounding the temple, and the disputes of the last days in Jerusalem fit in here.⁸ Even viewed from the standpoint of a narrative, they set the stage for this decisive meeting. There is even an interesting kind of "Son of Man/blasphemy" *inclusio* in Mark. It binds the first Jewish dispute with Jesus in Mark 2:1–12, which leads to a charge of blasphemy against him for claiming to forgive sin, to the final dispute here in the examination scene of 14:60–64. In this final text, the claim concerning the Son of Man, among other terms, reappears with fresh force in terms that speak of heavenly exaltation. But the very fact that the narrative slows down to a crawl at this key point indicates Mark's concern to communicate some detail about these events. I will not develop this point, because it becomes a burden of the rest of the essay. How careful Mark's work was in more detail is something that requires careful examination. Mark's pastoral concerns, which certainly also exist, do not necessarily rule out the possibility that he possessed some historical concern. Too often the two themes of pastoral theology and history are assumed to be in a kind of exclusive competition, where the presence of one precludes the other. Could the consistent narrative tension also reflect a historical concern? I hope in this article to make a case for their union, at least in this section of Mark.

(2) Nevertheless, Mark was also interested in an important pastoral point, portraying Jesus as the model disciple who is unjustly persecuted while trusting God.⁹ Disciples can study his experience to see how they

8. Many of these particular concerns are also topics addressed by the IBR Jesus Group in other essays, namely, healing-Sabbath disputes, the temple scene, and other last week disputes. The fact that such concerns are touched upon in Mark's version rather obliquely versus being injected as a summarizing literary theme in fact may well support a historical concern. The indirect nature of allusions of this sort at an examination scene may be another indicator of historicity.

9. A specific determination about the date and setting of Mark is part of a long, complex debate that I cannot resolve here. The preponderance of the evidence, mostly external in nature, does suggest that the gospel was written by a companion of Peter, John Mark, in Rome

should walk and what they might face. Jesus is one who simply offers his powerful confession when asked. In the content, tone, and strength of Jesus' response lies the example. Both points, history and pastoral theology, are important to Mark's portrayal of these key events. What has produced skepticism about the scene is the way in which christological designations pile up in the interrogation. For many, Mark is simply reflecting the christology of his own time, not the christology of Jesus at the examination. This issue will be addressed directly when questions related to possible sources of transmission and authenticity are directly treated below.

With the backdrop of Marcan narrative and pastoral concerns noted, I move to consider the historical elements of Mark's presentation more closely in the following four subsections. Second, I criticize an assumption that has clouded the way in which many have examined this scene, namely that the scene reports a Jewish capital trial. Third, I consider potential sources for the saying and the blasphemy itself. Here I only ask if it is possible that the saying could reflect knowledge of the Jewish examination of Jesus. Could there exist a chain of transmission for the saying? Fourth, I consider the saying itself and the issue of blasphemy in it. An attempt will be made to define the various elements of the perceived blasphemy in Jesus' reply. It is here that I apply the historical background of my monograph. At the least, the study should indicate what cultural assumptions Mark's presentation of the blasphemy involved and how he saw this key dispute. It would seem clear that this is how Mark framed his argument, whether he got the actual history right or not. Was he playing

because the largely Gentile community was undergoing the threat of significant persecution sometime in the sixties. The external evidence could support any date from the outbreak of the Neronian persecution. For a date of A.D. 65–67, see C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark* (Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 3–9; for a date of A.D. 68–69, Martin Hengel (*Studies in the Gospel of Mark* [trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985], 1–30) has a full discussion of the ancient sources. D. A. Carson and Doug Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 179–82 survey dates for Mark ranging from the forties to the seventies. Those supporting a date in the forties include C. Torrey and J. Wenham. Traditions that tie the gospel to Peter and Rome make this view unlikely. Those supporting the fifties include Harnack, Reicke, and Mann. The key to this view is that Luke–Acts dates to the early sixties, which is debatable. We have already noted those who support a date in the sixties. This is currently the most popular option. For it are the traditions that suggest Peter was near death or had died, that the context is one of persecution pointing to a time around Nero's rule, and the manner in which Mark 13 is presented, which seems to be before the fall of Jerusalem. However, none of these three points is unassailable. Those who date Mark after seventy see it as coming after the fall of Jerusalem because of the way they read Mark 13. This basis for dating is "seriously flawed" according to Carson and Moo. They opt for a date in the late fifties or sixties, which is a likely range for the origin of this gospel. For our purposes, what is important is not fixing the date but the general setting in the context of persecution, a point about which there is little dispute. Regardless of the date chosen, Mark treats a persecution context. As Cranfield states on p 14: "The purposes which are special to Mark would seem to be to supply the catechetical and liturgical needs of the church in Rome, to support its faith in the face of the threat of martyrdom and to provide material for missionary preachers." That some things in Mark only tangentially touch these catechetical themes points in the direction of additional historical concerns.

off cultural considerations that make some sense of the dispute as he saw it at the time he wrote? If such sensitivities reflect a careful reading of Jewish culture and theological perspective, then might that suggest Mark's framing is rooted in knowledge of the dispute from an earlier time? These represent key elements of background that must be assembled before the saying itself can be fully assessed. Finally, I treat the consideration of the saying as a whole and the nature of its historical character. It is at this point that various issues that are a part of the saying's analysis must be considered: the role and sensibility of the temple charge, the "Jewish" expressions in the scene, the use of Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13, the apocalyptic Son of Man and Jesus, and the combination and relationship of titles present in the question and the reply. Only within a consideration of these final questions can one evaluate the issue of the actual historicity of the scene as an event in the life of Jesus.

The Pastoral Function of the Examination Scene within Mark

The Jewish examination of Jesus performs a major function in the Marcan narrative.¹⁰ G. B. Caird has put the Marcan question in terms of the purpose of the entire gospel this way: "Why must the followers of Jesus suffer? Why, if he was the promised Messiah, did he suffer, and why should Gentiles believe in him if his own people have rejected him?"¹¹ Put in this light, the question of the Jewish examination serves to explain the path to suffering and the cross. Jesus as the model disciple is a theme developed by Philip Davis, as he compares what Mark contains versus the omissions in Matthew and Luke.¹² Davis argues that the absence of an infancy account or a detailed presentation of the resurrection leaves the predictions of resurrection in Mark 8:31; 9:9, 31; 10:34; and 14:28 as resolved in the declared accomplishment of resurrection noted in 16:6–7. The effect is a story starting with baptism that moves through various scenes of temptation and opposition and that "culminates in suffering and death toward an as-yet unseen vindication."¹³ If God kept his promise for Jesus, he will keep it for the disciple who follows Jesus' path.

10. Most commentaries do not consider the Marcan account from the standpoint of its narration, being more consumed with questions of the scene's historical detail or the meaning of the scene itself for Mark, especially for his christology. These approaches to the scene were discussed in the opening chapter of my *Blasphemy and Exaltation*. Only recently has attention been focused on the Gospels as narratives, which seeks to place the scene more significantly into the whole of Mark's presentation.

11. G. B. Caird, *New Testament Theology* (ed. L. D. Hurst; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 53.

12. P. Davis, "Christology, Discipleship, and Self-Understanding in the Gospel of Mark," in *Self-Definition and Self-Discovery in Early Christianity: A Case of Shifting Horizons. Essays in Appreciation of Ben F. Meyer from His Former Students* (ed. D. Hawkin and T. Robinson; Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen, 1990), 101–19.

13. Davis, "Christology, Discipleship, and Self-Understanding in the Gospel of Mark," 109. He notes that the omissions tend to involve events that are not subject to imitation.

The Marcan contrast between Jesus and Peter during the time of the examination in 14:53–72 also underscores this theme, as Jesus refuses to wilt under the pressure of trial as Peter does (esp. vv. 66–72).¹⁴ The disciples should be prepared to follow him in suffering (10:39, 13:9, 14:36). The Spirit will give utterance to what one must say when brought before the tribunal (13:9–12). So Jesus' confession in 14:62 is his only statement of defense as he endures his unjust suffering. Hurtado develops this point:

Mark writes this passage not only to show Jesus openly affirming who he is, but also to provide the readers with a shining example of how they were to react when put to trial on account of their faith in Jesus. The false witnesses show that this is really a trial based solely on the claim that Jesus is the Son of God and has nothing to do with any illegal behavior of Jesus. By this account, the readers are implicitly instructed to be certain that any trial they undergo stems from their faith and not from any wrongdoing on their part (cf. 1 Pet 3:13–16; 4:12–16). Jesus' forthright acknowledgment of his claim (**I am**, v. 62) exemplifies the unhesitating courage the readers are to show in confessing their faith in Jesus as the Son of God.¹⁵

The remarks indicate well Mark's pastoral purpose, especially when combined with another note of irony in the passage, which also reflects narrative concerns. There is an interesting interplay within Mark surrounding the charge of blasphemy. For Mark, it is the Son of God (1:1) who is blasphemed. A tracing of this ironic theme shows where the remark from the examination fits.

The first major controversy surrounding Jesus in Mark appears in 2:7, where he is charged with blasphemy for claiming to forgive sin. The charge seems to revolve around Jesus' taking up an exclusively divine prerogative with such directness based on his own authority. The offense appears to revolve around the fact that forgiveness comes outside any cultic requirements in a mere declaration, an approach that points to Jesus' own authority.¹⁶ But two other relevant blasphemy texts appear in Mark. In each of these cases, it is others who blaspheme or risk blaspheming. In 3:29, Jesus warns about blaspheming the Spirit, as opposed to the other sins and blasphemies that the "sons of men" might perform. Those who blaspheme

14. For a fuller development of how the theme of Peter's failure fits into Marcan teaching on discipleship and the example of the twelve in failing to get things right during Jesus' ministry, see L. Hurtado, "Following Jesus in the Gospel of Mark—and Beyond," in *Patterns of Discipleship in the New Testament* (ed. Richard N. Longenecker; McMaster New Testament Series; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 9–29.

15. Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark* (New International Commentary; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989), 249.

16. For this reading of Mark 2, see J. D. G. Dunn, *The Parting of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1991), 46–47. Forgiveness was possible without recourse to priests or rabbis. The implications for religious authority structures are huge, since these authorities would believe that the way they bestowed forgiveness was in line with divine instruction. See also B. Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1992), 130–33, on Jesus and forgiveness.

the Spirit are guilty of a sin that cannot be forgiven, for it is an “eternal sin.” The remark comes in response to the claim that Jesus casts out demons by Beelzebul in 3:22 or by an unclean spirit in 3:30, texts that form a bracket around the remark. The combination of 2:7 with 3:29 sets up a “battle of the blasphemies” in Mark, with each side accusing the other of offending God by their appraisal of Jesus.¹⁷ Jesus meets the accusation of the Jewish leadership in 2:7 and in 3:22 with a reciprocal warning. Mark puts at the top of the list of sins an improper assessment of Jesus.

Putting this backdrop next to the examination, we see that, while the leadership accuses Jesus of blasphemy in 14:64, he has already warned of the theological danger of doing so with reference to him. This is later reinforced in 15:29. Those onlookers who insult Jesus are said to blaspheme him, when they deride him for his claim to raise up the temple in three days and as they call for him to save himself.¹⁸ For Mark, the answer to this derision is not only his narrative description of their remarks here but the vindication that comes in the report of the resurrection in 16:6–7, a divine act that answers their retort. Here is Mark’s judgment about which option God sees as blasphemy as indicated in the battle over who blasphemes. The entire narrative exercise is designed to give those confessing Jesus confidence that their confession is valid, even in the face of those who would accuse them because of their association with Jesus. Thus, the “blasphemy” theme in Mark, viewed strictly from a narrative standpoint, is an important one to which the trial scene contributes significantly. At the very minimum, then, this is how the scene functions for Mark. But the the difference of opinion about Jesus raises the question whether there is more to the account than mere narratological and pastoral-theological framing of the examination. A narrative reading shows its value is helping us to see Mark’s concerns, but is that all the passage is doing?¹⁹ Does a detailed consideration of the text and its cultural background allow us to say anything more?

A Capital Case?

Perhaps one of the most prominent features in the critical examination of this scene is the noting of its many legal “irregularities” in terms of Jewish

17. I thank David Capes for pointing out this connection to me during a response he gave to a section of my work during the national meeting of the SBL in 1997.

18. The only other Marcan text to use the term *βλασφημῆω* or *βλασφημία* is 7:22, where it appears in a list of those who sin from “the inside.” This remark also occurs in the midst of a controversy scene and has implications about how those who followed Jesus related to questions of the Law and purity, but it is not as christologically significant as these other texts using the term. In fact, in this context, given the range of the vices mentioned, it might only mean “slander.”

19. For all the important attention that a narrative reading of the Gospels is receiving these days, these readings often do not exhaust how a passage should be examined. If there is a flaw in such reading, it is that not paying careful attention to cultural backgrounds can lead to missing key cultural scripts an author is using that point to his meaning.

background. This feature has been common to the examination of the passage since Lietzmann's study. Lietzmann's examination focused on one complex issue, the right to perform capital execution, and the fact that a Jewish execution would involve stoning.²⁰ With this focus, something crept into the discussion that was often assumed by others as well—namely, that this scene involves a Jewish capital case before the Sanhedrin. More recent studies indicated how the scene does not correspond at all to mishnaic prescriptions. Not only does Jesus fail to utter the divine Name, though blasphemy is charged, but also the Mishnah is violated in several other matters. This element of assessment has been quite stable as can be shown by comparing the essay on the trial of Lohse (1973) to the discussion of the Marcan scene in Reinbold (1994).²¹ Lohse's list of irregularities is: (1) a capital trial can only be held in the day (*m. Sanh.* 4:1), (2) it cannot be held on a Sabbath or feast day (*m. Sanh.* 4:1, *m. Besah* 5:2), (3) no judgment on the day of the trial (*m. Sanh.* 4:1), (4) blasphemy requires use of the divine name (*m. Sanh.* 7:5), and (5) the trial should not be held in the high priest's house but in a gathering room for the council (*m. Sanh.* 11:2). Reinbold's list is similar except that he adds the additional note that capital cases are to begin with a defense of the one charged (*m. Sanh.* 4:1), a detail totally lacking in the Marcan scene. He also omits mention of what blasphemy requires. These irregularities are seen as one basis for rejecting the scene and viewing it as Mark's own creation. The claim is that the scene does not fit Jewish practice and so is not authentic.

A huge side discussion has developed as a result of these claims with some arguing that the Mishnah reflects Pharisaic, not Sadducean practice, a solution made famous by Blinzler.²² Others have suggested that the more informal scene of Luke, something less than a trial, may be the more original account.²³ Others, like Strobel, have argued that the presence of a "deceiver" required an exceptional and more public kind of examination. Such an examination could include an inquiry that started and finished on the same day or that could run into or from the night (*m. Sanh.* 11:3 [Danby = 11.4]; *t. Sanh.* 7.11, 10.11).²⁴

20. H. Lietzmann, *Der Prozeß Jesu* (SPAW 14; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1931). What is important for us here is that Lietzmann's study emphasized the capital nature of the trial and questioned the scene on that basis. I have examined Lietzmann and his impact on subsequent study of this scene in my *Blasphemy and Exaltation*, 7–29. Subsequent scholarly discussion and my own work have raised questions about reading the text as full of such illegalities.

21. E. Lohse, "Der Prozeß Jesu Christi," in *Die Einheit des Neuen Testaments: Exegetische Studien zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (ed. E. Lohse; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 96–97. Wolfgang Reinbold, *Der älteste Bericht über den Tod Jesu: Literarische Analyse und historische Kritik der Passionsdarstellungen der Evangelien* (BZNW 69; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 252.

22. Josef Blinzler, *Der Prozeß Jesu* (4th ed.; Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1969), 216–29.

23. David Catchpole, *The Trial of Jesus: A Study in the Gospels and Jewish Historiography from 1770 to the Present Day* (StPB 18; Leiden: Brill, 1971), 153–220.

24. August Strobel, *Die Stunde der Wahrheit* (WUNT 21; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980), 85. Since Danby includes as 11.3 a paragraph not in the Naples 1492 printed edition of the Mishnah, this tractate is alternately numbered as 11.3 or 11.4. The remark in 11.3 notes a feast

It may be that Strobel's approach explains the matter, but this is not the only possibility. One could well argue that the entire discussion has contained a false assumption; namely, that the procedures used were those of a formal Jewish capital trial, since a Jewish trial is what Mark portrays. What if this examination was never intended to be seen as a Jewish capital case or a Jewish trial? Then the entire debate over mishnaic procedure might be superfluous. Commenting on the legal status of Jews in the Roman province, Betz proposes,

The Jews did not have the *ius gladii* under the Roman administration; it was reserved for the prefect (*War* 2.117; *Ant* 18.2; John 18:31; 19:10). In the provinces, however, the local courts were kept intact and often cooperated with the Roman prefect. Therefore, in the trial of Jesus the Sanhedrin of Jerusalem may have formed a kind of *consilium iudicum* which did the investigation of the case (*cognitio*) and prepared the accusation (*accusatio*) for the court of the prefect. That is why the nocturnal hearing of Jesus, carried through by a commission of the Sanhedrin under the high priest (Mark 14:53–65), and the morning session of the Sanhedrin (Mark 15:1) should not be treated as unhistorical creations of the Christian community; these events fit the legal situation in a Roman province of that time.²⁵

In other words, one must reckon with the real possibility that this gathering was never seen or intended as a formal Jewish capital case but a kind of preliminary hearing to determine if Jesus was as dangerous as the leadership sensed and whether he could be sent credibly for judgment by Rome. In turn, a possible false premise has led the discussion of this scene down a distracting path. But a claim for a hearing does not show that a hearing is necessarily present. Is there evidence that the Jewish leadership's intended goal for Jesus was to present him to Pilate as Rome's representative who could execute him?

Four strands of evidence point to this conclusion. First, the description of the decision in Mark is that Jesus is worthy of death (εἴνοχον εἶναι θανά-

day execution in Jerusalem for a deceiver. Such a person is to be "put to death at once" with a public announcement of his crime. Other elements in support of Strobel's have been taken up in subsequent studies by D. Neale, "Was Jesus a *Mesith*? Public Response to Jesus and His Ministry," *TynBul* 44 (1993): 89–101; G. Stanton, "Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and a False Prophet Who Deceived God's People?" in *Jesus of Nazareth Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 164–80; N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 149–474, esp. 439–42. These later studies deal with some of the significant objections others have raised about Strobel's approach. See discussion of Strobel in my *Blasphemy and Exaltation*, 13–15, esp. n. 23.

25. Otto Betz, "Jesus and the Temple Scroll," in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1992), 87–88. Betz notes the work of A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963 [1978 reprint]); and S. A. Fusco, "Il dramma del Golgota, nei suoi aspetti processuali," *Rassegna Pugliese* 7 (1972), 4–30.

τοῦ, 14:64).²⁶ The question is whether Jesus is worthy to die, or if he qualifies for such a fate. This is described as a condemning judgment (κατέκριναν) in response to a question about how it seems to the council (τί ὑμιν φαίνεται). This evaluation can function as a statement of an opinion to pass on to Pilate, an indictment to continue the process—rather than a final decisive formal legal judgment of guilt. If the text had said, “they condemned him to death,” then the statement might have been evidence of a formal, decisive verdict. For example, Luke’s account has Pilate using the term αἴτιος, which is the legal technical term for guilt (Luke 23:14); and its variation αἰτία does not appear in the Marcan scene.²⁷ These terms are associated with Rome (Luke 23:4; John 18:38; 19:4, 6; Matt 27:37; Mark 15:26; Acts 13:28; 28:18). The one place where the term is used of the Jewish perspective is in Acts 13:28, but even here it is said that they “could not find anything deserving death (μηδεμίαν αἰτίαν θανάτου εὐρόντες, yet they asked Pilate to have him killed.” All of this language fits well with the possibility of an examination for cause, rather than a more formal trial.

The Acts 13 text is important, because v. 27 notes that the people in Jerusalem and their leaders “condemned” (κρίναντες) him in fulfillment of Scripture. This term looks like the verb in Mark 14:64 and could appear to represent a formal condemnation at a trial, yet it sets up the remarks already noted from Acts 13:28, where the actual condemning procedure is described in terms of seeking death from Pilate. Thus the remarks also fit an examination of Jesus, rather than a formal capital trial. This fits with traditional remarks that describe Jesus as rejected (Luke 9:22, Mark 8:31) or given over to a death sentence (Luke 24:20) or Stephen’s charge that the leaders betrayed and killed the Just One (Acts 7:52). There is a causative thrust to all of this language, but all of it reflects the awareness that Pilate is the ultimate goal. Brown speaks of “the impression of a trial” in Mark and Matthew, citing the convening of authorities, witnesses with specific testimony, interrogation by the high priest, an admission of a messianic claim by Jesus, an indication that blasphemy has been uttered, and a condemnation of the remark as making Jesus worthy of death.²⁸ But it must be noted that none of these elements or their combination precludes what would take place at a hearing looking for cause. In fact, one could argue that the high priest’s direct involvement points more to such a hearing

26. Some later manuscripts, like A, W, Θ, families 1 and 13, and the Byzantine tradition have a different word order, placing the infinitive first in the phrase, but this makes no difference to the point. Also noting this as a possibility is Ferdinand Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel: Ihre Geschichte im frühen Christentum* (5th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 177. These remarks derive from the 1963 edition.

27. BAGD 26; BDAG 31.

28. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 423–24. In his discussion, he suggests a less formal feel to both Luke and John, which is the case, but this may be influenced by the fact that causative language has been read as having a more decisive legal thrust of finality.

than a formal case, where he would likely be silent as chief of the court.²⁹ Of course, this language could also apply to a formal judgment, as well. It is ambiguous. The problem is that such a hearing, if held, would still be a legal procedure, just not the ultimate one. Now my point is that the rules for examination might differ when someone with authority for a sentence is present. The kind of hearing can affect the nature of the examination.

The second strand of evidence is the presence of the temple charge itself in Mark 14:55–59. What was being examined was whether there were grounds to get Jesus before Rome on political charges, as the Romans would not be interested in a Jewish religious dispute unless it impacted Roman interests or the public peace. One of the things the Romans worked hard to protect was the *Pax Romana*. These remarks about the temple, if they could be proved to the Roman governor, would have made Jesus appear as a serious disturber of the peace in a socially sensitive locale. As a serious threat to provincial peace, Jesus would have to be dealt with as a matter of appropriate Roman stewardship. What on the surface looks like a nonsensical section of the examination scene—the presentation of planned false witnesses who cannot agree on their testimony—is, in fact, quite an important element. The witnesses' testimony needed to be solid enough and credible enough to eventually present to Pilate as Rome's representative. Such a charge need not necessarily reflect all the concerns of the Jewish leadership. They needed only to make a case for the dangerous prospect of political instability. That charge needed to be able to stand up to scrutiny to those outside the Jewish leadership. It is a sign of the strength of the presentation and its lack of anti-Jewish *Tendenz*, when considered as part of a hearing, that these witnesses were judged to be inadequate.³⁰ In fact, there is no good explanation for why this detail would be created by the community, only to be dropped as inadequate.³¹ It does not fit the claim that Mark portrays the trial as unfair, because the charges are seemingly acknowledged by the examiners as being insufficient to make a case. What the council was investigating was legal cause, a charge that had a real chance of being convincing to outsiders and that had a political tinge

29. R. Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (HTKNT 2; 2 vols.; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1976–77), 2:416–17.

30. So quite correctly, Renatus Kempthorne, "Anti-Christian Tendency in Pre-Markan Traditions of the Sanhedrin Trial," *TU 126* (1982): 283–85. For a discussion of the likely background involved in the temple act itself, see Bruce Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1992), 91–111.

31. The inadequacy of the testimony is seen in the fact that the high priest steps in and takes over the questioning, while pushing the discussion in a new but related direction. The argument that what one has here is early church polemic fails to explain why this charge is never picked up again after this scene. It clearly becomes irrelevant in light of subsequent events. Thus its subordinate role argues for its trustworthiness. It appears to serve as an example of the Jewish leadership's attempting to be careful about whether they have real evidence or not. The detail runs against the *Tendenz* to see the examination as an attempt to frame Jesus.

to it. So the very way in which this temple charge is handled and dropped indicates concern for an outside audience that also will need sufficient cause to convict. This dropped element fits better in a hearing context than as an element in a strictly Jewish capital case, because the pursuit of the temple charge was not merely for internal Jewish purposes but had to be able to work its political effect outside the council. Something was needed that indicated that Jesus was a political or even an imperial threat to Judea and Rome. The lack of development of the temple charge suggests that there was little or no confidence that a case could be made on this basis alone. There is one other advantage to this argument. If Jesus were convicted and executed by Rome, then the blame for his removal could always be placed on Rome's doorstep. The Jewish leadership would be "covered" on both ends. Judas, one of his own, said Jesus was a threat, and Rome concurred. The role the leadership had was simply responsibility for investigating a charge and passing the judgment on to Rome to make the final, fatal call.

The third trace of evidence is that there was no attempt at a defense with witnesses, a requirement in a formal trial (*m. Sanh.* 4:1 required that a capital case begin with reasons for acquittal). Now this could simply be the result of a condensation of the scene, but it also would fit with a hearing. Once sufficient evidence existed to bring a charge and ask for death, then any issue of a full defense would be deferred until a later, formal trial. In fact, it should not be overlooked that Jesus was asked if he had any reply in Mark 14:60. He simply remained silent in Mark's account, a version Matthew follows. Jesus responds in Luke 22:67 that his public statements were enough, so that to respond now is useless. The result of the Lucan response is the equivalent of not responding. As a result, there is not much that can be made of this absence of a defense, but it does cohere better with a hearing scene.

The last point of evidence looks to earlier motive. The sequence of Mark 12:12–16 shows that the plan to arrest Jesus had Rome in mind, potentially, beginning with an earlier moment. The question about the payment of taxes to Rome was the first controversy after the note about the desire to arrest him (Mark 12:12). It is an initial effort to "entrap" Jesus after he came to Jerusalem (*ἀγρεύσωσιν*, Mark 12:13). It shows that an eye was turned toward Pilate and Rome. Now the "taxes" saying is one of the few in Mark that is seen as authentic by most, though some dispute the setting.³² But the setting in Jerusalem should not be doubted. The question of

32. For example, Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 26, treats the scene as genuine. The Jesus Seminar accepts the saying as authentic, rating the remark in v. 17 as the only saying in Mark that they see as totally authentic, though they prefer the version of the account in the Egerton Gospel 3:1–6, which means that they regard the rest of the context as inauthentic. Robert W. Funk and Roy W. Hoover, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 102. What they cannot explain is why v. 17 would circulate on its own, without some context. By itself, the saying makes no sense at all.

this tax is appropriate for a locale in Jerusalem, because it was here that taxes were paid to Caesar through Pilate, as his representative, and through his collectors. When someone was in Galilee, it was Herod Antipas, as a Jewish leader, who collected the tax. Herod's role could be defended because at least he was partially Jewish. The offense in Judea was paying tax to a Gentile. The question is only relevant to someone who lived in the Jerusalem area. The account itself shows that there was an attempt to see if the prophetic Jesus might be as hostile toward Rome as other prophets had been to outside nations. On the other hand, should the sequence reflect the tumultuous events in Jerusalem, and given the presence of the Herodians and the recent temple controversy this is quite possible, then we have a case of attempting to see if Jesus could be seen as a threat to Rome.³³

These four elements suggest that the examination was only an attempt to gather charges so that a case could be made before Rome and Pilate. The haste of the examination, which also indicates this desire, was fueled by three other considerations: (1) the short-term presence of Pilate in the city and (2) the danger the leaders would have felt had events dragged out too long or had they taken place in too public a forum. The city was filled with Galilean pilgrims celebrating Passover. The night arrest, examination, and early morning sentence lessened the risk of a reaction, because the pilgrims had to journey outside the town overnight (compare with Jesus' own practice [Luke 21:37]). By getting the events to Pilate by daylight and making the legal issue his, security became his problem. (3) A third advantage resulted from an immediate resolution. Once security was no longer a concern, there was also the advantage of making Jesus a public example among all those present, should the execution come quickly, while pilgrims were still present. Not only was this something that was legally allowed, it was even advised for a figure perceived to be a major deceiver.³⁴

Potential Sources for the Debate in the Examination

But what of the key saying then? Before considering it, we need to give attention to the potential sources for such a report. Of course, we do not know the source, and none of Jesus' disciples at the time would have been present at whatever examination took place. This reality has led some to argue that there is no potential source for this scene or that, at least, there is no great likelihood of a train of transmission for it.³⁵ This view is clearly

33. As Pesch (*Das Markusevangelium*, 226) notes, "Die Alternativfrage, die Jesus gestellt ist, ist eine Falle: Entweder würde Jesus Steuerverweigerung und damit politischen Aufruhr oder Steuerzahlung und damit Götzendienst predigen."

34. On the case for Jesus' being perceived as a deceiver, see n. 24 above.

35. For example, one of the claims of Lietzmann's work is that although the source for Peter's denials was likely to be the disciple himself, this could not be claimed for the trial scene, for he was in the courtyard and remained there, so he could not have heard the testimony and there are no other witnesses; Lietzmann, *Der Prozeß Jesu*, 314–15. On p. 315, Lietzmann argued

articulated by E. P. Sanders when he claims, "It is hard, though not impossible, to imagine a chain of transmission which would have passed on the exchanges of the supposed trial."³⁶

This hesitation to consider sources for the scene seems strongly overdrawn. Numerous potential candidates exist. For example, prominent Jews, who would have had access either to the trial itself or to reports about it, also would have had close contact with the Christian community. Prominent among such figures would be Joseph of Arimathea, who is connected with the burial of Jesus and who apparently had official access to the decision (Mark 15:43).³⁷ A figure such as Nicodemus also comes to mind. Any prominent, official Jewish leaders who subsequently became Christians would have had access to knowledge about these events. Surely the persecutor Saul fits in this category. His violent opposition to the new sect would have meant he would have known what the Jewish involvement and position on Jesus would have been. Other priests also became a part of the community in Jerusalem (Acts 6:7).

The possible chain of transmission could also have emerged quite naturally out of the flow of everyday events in Jerusalem. What took place with Jesus reflected a heated polemical debate within Judaism that raged in the city because of disputes about Christians' "breaking the law," with intense public debate until at least 70 C.E.³⁸ It is hard, if not impossible, to

that "daß uns keine Quelle für diesen Bericht glaubhaft wird. Petrus ist nicht der Gewährsmann, denn er ist, wie zweimal (14, 54.66) ausdrücklich betont wird, nur bis in den Hof des hohenpriesterlichen Palastes vorgedrungen und unten im Hof geblieben. Er kann also von der Verhandlung nichts gehört haben, und einen anderen Zeugen sehen wir nicht."

36. E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 298.

37. It is highly unlikely that Joseph is a figure created by the Church. The portrayal of a member of the Sanhedrin as sympathetic to Jesus in the midst of traditions that highlighted the animosity of the leadership and in the face of the polemical environment in the early church makes the description of his office quite credible. See Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 1240. W. J. Lyons has also defended a historical Joseph who was retained in the tradition, "On the Life and Death of Joseph of Arimathea," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 2 (2004): 29–53. Lyons challenges Brown's idea that Joseph became a believer, seeing it as a "harmonizing" reading of the evidence. For Lyons, Joseph died a pious Jew. However, it seems unlikely that such a sympathetic portrait of a Sanhedrin member would be preserved in the tradition had its root description not been true. Even in the cases of Caiaphas in John and Gamaliel in Acts, their position with regard to the gospel is clear. So the tradition can preserve a picture of a Jewish member who opposes the gospel and yet acts in a circumspect way with regard to the new movement. This background also explains how the subsequent tradition about Joseph works. It is not that the original portrait of Joseph is "swept aside" but that it was the natural consequence of what happened to Joseph, something the new movement was quite aware of because of Joseph's previous social and religious status.

38. See Josephus, *Ant.* 20.9.1 §200. The case of James, slain by Annas the Younger in 62 C.E. is especially revealing. Josephus tells us that he was given over to be stoned "for having transgressed the Law" (*παρανοησάντων κατηγορίαν παρέδωκε λυεσθησομένων*). What law was it that James broke, given his reputation within Christian circles as a Jewish-Christian leader who was careful about keeping the Law? It seems likely that the law had to relate to his christological allegiances and a charge of blasphemy. This would fit the fact that he was stoned, which was the penalty for such a crime, and parallels how Stephen was handled as well. There

imagine that a Jewish view of the trial did not emerge in the midst of this quite public debate. It is virtually impossible to believe that the Jewish position on Jesus was never made public. The Annas clan would have justified its role in sending Jesus to Rome as a matter of ensuring an understanding of the priesthood's policy concerning the newly emerging, socially disturbing movement. Included in this would have been the reasons Jesus was taken before Pilate. Moreover these debates would have involved the family of the high priest, including the powerful patriarch of the family, Annas. It is significant to note that the center of this controversy involved the same priestly family from the time of Jesus until the stoning of James, Jesus' brother in 62 C.E., a period of around 30 years.³⁹ Josephus seems to have had access to reports about the trial of James and the reaction to it. The example of letters like that of Claudias Lysias to Felix shows that sometimes a legal examination came with an explanation from the examiner sending the prisoner to a leader (Acts 23:26–30). But the issue of how these records were generally kept is not clear.⁴⁰

However, if there were some records of a situation such as James's, then should we think it was any different from the trial of the one whose movement was at the center of the controversy? And given the continuity within the Jewish leadership during this period, would it be too much to argue that the two sides would have known the views and rationale for

is a pattern of treatment that runs through the Jewish-Christians' relationship to the Jewish leadership. This public commotion surely also produced public discussion of the original event. The verb for transgression, *παρανομέω*, which appears 42x in Josephus, is a very broad term because it can refer to acts against another person (*Ant.* 12.288). However, many serious transgressions against God by numerous kings of Israel are singled out by use of this term; many are said to have followed in the footsteps of Jeroboam (*Ant.* 8.9.1 §245—Jeroboam; 8.10.2 §253—Rehoboam; 9.6.5 §§168, 170—Joash; 9.2.1 §18—Ahab like Jeroboam; 9.5.1.1 §95—Joram like Jeroboam).

39. Josephus, *Ant.* 20.9.1 §§197–203. I thank Martin Hengel for pointing out this argument to me. A similar position with regard to Annas's family's animosity toward Christians is noted by Brown (*The Death of the Messiah*, 409). As he says, "every famous Christian who died violently in Judea before the Jewish Revolt suffered in a tenure of a priest related to Annas." Annas and his five sons all served as high priests at one time or another in this period, as did one son-in-law (Caiaphas, the high priest during the time of Jesus; John 18:13; Josephus, *Ant.* 20.9.1 §198; 18.2.2 §§ 34–35). This family had considerable power for much of a 50-year period and engaged in a constant battle with the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem during this time. It should also not be overlooked that when Josephus describes this incident he describes the Sadducees as "more heartless in judging offenders than any of the rest of the Jews" (εἰσι περὶ τὰς κρίσεις ὅμοι παρὰ πάντας τοὺς Ἰουδαίους, 20.9.1 §199). This standard evaluation may mean that Blinzler is right to suggest that the rules of judgment under Sadducean authority were more strict than those that emerged under the Pharisees as reflected in the Mishnah. Blinzler, *Der Prozess Jesu*, 197–98, 227.

40. A. N. Sherwin-White (*Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* [Grand Rapids; Baker, 1963], 105–6) notes that in Pliny's letters to Trajan most of the materials for the trial came from the participants. Only once is an official document used, and another time there is a request to check an official document for information. This indicates that records were probably kept but that if they existed Rome would have been the likely locale. In sum, the nature of such records and how they might have been kept is a question that could use some detailed study.

opposition much as the leaders of opposing political parties might today? This means that numerous potential (and some quite public) chains of transmission for this scene existed. Surely the events associated with the public spectacle of a trial circulated widely in the city.

The possibility of the saying's reflecting the real debate does not, however, mean that it came from this event. This requires a careful examination of the key saying itself. Can one specify the nature of the blasphemy as it is reflected in this saying? At the least, one should be able to describe from Mark's (and the early church's) point of view what the nature of the blasphemy was and the cultural assumptions that this remark drew upon for this conclusion. Once this is done, then consideration can be given to the question whether or not the saying has roots in the actual trial scene.

The "Blasphemy" in the Jewish Examination of Jesus

There are three general options for the nature of the blasphemy: (1) pronunciation of the divine names is blasphemous; (2) something is blasphemous about being at the right hand of God; and (3) the blasphemy involves how the leaders are addressed.⁴¹ After reviewing these options, we will look at the details of how the blasphemy was seen.

There are three potential elements in the report of Mark 14:61–62 that could have led to the Jewish view that Jesus had blasphemed and that match the three options just noted: the mention of God's name in a blasphemous manner, an offense against God's unique honor, and an offense against the leadership. As will be made clear, the second and third elements serve as the more likely sources of the evaluation against Jesus. The combination of these elements is important to note, because often the charge is seen to stem from a single factor only. Yet one must consider the possibility that the reply challenges an array of Jewish cultural assumptions, making the remarks particularly offensive for the leadership. Might it be possible that Jesus' reply was offensive at multiple levels, making the offense even greater in the leadership's view?

Option 1. The first option is the view of Robert Gundry that Jesus pronounced the divine Name in violation of *m. Sanh.* 7:5 when he alluded to Ps 110:1. However this citation was suppressed in the public reports of the scene, including Mark's, so as not to repeat the blasphemy and compound the offense.⁴² This procedure would reflect practice noted in the

41. Gundry (*The Old Is Better*, 102) notes a fourth view that the Sadducean standard was not limited to the pronunciation of the divine name. This view does not directly address what was said as much as what could be allowed to count for blasphemy. The remark appears in an essay entitled "Jesus' Blasphemy according to Mark 14:61b–64 and Mishnah Sanhedrin 7:5," Gundry's fullest examination of this question.

42. Robert Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 915–18. Craig Evans (*Jesus and His Contemporaries: Comparative Studies* [Leiden: Brill, 1995], 412–13) discusses this option. Evans also argues that this fact alone cannot explain

Mishnah (also in *m. Sanh.* 7:5), where report of the exact wording of the blasphemy is only repeated in the privacy of a hearing and not in a public report, so as to avoid repeating the sin.⁴³ Thus, Jesus said, "I am, and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Yahweh," but it was reported publicly as "seated at the right hand of power," as Mark 14 has it. The key to this view is that only an utterance repeating the divine name could count for a charge of capital blasphemy, just as the Mishnah says. Gundry claims that it is rooted in old Jewish texts: *Sus* 44–59; *11QTemple^a* 61:9; *Lev* 24:15–16 LXX; Philo, *Mos.* 2 §§203–8; and Josephus, *Ant.* 4.8.6 §202. He argues that the tearing of the garments for a verbal blasphemy of this sort fits the mishnaic background.

This explanation is possibly an element of the background but only with certain additional assumptions that are not at all to be assumed.⁴⁴ It must be noted that it was common for biblical texts to be pronounced with a substitute for the divine Name, as also was the case for benedictions, with the exception of a few specified cases. One of the situations with benedictions is noted in *m. Soṭah* 7:6. This text describes how the common priestly benediction of *Num* 6:24–26 was given to the people. So here we have a scriptural text and a benediction. In the provinces, each verse was read by itself, and the crowd would respond with amen in each case, while at the temple it was read as a whole and treated as a single verse. But the more important consideration for us comes next when the issue of the pronunciation of the Name is treated. The text reads, "in the temple they pronounced the Name as written, but in the provinces by a substituted word." So it is no guarantee that the presence of the divine Name in Scripture meant that it would be read or spoken in public.⁴⁵

Another text is *m. Yoma* 6:2. This text records the confession of the high priest over the lamb for the nation's sins on the Day of Atonement. Included in the saying is the citation of *Lev* 16:30. This verse includes a reference to the divine Name, which the high priest did read, and the crowd bowed and fell on their faces when "the people which stood in the temple court heard the expressed Name come forth from the mouth of the high priest." In addition, they responded to the confession and the use of the

the blasphemy in the scene, a point with which I agree for reasons I am about to show. Gundry's updated essay in *The Old Is Better*, 98–110, challenges the view argued for here and in my *Blasphemy and Exaltation* volume.

43. For a citation and more discussion of this mishnaic text, see the section on it in Bock, *ibid.*, 67–68.

44. On p. 105, in *The Old Is Better*, Gundry claims that the goal of my arguments in the monograph involved having "disposed" of his verbal blasphemy through the divine Name view. However, my goal was simply to suggest that a pronunciation of the divine Name alone cannot explain the charge, nor would pronouncing the name have been absolutely necessary to produce such a charge. There was no disposal of the view, only the claim that pronouncing the name by itself cannot explain everything.

45. This possibility negates the claim of Gundry (*The Old Is Better*, 104) that we can know the divine Name was used by Jesus in Mark 12:36. In fact, the argument over the term "Lord" works better there, if it was a substitute for the divine Name.

Name with a euphemism, “Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom forever and ever.”⁴⁶

These two texts show that using Scripture in the temple and pronouncing the divine name is not blasphemy because (1) one is quoting Scripture and (2) one is doing it in the temple precincts. So Jesus quoting or alluding directly to the language of a passage would not have been seen as blasphemous in itself because he was simply citing Scripture. Something else about what was said or the manner in which Jesus did this had to be the basis for the blasphemy.⁴⁷

Still a third example appears at Qumran, though it is not consistent.⁴⁸ In the *Isaiah Scroll*, יהוה is occasionally altered to אדני, or the dual phrase (יהוה אדני) is reduced to only אדני (1QIs^a glosses the Name in 28:16, 30:15, 65:13, by writing above it אדוני; and reduces it in 49:22, 52:4, 61:1).⁴⁹ In 1QIs^a 50:5, it is replaced with אלוהים. The Name is omitted from 1QIs^a 45:8, while in 1QIs^a 52:5 and 59:21, it is omitted once when it appears twice in the MT. In 1QIs^a 3:17, ואדני appears for the Name, while 3:15 writes אדני over the Name. In 1QIs^a 40:7 and 42:6, a row of dots appears where the Name would be expected, while in 42:5 the term האלוהים appears instead of the Name. The same occurs in other texts from Qumran as well.⁵⁰ These changes show

46. The command is also noted in exactly the same way in *m. Yoma* 3:8.

47. It is this point that Gundry’s treatment of blasphemy entirely misses. The Name could have been pronounced, but it would have been done in allusion to Scripture, and as such would not have been seen as a blasphemous offense on its own, though it might have been viewed as insensitive to temple-public discourse distinctions. This means something else had to be key. It is the conceptual manner of Jesus’ use that makes the remark an offense. It also suggests that pronouncing the divine Name might not be necessary for a charge of blasphemy.

48. Stephen Byington, “יהוה and אדני,” *JBL* 76 (1957), 58–59.

49. Contra Siegfried Schulz (“Maranatha und Kyrios Jesus,” *ZNW* 53 [1962]: 133), there is evidence of this type of change in early material. On pp. 132–33, he notes that a shortened form of the divine Name (יהו) appears in the Elephantine papyri of the fifth century B.C.E. (Iאω), but he raises questions about how much can be drawn from this practice. However, the very presence of an alternate and abbreviated form of the Name shows that the Name is being treated with respect by not being reproduced exactly. The texts at Elephantine can be found in A. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923). The passages where יהו appears are: 6.4, 6, 11; 22.1, 123; 25.6; 27.15; 30.6, 15, 24–27 (3×); 31.7, 24–25 (2×); 33.8; 38.1; 45.3–4; and 56.2. Care with regard to speaking the divine Name is also noted in Josephus, *Ant* 2.12.4 §§275–76; and in Philo, *Mos.* 2.114. For evidence of a substitution of the Name with Lord, one can note the LXX and the examples at Qumran; see next note below. On the use of Iאω, see R. Ganschinietz, “Iao,” in *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Stuttgart: Metzlersche, 1916), vol. 9, cols. 698–721; Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974), vol. 1:98, 171–72, 211–12, and vol. 2:140–41, 410–12, 673; and David Aune, “Iao (‘Iaō),” *RAC* 129, cols. 1–12.

50. Michael A. Knibb, *The Qumran Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 134, 170, 232–33, 250. He notes how the Name is written in old script in 1QpHab vi 14, while in 1QS VIII 14, the citation of Isa 40:3 leaves only four dots where the name YHWH appeared. Interestingly, in 4QpPs^a ii 13 the reverse is the case, as YHWH appears where “Lord” was present. J. A. Fitzmyer has criticized Schulz at this point in “The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic to the Study of the New Testament,” *NTS* 20 (1974): 386–91. He notes in 11QTg Job the absolute use of מרדא and comments on: (1) the construct chains Schulz mentioned in the Elephantine papyri at 30.15, (2) the use of אלוהא for the tetragrammaton in 11QTg Job 37.3, 38.2 (2×),

that some Jews were careful to avoid writing the divine Name in Scripture, which in turn would prevent its being pronounced as well.

What these examples mean is that it is not certain that even if Jesus cited Ps 110:1 he would have read the divine Name as written, given the possible variations permitted within oral delivery. This raises doubts about the pronunciation of the divine Name view. Regardless, it also is not certain that the reading of the Name itself from Scripture would have been considered uttering the name “unseasonably,” which is a type of blasphemy noted by Philo as worthy of death (*Mos.* 2.206, 208). As Evans notes, “Uttering the Divine Name, especially in the context of quoting Scripture and if with all proper reverence, is not blasphemous.”⁵¹ The just-noted examples of Scripture read in the temple are examples of Evans’s point. Thus, this suggestion *by itself* is not likely, unless one can argue that what created the charge was a lack of “proper reverence” in the way it was cited. This explanation would require that other, more fundamental and conceptual grounds be raised that formed the essence of the blasphemy—which is possible for this scene, as the following options will show.⁵²

Nonetheless, this option is important, because it raises the possibility that the circumlocution in the reply “the power of the blessed One” is sensitive in Jewish practice. Does the reference to “the power of the blessed One” reflect a Marcan rendering, pre-Markan Christian tradition, a Jewish report of the trial where the allusion to the divine Name is reported in an indirect way, or is it a report of Jesus’ words? Someone was aware of potential Jewish sensitivities here. This question concerning “Jewish” expressions in vv. 61–62 is resumed in more detail below.

Option 2. The second option argues that the major feature of what was seen as blasphemous in the view of the leadership came within Jesus’ reply about the Son of Man. After Jesus responds positively to the question whether he is the Christ, the Son of the Blessed, he goes on to speak of the council’s seeing the Son of Man seated at the right hand of power and com-

38.3, and 38.7, and (3) the rendering of שדי twice by מרא in 11QTgJob 34.5, 7, as well as its likely presence in 36.8. In 34.6–7 he is confident it appears for the divine Name. For a probable other absolute use of the term Lord (מרי), see also 1QapGen 20.12–13.

51. Craig Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 413.

52. Gundry (*The Old Is Better*, 101) raises an objection against the conceptual view; it is that Jesus’ claim to forgive sin should have evoked a charge of capital blasphemy if a conceptual view of blasphemy is at play. It is a very fair problem to raise. Two observations are important here. (1) The text *does raise* the issue of blasphemy. However, because Jesus introduces the concept indirectly and ties the authority to an otherwise undefined “Son of Man” figure, the reaction is one of raising the question, not being able really to pin Jesus down as having made a clear claim about himself. Matthew’s version indicates some confusion because such authority was given to a human. (2) A second feature is that in the case of verbal blasphemy it often was the case that one might be warned first and then a second violation would result in culpability (*y. Sanh.* 7.25a–b = Neusner 7.8–9). Now, it is the case that the entire series of controversies did lead some leaders to seek to remove Jesus (Mark 3:6). This event of claiming the right to forgive sins was the beginning of these concerns. However, the event itself was not a clear enough example to warrant an immediate action. It did do enough to raise eyebrows.

ing on the clouds. The key reply reads, ἐγώ εἰμι, καὶ ὄψεσθε τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ δεξιῶν καθήμενον τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.⁵³ Now, it is contextually plain that within the account the reference to the Son of Man is a self-reference to Jesus.⁵⁴ The reply combines an allusion to the enthroned authority of a regal figure from Ps 110:1 with the authoritative figure of one like a Son of Man from Dan 7:13.⁵⁵

There has been some debate on what it is that Jesus promises the council will see. Some argue that the entire remark is a description only of Jesus' exaltation, an allusion to resurrection to the right hand, a going to God.⁵⁶ Jesus promises that the council will see his vindication by God and the effects of his installment into authority. The case for this is grounded in three points. (1) There is the original meaning of Dan 7:13, which portrays one like a Son of Man "going to God" and thus serves as the interpretation of the remark. (2) In addition, Matthew and Luke highlight an instantaneous seeing, with Matthew's ἀπ' ἄρτι (26:64) and Luke's ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν (22:69). Only a resurrection can fit this near setting. (3) There is the grammatical tightness of a verb controlling two participles, which one would normally expect to refer to simultaneous events.

However, it is unlikely that resurrection alone is what is meant. Mark 14:28 shows that Mark is not hesitant about alluding directly to resurrection in reporting what Jesus says. What is amazing about this trial scene is the total absence of reference to resurrection. Only an indirect reference to exaltation is present. This could suggest the use of old tradition, and yet mention of exaltation alone seems not to be the only emphasis here. For example, the riding on the clouds, though it is a heavenly, theomorphic image, is not about heavenly activity but portrays a vindication that involves figures on earth, as even Dan 7 shows. There it is the saints on earth who benefit from the work of the Son of Man.⁵⁷ As Müller states of the Dan 7 scene,

53. There are no major text-critical problems here. A few manuscripts (Θ, family 13, 565, 700) add "you say that" (σὺ εἶπας ὅτι) before the reply, while D omits καὶ ἐρχόμενον. Both these readings are clearly secondary.

54. I treat only the issue of the passage's meaning here and the nature of the blasphemy charge in the account as it is presented. The discussion of authenticity follows on pp. 85–109 on "The Potential Authenticity of the Saying," after a description of how the blasphemy is presented in this text.

55. For a careful study of the background of these two texts, one reflecting messianic enthronement discourse (Ps 110:1) and the other a judicial throne discourse, see Eskola, *Messiah and the Throne*. His analysis does not discuss historical Jesus questions but notes that this combination is a Christian innovation that belonged to the "first" Christians, with the judicial strain appearing to derive from Jesus himself (pp. 283, 333–35, 366–70). Its roots are both related to and distinct from Jewish Throne teaching often discussed in relationship to Merkabah mysticism.

56. T. F. Glasson, "The Reply to Caiaphas (Mark XIV.62)," *NTS* 7 (1960–61): 88–93. This view is also vigorously defended by Morna Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark* (London: S.P.C.K., 1967), 166–71.

57. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 301; Karlheinz Müller, "Der Menschensohn im Danielzyklus," in *Jesus und der Menschensohn*: F. A. Vögtle (ed. R. Pesch and R. Schnackenburg; Freiburg: Herder, 1975), 37–80, esp. 45.

Dabei will bedacht sein, daß nirgends in der alttestamentlichen, frühjüdischen und talmudischen Literatur jemals "Wolken" eine Rolle spielen, solange es darum geht, den Verkehr und die Bewegung der Himmlischen untereinander im Raum ihrer den Augen der Menschen entzogenen Transzendenz ins Wort zu rücken. Erst wenn einer von ihnen aus deren Verborgtheit *heraustritt*, werden Epiphaniewolken und Wolkenvehikel bemüht. Diese Beobachtung legt es nahe, das anhand einer Partizipialkonstruktion pointierte "Kommen" des Menschensohnes als *Abstieg* vom Himmel *zur Erde* zu begreifen.⁵⁸

Now it might be objected that Dan 7:9–13 itself is a heavenly scene, so that Müller is wrong. But this fails to appreciate the fact that the reason for the heavenly installation of the Son of Man who is on the clouds is to vindicate the saints on earth (vv. 21–27). In other words, the reason one is given a glimpse of what is happening in heaven is because it impacts what will happen on earth. Seen in this light, Müller's remarks are appropriate. The allusion, then, anticipates a return to rule and vindicate the saints (in this case, Jesus also is including himself as among the vindicated!).

One can debate whether what is affirmed here by Jesus is a return to judge as a result of vindication, as I have claimed earlier, or a dominion that is given after God judges in vindication of the saints, as Adela Collins argues is the point in Dan 7.⁵⁹ In Dan 7, the Ancient of Days judges and then gives the resultant authority to the Son of Man. The problem here is that Jesus so identifies in his approaching exaltation with the Father that judgment and dominion appear to be shared in his view. Jesus' teaching about the work of the returning and judging Son of Man elsewhere suggests this linkage in his thought, if those texts are authentic. These nuances are not the key to what is heard as offensive by the leaders. Jesus' bold affirmation of his presence at the side of God and coming authority (whether as judge, ruler, or merely as a vindicated person) is what they found offensive. So, not only will God vindicate Jesus, but he will exalt him to a place of honor that is shared with God. This position is what the saying indicates the leadership heard as blasphemous.

In fact, the claim to come on the clouds is a significant claim, not only alluding to Dan 7:13, but also using imagery that claims a right only deity possesses. Everywhere else in the OT, only God or the gods ride the clouds

58. Karlheinz Müller, "Der Menschensohn im Danielzyklus," 45. The emphasis is his. In English the citation reads, "At the same time, it will be carefully noted that nowhere in the Old Testament, early Jewish, or Talmudic literature do 'clouds' ever play a role, if it is about the transport and movement of the heavenly beings to be closer together in their sphere of withdrawn transcendence from before the eyes of men. When one of them emerges from seclusion, he or she calls upon the service of clouds of epiphany and clouds as vehicles. This observation leads to the obvious conclusion that the example of a participial construction points to the 'coming' of the Son of Man being understood as a *descent* from heaven to earth."

59. Collins's argument appears in Adela Yarbo Collins, "The Charge of Blasphemy in Mark 14.64," *JSNT* 26 (2004): 379–401.

(Exod 14:20, Num 10:34, Ps 104:3, Isa 19:1).⁶⁰ Thus, comprehensive heavenly authority is present in the image. The picture is of a sovereign, divinely related exercise of power.

As for the claim that, grammatically, one would expect simultaneous events when there is a verb linked with two participles, we must remember that this is a prophetic allusion using metaphorical language, so a combination of events may be placed in proximity that, in fact, are quite distant from one another. In addition, the order of these events with seating first and then a mention of coming on the clouds speaks against a reference only to exaltation, as does the earlier allusion to Dan 7 in Mark 13:26, which clearly alludes to a later *parousia*. If exaltation were meant and the clouds alluded to exaltation, then one would expect the ascension into the clouds to God to lead to the seating. The order of the participles would be reversed. The changes by Matthew and Luke only make explicit what this remark assumes, that a vindication of Jesus is the presupposition for his return, because evidence of his exaltation is seen not only in his return but in the activity among his people that precedes it. The redactional changes by the other evangelists only highlight this additional implied emphasis in the remark. Mark has not stated the point quite strongly enough for them, so they develop the implications more fully. Thus the combined allusion is a declaration of total vindication by God that allows Jesus to share authority with God and return, functioning with final judgment on behalf of God's saints. When he returns, it will probably be as eschatological judge, exercising the judicial power of God on behalf of the righteous. At the least, he returns as one whom God has designated to rule over the world. By implication, part of this vindication comes on his own behalf for the judgment that the leaders are contemplating against him.

The problem that the leaders would have seen with this remark is probably not that such a figure existed. The portrait in *1 Enoch* of the Son of Man shows that this category was contemplated within Judaism, somewhere by the middle of the first century.⁶¹ To expect such a glorious figure in the future was possible. What would have caused the offense was that Jesus was making this identification with himself in his *claim* to share authority with God. He—as a Galilean preacher or a wonder worker or an eschatological prophet, or even as one making a messianic claim—was extending the claim to the right to share in God's final judgment as the sent *heavenly* ruler and possibly even the final judge from heaven. It is the juxtaposition of seating and coming on the clouds that makes clear the transcendent function that

60. J. A. Emerton, "The Origin of the Son of Man Imagery," *JTS* n.s. 9 (1958): 225–42.

61. On the disputed date of *1 Enoch*, see E. Isaac in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; 2 vols.; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983–85), 1:6–7, who argues for a first-century date; and Siebert Uhlig, *Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit: Das Äthiopische Henochbuch* (vol. 5/6; Gütersloh: Gütersloh Verlagshaus, 1984), 574–75, who considers dates ranging from the end of the Hasmonean period into the first century and sees roots extending back into the first century B.C.E.

Jesus gives himself here, with the reference to clouds making it apparent that more than a pure human and earthly messianic claim is present.⁶² There is an implication in this remark as well. If they are contemplating judging him now, he will eventually rule or judge them later.

The self-made claim to sit at the right hand and ride the clouds would be read as a blasphemous utterance, a false claim that equates Jesus in a unique way with God and that reflects an arrogant disrespect toward the one true God. As an examination of Jewish exaltation shows, a proximate seating next to God might be considered for a privileged few, either a few universally acknowledged greats of the past (such as Moses in *Exagōgē to Ezekiel*) or the future eschatological figure of judgment (such as Son of Man in *1 Enoch*). But this honor would never be contemplated by the leadership for a humble, rural Galilean preacher like Jesus. And yet Jesus seems to claim even more. He will share the throne with the Shekinah and sit next to him at his right hand.⁶³ Jesus is not only near to God and working with him, he is seated in a way that shares the highest honor with him. Only the figure of Enoch–Son of Man seems close to this imagery, and even his access to God in this way was controversial, despite his translation by God according to Gen 5:24. Jesus' remarks would have been read as blasphemous along the lines that Philo described in *Dreams* 2.130–31 or *Decalogue*

62. Another possible reading exists, if one does not see a self-claim by Jesus in the allusion to the Son of Man. It would be a claim that a vindicating judgment is coming in the eschaton through such a figure, who remains enigmatically unidentified, and that Jesus is so closely identified with what the Son of Man represents that Jesus will be vindicated in that judgment on behalf of the righteous. Seen in this light, there is still blasphemy, because the insight and spiritual discernment of the leadership are still being directly and seriously challenged. So they would be regarded as being among the judged. This remark then could be read as a violation of Exod 22:27[28]. Jesus would be seen as cursing the leaders by implying their judgment, since the leaders would be excluded from being among the righteous at the end. In Exodus, the verb for "curse" stands in parallelism to blaspheming God, showing a close relationship between the two. Goliath and Sennacherib are seen as violating this prohibition (1 Sam 17, 2 Kgs 19:3, Isa 37:3, Ezek 35:12—of Edom). On the roots of this idea, see my *Blasphemy and Exaltation*, 32–36, 41–42. The remark would be seen as a subtle anathema against the leadership. I think this option is less likely, for reasons I shall consider in discussing the apocalyptic Son of Man; it is another way in which the tradition could be read and seen as essentially authentic. For this view, see the remarks of C. Colpe, "ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου," *TDNT* 8.435–41. He says, "In this respect there is a parallel to what he says about His perfecting to various hearers and also to His proclamation of God's kingdom to the whole people of Israel. Just as the kingdom of God and the Son of Man could not be in competition in this respect, so it is with Jesus and the Son of Man. The apocalyptic Son of Man is a symbol of Jesus' assurance of perfecting. With a shift from the assurance to the one who has it, the whole process may be interpreted as a dynamic and functional equating of Jesus and the coming Son of Man with the future perfecting of Jesus in view. On this view the primitive community then made of it a static personal identification accomplished already in the present Jesus." For Colpe, future perfecting is another way to speak of vindication. He regards Luke 22:69 as authentic, while arguing that the appearance of Dan 7 in Mark 14:62 is a reflection of the early church (see p. 435).

63. As M. Hengel has argued (in *Studies in Early Christology* [London: T. & T. Clark, 2004], 185–203), this claim was unique, though some exaltation imagery comes conceptually close to this. Jesus has chosen to state the point uniquely in the most emphatic way possible.

13–14.61–64.⁶⁴ In *On Dreams*, Philo had said that a man claiming the prerogatives of God is a person who possesses “evil of an extraordinary nature,” “a man miserable in every respect,” who “has dared to compare himself to the all-blessed God.” Such a man utters blasphemies against the creation, when it does not treat him right. In *Decalogue*, he argued that those who give those in the heavens (sun, moon, and stars) the same honors as those of the creator are “the most foolish and most unjust” of men. Those who think to ascribe to themselves honor like that given to God are possessed with “an insolent and free-spoken madness, as they “make an open display of the impiety which dwells in their hearts, and venture to blaspheme the deity, whetting an evil tongue, and desiring to vex the pious, who immediately feel an indescribable and irreconcilable affliction.” Philo’s attitude, even as a heavily hellenized Jew, describes his perception of pagan arrogance, especially against any form of ruler cult. How much more the council would have been offended by Jesus’ remarks, made as they were by a Jew. Philo’s commentary could explain why the response to this remark was the priest’s ripping of his clothes. Afflicted by what he had heard, he gave the clear sign that blasphemy had been uttered (Mark 14:63; *m. Sanh.* 7:5).

In Jewish perception, what Jesus claims here is like, if not worse than, what other traditional blasphemers of Jewish lore said or did. What the actions of Sisera, Goliath, Sennacherib, Belshazzar, Manasseh, and Titus shared was a disregard for God’s unique power and honor. An examination of blasphemy in Judaism shows how each of these figures was described and condemned. The midrashim supply particularly interesting additional examples when one considers how Isa 14:12–14 is handled by later rabbis. In these texts, Nebuchadnezzar becomes the illustration of arrogance, though in one major discussion he shares the stage with Pharaoh; Hiram; Joash, king of Judah; and Sennacherib (*Exod. Rab.* 8.2). In this

64. Bock, *Blasphemy and Exaltation*, 30–112, esp. 110–12. This detailed portrait is largely supported in a recent essay by Adela Yarbo Collins (“The Charge of Blasphemy in Mark 14.64”), who went back over these Jewish texts up to Josephus. One key conclusion was that Philo’s concept of blasphemy was “a specific kind of insult to God, namely, speech that compromises the Jewish affirmation that only the God of Israel is divine.” She cites the (already noted above) *Legatio ad Gaium* 26 §§166–70 and *De somniis* 2.18 §§125–32. The second text involves an unnamed Egyptian governor who did away with the Sabbath and asked that he be served on that day, claiming he (among other things) was the whirlwind and controlled destiny. Philo reacts, asking what one should think of someone who thinks or utter such things. Philo calls him “an evil thing hitherto unknown,” “he who likened to the All-Blessed his miserable self,” and one who would not hesitate “to utter blasphemies (βλασφημεῖν) against the sun, and the moon, and the rest of the stars,” if they made him too hot or too cold or did not bear fruit. She correctly notes on p. 388, in a critique of my chapter, that *Decalogue* 13 §§61–69 condemns those who worship the sun, moon, and stars—not rulers, as I had earlier suggested. However, the point of the text changes little about how cultural blasphemy was seen with this change of referent. It is a slander against God to regard anything else as sharing his unique honor. Her summary is from pp. 395–96. On p. 396, she says that Mark’s use of blasphemy is like that of Philo (and Josephus).

midrash, Hiram is condemned, as Ezek 28:2 is related to him, while Isa 14 is applied to Nebuchadnezzar, who "claimed deity." According to the text, Pharaoh also made such a claim, as the midrash appeals to Ezek 29:3. Joash also fails because he received worship, with 2 Chr 24:17–25 being the key text supplying the evidence. The last example is Sennacherib, noting 2 Kgs 19:35. In the midst of this developed exposition, comes this emotional note. In discussing Zech 4:10, the midrash says, "this refers, however, says R. Berekiah (ca. 340 C.E.), to the haughty who declare themselves to be gods, but whom God makes abominations in the world." Here we see a later rabbi's reactions to those who were perceived to have portrayed themselves as too much like God. One can note, in addition, the tradition involving a son of man claim in *y. Ta'an.* 2.65b (Neusner 2.1). Here Rabbi Abbahu (ca. 300 C.E.) makes two statements, "If a man should tell you, 'I am God,' he is lying. If he says, 'I am the son of man,' in the end he will regret it: 'I will ascend to heaven,' he said it but he will not carry it out." This tradition is like what is seen in the rabbinic handling of Isa 14.⁶⁵ Such statements are to be rejected and subject one to judgment.

The Jewish leadership believed that Jesus' remarks fell into this class. The consistency of these illustrative portraits of the blasphemer reveals a commonly held view of how blasphemy could be perceived in remarks or actions that appeared to reduce God's unique stature. The Jewish reaction to a sense of violation of God's presence, as seen in *Ant.* 12.10.5 §406 or in 1 Macc 2:6, shows how important the protection of the uniqueness of God's presence was. In *Antiquities*, the priests pray after Nicanor's blasphemy, and he is defeated by Judas. In 1 Macc 2, Judas slays those who sacrifice a pig on an altar independent from the one in Jerusalem, an act he considered blasphemous. As our earlier study of figures going into God's presence showed, respect for God's unique presence was jealously guarded. Those who enter gain access by his invitation only. Access of this sort is

65. Nebuchadnezzar is the example in reference to Isa 14:12–14 in several texts, such as *Exod. Rab.* 15.6 and 21.3; *Lev. Rab.* 18.2; and *Num. Rab.* 9.24 and 20.1. In this last text, Solomon is contrasted with Nebuchadnezzar: "the former built the Temple and uttered numerous songs and supplications, while the latter destroyed it and reviled and blasphemed, saying, 'I will ascend above the height of the clouds; I will be like the Most High (Isa 14:14).'" This is one of the few texts to actually speak of Nebuchadnezzar's blasphemy while making a point from Isa 14, but the key is not only his action against the temple, which would be seen as a direct attack against God's presence, but the attribution through the application of Isaiah of a heart attitude that is condemned. If someone was perceived as having made a claim that brought one too close to God or made oneself to be too much like him, these texts help show how such a claim would have been viewed. These Isa 14 texts parallel what is seen in the Jewish blasphemy texts in general, indicating how consistently these portraits are, as well as the reaction to them. The views of the later rabbis are like those of Philo. This may well point to the age of the view. The feeling is centuries old. The translation of the Son of Man text in *y. Ta'an.* 2.65b can be found in J. Neusner, ed., *Talmud of the Land of Israel* (25 vols.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998–99), 18:183; or *Strack-Billerbeck*, 1:486. On the Son of Man text, see Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology*, 181 and n. 130.

rarely contemplated. Jesus' remarks possess a frankness that dissolves these formalities.

In considering Jesus' remarks, some have argued for a type of precedent in texts declaring the vindication of the righteous, such as *T. Job* 33:2–4, *Apoc. El. (c)* 37:3–4, and *T. Benj.* 10:5–6.⁶⁶ Here are descriptions of figures who receive thrones with imagery that mentions God's right hand. However, these texts speak of honor coming *from* the right hand of God or of a privilege shared *with others*, so that the *Testament of Job* speaks of a throne from above whose "splendor and majesty are from the right hand," while the Coptic *Apocalypse of Elijah* speaks of a host of righteous Christian martyrs set "at God's right hand." These martyrs render thanks for others as they conquer the Son of Iniquity, see the destruction of heaven and earth, and receive the thrones of glory and crowns. In the *Testament of Benjamin*, the patriarchs Enoch, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are raised up (not seated!) "at the right hand in great joy." But Jesus' claim is not to be among the righteous but to lead them as God's vice-regent, a ruling figure like that mentioned in Ps 110:1. There is more in his claim than what we see in these texts about the vindication of the righteous, though what these texts show is a background that parallels to a lesser degree what Jesus claims. If such honor goes to the righteous, how much more honor can be contemplated for the one who brings their vindication. Perhaps this kind of expectation fueled an element of the development of this view within Jesus. Jesus, as eschatological leader of the yet-to-be vindicated righteous, was to possess a special position in heaven.

Morna Hooker summarizes well the leadership's view of the blasphemy charge, a charge that fits the appropriate Jewish religious and cultural background. As she says, "*To claim for oneself* a seat at the right hand of power, however, is to claim a share in the authority of God; *to appropriate to oneself* such authority and *to bestow on oneself* this unique status in the sight of God and man would almost certainly have been regarded as blasphemy."⁶⁷ The dispute surrounding Jesus was a debate about his authority as it related to his person and mission. The Marcan text presents this as the essence of the dispute and as central to his conviction to crucifixion.

The leaders handed Jesus over to Roman officials, because they saw in him a dangerous blasphemer and deceiver. But they presented the accusation in political terms—in a form that Pilate could understand and feel enough threatened by to act. Someone like Jesus with such a comprehensive view of his own authority could be portrayed not only as a threat to Israel but also as a potentially serious problem for Rome. In addition, by subjecting Jesus to crucifixion, the Jewish leadership was making an additional public statement that explicitly turned Jesus' death into one cursed

66. See, for example, G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 297–98.

67. The emphasis in the quotation is mine; Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark*, 173.

by God, because the contemporary reading of Deut 21:23 would have seen a crucifixion in these terms.⁶⁸ In fact, God would be seen as the source of the judgment of “accursed” by permitting a crucifixion to take place.

At the very least, this is how the church, as reflected by Mark, portrayed the dispute from the Jewish side. But it is significant to note that this portrayal would have been done at great risk to the church, when Mark’s Gospel emerged in Rome. To blame both the Jewish leadership and the Romans as having a role in Jesus’ death meant that two major, powerful forces in the early Christians’ world would share responsibility for the death. To admit that Jesus was charged as a political subversive and was executed for such a crime put Rome on notice about the Christians, even though the church would have regarded the charge against Jesus as false. To present the account this way suggests that at its base must be roots that motivated this broad sweep of responsibility. The story had to be told, even if there was risk for the church in terms of who got blamed.

Option 3. There is a third option concerning the blasphemy that one ought to note, because it serves as a second feature that adds to the sense of offense. Two elements of potential background illuminate this aspect of the blasphemy. First, when Jesus claims to be a judging figure and claims that the council will see this exercise of authority, he may well be appealing to martyrdom language that has already been noted in the expectation of vindication. But the point here is more specific. The idea of “seeing” has been discussed as an allusion to Zech 12:10, “they will look upon (ἐπιβλέψοντα) him whom they have pierced . . . and will mourn over him.”⁶⁹ But there is really nothing in this context to suggest an allusion to this text.⁷⁰ There is no allusion to “piercing” or to the need for repentance. Rather, the concept of “seeing” emerging out of the martyrdom tradition provides a more likely background. Three texts show the theme. Wisdom 5:2 reads, “When the unrighteous see (ἰδόντες) them, they will be shaken with dreadful fear and they will be amazed at the unexpected salvation of the righteous.” *Apocalypse of Elijah* 35:17 (= 5:28 in Charlesworth, *OTP*) reads, “Then the sinners in torment will see the place of the righteous. And thus grace will occur.” This is a composite text, mixing Jewish and Christian elements, but again in an eschatological context, those who see are those who are judged and what they see is the vindication of the righteous. A Christian text with a similar motif is Luke 16:23. The third text is perhaps

68. On this first-century view of crucifixion, see the discussion of the work of Otto Betz in my *Blasphemy and Exaltation*, 15–17, the discussion of 11Q*Temple* 64:6–13, and n. 66 there.

69. Norman Perrin, *Rediscovering the Teaching of Jesus* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 181–85.

70. Correctly Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992), 166–67. The following discussion of martyrdom background follows his treatment. See also Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium*, 2:438.

the most important. It is *1 En.* 62:3–5.⁷¹ The text reads, “On the day of judgment, all the kings, governors, the high officials, and landlords, *shall see* and recognize him—how he sits on the throne of his glory and righteousness is judged before him. . . . They shall be terrified and dejected; and pain shall seize them when *they see* that Son of Man sitting on the throne of glory.”⁷² Not only does this text repeat the theme of the seeing of vindication, but it includes a reference to the seen Son of Man. As Borsch noted, the three themes of (1) they see, (2) Son of Man, and (3) sitting have a parallel. These three concepts appear in the same order in both texts and reflect “indications of the influence of older common conceptions.”⁷³ The background means that Jesus challenges and warns his accusers that the real authority is not the Jewish council but Jesus, who will preside over them one day. This future prospect makes their examination a sham.

Jesus’ remark about what will be seen is made in such a vague manner, however, that it is unlikely to be a creation of the church. It lacks the kind of directness one might expect from a saying formulated by the church after Jesus’ vindication.

Second, this aspect of the remark represents an attack on the “divinely appointed” leadership of the nation—at least this is how the leadership would have seen themselves. This attack would be read as a violation of Exod 22:27, which is one of the Torah’s prominent blasphemy texts. For example Hyrcanus expected the Pharisees to judge a figure named Eleazar for casting blasphemous insults upon him as the leader. He was disappointed when they preferred a whipping over death (Josephus, *Ant.* 13.10.6 §§293–96).⁷⁴ This violation makes Jesus both a political and a religious threat. In the leader’s view, not only was Jesus making a false and religiously dangerous claim by evaporating the distance between himself and God, but he was also challenging the authority of those who had responsibility for the spiritual well-being of the nation, suggesting that they would be reckoned among the judged in the end. As such, he raised the prospect of intense political-social unrest, as the temple incident had already suggested. Now anyone who threatened the well-being of the people and their political stability before Rome was also subject to reaction by the Jewish authorities, because presenting oneself as a person who might cause the nation to fall into Gentile hands was viewed as a dangerous political act. An act of this sort could be seen as a criminal offense that carried a penalty of death. Here the key text informing the cultural

71. This connection was made by F. H. Borsch, “Mark XIV.62 and 1 Enoch LXII.5,” *NTS* 14 (1967–68): 565–67. See also Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology*, 185–89. He notes that the seating here is something a little less than being seated at the right hand.

72. The emphasis is mine.

73. Borsch, “Mark XIV.62 and 1 Enoch LXII.5,” 567. For an alternative reading of this emphasis, which also would be seen as blasphemous, see the discussion surrounding n. 45 above.

74. Schwemer, “Die Passion des Messias nach Markus,” *Die messianische Anspruch*, 149–50.

background is 11Q*Temple* 64:6–13.⁷⁵ This text in the key lines, 7–9, reads: “(7) If a man slanders his [= God’s] people and delivers his people up to a foreign nation and does evil to his people (8) you shall hang him on a tree, and he shall die. According to the mouth (= testimony) of two witnesses and the mouth of three witnesses (9) he shall be put to death, and they shall hang him on a tree.” Two features of the passage are important. The first is that slandering the people and putting them at risk is what leads to the sentence. Second, the text mentions hanging by a tree, the first-century cultural equivalent of which was crucifixion. The allusion is to Deut 21:22–23, which described the public display of an offender *after* he was executed on a tree. In the first century, crucifixion was seen as an equivalent of this text, even though the death came simultaneously with the public hanging.⁷⁶

Jesus’ remarks were a provocation of the strongest kind. The judges are being threatened with being judged by the accused, while he functions as God’s intimate representative. His threatening of the leadership with his claim to be eschatological judge and the remark suggesting that the council was unrighteous in having him stand before them were blasphemous at this second, social level. It seriously challenged their claims of divinely appointed leadership and responsibility for Israel. This element of the charge provided the political grounds that the leadership needed to take him to Rome and present him as a threat to public order. So Jesus’ claims would not only have been perceived as false—a premise that could allow a very public process, as Strobel has noted—but the claims would be seen as potentially dangerous.⁷⁷ It is the combination that caused the leadership to act according to Mark.

Jesus’ remark was perceived as blasphemous on two levels. First, his claim to have the prerogative of final judgment and sit next to God in heaven represented a claim to comprehensive authority, a function that the leadership could never contemplate or accept for one of such humble background. Such prerogatives, even when they were contemplated, were reserved for only the unique. His direct claim to possess such a position would have been automatically offensive. Second, his claim was also an attack on the leadership in violation of the spirit of Exod 22:27 and an attitude that could put the social structure of the nation at risk before Rome. Jesus was different from a later object of messianic honor, Bar Kochba, as the latter figure at least had the support of some of the social-political leadership in the nation (for example, Akiba). Jesus’ claim of authority went beyond political messianic claims in the view of the leadership, because it held them eschatologically accountable for what they would do with him. Such a challenge would not go uncontested. Not only had Jesus

75. Betz, “Jesus and the Temple Scroll,” 80–81, 87–89. The brackets in the translation clarify the pronoun’s antecedent, while the parentheses explain an idiom.

76. David J. Halperin, “Crucifixion, the Nahum Peshier, and the Rabbinic Penalty of Strangulation,” *JJS* 32 (1981): 32–46.

77. See the discussion above and n. 24.

made himself too close to God, he had also created a great, irreversible gap between himself and the leadership. At least, this is how Mark portrays the event. What must be said about this saying is that much within it seems to fit well in the cultural thought world of first-century Judaism.

The Potential Authenticity of the Saying

The background of the Jewish perception of Jesus' blasphemy has been examined. The exchange makes sense in a Jewish context. It has "historical plausibility," to name a criterion suggested by some as a way to validate such material. In this section, I will apply the criteria of historical plausibility, dissimilarity, ambiguity, and Jewishness to different features of the saying to see if it meets such standards. Does this saying and its background possess the potential to be regarded as an authentic summary of the real scene? This question is stated carefully, for not only are we dealing with a Greek translation but a text that is about 35 to 40 years removed from the original scene. This section will treat various elements that have been considered in the past to make the scene a questionable one: (1) the temple charge, (2) the "Jewish" expressions in vv. 61–62—namely, the circumlocutions of God involving *εὐλογητός* and *δύναμις*, (3) the use of Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13, (4) the possibility of Jesus' calling himself the apocalyptic Son of Man, and (5) the combination of christological titles that appear in the question and reply. Only after all of the first four subtopics are treated can we consider the presence and relationship of the titles to one another and assess the likelihood of the saying's authenticity.

1. *A Lack of Coherence between the Temple Charge and the Rest of the Scene.*

The movement from the temple charge directly into the christological issue has been seen by many as a problem for the passage. It is argued that the transition into christology is too abrupt to be credible and thus reflects Mark's work. The scene is designed to heighten the drama, not portray reality. Mark's goal is to get to the theme of Jesus' theologically loaded definition of who he is. The redactional effort is often seen as reflecting a combination of traditional material and material from Mark. For example, Hugh Anderson writes in his comments on vv. 60–65 that "the question that the **high priest** now puts to Jesus, **Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?** is introduced somewhat abruptly in so far as it has no obvious connection with the foregoing proceedings, certainly not with the alleged prediction of Jesus' part of the destruction of the Temple."⁷⁸ Anderson suggests that perhaps the temple charge goes back to the trial, but the juxtaposition of temple and christology is not credible.⁷⁹

78. Hugh Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1976), 330–31.

79. Anderson (*ibid.*, 329) argues that Matt 26:60 may reflect history in that a temple saying of Jesus was used at the trial. However, on p. 331, he argues that the high priest's question is a case that "here the church has put its own language on the lips of the high priest." When it comes to Jesus' reply, Anderson argues that, "for Mark, the speaker here, the harried and

Now the question is whether such a transition is unconnected and abrupt from a historical perspective. In making literary or form judgments about what Mark has done or how he might have summarized what he may have been aware of from tradition, it is important that we not underdevelop historical background questions or ignore possibilities for showing the text's unity. A striking illustration of this problem is the criticism of Otto Betz in the recent study by W. Reinbold.⁸⁰ As he examines the passage historically, he dismisses the entire work of Betz's study by questioning Betz's suggestion that a morning trial took place in its traditional, temple locale.⁸¹ But questioning this detail of Betz's view does not represent a careful assessment of the overall argument from historical background but merely criticizes one minor point. Nor is his rejection of Strobel entirely compelling.⁸² He rejects Strobel's work primarily on the premises that idolatry, which is allegedly the key to a Jewish deceiver charge, is nowhere in view for Jesus and that the charge of deception is nowhere raised in the NT tradition (a point that is not true when one considers Luke 23:2 with its important reference to Jesus' distorting custom in the context of a religion steeped in a commitment to revelation and tradition).

In fact, Reinbold's assessment is inadequate in a variety of ways. First, there are NT texts indicating that Jesus was seen as a deceiver explicitly using terms such as *πλάνοσ* and *πλανᾶ* (Matt 27:63–64; John 7:12, 47).

Second, this testimony about Jesus' deception also appears in Jewish sources. There is a key text in the Jewish tradition that makes a similar point, saying that Jesus was stoned because he "practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy" (*b. Sanh.* 43a, עַל שְׂכִישֵׁף וְהִסִּית וְהִרִיחַ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל). That such a crime was punishable with execution is shown in the list of capital crimes from *m. Sanh.* 7:4, because the *הַמְסִית* is a crime subject to the death penalty of stoning. It seems likely that the reference to stoning is a figurative way to refer to a capital execution by means of biblical language. Another, less well-known set of texts from Qumran discuss how the high priest is to test for a false prophet and deceiver, using the Urim and Thummin (4Q375, 4Q376).⁸³ Other passages also develop this deceiver theme.⁸⁴

persecuted one, is the very one inseparably connected with God's ultimate triumph." Similar in thrust are E. Linnemann, *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte* (FRLANT 102; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970), 129–30; and E. Lohse, "Der Prozeß Jesu Christi," in *Die Einheit des Neuen Testaments: Exegetische Studien zur Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (ed. E. Lohse; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 99–100, who notes that the view of a disjunction is also found in Bultmann and Dibelius. See Lohse's n. 42.

80. Wolfgang Reinbold, *Der älteste Bericht über den Tod Jesu: Literarische Analyse und historische Kritik der Passionsdarstellungen der Evangelien* (BZNW 69; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1994), 256.

81. Otto Betz, "Probleme des Prozesses Jesu," in *ANRW* II.25.1, pp. 613–44.

82. Strobel, *Die Stunde der Wahrheit*, 81–92.

83. On this passage, which calls for sacrifices and a test using the Urim and Thummin, see J. Strugnell, "Moses-Pseudepigrapha at Qumran: 4Q375, 4Q376, and Similar Works," in *Archaeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls: The New York University Conference in Memory of Yigael Yadin* (ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman; JSPSup 8; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 221–56; and Johannes Zimmermann, *Messianische Vorstellungen in den Schriftfunden von Qumran*

In the texts in the Fathers where there is contention with Jews, the charge against Jesus is consistently that he was a magician or a deceiver, a person subject to the evil arts. For example, there is a long discussion in Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 69.7, where Justin's Jewish opponent attributes Jesus' abilities in magical arts to his being "a magician and a deceiver of the people" (μάγον . . . καὶ λαοπλάνον). In 108.2, he is called "a Galilean deceiver" (Γαλιλαίου πλάνου). Origen also dealt with such a claim. In *Cels.* 1.68, there is a long discussion over Jesus' works and ministry. Celsus charges that he is an evil and godless man, while in 1.71, he is a God-hating and unworthy magician (θεομισσοῦς ἦν τινος καὶ μοχθηροῦ γόητος; GCS 1, 22). Eusebius repeats the charge in his *Dem. ev.* 3, 3, 1–4 and 3, 6, 1, where he considers the deceiver (πλάνος) charge (CGS 23, pp. 108–9). The consistent testimony of Christians, Jews, and the Christians who were reporting about the Jewish view is that he was put to death, in part, for deceiving Israel. Thus, the tradition of the Talmud has old roots.

Third, Reinhold's assessment also ignores both the relationship and the distinction between idolatry and blasphemy in the Jewish materials. In Judaism, idolatry and blasphemy were comparable and sometimes were seen as interrelated offenses, but they did not have to be.⁸⁵ The punishments for them were often viewed as similar, and the way they were assessed was often paralleled.

A fourth point that Reinhold fails to consider is the difference in Betz's position from Strobel's argument. Betz tightened Strobel's argument at the places where Strobel's links were the weakest by adding additional background.⁸⁶ Whereas Strobel emphasized Jesus the deceiver, Betz highlights how Jesus in his messianic claim is seen as a deceiver. The difference is significant, because it fills in a gap in Strobel's argument, which Reinhold rightly notes but overplays. In sum, Reinhold's critique thoroughly fails to come to grips with the historical evidence on all sides of the controversy

(Ph.D. diss., Tübingen University, 1996), 204–16. The text is fragmentary and seems to be an apocryphon of Moses. It has uncertain origins, though it appears not to be from the Qumran community itself. Josephus discusses a similar process in *Ant* 3.8.9 §§214–18, though the two sets of passages disagree whether the stone on the left (4Q376) or the right (Josephus) shines to give the signal. According to Nehemiah, these stones went out of use by the time of Ezra (Neh 7:65), but Josephus dates their non-use later, at ca. 120 B.C.E.; see Strugnell, "Moses-Pseudepigrapha," 243. The text is significant because it shows that concern for these issues remained alive to the extent that how examinations should take place was contemplated, with the result that the penalty for the crime for being a false prophet or deceiver was death.

84. Martin Hengel, *Nachfolge und Charisma: Eine exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Studie zu Mt 8,21f. und Jesu Ruf in die Nachfolge* (BZNW 34; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1968), 44–45 n. 14.

85. See my *Blasphemy and Exaltation*, 110–12, which distinguishes between acts of blasphemy that *can be* idolatrous acts *and/or* acts of arrogance, from the category of blasphemous utterances. For example, the already-discussed criticism of God's leaders is not idolatrous but is seen as a blasphemous attack on God's honor reflecting criticism of the divine choice. Acts dishonoring God's temple are another example (1 Macc 2:6).

86. See the works of Strobel (*Stunde der Wahrheit*) and Betz ("Jesus and the Temple Scroll") and nn. 24–25 above.

that Jesus was slain as a deceiver, a point that lends credibility to the careful historical background work of Strobel and Betz.

What emerges from a careful consideration of Betz's work is that a credible unity to the summarized flow of events emerges that reflects not abruptness but a careful understanding of the conceptual connections that existed at the time. This is part of what meets the demands of Theissen and Winter's "historical plausibility" criterion. The connection shows a nuanced awareness of the cultural background. Betz showed how the temple threat could have been interpreted as putting the nation at risk before Rome in a way that demanded response. Here the already-cited 11Q*Temple* 64:6–13 reflects sensitivity to the political realities that a temple disruption could cause with Rome. There existed in the view of the leadership the need to deal severely with such a challenge, including the prospect of crucifixion for one found guilty of the charge. Betz also noted a temple-king connection in Jewish tradition, stretching back to 2 Sam 7 and appearing as well in the 14th petition of the *Shemoneh Esreh*, in which the hope of a cleansed, everlasting Jerusalem where God again dwells and the raising up of David's throne are placed side by side. The 14th petition reads, "And to Jerusalem, your city, return with mercy and dwell in its midst as you have spoken; and build it soon in our days to be an everlasting building; and raise up quickly in its midst the throne of David. Blessed are you, Lord, who builds Jerusalem." The concerns here would be Jewish, of course, not Roman.

But there still could be a minor problem with the argument in this form. It is found in the view that Messiah is possibly not explicitly said to be the builder or destroyer of the temple in these early Jewish texts.⁸⁷ The

87. Gundry, *Mark*, 898–901. He notes that it is God who builds the temple in the early key text of 4QFlor 1–2, 10, where it is also a question whether the temple is meant, the dynasty of regal Davidic rule, or probably both (temple in vv. 1–2, dynasty in v. 10). For views on what Jesus' saying in Mark might have meant, see Gundry's discussion. As I will argue, it is almost irrelevant what the exact meaning here is, because it was the association related to authority and restoration that led to the more-focused personal question that the high priest asked. Gundry's view could be slightly overstated if, at this time, texts such as Zech 6:12 were read in the way that *Tg. Zech.* 6:12 and *Tg. Isa.* 53:5 suggest. Both these later targums suggest that Messiah will build the temple, for the *Isaiah Targum* says that Messiah "will build the sanctuary which was profaned for our sins," and the *Targum to Zechariah* speaks of the Anointed, who will be revealed, be raised up, and "shall build the temple of the Lord." Of course, the problem with these texts is that they are late. However, if this understanding of Messiah's role existed in this earlier period, then Betz's case is more direct, because the suggestion of a messianic building of the temple would then be explicit. But my point is that, even if the connection is more implied, the connection still easily comes to the surface. For other discussions of the relation of the temple to Messiah, see E. E. Ellis, "Deity Christology in Mark 14:58," in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ* (ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 200 and nn. 44–45; D. D. Edwards, *Jesus and the Temple* (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Theological Seminary, 1992), 204–7; Dunn (*The Parting of the Ways*, 51–53), who stresses the involvement of the key priests in sending Jesus to his death as part of a dispute over religious authority; and Volker Hampel, *Menschensohn und historischer Jesus: Ein Rätselwort als Schlüssel zum messianischen Selbstverständnis Jesu* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 174–75, who also notes *Lev. Rab.* 9.6 (111a) for this theme. They see a connection between Messiah

connection may not be an explicit one but an implicit one. Nonetheless, the key to the high priest's transition in the question is not in this detail of building or destroying a temple, in my view; it is rather in the authority, the claim of social and structural restoration, and the arrival of the era that this restorative claim implies is present. Even though this temple charge apparently was dropped and could not be definitively proved, what the potential but unproved claim did raise was Jesus' association with some type of golden age restoration from God. Jesus did look for a restoration of the nation in which he would have a key role. Now a figure from Judaism that this type of association would suggest was a messianic one—especially if one thinks about the *Shemoneh Esreh*. This association with Messiah also made it possible to raise a political question in relationship to Rome. Thus, the transition is a quite natural one and can make good historical sense in the context, whether one takes the more explicit approach of Betz or sees only a conceptual move based on Jesus' claim of bringing restoration here.

2. *The Issue of "Jewish" Expressions in vv. 61–62.* According to Mark, Jesus' silence on the temple charge leads the high priest to step in and ask, σὺ εἶ ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ ("Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?").⁸⁸ The phrase "the Son of the Blessed One" is an indirect reference to God. "The Blessed One" is a circumlocution that avoids speaking directly of God out of respect for the deity.⁸⁹ In turn, Jesus' reply refers to ἐκ δεξιῶν καθήμενον τῆς δυνάμεως ("seated at the right hand of power"). The reference to "the Power" or "the Almighty" is another circumlocution that describes God through his attributes of power and authority, just as the English name "the Almighty" would. The avoidance of pronouncing God's name is a Jewish custom, but whether these phrases could reflect roots in an authentic tradition has been disputed.

Two examples summarize the reasons raised for questioning the expression's authenticity and regarding it as the work of Mark or the early church. Hugh Anderson writes,

and temple as possible for this era. The entire temple pericope as raising the authority question is fully developed by Jostein Ådna, *Jesu Kritik am Tempel: Eine Untersuchung zum Verlauf und Sinn der sogenannten Tempelreinigung Jesu, Markus 11,15–17 und Parallelen* (Ph.D. diss., Tübingen/Stavanger, 1993). See esp. his pp. 565–79. This work has now been published as *Jesu Stellung zum Tempel* (WUNT 2/119; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 2000).

88. This is the Greek text. A few manuscripts (Γ, Φ, and *pc* in apparatus) lack the reference to the Christ.

89. This wording is changed from my wording in *Blasphemy and Exaltation*, 214, where I mistakenly spoke of a circumlocution for the divine Name, where only a generic reference to God was present, not a use of the divine Name. The error was pointed out by M. Casey in his review of my book in *JTS* 52 (2001): 245–47. This review was highly critical of my work. I have responded to him in detail and updated my discussion of this theme in "Jewish Expressions in Mark 14.61–62 and the Authenticity of the Jewish Examination of Jesus," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 1 (2003): 147–59. Schwemer ("Die Passion des Messiah") called the review "völlig ungerechtfertigt" ("completely unjustified").

Although the description **Son of the Blessed** is a typically Jewish reverential circumlocution for 'Son of God', it is quite improbable that a high priest of the Sadducean party would have used this language in collocation with the term 'Christ' or 'Messiah'. The semblance of verisimilitude barely disguises the fact, therefore, that here the Church has put its own language on the lips of the high priest.⁹⁰

Though it is not entirely clear from Anderson's remarks why it is improbable that a high priest of the Sadducees would use such an expression, an explanation is provided by the remarks of Donald Juel as a part of his judgment that "the best explanation of the phrase in Mark is that it is a pseudo-Jewish expression created by the author as appropriate in the mouth of the high priest."⁹¹ Earlier he had noted that (1) the term "the Blessed One" as a circumlocution for the name of God is almost completely unattested" and (2) that the title "Son of God" is rarely used as a messianic designation in extant Jewish literature."⁹²

The tendency of the scholars discussing this problem is to isolate the example of "Son of the Blessed One" from a discussion of the "right hand of Power," since the "Son" phrase is the more rare and disputed usage. But it could be argued that it is the pair of references that are revealing. The care of the high priest to be reverential is respected and repeated by Jesus even as he replies.⁹³ The detail and the paired response add notes of solemnity to the report. The fact that the two expressions play off one another should be noted before we look at each expression separately.

It is important to summarize the key linguistic data for both expressions.⁹⁴ Traces of a similar expression, "the Blessed One," can be found in *m. Ber. 7:3* and in *1 En. 77:2*.⁹⁵ In other words, the concept is common, while

90. Anderson, *The Gospel of Mark*, 331. I noted in n. 78 above the concluding part of this citation earlier in connection with the claim that the shift to christology was abrupt after the temple discussion.

91. Donald Juel, *Messiah and the Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 31; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977), 79.

92. *Ibid.*, 78.

93. This point only applies if the report of the trial did not alter a direct reference to God by Jesus to match the priest's question in order to remove an element of potential blasphemy by naming God directly, a view noted above and held by Robert Gundry. My contention is that this is one of the reasons Gundry's suggestion is less than likely at this point. I view the pairing as significant, at least for Mark's portrayal of the event. Though Jesus is making bold claims, he is portrayed as doing so while showing respect for God that the high priest introduced. Only Mark's version has this pair of circumlocutions, because Matt 26:63 ("Are you the Christ, the Son of God?") and Luke 22:67 ("If you are the Christ, tell us") alter the question slightly. The variation means that we are dealing with summaries of the scene here, as opposed to the actual wording in at least two of the synoptic gospel portrayals, but a movement away from an almost liturgical-like circumlocution is more likely than the reverse, since a circumlocution is more indirect. Nonetheless, the question remains whether even these summaries are a good general reflection of what took place.

94. Gustav Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu* (2nd ed.; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1965), 163–65; Strack-Billerbeck, 2:51; and Evans, *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 421–22.

95. The key expression in the Mishnah is *הַמְבוֹרֵךְ*. See especially, Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud* (SJ 9; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1977), 100–111, 314, esp. p. 105 n. 1. His index contains

the exact expression is not. The usage in *1 Enoch* is potentially significant because it refers to “the eternally Blessed.” However, the Aramaic fragments we have of *1 Enoch* from Qumran unfortunately do not include this text, because Qumran only has about one-fifth of this book in Aramaic.⁹⁶ The other Jewish uses of “Blessed One” reveal that this phrase is an old synagogue expression used in prayer, a common respectful way to refer to what God does, though it is in a dependent, adjectival construction and is not used independently as an isolated name.

In fact, there is a long string of traditional discussions about this blessing that invokes God as the one who is to be blessed (המבורך), a phrase tied to a remark by Rabbi Ishmael (ca. 120 C.E.), who said that the blessing in the synagogue should be, “Bless the Lord who is blessed.” The remark concludes a long discussion about the proper benedictions for a variety of situations and audience sizes (*m. Ber.* 7:3). The development of the discussion on proper blessing formulas continues in texts such as *b. Ber.* 49b–50a (2×), *Mek. Pisha* 16 on Exod 13:3 (lines 130–40, Lauterbach), and *y. Ber.* 11b–c (3×, though the first reference in 11b is only in the London and Paris MSS). The benediction comes to expression in the very old Jewish prayer known as the *Qaddish*.⁹⁷ It also was associated with a morning invitation to worship with the call, “Bless you the Lord the one to whom blessing is due.”⁹⁸ Another Jewish text alludes to this prayer without using the specific benediction (*t. Ber.* 5.18). So this description of God as a Blessed One is a part of the central prayer life of the nation, an old synagogue prayer. It has overtones of appreciation, prayer, and worship. Its widespread use in the liturgical tradition suggests an old practice. It shows that it is perfectly appropriate to speak of God as the “Blessed One.”⁹⁹

37 different blessing formulas involving God. Judaism was in the habit of showering blessings upon God in its worship. See also *Sifre Deut.* §306 (Finkelstein, p. 342, line 6). This account has both the blessing (“Bless you the Lord who is to be blessed”) and a response that uses the phrase “Bless you the Lord who is to be blessed forever.” The two phrases here are: ברכו את ה' המבורך לעולם for the blessing and ברוך ה' המבורך לעולם for the response. Though the expression “the eternally Blessed” has not been found in Aramaic fragments of this *1 Enoch* passage, a parallel expression is found in 4Q209 as it reflects *1 En.* 23:3–4 (see also Maier’s translation, vol. 2, p. 161). The connection to 23:3–4 is noted in Michael Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 179. The Yerushalmi text noted below can be found in P. Schäfer and H.-J. Becker, eds., *Synopse zum Talmud Yerushalmi* (vol. 1/1–2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), 188–91.

96. Knibb, *The Ethiopian Book of Enoch*, 6–15.

97. Ismar Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtliche Entwicklung* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1962), 92–98. The prayer comes at the end of the reading of the Torah or at the end of a public sermon. In *Sop.* 21.6, 10.7, and 19.1, the prayer is associated with the conclusion of the reading of Torah and comes at the end of the sequence of prayers. These connections appear to be a little more recent in origin. The oldest named rabbi who is tied to the prayer’s use is Jose b. Halaftha (ca. 150 C.E.). See *Sifre Deut.* §306 and *b. Ber.* 3a. The expression is יהא שמה רבא מברך לעולם. D. W. Staerk, *Altjüdische liturgische Gebete* (Kleine Texte für Vorlesungen und Übungen 58; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1930), 30–31.

98. Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, 25.

99. In “Jewish Expressions,” I have added the evidence of numerous texts from Qumran and the Mishnah for the expressions that look to God as one to be blessed. In the conclusion of that section, I said, “So as unprecedented as the expression ‘Son of the Blessed One’ is, the

However, there is a difference in Mark's usage that points to the criterion of dissimilarity, if we can apply it in this case to something the high priest says. The high priest uses the term "Blessed" as part of the description of God's son (Son of the Blessed One) as opposed to the normal way of using it as part of a blessing one offers for what God has done. In other words, the usage is a variation on a common Jewish idea but does not match that common usage as a created saying likely would. More than that, Mark does not use the verb "to bless" (εὐλογέω) to refer to God in his other uses (6:44, 8:7, 14:22—in prayer with a request that God bless, 11:9–10—where the entering Jesus and the kingdom to come are said to be blessed; 8:7, 11:10 are uses unique to Mark). Nowhere else in a gospel is this name used for God. It is used of God in a qualified manner like the Jewish practice in Rom 1:25, 9:5; 2 Cor 11:31, where it describes God as blessed. It is interesting that these NT uses are limited to the most scribally trained Jew of the NT writers, Paul. It also is unlikely that this expression and its Jewish-like character were created by Mark, because his audience was not savvy on Jewish cultural themes, as his explanation of terms in a passage such as Mark 7:1–4 shows. When we add the fact that Mark uses "Son of God" with ease elsewhere (1:1, 3:11, 5:7—in a vocative, 15:39), then this expression looks like one that came to Mark through the tradition.

If the Semitic expression was used at Jesus' examination in a way that the Greek reflects, then the priest is speaking of God with great respect as he introduces the question, a point that adds solemnity to its import. Now what is also important in the *1 Enoch* text is that it appears next to a parallel reference to "the Most High," showing that Jews often piled up titles or solemn ideas in proximity to one another when discussing a significant figure. This point is important for the later consideration of the proximity of titles in the Mark 14 setting.

In the Mishnah, the reference to God as blessed comes, as was already noted, from Rabbi Ishmael (ca. 120 C.E.), who reports one of the congregational blessings to be, "Bless you the Lord who is to be blessed." Here the expression is adjectival, a reading that also could be applied to the Marcan text as an alternative way to translate what the Semitic could have been behind the text of Mark. So, although the exact phrase "Son of the blessed One" is not attested, all of the elements for it are present and parallels of this type of expression do exist in Judaism, such as the expression "Son of

concept of God as the one who is blessed is not rare at all. It is this combination of similarity and dissimilarity that speaks to the likelihood that what we have in Mark 14 is a trace of Jewish expression, not made up by Mark or the church, but retained from the Jewish roots and serious nature of the examination of Jesus" (p. 153). The use of the expression underscores the serious, even solemn nature of the query, rooted as it is in prayer and worship. In expressing myself this way, I am appealing to Tom Wright's variation of the criterion of dissimilarity, what has come to be called double dissimilarity, which means close to but not quite like Judaism or early church expression. The NT reflects such usage in Eph 1:3 and 1 Pet 1:3.

the Most High" in 4QpsDanA^a shows.¹⁰⁰ In responding to Juel's claim that this is a "pseudo-Jewish" expression, Marcus cautions, "The fragmentary nature of our sources for first-century Judaism, however, casts doubt on the appropriateness of the prefix 'pseudo-'"¹⁰¹ Even the fragmentary sources show a series of examples that are quite similar to what we have in Mark. Although all of this falls short of clear proof that the expression itself is ultimately rooted in Jesus and the trial, it does suggest that what we have is more likely to have come to Mark through the tradition than to have been his own creative expression. So one can ask, is there more evidence from the context that might tip the balance even further?

When it comes to the reference to power, things are a little clearer.¹⁰² 1 *Enoch* 62:7 has a figurative reference to power, though not as a name, when it says, "For the Son of Man was concealed from the beginning, and the Most High One preserved him in the presence of his power." The expression itself appears throughout the Jewish tradition in *Sipre Num.* §112 [on 15:31], where Rabbi Ishmael (ca. 120 C.E.) refers to the mouth of "the Power" (הגבורה). Similar are references to "from the mouth of the Power" in *b. Jer.* 54b (מפי הגבורה, 2x); *b. Yebam.* 105b (מפי הגבורה); and *Tg. Job* 5:8 and its reference to "from the Power [תקיפא]." The two talmudic texts describe how Moses received the Law from the Almighty. Similar is *b. Šabb.* 88b, where the giving of the Law to Moses meant "every single word that went forth from the mouth of the Almighty (מפי הגבורה) was split up into seventy languages." In *b. Meg.* 31b, Rabbi Abaye (ca. 335 C.E.) notes that the curses in Leviticus need to be read one verse at a time because "Moses uttered them from the mouth of the Almighty" (מפי הגבורה). We will see below that this theme appears in other texts as well and is tied to the prohibition to idolatry, an important connection for our topic. A variation on the phrase is "the Power that is above" in *Sipre Deut.* §319 [on 32:18], while "from the mouth of the Power" appears again in *'Abot R. Nat.* [A] 37.12. An alternate text to *Sipre Deut.* §9 on Deut 1:9 says, "Moses said to

100. For a recent discussion of this Qumranian text, see Émile Puech, "Fragment d'une apocalypse en araméen (4Q246 = pseudo-Dan^d) et le 'Royaume de Dieu,'" *RB* 99 (1992): 98–131. For discussion of its significance for NT studies, see J. Fitzmyer, "The Contribution of Qumran Aramaic to the Study of the New Testament," *NTS* 20 (1974): 382–401; and his "4Q246: The 'Son of God' Document from Qumran," *Bib* 74 (1993): 153–74; as well as Evans (*Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 107–11), who rightly defends a probable messianic reading for this text, noting parallels between it, Isa 10:20–11:16, and Ps 89:27–28[26–27] against Fitzmyer's nonmessianic reading. This messianic reading is argued in detail by Zimmermann, *Messianische Texte aus Qumran*, 128–70. He sees a link between the Son of Man of Dan 7 and the use of this title here. This text has been alternately numbered 4Q246 and 4Q243 (how Fitzmyer numbered the text in 1974). The recognized designation now is 4Q246.

101. Joel Marcus, "Mark 14:16: 'Are You the Messiah-Son-of God?'" *NovT* 31 (1989): 127 n. 6.

102. For brief discussions of these texts, see A. Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*, vol. 1: *The Names and Attributes of God* (London: Oxford University Press, 1922), 82; Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu*, 1:164–65; Str-B 1:1006–7; 2:308.

Israel, 'I did not speak to you on my own, but out of the mouth of the Almighty.'" *Mekilta* also has several examples invoking Moses.¹⁰³ *Mek. Beshallah* 2 (26a) on Exod 14:2 has Moses report on the freedom of the Israelites that came from "the mouth of the Almighty" (מפי הגבורה). *Mek. Amalek* 4 (59b) on Exod 18:19 calls Moses to seek counsel "with the Power" (בגבורה). *Mek. Bahodesh* 9 (71a) on Exod 20:18 has Ishmael (ca. 120 C.E.) report the words of Akiba (ca. 120 C.E.) that speak of the people hearing the fiery word coming out of the "mouth of the Power" (מפי הגבורה). *Mek. Amalek* 1 on Exod 17:13 (54b) has Rabbi Eleazar (ca. 130 C.E.) speak of the war being by "the order of the Power" (מפי הגבורה). *Mek. Vayassa* 1 on Exod 15:22 has two references coming from Rabbi Eleazar that Moses got the command for the journey "from the mouth of the Almighty" (מפי הגבורה). Later in the same passage in the discussion on Exod 15:24, the remark is made that when Israelites spoke against Moses they were "speaking against the Almighty" (על הגבורה). Both refer to the time of the Exodus and God directing the journey. The term is especially suited to the authority of God and the events associated with the Exodus. This usage is well enough distributed to be seen as common, even though these texts are later than the time of Jesus.

In fact the *Sipre Num.* §112 text was noted in the discussion on blasphemy and is a significant text.¹⁰⁴ Here the reference to Moses comes through the teaching of Ishmael (ca. 120 C.E.). Idolatry associated with blasphemy is the topic. The act is seen as a violation of the first commandment, which "Moses had spoken from the mouth of the Almighty" (מפי הגבורה). Similar in force is *b. Mak.* 24a, where the command not to have other gods is said by R. Hamnuna (ca. 290 C.E.) to have come "from the mouth of the Almighty" (מפי הגבורה). Parallel to that is a reference in *b. Hor.* 8a, where Ishmael again is the source and again the word about idolatry is "I [am the Lord your God] and you shall not have [any other gods before me]," which was heard from the "mouth of the Almighty" (מפי גבורה; the context makes it clear that idolatry is the topic). This phrase shows up consistently as an expression for the revelation to Moses and in a wide range of materials. The association of the term with the authority of God in establishing the nation and giving the Law is significant background information. It is a title associated with the salvific power and revelation of the one true God.

103. The following *Mekilta* references are keyed to Lauterbach's English translation edition and the numbering system of Finkelstein. See Lauterbach, 26a on 1:190; 54b on 2:147; 59b on 2:182, and 71a on 2:266. For a discussion of this theme, see E. Urbach, *The Sages, Their Concepts and Beliefs* (trans. I. Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes, 1975), 80–96 and 722–24, esp. 84–86. On p. 86, he closes his survey with this remark, "Without doubt, this epithet corresponds to the term δὺναμις that occurs also in Matthew xxvi 6. Jesus declares: 'Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the *Gevûra*- (ἐκ δεξιῶν τῆς δυνάμεως)." He notes that it is found by the end of the first century with this force.

104. Karl G. Kuhn, *Sipre zu Numeri*, RT 2, vol. 3, p. 330, esp. n. 74, and the edition of Horowitz, p. 121, line 9.

The expression is almost an idiom. *ʿAbot R. Nat.* 37 elaborates when it notes in comparing Moses and Aaron as recipients of God's revelation that "Moses heard the words from the mouth of the Almighty, while Aaron heard them from the mouth of Moses" (משה שמע מפי הגבורה ואהרן) (שמע מפי משה).¹⁰⁵ Thus, to invoke "the Power" is to speak of the God of the nation, who speaks with authority. The expression is so widely attested in the early midrashim that it has a good claim to early roots. The consistency of the usage shows that the expression is full of subtlety and significance. Jesus claims he will sit next to this Almighty One, serving beside the true God with full authority as his unique representative. To allude to a description of God that may have been associated with Moses, the Exodus, and the nation's origin surely makes the claim of Jesus even stronger—and more provocative. This kind of involved Jewish expression is unlikely to have its origin in the early church, particularly in a gospel that is written with Gentile concerns in mind.

All of this evidence shows that both expressions fit this setting exceedingly well (contra Anderson). One can speak of the exchange fitting the cultural context, being plausible as an expression of very nuanced Jewish ideas. The juxtaposition of the two expressions, echoing the solemnity of the scene, helps to suggest that the evidence for the less well-attested expression of the Blessed One is strengthened by the evidence for the "power" or "Almighty."

However, because the argument is not clear-cut, it is also important to consider what arguments exist for the likelihood that Mark did not create the wording of this exchange. First, as I just noted, Mark has no hesitation in using "Son of God." He does so at various key points, including 1:1 (introduction), 3:11, 5:7, 15:39 (centurion). The middle two cases involve unclean spirits. Interestingly in 5:7, there is the complex expression, Jesus, Son of God, the Most High (υἱὲ τοῦ θεοῦ τοῦ ὑψίστου). So the expression without a direct reference to God is unusual for Mark. As Kazmierski notes, to attribute its origin to Mark "would be strange in light of his redactional interest in the Hellenistic form of the confession of Sonship."¹⁰⁶ Though I would hesitate to characterize "Son of God" as a Hellenistic title in light of Qumranian finds (such as 4QFlor 1:10–11) and the tighter interrelationship between the various cultures, Kazmierski's point about Marcan preferred expressions is correct and speaks against Marcan creation.

Second, the very dissimilarity of the expression to Christian titles speaks for "Son of the Blessed One" as a non-Christian use, for it requires not only the use of the circumlocution but an appreciation by Mark's audience of the fact that it substitutes for "Son of God." His audience might

105. For the text, see Salomon Schechter, *Aboth de Rabbi Nathan*, 110. I thank Martin Hengel again for putting me on the trail of many of these texts both for blessing and for power.

106. Carl R. Kazmierski, *Jesus, the Son of God: A Study of the Marcan Tradition and Its Redaction by the Evangelist* (FB 33; Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1979), 171. He prefers to argue that Mark got it from Jewish-Christian tradition.

not appreciate the subtlety of the indirect reference, regardless of whether “Son of God” should be read in messianic or in more exalted terms. In other words, the liturgical and respectful background of the term is not appreciated by a Gentile audience. Significantly, Matthew, writing for a Jewish audience, opts for the more direct “Son of God” here in 26:63, even doubling the reference by including before the question an oath to the “living God.” This indicates that Mark is far less likely to have created the phrase. Not only was it not his style, it was a difficult expression for his audience.

Third, power is not a substitute for God elsewhere in the NT, despite the numerous uses of Ps 110:1 in these texts (Acts 2:34–35; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). All of this points to the exceptional usage as being exactly that, exceptional, and not contrived. Something motivated Mark to write in this indirect style. Neither is it clear that the source would be a creative attempt to echo Jewish tradition perhaps through Jewish-Christian sources, because the evangelist Matthew, writing for that setting, lacks such a reference, though he does retain the reference to power in 26:64 (as does Luke 22:69). When these circumlocutions appear, the evangelists seem motivated by something present in their tradition that causes them to use them. The respect shown to God by the high priest in asking his key question in this sensitive trial setting and the reciprocal response by Jesus are very appropriate for this setting. It is a subtle, detailed touch that by its unique character likely points to authenticity at the root of the trial tradition.

3. *The Use of Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13.* This topic and the next one are closely bound together. One could discuss them together, but the availability of these OT images is still a separate discussion from Jesus’ use of the Son of Man title. So I will consider issues tied to the question of the apocalyptic Son of Man separately. First, I discuss the use of Ps 110:1, especially as it appears in Mark 12. Then I take up the question of Dan 7 and the debate over the Son of Man.

In considering authenticity issues associated with the use of Ps 110:1, our key text is Mark 12:35–37, because it sets the backdrop to the examination scene. In that passage, Jesus raised the question why David calls the Christ Lord, if he is supposed to be David’s son.¹⁰⁷ If this passage raising the issue of what Messiah should be called is authentic, then there is nothing unusual about its presence in the trial scene.

Now the major objection to the authenticity of this Mark 12 text and its use of Ps 110:1 is its alleged dependence on the LXX to make its argument. It is claimed that the wordplay involving the title “Lord” is only possible in the LXX, so this text must be a later christological reflection of

107. For a full treatment of Ps 110:1 and its suitability to this setting, see my *Luke 9:51–24:53* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3b; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1630–41.

the post-Easter, Hellenistic Christian community.¹⁰⁸ Hahn also rejects any attempt to suggest how this text may have been read in Hebrew or Aramaic had there been an attempt to avoid pronunciation of the divine Name, a view Dalman noted years ago.¹⁰⁹

Two points need to be made here. First, one cannot exclude by mere declaration the possibility that the divine Name was not pronounced in an oral setting. The evidence for this likelihood was considered above in the discussion of whether the blasphemy might have entailed pronunciation in the reading of the divine Name.¹¹⁰ There it was noted as possible but not certain that the divine Name was not pronounced. The minute such a substitution was made, the ambiguity would exist in Aramaic (אמר מריא למראי). In Hebrew, a substitution revolving around the reuse of ארני is also a possibility.

Second, even if the substitution was *not* made, the problem that the Mark 12 text introduces remains, though with slightly less of an edge. The problem of the Mark 12 text is not that the divine title Lord is used but that David, an ancestor in a patriarchal society, calls a descendant his Lord.¹¹¹ This problem exists in the text in its Hebrew form as well. In the entire dispute over the later christological significance emerging from this text, it has been forgotten that the dilemma originally rotated around the honor that David gives to the proposed Messiah, who also is his descendant, a fact that is ironic in a culture that gives honor to the elder, not the younger. Thus it is quite possible that the text in an unaltered Semitic form could raise the dilemma that Jesus points out is present in the text. Why would David call his descendant Lord? These two considerations mean that Ps 110:1 could be used as a way of probing the authority of the Messiah from the perspective of the one to whom the royal promise, according to Jewish tradition, was given.¹¹² Nothing in this understanding or the tension it raises requires a post-Easter reading of this passage.

But there is a final consideration as well that speaks for the authenticity of Jesus' use of Ps 110:1 in Mark 12. It is the very ambiguity and Jewishness of the way Jesus makes his point. The playing down of the Davidic sonship of the messianic figure is counter to the normal post-Easter emphasis, as Acts 2:30–36, 13:23–39; Rom 1:2–4; and Heb 1:3–14 show. Those who see a post-Easter creation must deal with this question: would the later, post-Easter community have expressed its conviction about Jesus as

108. This argument is clearly summarized by Ferdinand Hahn, *Christologische Hoheitstitel* (5th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995), 112–15.

109. Dalman, *Die Worte Jesu*, 270.

110. See the discussion above surrounding Byington's work and n. 48.

111. Jesus' argument appears to assume that David is the speaker of the utterance.

112. The one assumption that Jesus and his audience share about the psalm is that David is the speaker, a view that would fit the first-century setting. Given that the text is royal and that Israel lacks a king in Jesus' time, it is also likely that the text would be seen as applying to a king in a restored monarchy, a restoration that could easily conjure up messianic implications.

Lord in a way that is so ambiguous and that at the same time gives an impression that the long-established and quite traditional Son of David title is insignificant? The form of Jesus' query has long been noted to parallel the Jewish style of putting two remarks in opposition to one another. The point is not to deny one remark or the other but to relate them to each other.¹¹³ Jesus is simply affirming that David's calling Messiah Lord is more important than his being called Son of David. The query, which is unanswered in the Mark 12 context, serves to underscore the Messiah's authority and the ancestor's respect for his anticipated great descendant. At a narrative level, the unanswered question looks for a resolution. The trial scene does that for Mark. The coming exaltation of the One to be crucified explains the passage, and the passage explains the significance of that exaltation.

Now this issue of Messiah's authority as an abstract theological topic is not a post-Easter question. It has been raised by the very nature of the Jerusalem events in which this dispute appears. An earlier query about Jesus' authority came after he cleansed the temple (Mark 11:27–33). Jesus' query here is an answer to the question the leadership posed to him earlier but with a critical and reflective edge. If David, the one who received the promise, responds to Messiah as Lord, how should others (including you leaders!) view him? Jesus does not make an identification of himself with Messiah in Mark 12 but merely sets forth the question theoretically and leaves the conclusions to his listeners, as Mark does for his readers. Would a post-Easter creation be so subtle?

In sum, the evidence of Mark 12:35–37 indicates that it is far more likely that Ps 110:1 goes back to a period when the issues surrounding Jesus' identity were surfacing than to roots in a community that was openly confessing him in the midst of dispute. As such, its claims to authenticity are strong. This means that the roots of the well-attested NT use of Ps 110:1 go back, in all likelihood, to Jesus himself, and so this was a text he could use in his defense later, particularly if he contemplated a vindication by God for what was currently taking place. But to show that Ps 110:1 could be used by Jesus, or even was used by him on one occasion, does not indicate that it was used as shown in Mark 14:62. This requires consideration of the text that it is paired with Dan 7, along with some reflection on the Son of Man concept that also is present in the examination scene.

So I turn to Dan 7 as a way into the discussion about the Son of Man. The question of the possibility of Jesus' use of Dan 7:13–14 is closely tied to the issue of the apocalyptic Son of Man. This question is examined now in two steps. Here we consider the conceptual parallels that indicate that, during the time of Jesus, speculation about an exalted figure like the Son of Man existed in Judaism. If this is the case, then it can be seriously questioned whether such reflection would have taken place only in a post-

113. David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: University of London/Athlone, 1956), 158–63.

Easter context. The next section will consider the issue of the apocalyptic Son of Man and Jesus by looking at the evidence of these sayings themselves, regardless of whether the evidence discussed in this section is deemed persuasive or not.¹¹⁴

It has been a hotly debated question whether one should speak of a Son of Man figure in Judaism, because (1) the expression in Dan 7 is not a title but a metaphor (“one like a son of man”), and (2) it was argued that there is no clear evidence in early Jewish texts that such a figure was ever the subject of intense Jewish speculation.¹¹⁵ More recently the debate has been renewed in a more cautiously stated form. Whether there was a Son of Man concept might be debated, but there certainly was speculation about an exalted figure whose roots lie in Dan 7.¹¹⁶

The summary evidence involves a wide array of sources from Judaism of varying strength. For example, in 11QMelch 2:18, there is reference to the bearer of good tidings, who is “the messiah of the spirit of whom Dan[iel] spoke.” Now, the allusion in the context is probably to Dan 9:25 because seven weeks are mentioned, but Horbury notes that this text was often associated with Dan 2 and 7 in Jewish thinking, so the same figure may be in view.¹¹⁷ In *Ezekiel the Tragedian*, a text where in a dream Moses gets to sit on God’s throne, note that the throne of exaltation on which Moses sat was associated with the plural expression “thrones,” language from Dan 7:9.

Other slightly later texts have even clearer points of contact. *1 Enoch* is filled with Son of Man references (46:2–4; 48:2; 62:5, 7, 9, 14; 63:11; 69:27, 29 [2×]; 70:1; 71:14, 17). His enthronement in 62:2–14 is clearly connected to Dan 7, with its reference to a seat on the “throne of glory.”¹¹⁸ *1 Enoch* 46:1 and 47:3 also seem to allude to Dan 7, as do 63:11; 69:27, 29. The three variations in the way “Son of Man” is referred to here do not alter the point that it is Dan 7 that is the point of departure for the imagery here.¹¹⁹ *4 Ezra*

114. This two-tiered division of the discussion reflects the way the issue is carefully discussed by Brown (*The Death of the Messiah*, 509–15).

115. Ragnar Leivestad, “Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man,” *NTS* 18 (1971–72): 243–67. His argument is that only *1 Enoch* gives potential early Jewish evidence for such a title, that it is too late to count, that a title is not certain in the Similitudes, and that a title is not present in Dan 7. One can certainly challenge Leivestad’s view of the date of *1 Enoch*. Other points that he raises will be addressed shortly.

116. John J. Collins, “The Son of Man in First-Century Judaism,” *NTS* 38 (1992): 448–66; and William Horbury, “The Messianic Associations of ‘The Son of Man,’” *JTS* 36 (1985): 34–55.

117. *Ibid.*, 42. Among the texts he notes are *Num. Rab.* 13.14 on Num 7:13 and *Tanḥ.* (Buber) Gen, *Toledoth* 20, with the second text including a reference to Isa 52:7 as well.

118. For issues tied to the dating of this material, see the discussion of Enoch on pp. 85–86 above. It is probably a first-century text. On the differences between the Enoch imagery and Ps 110:1–Dan 7, see Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology*, 185–89; Enoch lacks explicit reference to the intimate right-hand imagery. However, it must be noted that Enoch’s imagery otherwise is very close to these older texts. The issue in all of them is judging authority carried out as the exclusive representative of God from a heavenly throne. The throne and authority are associated directly with God.

119. Contra Leivestad, “Exit the Apocalyptic Son of Man,” n. 105.

13 is another, later text that also reflects speculation about the figure of Daniel. A rabbinic dispute attributed to the late first century involves Akiba's claim that the "thrones" are reserved for David. It suggests an interesting regal, Dan 7 connection (*b. Hag.* 14a; *b. Sanh.* 38b).¹²⁰ Some have compared the Melchizedek figure to aspects of Son of Man speculation.¹²¹ Finally, there is the image of the exalted figure in 4Q491, who also echoes themes of Dan 7.¹²² The variety of passages indicates that Dan 7 imagery was a part of first-century Jewish eschatological and apocalyptic speculation, apart from the question of the presence of a defined Son of Man figure. This means that Dan 7 was a text that was present in the theologically reflective thinking of Judaism and was quite available to Jesus once he started thinking in eschatological-vindication terms. There is nothing here that requires a post-Easter scenario. So the availability of Dan 7 for reflection about the end seems clear enough.

Only two questions remain with regard to the use of these texts. (1) Did Jesus speak of himself as the apocalyptic Son of Man? (2) Is the kind of stitching together of OT allusions such as the combination in Mark 14:62 possible for Jesus? It is to those questions I now turn, but it must be said before considering them that there is nothing in the evidence about the use and availability of Ps 110:1 or Dan 7:13 that demands that the usage here be seen as post-Easter. When Perrin wrote arguing that Mark 14:62 reflected a Christian *peshet* tradition, he did not note any of the Jewish Dan 7 texts already cited.¹²³ The only question is whether Jesus would have portrayed himself as the authoritative figure described in these texts. We have already argued the case for Ps 110:1 above in discussing Mark 12:35–37, but what of the apocalyptic Son of Man?

4. *Jesus and Apocalyptic Son of Man.* The Son of Man title has been the object of intense debate for years and shows no signs of abating.¹²⁴ In this article, we can only treat where the discussion stands and develop the points most relevant to our concern.

120. These talmudic texts were also discussed in my *Blasphemy and Exaltation*, 145–54, under David with mention of 4 *Ezra* in a separate subsection.

121. P. J. Kobelski, *Melchizedek and Melchereša*' (CBQMS 10; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1981), 136.

122. Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology*, 202.

123. Norman Perrin, "Mark XIV.62: The End Product of a Christian *Peshet* Tradition?" *NTS* 13 (1965–66): 150–55.

124. Representative of a host of recent monographs since 1980 are: A. J. B. Higgins, *The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus* (SNTSMS 39; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Seyoon Kim, *The 'Son of Man' as the Son of God* (WUNT 30; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983); Barnabas Lindars, *Jesus Son of Man* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983); Chrys C. Caragounis, *The Son of Man: Vision and Interpretation* (WUNT 38; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986); Volker Hampel, *Menschensohn und historischer Jesus: Ein Rätselwort als Schlüssel zum messianischen Selbstverständnis Jesu* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990); Anton Vögtle, *Die "Gretchenfrage" des Menschensohn-Problems: Bilanz und Perspektive* (QD 152; Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1994); D. Burkitt, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation* (SNTSMS 107; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Numerous issues surround the discussion, including an intense debate over whether the expression is representative of a title (like the form of its consistent NT use) or is an idiom. If it is an idiom, then it has been argued that the meaning is either a circumlocution for "I" (Vermes) or an indirect expression with the force of "some person" (Fitzmyer).¹²⁵ It seems that, for most students of the problem today, a formal title, or at least a unified Son of Man concept, did not yet exist in the early first century and that Fitzmyer has more evidence available for his view on the idiom. It is the idiomatic element in the Aramaic expression and the lack of a fixed concept in Judaism that allow any "son of man" remark to be ambiguous unless it is tied to a specific passage or context. This means the term could be an effective vehicle as a cipher for Jesus that he could fill with content and also define as he used it. One can argue that Jesus used the term ambiguously initially and drew out its force as he continued to use it, eventually associating it with Dan 7.¹²⁶

But as was shown above, it is one thing to say that the Son of Man figure was not a given in Judaism and quite another to say that Dan 7 was not the object of reflection in that period. Even if a fixed portrait and title did not exist, the outlines of such a figure were emerging and were available for reflection and development.

So what is the evidence in the Gospels themselves concerning the apocalyptic Son of Man? The designation Son of Man appears 82 times in the Gospels and is a self-designation of Jesus in all but one case, where it reports a claim of Jesus (John 12:34).¹²⁷ When one sorts out the parallels, it looks as though 51 sayings are involved, of which 14 appear to come from Mark and 10 from the sayings source, often called Q.¹²⁸ Of the four uses outside the Gospels, only one (Act 7:56) has the full phrase with the definite article as it appears in the Gospels (Heb 2:6; Rev 1:13, 14:14). In other words, the term is very much one associated with Jesus' own speech. So in texts where the early church is clearly speaking, the term is rare, and the full form of the title almost never appears. The nature of its usage by Jesus and the oddity of the term as a Greek expression is the probable reason that the expression appears in this limited way. Other titles such as Son of

125. I have already commented on this issue in a special excursus entitled "The Son of Man in Aramaic and Luke (5:24)," in *Luke 1:1–9:50* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament 3a; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 924–30; and in "The Son of Man in Luke 5:24," *BBR* 1 (1991): 109–21. For Vermes's argument, see "The Use of *בן נשא* in Jewish Aramaic," *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (3rd ed., by M. Black; Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), 310–30. For J. Fitzmyer, "Another View of the 'Son of Man' Debate," *JSNT* 4 (1979): 58–68; and *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (SBLMS 25; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 143–61.

126. I have made this argument elsewhere already, in "The Son of Man in Aramaic and Luke (5:24)" and in "The Son of Man in Luke 5:24."

127. Mark 2:10 is sometimes seen as an editorial aside by Mark, but the syntax of the verse makes the case for this awkward and quite unlikely. The breakdown is 69 times in the Synoptics (Matt 30, Mark 14, Luke 25) and 13 times in John.

128. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 507.

God, Messiah, and Lord were more functional. Jeremias makes the following observation about the pattern of usage:

How did it come about that at a very early stage the community avoided the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου because it was liable to be misunderstood, did not use it in a single confession, yet at the same time handed it down in the sayings of Jesus, in the synoptic gospels virtually as the only title used by Jesus of himself? How is it that the instances of it increase, but the usage is still strictly limited to the sayings of Jesus? There can only be one answer; the title was rooted in the tradition of the sayings of Jesus right from the beginning; as a result, it was sacrosanct, and no-one dared eliminate it.¹²⁹

These factors make a good case for seeing the expression as having roots in Jesus' own use. But such observations only defend the general use of the term. What can be said about the apocalyptic Son of Man sayings?

It is significant to note how well-attested the apocalyptic Son of Man is within the tradition:¹³⁰

Mark 8:38

Mark 13:26

Mark 14:62

Q: Matt 24:27 (like Luke 17:24)

Matt 24:37 (like Luke 17:26)

Matt 24:39 (like Luke 17:30)

Luke 12:8 (Matt 10:32 lacks the title)

M: Matt 10:23

Matt 13:41

Matt 19:28 (Luke 22:30 lacks the title) [this could be Q]

Matt 24:44

Matt 25:31

L: Luke 17:22

What the list clearly shows is that the apocalyptic Son of Man shows up in every level of the Synoptic Gospel tradition. If the criterion of multiple attestation means anything or has any useful purpose, then the idea that Jesus spoke of himself in these terms should not be doubted. The text that a few of these sayings most naturally reflect is Dan 7:13–14 (triple tradition: Mark 13:26 = Matt 24:30 = Luke 21:27; Mark 14:62 = Matt 26:64 [though Luke 22:69 lacks an allusion to Dan 7]; M: Matt 13:41; Matt 19:28; Matt 25:31; Q: possibly Luke 12:8 [though the parallel in Matthew lacks the title, it does have a vindication-judgment setting]). Though the association with

129. J. Jeremias, *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus* (trans. John Bowden; New York: Scribner, 1971), 266. These variations may be a clue that oral tradition is at work as to the randomness of these uses.

130. The following list is part of a longer apocalyptic Son of Man discussion in my *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 1171–72.

Dan 7 is less widely attested, it is the only named biblical text that supplies the elements for the texts that do treat vindication. Once the category of apocalyptic Son of Man is associated with Jesus, then a connection with Dan 7 cannot be very far away.

The idea that this expression was the sole product of the early church faces two significant questions that bring the early church view into doubt. (1) Why was this title so massively retrojected, seemingly being placed on Jesus' lips in an exclusive way unlike any other major title, such as "Lord," "Son of God," and "Messiah"? (2) If this title was fashioned by the early church and was created as the self-designation of Jesus, why has it left almost no trace in non-Gospel NT literature, also unlike the other titles?¹³¹ All of this makes it inherently much more likely that Jesus referred to himself as Son of Man in an apocalyptic sense than that the church was responsible for this identification. The evidence suggests that this text was a significant feature of his thinking by the end of his ministry, because most of the explicit references to Dan 7 appear as Jesus drew near to Jerusalem.

One other strand of evidence also makes a connection between king and Son of Man. The combination of Son of Man imagery and the imagery of a royal figure, the very combination appearing in Mark 14:62, also has traces in the NT and in Jewish tradition. In the NT the other such text is Mark 2:23–27, where the authority of David appears side by side with an appeal to the authority of the Son of Man, because the famous king is the prototype and justification for Jesus' exceptional activity with his disciples on the Sabbath.¹³² In Judaism, it has been noted how the Danielic figure has elements of authority that other texts from the Jewish Scriptures attribute to the great expected king.¹³³ Bittner notes how the themes of rule, kingdom, and power reflect the presentation of a regal figure, not a prophetic figure: "Das Wortfeld von Herrschaft, Königtum, und Macht ist in der altorientalischen Königsvorstellung, wie sie sich in der davidischen Königstradition widerspiegelt, verwurzelt, hat aber mit Prophetenberufungen nichts zu tun."¹³⁴ He also notes that such authority, when it involves vindication or the subordination of the nations, points to the royal office (Mic 5:3–4; Zech 9:10; Pss 2, 89). When the issue of duration surfaces,

131. These two penetrating questions are raised by Brown (*The Death of the Messiah*, 507). If the identification of Jesus with the apocalyptic Son of Man is not correct, one can still defend the authenticity of the saying by appeal to a close, enigmatic use by Jesus, a view I discuss below in n. 139.

132. This example is noted in Evans (*Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 452). One must be careful here. There is no direct reference to Daniel; only the title is present. Nonetheless, the issue of authority in a major area, the Law, leads one to see the usage as descriptive of a person with some form of judicial or discerning authority.

133. Wolfgang Bittner, "Gott-Menschensohn-Davidsohn: Eine Untersuchungen zur Traditions-geschichte von Daniel 7,13f.," *FZPhTh* 32 (1985): 357–64.

134. *Ibid.*, 358. Bittner's quotation observes that sonship language is associated with kingship in the ancient Near East and in Israel is associated with the Davidic House, not with the prophetic office.

it is kingship that is present (2 Sam 7:16, Isa 9:5 [6–7]). The description of the king as Son and the closeness of the Son of Man to God is paralleled most closely by the image of the king as son (2 Sam 7:14, Ps 2:6, Isa 9:5 [6–7]). As such, the parallels, all of which are a part of the Jewish Scripture and so were available to Jesus, suggest the possibility of making the association present in this text between Messiah and Son of Man. Thus, the old attempt to separate kingdom from Son of Man will not work.

A formal question also remains. Is there evidence that Jesus may have combined OT texts in a way like that found in this passage? Objection is often made that Jesus does not combine texts from the Scripture in the way Mark 14:62 does.¹³⁵ Yet two texts point to the potential of Jesus' conceptually linking texts together like this, side by side. In Mark 7:6–10 = Matt 15:4–9, Jesus ties together references to the honoring of parents and the honoring with lips (Isa 29:13; Exod 20:12 [Deut 5:16]; Exod 21:17 [Lev 20:9]) in a way that recalls Jewish midrashic reflection. The concepts of "honor" and "father and mother" appear here. In a second text, Matt 22:33–39 (like Mark 12:29–31), there is a linkage involving the concept of love (Deut 6:4–5, Lev 19:18), resulting in a text on the great commandments of love.¹³⁶ This kind of linkage was a very Jewish way to argue, rooted in the hermeneutical rules associated with Hillel. These texts touch on ethical themes often seen as reflective of Jesus' social emphases. They indicate in terms of their form of presentation that the style of linking two themes from the Scriptures together could be reflective of Jesus.¹³⁷ There is nothing in terms of content or form that prevents this kind of association of texts from reaching back to Jesus. In many cases the evidence that the expression goes back to him is stronger than that the church created it.

Because he has said it so clearly, I cite two of Raymond Brown's remarks about Mark 14:62.¹³⁸ One full citation involves one of his key observations as he assesses Perrin's claim that Mark 14:62 is Christian midrash, a view like that of Hampel. The second citation comes from his conclusion on the Son of Man in Mark 14:

First, if it seems quite likely that the Gospel picture is developed beyond any single OT or known intertestamental passage or expectation, and that this development probably took place through the

135. So, for example, Hampel, *Menschensohn und historischer Jesus*, 179–80. He argues that this form of the combination reflects the early church, as does discussion of a returning Son of Man. Against the second point, see above. In fact, this is probably the most common argument that the passage is not authentic. The claim is that the linkage of Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13–14 reflects an early church midrashic teaching about Jesus.

136. A similar teaching appears in the response of the scribe in Luke 10:25–29 to introduce the parable of the Good Samaritan, but the context is distinct enough that this may well reflect a distinct tradition, not a true parallel. See the discussion of the Lucan pericope in my *Luke 9:51–24:53*, 1018–21.

137. Another example is Luke 4:16–20, where Isa 61 and 58 are combined (but it is singly attested).

138. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 513–14 is the first citation, and the second appears on pp. 514–15. The emphasis in the citation is his.

interpretative combination of several passages, any affirmation that all this development *must have* come from early Christians and none of it from Jesus reflects one of the peculiar prejudices of modern scholarship. A Jesus who did not reflect on the OT and use the interpretative techniques of his time is an unrealistic projection who surely never existed. *The perception that OT passages were interpreted to give a christological insight does not date the process.* To prove that this could not have been done by Jesus, at least inchoatively, is surely no less difficult than to prove that it was done by him. Hidden behind the attribution to the early church is often the assumption that Jesus had no christology even by way of reading the Scriptures to discern in what anticipated way he fitted into God's plan. Can one really think that credible?

Later he concludes,

Jesus could have spoken of the "Son of Man" as his understanding of his role in God's plan precisely when he was faced with hostile challenges reflecting the expectations of his contemporaries. Inevitably the Christian record would have crossed the *t's* and dotted the *i's* of the scriptural background of his words. Even though *all* of Mark 14:61–62 and par. is phrased in Christian language of the 60s (language *not* unrelated to issues of AD 30/33), there is reason to believe that in 14:62 we may be close to the mindset and style of Jesus himself.¹³⁹

139. Brown (ibid.), 515 n. 55) adds one more point for authenticity in this Marcan text. He notes that the phrase "you will see" is difficult and may favor authenticity, because "post factum, Christians producing such a statement might have been clearer." A variation on this kind of defense of authenticity, which I believe is less likely is advocated by Bruce Chilton, who suggests that Jesus taught about the Son of Man as an angel of advocacy in the divine court, who would defend and vindicate the accused because Jesus' mission represented the program of God. In this view, the Son of Man, though distinct from Jesus, is inseparably bound with his mission. Thus, at the trial, the remark would still reflect some authenticity and would still be seen by the leadership as a blasphemous rebuke of the leadership's rejection of Jesus' divinely directed announcement of God's program. The Synoptics transform this close association into a purely christological identity. See his "Son of Man: Human and Heavenly," in *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck* (BETL 100C; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992), 1:203–18. This reading does defend the remark's essential historicity but construes its force differently. Such a view, though possible, seems to leave the issue of the person of Jesus understated and unanswered as the reply in effect becomes, "I am who I claimed, whoever that is, and God will vindicate me through his agent, showing this examination to be in grave error." Chilton argues that Jesus' appeal to the witness of heaven is like an appeal he engages in Mark 9:1, where the idiomatic phrase "to taste death" refers to the immortality of the witnesses Moses and Elijah, to whom Jesus appeals through an oath in the midst of the transfiguration scene. My problem with this view of Mark 9 is that, despite the important linguistic evidence for the possibility of an idiom, it is not clear that Moses was seen in Jewish tradition as one who was taken up while never experiencing death. See the dispute over this in the Moses discussion in my *Blasphemy and Exaltation*, 133–37. For this view, see Chilton, "'Not to Taste Death': A Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Usage," *Studia Biblica 1978, II: Papers on the Gospels, Sixth International Congress on Biblical Studies, Oxford, 3–7 April 1978* (ed. E. A. Livingstone; JSNTSup 2; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1980), 29–36. For reasons I am arguing, I think a more direct, personally focused reply from Jesus is slightly more likely.

I agree and would like to push Brown's point. There is a far greater likelihood that this text, with all of its sensitivity to Jewish background, goes back to Jesus or, at least, reflects an earlier setting than Mark or the early church with which he was associated. One of those elements of sensitivity is present in the way the charge of blasphemy coheres with perceptions that would have belonged to the Jewish leadership, a point to which I now return as I examine one final argument against authenticity.

5. *The Meaning and Relationship of the Titles.* It has been claimed that the stacking up of titles, as in this text, is an argument against authenticity.¹⁴⁰ But on formal and conceptual grounds, this claim can be rejected as going beyond the evidence. In discussing the Son of Man, I noted that development is not the private domain of the early church and that combining allusions does not date when such combinations took place. Jesus was capable of formulating an association between Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13. But this response only deals with the nature of Jesus' reply. What about the way the high priest forms his question with multiple titles? Is the stacking up of titles in his question necessarily artificial?

That the high priest would be concerned about Jesus as Messiah is natural, because a charge is being considered that the leadership feels makes Jesus a candidate to be taken to the Roman authorities. As also was noted, the temple incident and sayings might suggest that Jesus had associated himself with events tied to the return of the Messiah. The Son of Man title is Jesus' way to refer to himself, so both of these elements fit. The only potentially extraneous element is the allusion to the Son of the Blessed.

But on formal grounds it is not unusual in Judaism for titles to be piled on one another when one is emphasizing a point. I already noted in an earlier discussion that two names were given for God in *1 En.* 77:2, namely, "Most High" and "eternally Blessed." One can point to *1 En.* 48:2 with its reference to "the Lord of Spirits, the Before-time," a construction much like the one seen in Mark 14. Similar is *Pss. Sol.* 17:21 with its reference to "their king, the son of David." Of course, the outstanding biblical example of the piling up of names is *Isa* 9:6 [Eng.], and here also it is a royal figure being named. When this takes place, there is something solemn about what is being said. So there is nothing formally odd about the high priest's questioning Jesus and doing so with a combined set of titles that suggests the moment's seriousness.

Read in this light, it appears that the high priest is asking Jesus to confirm his messianic status. Now this point in the question has been challenged in the past because it is not a capital crime in Judaism to claim to be

140. As Donald Juel states about the Mark 14 combination, "The combination of allusions presumes a developed stage of reflection." This is similar to the midrashic argument in another form, only here titles, not texts are in view. See his *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 146. As a result, many of the reasons for this view have been noted in the previous section above.

Messiah—that is, a messianic claim is not blasphemous.¹⁴¹ The point that messianic confession is not inherently blasphemous is a correct one, as the examination of blasphemy within Judaism shows. But this objection makes an assumption about the question sequence that should be criticized. The incorrect assumption is that what the examination was seeking and what resulted from the examination were exactly the same thing. It assumes that Jesus' affirmative reply to the high priest's messianic question makes the blasphemous remark revolve around messiahship. But my contention is that this is not the relationship between the priest's question and Jesus' answer. The examination was about messiahship, so that a sociopolitical issue could be taken to Rome. The threat that Jesus represented to the people in the leadership's view, in a view much as 11Q*Temple* 64:6–13 expresses, meant that he should be stopped and brought before Rome as a political-social threat. If a messianic claim and danger could be proven, then Jesus could be taken to Rome. The leadership could have developed real concern about this threat when Jesus uttered the parable of the wicked tenants, which was clearly an attack on the leadership and suggested that Jesus was a "son," whose rejection would be vindicated by God.¹⁴² The threat to Jewish leadership could be translated into a threat to Rome's leadership as well. Jesus believed that he represented God and had authority from above. This could be represented as possessing a claim to independent authority, a risk to all current sociopolitical structures and a potential source of public instability. This is what the priest's question sought to determine.

But Jesus' reply responds to this messianic query *and yet does even more*. It represents a severe assault on the sensibilities of the Jewish leaders on two levels. First, the reply speaks of an exalted Jesus, who sees himself as too close to God in the leadership's view. Second, he makes claims as a ruler or judge who one day will render a verdict and/or experience a vindication against the very leadership that sees itself as appointed by God. In the first element of Jesus' affirmation, the leadership sees a dangerous claim to independent authority that they can take to Rome. In both aspects of Jesus' reply there is, in their view, cause for seeing the highest of religious offenses possible—namely, blasphemy. The high priest's ripping of his garments says as much (Num 14:6, Judg 11:35, 2 Sam 1:11, 1 Macc 2:14; *y. Mo'ed Qat.* 3.83b [= Neusner 3.7]; *b. Sanh.* 60a). What started out as an investigation about Messiah becomes more than that because of the way Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13 are woven together. This does not mean that the messianic charge is wrong or even that it is "corrected." It means that Jesus defines who the Messiah is in terms of the totality of the authority he possesses. This figure is so close to God that he possesses authority even

141. See the remarks in Joel Marcus, "Mark 14:61: 'Are You the Messiah-Son-of-God?'" *NovT* 31 (1989): 127–29.

142. This is perceptively noted by Jack Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark's Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 118–19. On this parable, see Klyne Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants* (WUNT 27; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983).

over the nation's highest religious authorities. That is Jesus' claim. It parallels the claim he made earlier in the parable, except that now God's vindication is to be carried out by and/or on behalf of the very person they are trying to condemn. Jesus claims total independence from the authorities of the day. He can be taken to Pilate.

This point has a corollary for those who try to argue that Mark's concern is strictly pastoral and not historical. In this narrative theological view, Jesus is a model in how to face charges of blasphemy for the early church, which is facing such charges.¹⁴³ Mark's pastoral lesson is that, in suffering as Jesus did, they follow his way and example. The point is true enough about Mark's goal, but in separating history and pastoral theology, the significance of the uniqueness of Jesus' reply about himself is understated. Jesus is an example in how he faces the charge, but the reply he gives is unique to him and is not in its content an example to be followed. In fact, the reply explains the unique vindication that Jesus receives at God's right hand. Now the question begs, if Jesus is only an example in how he faces the charge of blasphemy and the scene is Mark's or the early church's creation, why have an exemplary reply that does not help Mark's members know how they should reply? The difference suggests that both teaching Jesus' example and making a point about the historical christology that lies at the core of the tension are addressed.

One final point needs attention. Recent scholarly debate has surfaced over whether the two titles in the phrase "Christ, Son of the Blessed" are synonymous and what their relationship is within Jesus' Son of Man reply. Some have argued the case that Son of the Blessed or Son of Man limits the Christ title or operates in a distinct way from it.¹⁴⁴ The difference may be summarized in four different options, two for the question and two for the reply: (1) Did the high priest ask about Jesus as the royal messiah (synonyms)? (2) Was he asking about a "Son of God"—type Messiah (second title restricts the first)? (3) Was Jesus replying in terms of public function, not making a titular confession (son of man as "this man")? (4) Was Jesus

143. Helen K. Bond, *Caiaphas: Friend of Rome and Judge of Jesus?* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 106–7.

144. Though the phrase "Christ, Son of the Blessed" is usually considered synonymous so that Jesus' reference to the Son of Man is seen as saying the same thing in a more precise way, recently various ways of arguing for a distinction have been presented. Marcus ("Mark 14:61: 'Are You the Messiah-Son-of-God?'" 125–41) prefers a sense of Messiah, that is, the Son of God type of Messiah. But there is no sense in the text that the high priest is pursuing a fresh line of questioning or that "Son of God" to *Jewish ears* would suggest an exalted, transcendent image in distinction to a royal one, unless something else in addition was said to show it was taken as such. Jack Kingsbury (*The Christology of Mark's Gospel*, 118–23, 160–67) argues that "Son of God" is a confessional title, while "Son of Man" is a "public" title, showing what Jesus does rather than identifying who he is. So the priest asks who Jesus is, while Jesus replies what he will do as "this man" (= Son of Man). Marcus's distinction is designed to question the use of "Son of Man" as a title. But it is hard, given the allusion to Dan 7, not to see an identification with that figure as present in Jesus' remarks. In fact, the response makes an equation of that Son of Man figure with the Son of God figure about whom he is asked.

replying by using a title referring to the figure he preferred to highlight (Son of Man = apocalyptic Son of Man).

I contend that arguing for these differences in force is too subtle for the trial setting. Distinctions such as these would not be present in the original setting. It certainly would not be present in the question of the high priest. Although it is likely that Mark's readers, given subsequent events, could have raised important distinctions and implications from the terms and may even have read this scene as containing such implications in the titles (i.e., option 2), the original setting is unlikely to have been a confrontation with this distinction. The temple-Messiah connection in the pericope argues for an earthly figure as the issue, a royal messianic figure of some kind (option 1). And the Jewish use of the expression "Son of God," as in texts such as 4QFlor 1:10–11 with its connection to 2 Sam 7, does not suggest such a distinction for Son of God. As for "Son of Man," the use of Dan 7 points attention immediately to the figure of that text (option 4) and suggests an additional identification with the messianic figure that the priest asks about.

In sum, Jesus' reply is what led to his conviction on a blasphemy charge. This reply had sociopolitical elements in it, as well as a religious dimension that constituted blasphemy. None of the objections to the historicity of this scene have persuasive substance. Though one cannot prove absolutely that the dialogue goes back to Jesus and the high priest, the evidence makes it likely that the Marcan summary is reflective of what took place or is a reasonable representation of the fundamental conflict of views. It has great historical plausibility with the background that would apply to such a scene. Moreover, the scene possesses clear indications that make it more likely that it goes back to the trial scene and not to Mark.

SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of this analysis can be summarized in two points. One summarizes what the background on blasphemy and exaltation bring to the event. The second focuses on what a historical reading of this event tells us about the historical Jesus. Because most of the details of these two points have been treated in the examination of historicity, I summarize the implications for significance.

Implications for Method:

Importance of Historical Background Work

A careful study of the historical background of Jewish views on blasphemy and exaltation does help bring new light to a passage that stands near the center of the description of the final events of Jesus' life. In an era when literary study and various exclusively textual approaches to the Gospels are on the rise, it is important to recall that such studies cannot replace the need for careful work in the sociocultural environment of these

texts. Literary and formal studies can tell us much about the author and how he tells his story, but they often cannot answer the historical questions the text raises. To assume that they can without a careful philological-conceptual examination of the historical background risks making literary and formal studies roam into an area for which they are not equipped. In addition, to flee the discussion of history for a treatment of the text only on a narrative level is to bifurcate something the Gospels do not represent themselves as being. They are not narrative only but also claim to present the tradition about Jesus so as to make him known. When it comes to history, the text must be placed in a broader context than mere form and literary analysis. Much recent study of Jesus has moved exclusively in a literary direction. There is much to be said for the study of the Gospels as a historical query and what these important and related disciplines can contribute to each other. There also is much that the sources can tell us about Jesus as a result.

Another problem has been that too much historical Jesus study has looked for historical parallels in the wrong milieu—a Hellenistic one. There will always be a need for detailed work in the Jewish environment in which these texts and the events associated with them operated. Studies like these from the IBR Jesus Group show that there is room for careful historical work in the sources. In a time when there is renewed interest in the Jewish background of the Gospels, a study like this article shows that there is still much to be gained by a careful pursuit of the roots to concepts in these historically significant texts. Some concepts give evidence of a wide distribution in the many sources that explain Judaism. Such distribution indicates that the ideas they possess may have ancient roots in Jewish belief. Both blasphemy and exaltation give evidence of such a wide distribution. Though both areas were debated and discussed, there are fundamental elements of belief that appear alongside the more disputed points.

I offer the following two conclusions about blasphemy and exaltation in Judaism and in the life of Jesus:¹⁴⁵

1. Blasphemy certainly included the use of the divine Name in an inappropriate way (*m. Sanh.* 6.4, 7.5; *Philo, Mos.* 2.203–6). This is blasphemy defined in its most narrow sense. Some suggest that the use of alternate names also constituted verbal blasphemy, though this was heavily debated (*m. Šeb.* 4:13; *b. Šeb.* 35a; *b. Sanh.* 55b–57a, 60a). Such alternate utterances did produce warnings. Unheeded warnings produced violations and possible full culpability.

But there are also acts of blasphemy that might or might not include a narrow blasphemous utterance. Acts of idolatry and of arrogant disrespect for God or toward his chosen leaders were seen as blasphemous. Judgment, whether from God or through intermediate agents, was the

145. This summary covers texts that I discussed in *Blasphemy and Exaltation* so that the context for evaluating the scene of the trial is evident in its full range of evidence.

appropriate response. Numerous examples fit in this category. They include: Sisera (*Num. Rab.* 10.2), Goliath (Josephus, *Ant.* 6.183), Sennacherib (2 Kgs 18–19 = Isa 37:6, 23), Belshazzar (Josephus, *Ant.* 10.233, 242), Manasseh (*Sipre Num.* §112), and Titus (*b. Git* 56; *ʿAbot R Nat.* 7[B]). Defaming the temple is also seen in such a light. Significant for this study is the view that comparing oneself or another person to God is blasphemous and is like the other arrogant acts condemned as an affront to God (Philo, *Dreams* 2.130–31—of self claims; *Decal.* 13–14.61–64—of exalting the sun, moon, and stars).

2. God's presence is unique and so glorious that only a few are contemplated as being able to approach him directly. Such figures are great luminaries of the past or anticipated luminaries of the future. Those who sit in his presence constitute an even smaller group. They are directed to do so by God and often sit for a short time.

Of the angels, only Gabriel is said to sit and that is merely as an escort to Enoch (2 *En.* 24). In fact, in general, angels do not sit before God. Even Michael, the great archangel, is never portrayed as seated before God. This honor, if it is considered to exist at all, is left to some made "in the image of God." In fact, Metatron-Enoch is punished when he sits in a way that allows him to be confused with God (3 *En.* 16).

The list of humans who sit is longer: Adam, Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Moses, David, Job, the Messiah, Enoch-Son of Man, and Enoch-Metatron. Some sit for a time merely to record revelation (Enoch: *Jub.* 4:20; *T. Ab.* 10–12; 2 *En.* 24:1–3). Adam and Abraham sit as witnesses to the final judgment (*T. Ab.* 10–13), while Abel sits for a time and exercises an initial stage of judgment. Adam is returned to the position he had before the fall (*L.A.E.* 47:3; *Apoc. Mos.* 39:2–3 [= later version of *Life of Adam and Eve*; *OTP* 2:259]). Job argues that he will be restored to a heavenly seat of honor (*T. Job* 33). It is possibly a messianic seating that appears in 4Q491 1:13–17, though it is not certain (an honoring of the Teacher of Righteousness, the end-time prophet, or the Eschatological High Priest are other options). What is excluded is an angelic figure. David sits before God on Israel's throne in 4Q504 frag. 2 IV 6. Messiah sits on the right, with Abraham on the left in *Midr. Ps.* 18:29, while David sits by God in heaven according to Akiba (*b. Hag.* 14a; *b. Sanh.* 38b). None of these seatings in God's presence look like the full vice-regency that other Jewish texts suggest. Only a few texts describe a seating that suggests a significant sharing of authority with heaven.

More-exalted portraits appear with Moses (*Exagōgē*, 68–89), but this dream scene looks to portray symbolically his Exodus ministry and is not eschatological. Enoch-Metatron is given extensive authority, only to have it removed when it appears that he has claimed to share power with God (3 *En.* 3–16). The unique picture in the Jewish material is Enoch-Son of Man (1 *En.* 45:3, 46:1–3, 51:3, 61:8, 62:2–8, 70:2, 71:1–17). This figure appears to possess full eschatological power. But the portrait was not without controversy, because other traditions strongly counter this portrait, suggesting discomfort among some in Judaism with the extensive authority

attributed to Enoch (*T. Ab.* B 11:3–8; *b. Sanh.* 38b, where reference is to Metatron, who is often associated with Enoch, as *3 En.* 4:2–3 with 16:1–5 show).

Some Jews seem willing to consider the possibility of being seated next to God for a select few great figures and under very limited conditions. Except for perhaps the Enoch–Son of Man portrait, none of these images appears to portray a figure seated at God’s right hand or sharing the merkabah throne at the same time God is seated there. To sit at God’s right hand on the same throne, as opposed to sitting on a separate throne next to God or somewhere else in heaven, is a higher form of exaltation than merely sitting in heaven. This kind of explicit language never appears concerning any of these figures, although Akiba’s remarks about David are close (*b. Hag.* 14a; *b. Sanh.* 38b). Other Jewish material challenges all such forms of exaltation (*3 En.* 3–16). In the exceptionally rare cases of those who get to go into God’s presence, those who go there are divinely directed there. It is not a role one claims for oneself.

The Jewish Examination of Jesus

Here I note implications.

1. The examination of Jesus was never intended as a Jewish capital trial. Rome was always the goal. Though we do not know the exact legal procedures for the time of Caiaphas, the discussion of capital authority and procedures for the period of Roman rule would have been an idealized discussion, since Jews did not possess this authority under the Romans. Rules recorded for the Mishnah over a century later may share an idealized quality as well. Nevertheless, the fact that a hearing and not a final, decisive capital trial was undertaken with Jesus might explain why the procedure of Jesus’ examination looks so different from a capital trial as it is portrayed in the Mishnah. In fact, cases in which a figure is seen as a deceiver call for a quick and ultimately public procedure (*m. Sanh.* 11:3 [Danby = 11.4]; *t. Sanh.* 7.11, 10.11).

2. Numerous potential sources for the trial scene exist from people who were present to people who would have known what took place. Note that I do not mean only people who were present but also people who had access to those present. Among the candidates who could have been sources of information are Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, Saul, and the very public polemic against Jewish Christians directed by Annas’s family, a battle that ran for more than 30 years. Some could have been present such as Joseph and a beloved disciple mentioned as present who knew the high priest in John 18:15. Others had access to people who were present, such as Saul. Jesus’ trial scene does not lack for sources, even though no disciples of Jesus were present in the examination room.

3. Jesus’ blasphemy operated at two levels. It is these findings that are so important for assessing the historical Jesus. (a) Jesus’ claim to possess comprehensive authority from God. Though Judaism might contemplate

such a position for a few, the teacher from Galilee was not among the luminaries for whom such a role might be considered. As a result, his remark would have been seen as a self-claim that was an affront to God. To claim to be able to share God's glory in a Jewish context would mean pointing to an exalted status that was even more than a prophet or any typical view of the Jewish Messiah. That is how the Jewish leadership would have seen the claim. What Jesus' statement means is that he saw his mission in terms of messianic kingdom work that also involved his inseparable association and intimacy with God. His coming vindication by God would indicate all of this. Psalm 110:1 and Dan 7:13–14 taken together explain it. Jesus was Christ, Son of the Blessed One, and Son of Man in one package, and the right hand of God awaited him after his unjust death. That coming vindication and the position it reveals him to possess at God's right hand helps all to see and the church to explain who Jesus was and is. (b) Jesus also attacked the leadership, by implicitly claiming to be their future judge and/or by claiming a vindication by God for the leadership's anticipated act. This would be seen by the Jewish leadership as a violation of Exod 22:27, where God's leaders are not to be cursed. A claim that their authority was nonexistent and that they would be accounted among the wicked is a total rejection of their authority. To the leadership, this was an affront to God, because they were, in their own view, God's established chosen leadership. Jesus' claim to possess comprehensive, independent authority would serve as the basis of taking Jesus before Rome on a sociopolitical charge, as well as constituting a religious offense of blasphemy that would be seen as worthy of the pursuit of the death penalty. In the leadership's view, the sociopolitical threat to the stability of the Jewish people was the underlying reason why this claim had to be dealt with so comprehensively. Jesus' reply, in his own view, simply grew out of the implications of who he saw himself to be.

4. The scene as a summary of trial events has a strong claim to authenticity, a stronger claim than the alternative, that the scene was created by Mark or by the early church. This means that this examination is a core event for understanding the historical Jesus. It is a hub from which one can work backward to some degree into the significance of his earthly ministry or forward into how these events were the catalyst for the more developed expressions and explanations of who Jesus was and is. These explanations are found in the works of the early church in the works of the apostolic testimony that is reflected in much of the rest of the NT, as well as in other works that clearly saw the implications of the unique claims Jesus made for himself.

The conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leadership two millennia ago was grounded in fundamentally different perceptions of who he was and the authority he possessed for what he was doing. Either he was a blasphemer or the agent of God destined for a unique exaltation/vindication. Either he was a deceiver of the people or the Son of the Blessed One. The claims Jesus apparently made were so significant and the following he

gathered was so great that a judgment about him could not be avoided. This article has tried to understand how those who examined Jesus saw his claims in light of their legal-theological categories. Why did the leadership seek to deal decisively with Jesus? The checkered trail of history since these events, especially between Jews and Christians, requires that every effort be made to understand what caused a segment of Judaism's leadership to send Jesus to face capital examination by Rome's representative. Especially important is to consider what claims Jesus made that they saw as so disturbing. Every generation will surely assess these events afresh in light of the new data and methods that may emerge, but it is important that these assessments appreciate how the issues were seen and framed at the time. A study of Jewish views of blasphemy and exaltation illumines the ways in which the Jewish leadership perceived Jesus' claims. They saw in Jesus' claim of exaltation an affront to God's unique honor and to their position as representatives of God's people. Jesus saw in his anticipated exaltation a vindication of his calling, ministry, and claims, so that one day he would be seen by all as Son of Man seated at God's right hand. In other words, the ancient sources and their cultural scripts reveal how blasphemy and exaltation clashed during this examination in ways that changed the course of history. What I have argued is that the case for the authenticity of the summary description of the historic clash is strong.