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# The Role of the Quote from Psalm 82 in John 10:34-36

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THE ROLE OF THE QUOTE FROM PSALM 82  
IN JOHN 10:34-36

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A Paper Presented to Dr. E. M. Krentz  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Exegetical Theology  
in fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
Research Elective

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by

Colin Liske

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- BAG . . . . . Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich  
IDB . . . . . Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible  
i.e. . . . . id est, that is  
RSV . . . . . Revised Standard Version

## CHAPTER I

### THE NEED FOR AN EXAMINATION

#### The Diversity in Interpretations

Richard P. Jungkuntz entitled a recent article in Concordia Theological Monthly "An Approach to the Exegesis of John 10:34-36."<sup>1</sup> His choice of the term Approach is significant in perspective of the many and varied attempts to interpret this passage, both in the past and in the present. Jungkuntz divides these many attempts into two major categories, the "modern" and the "traditional", without attaching any value judgment to the terminology he uses. He goes on to describe the fundamentals of each category, places fundamentals of each of these categories within the framework of two related syllogisms, and then offers a criticism of each view.<sup>2</sup>

Jungkuntz describes the "modern" interpretation in the following way:

In His exegesis and in His argument based thereon, Jesus is employing a thoroughly rabbinical technique. By means of the exegetical principle known as gezerah shawa, He fastens on an Old Testament passage (Ps. 82:6) which contains a word (אֱלֹהִים) involved in His dispute with the Pharisees and with the help of a literalistic understanding makes the passage serve as an argument from

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<sup>1</sup>Richard P. Jungkuntz, "An Approach to the Exegesis of John 10:34-36," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXV (October 1964), 556.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 556-558.

analogy supporting His right to claim the title of divinity even though He is a human being.<sup>3</sup>

Among the modern exegetes who interpret the passage in this way, Jungkuntz includes Strachan, Hoskyns and Davey, Bultmann, Barrett, Strathmann, and Richardson.<sup>4</sup> He then notes two major objections to this interpretation. The first is that Jesus uses an ad hominem argument because Jesus does not accept for himself the literalistic exegesis of his opponents. The second objection is that Jesus' reply does not meet the substance of the Jews' accusation, and is therefore irrelevant and deceptive.<sup>5</sup>

Among those commentators claiming the "traditional" interpretation, Jungkuntz lists Lenski, Calvin, Bengel, Godet, Hengstenberg, Stoeckhardt, Lightfoot, and Tasker.<sup>6</sup> Taking Lenski as his spokesman for this tradition of interpretation, Jungkuntz describes it in this way:

Jesus is in this passage not merely silencing the Pharisees, and not merely repeating His original claim, but He is actually proving by syllogistic argument that He is rightly called God in the highest sense.<sup>7</sup>

Having reduced this traditional view to two syllogisms, Jungkuntz correctly objects that this view is logically invalid because a fourth term is always used. He notes that

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 556.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 557.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 556-557.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 557.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 558.

Lenski attempts to avoid this embarrassment by asserting that Jesus is arguing a minori ad maius, that is, that "being sanctified" is greater than having the Word of God "come" to one. Again, Jungkuntz rightly objects that this argument either introduces another equivocation or a petitio principii. Finally having analyzed and rejected both the "modern" and "traditional" interpretations, Jungkuntz proceeds with his own interpretation, beginning with an analysis of the verb  $\lambdaυθ\eta\eta\iota\iota$  in John 10:35b.<sup>8</sup>

In this analysis of the varied interpretations of these verses, Jungkuntz has not only pinpointed the difficulties involved in its interpretation, but he has also pointedly demonstrated that modern theology must once again come to grips with this portion of Holy Scripture. He sees the choice between the alternatives offered distasteful at the least, if not completely unacceptable, and cognizant of the exigency of the task he has set for himself, he proceeds with utmost caution, wisely entitling his article an Approach to the exegesis of this passage.<sup>9</sup>

#### The Controversy in the Missouri--Synod

The traditionally authoritative dogmatician for the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Francis Pieper, has used

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.



John 10:35b for underlining the authority of Scripture, translating the passage, "Scripture cannot be broken". His heavy emphasis on employing John 10:35b in this way is easily demonstrated by the fact that he cites it most frequently when discussing Prolegomena or Holy Scripture.<sup>10</sup> The obvious meaning of the passive voice of the verb  $\lambda\upsilon\omega$  here is equivalent to that offered by Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, meaning "to be destroyed", or "to be abolished".<sup>11</sup>

Pieper's interpretation of John 10:35b has been both questioned and supported in recent years within the Missouri--Synod, largely because of the fact that the nature of the authority of Holy Scripture has itself been an issue of heated debate.<sup>12</sup> Jungkuntz is one commentator who does not share Pieper's view that John 10:35b is a reference to the nature of Scripture's authority. Consequently, since this particular section of Holy Scripture has been and now is regarded as vital to the doctrine of Holy Scripture within our own Synodical tradition, a detailed investigation is both desirable and necessary.

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<sup>10</sup>Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, translated by Theodore Engelder (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), pp. 3-359.

<sup>11</sup>Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, translated and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (Fourth edition; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 485.

<sup>12</sup>One of the most recent notable works regarding this issue is an essay entitled "The Authority of Scripture", delivered by Dr. J. A. O. Preus at the 31st Regular Convention of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Alberta--British Columbia District, convened in Calgary, Alberta, February 14th-17th, 1966.

### Methodology Employed

Jungkuntz began his recent investigation of John 10:34-36 with an analysis of the verb *λέω* in 10:35b. This starting point is in itself commendable, but Jungkuntz neglects other important emphases of these verses. The whole of the protasis and apodosis of John 10:35,36 must be considered. The protasis of John 10:35 is the connecting link between two major points in Jesus' argument, that is, the role of the quote from Psalm 82:6 and the charge of blasphemy. The relation of these two points in Jesus' argument must therefore be considered in any interpretation of this passage.

Our investigation will therefore begin with a detailed study of the present position of research regarding John 10:34-36 and an analysis in detail of the two points mentioned in Jesus' argument. The investigation of the first point in the argument will be a critical study of Psalm 82, both in its ancient and modern exegesis, and the study of the second will include an analysis of early second century A. D. Rabbinic exegesis of three Old Testament passages which deal with the concept of blasphemy. Finally, we will attempt to explicate the relation between the two points in their immediate and broader contexts.

### Preliminary Summary

The argument that Jesus employs in John 10:34-36 is not

ad hominem, it is not an a minori ad maius plea, nor is it a movement from the "gods" of verse 34 to the term "Son of God" in verse 36 in an attempt to prove that Jesus is God or the judge par excellence who fulfills prophetic history. On the contrary, the Jews of John 10 have been judged by Jesus and rebel, accusing him of blasphemy for taking to himself the function of judging the judges of Israel, a role proper only to God Himself.

In reply to their argument, Jesus uses the quote from Psalm 82:6 in its original judgment upon the unjust judges of Israel to point out that God Himself did indeed so judge the judges of Israel. Thus Jesus argues that God Himself had "called them gods to whom the Word of God came"; God Himself judged the judges of Israel. Why then should these judges of Israel accuse him of blasphemy if he is merely fulfilling this role of divine judgment upon the unjust judges of Israel? After all, God Himself had sent Jesus, the Son of God, the appointed Judge, into the world to do exactly this, to judge the unjust judges of Israel. Jesus is merely fulfilling the role of the divine judge, the task which the Father had given to him.

It is true that Jesus is making the claim to be equal with God by the very fact that he carries out God's own role in judging the unjust judges of Israel. But Jesus is not blaspheming because the Father has Himself consecrated and sent him for this very purpose, to judge the "gods", that is, the unjust judges of Israel. The Jews, of course, do not accept

Jesus' argument but in turn merely consider it a further statement of blasphemy, and again try to arrest him.

## CHAPTER II

### PRESENT POSITION OF RESEARCH

Besides the typical "modern" and "traditional" positions outlined in the introductory chapter, a number of monographs and periodical articles on the subject of John 10:34-36 have recently appeared. Among the first to be mentioned is a study on the Canaanite background of Psalm 82 by Roger T. O'Callaghan in 1953.<sup>1</sup> O'Callaghan does not apply his investigation to the text of John 10:34-36, but he does give relevant background material for its interpretation. O'Callaghan points out, against J. Morgenstern,<sup>2</sup> that it is still very possible to interpret this Psalm as a unit whole without dropping verses three through five, and he maintains further, against G. Ernest Wright<sup>3</sup> and C. H. Gordon,<sup>4</sup> that the  $\text{ד' אֱלֹהִים}$  of verse six refers to human judges.

In defense of the last point, O'Callaghan cites the an-

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<sup>1</sup>Roger T. O'Callaghan, "A Note on the Canaanite Background of Psalm 82," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XV, no. 3. (1953) 311-314.

<sup>2</sup>J. Morgenstern, "The Mythical Background of Psalm 82," Hebrew Union College Annual, XIV (1939), 29-126.

<sup>3</sup>G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1950), pp. 39,40.

<sup>4</sup>C. H. Gordon, "Elohim in Its Reputed Meaning of Rulers and Judges," Journal of Biblical Literature, LIV (1935), 139-144.

cient Ugaritic legend of King Keret<sup>5</sup> who, as a semi-divine figure, has become ill and therefore neglects his sacred duty of judging the cause of the widow and the brokenhearted. For this his own son reviles him and demands that the throne be turned over to him. This legend, says O'Callaghan, is so similar in content to Psalm 82 that a polytheistic interpretation of the Psalm must certainly be excluded. He notes, in addition, that the argument that angels are never represented as invested with judiciary power should be modified in view of Malachi 3:1f. where Yahweh sends forth "his messenger . . . his angel of the covenant" who purifies the people, even though Yahweh exercises judgment in verse 5. In conclusion, O'Callaghan leaves the interpretation of the  $\text{ד'ט'ז'ז'}$  of Psalm 82:2b,6 open to angelic and human judges.<sup>6</sup>

A. Hanson recently proposed the rather unique view that John, the Gospel writer, regarded this Psalm as an address by the pre-existent Word to the Jews at Sinai, which address also applied to the Jews' posterity.<sup>7</sup> He states that he is following the lead of men like B. F. Westcott, who already in 1900 suggested the connection of  $\text{λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ}$  in John 10:35

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<sup>5</sup>The King Keret legend is translated in full in James B. Pritchard, editor, Ancient Near Eastern Texts (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950), 142-149. For the comparison with Psalm 82 see especially pp. 147-148.

<sup>6</sup>O'Callaghan, pp. 312-314.

<sup>7</sup>A. Hanson, "John's Citation of Psalm LXXXII," New Testament Studies, XI (1964-'65), 158-162

with the Word before the incarnation,<sup>8</sup> as well as that of C. K. Barrett, who sees this Psalm as referring to the creative power of the Word of God addressed to creatures, raising them above themselves.<sup>9</sup> Hanson expresses his view of the personally present pre-existent Word in this way:

If to be addressed by the pre-existent Word justifies men in being called gods, indirect and mediated though that address was (coming perhaps through Moses, certainly written down only through David), far more are we justified in applying the title Son of God to the human bearer of the pre-existent Word, sanctified and sent by the Father as he was, in unmediated and direct presence.<sup>10</sup>

Although Hanson's approach is rather different from most other interpretations, he too employs an a minori ad maius argument in the above quote. Note also Hanson believes that the Jesus of 10:35 is called God in Psalm lxxxii:8<sup>11</sup> and he says, "This Scripture is being precisely fulfilled in Christ."<sup>12</sup>

In 1960 J. A. Emerton wrote an article<sup>13</sup> in which he contended that Psalm 82:6 refers to angels. In its original sense Psalm 82 portrayed the God of Israel passing judgment upon the other gods of the world. This sense was not unknown in later times, for it was then understood in terms of Jewish belief

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>13</sup>J. A. Emerton, "Some New Testament Notes," Journal of Theological Studies, XI, 2 (1960), 329-336.

that the various nations of the world were allotted to super-human beings (Deuteronomy 4:19; 32:8f.; Daniel 10; Ecclesiasticus 17:17). These beings were regarded as angels by the Jews but as gods by the gentiles. In a similar vein, Paul in I Corinthians 10:20 does not deny all existence to those regarded by the heathen as gods. In addition to this, many of the Qumran scrolls have a highly developed angelology using the term  $\text{D}^{\prime} \text{?} \text{X}$ .<sup>14</sup>

In citing further evidence, Emerton notes that the Targum<sup>15</sup> understands the gods of verse one to be men, for it renders the word by "judges", though in verse six it paraphrases and his "angels". He notes too that Origen in his commentary on John seems to interpret this psalm of men who are called gods, while in Contra Celsum he interprets this psalm of both men and angels. But to bolster his argument, Emerton adds that Origen's commentary must be viewed in perspective of the fact that for him all men are deified and become angels. In summarizing his view, Emerton says:

It is possible to interpret John 10:34ff. against the background of this tradition. The charge of blasphemy was based on the assertion that Jesus, "being a man," made himself God. Jesus, however, does not find an

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 330.

<sup>15</sup>Emerton does not identify the Targum to which he refers, but he refers the reader to P. de Lagarde, Hagiographa Chaldaice (1873), p. 49. This reference is not in our seminary library.



Old Testament text to prove directly that men can be called god. He goes back to fundamental principles and argues, more generally, that the word "god" can, in certain circumstances, be applied to beings other than God himself, to whom he has committed authority. The angels can be called gods because of the divine word of commission to rule the nations. This word may be "Ye are gods" in verse six of the psalm. In any case, the existence of such a word of commission seems to be implied by the Jewish belief that the authority of the angels was derived from a divine decree (Deut. 4:19; 32:8f.; Ecclus. 17:17; Jubilees 15:31; I Enoch 20:5). Jesus, however, whose commission is more exalted than theirs, and who is the Word himself, has a far better claim to the title.<sup>16</sup>

It is particularly significant to note at this point that Emerton's views as outlined above give further evidence for the possibility of interpreting the gods of verse six as the judges of Israel. This is especially evident in his citations from the Targum and Origen, evidence which appears significantly within the time and thought milieu of John's Gospel.

In 1966 Emerton wrote a second article<sup>17</sup> in which he adduces further evidence to support his view that the gods of Psalm 82:6 refers to angels. The evidence stems from a newly found text, an eschatological Midrash from Qumran Cave XI, dated by A. S. van der Woude in the first half of the first century A. D. It is therefore extremely valuable for an understanding of Psalm 82 during the time when John's Gospel

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<sup>16</sup>Emerton, Notes, p. 332.

<sup>17</sup>J. A. Emerton, "Melchizedek and the Gods: Fresh Evidence for the Jewish Background of John 10:34-36," Journal of Theological Studies, XVII, 2 (1966), 399-401.

was written.<sup>18</sup>

A. S. van der Woude points out, says Emerton, that when  $\square \text{מלכ} \text{זדק}$  appears in a quotation of Psalm 82:1, the first occurrence refers, by way of inference from the context, to Melchizedek, and the second reference in Psalm 82:6,7 is to the angels of God who support Melchizedek. Melchizedek has probably achieved this status because of his identification with the archangel Michael. In addition to this, line eight of the scroll probably refers to the lot ( $\text{ל} \text{ז} \text{ז} \text{ל}$ ) of Melchizedek and line five perhaps speaks of the  $\text{ז} \text{ל} \text{ז} \text{ז}$  of Melchizedek. If this is the correct reading in line five, it is possible that the writer saw a connection between this noun and the verb in Psalm 82:8 which he probably thought to be addressed to Melchizedek.<sup>19</sup>

In an article in the Harvard Theological Revue, James S. Ackerman<sup>20</sup> takes cognizance of a relevant rabbinic tradition cited by Paul Billerbeck<sup>21</sup> and points out its significance

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<sup>18</sup>Emerton, Melchizedek, p. 400. This text is translated into English by M. De Jorge and A. S. van der Woude in an article entitled, "II Q Melchizedek and the New Testament," New Testament Studies, XII (1965-66), 302-303.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 401

<sup>20</sup>James S. Ackerman, "The Rabbinic Interpretation of Psalm 82 and the Gospel of John," Harvard Theological Revue, LIX, 2 (1966) 186-188.

<sup>21</sup>Paul Billerbeck, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus, in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922), I, 543.

for the interpretation of John 10:34-36. In this tradition, the people of Israel are called gods and given the Torah on Mt. Sinai. The gift of the Torah gives these Israelites, who are now called gods, power over death. Thus it was that God, who had created the Angel of Death for the nations of the world, refused to give him authority over the Israelites. But it was not long before the Israelites sinned with the golden calf, and God therefore pronounced His judgment upon them, telling them that they would have to die like men. Ackerman holds that the Rabbis created this myth to explain Psalm 82:6-7; he interprets this tradition as a new fall story.<sup>22</sup> Then, in applying this tradition to the text of John 10:34-36, Ackerman says the following:

Jesus describes the so-called "gods" as ἑκείνους . . . πρὸς οὓς ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐγένετο. The characteristic which qualifies these people as gods, and identifies them as a group, is the fact that the Word of God had come to them. The theory that Jesus is referring to Israelite judges is most difficult to accept. The verb ἐγένετο with πρὸς plus the accusative of direction signifies the gift of a divine revelation throughout the Old (LXX) and New Testaments.<sup>23</sup>

There was never a time in Old Testament history when God revealed his word to a group of judges. They are rather the interpreters of his word--those to whom the Torah has been entrusted. This word was revealed (ἐγένετο . . . πρὸς) to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai through Moses. There is no evidence in rabbinic tradition that God named the Israelite judges gods. Whenever Ps. 82:6-7

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<sup>22</sup>Ackerman, pp. 186-187.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 187.

is used out of context by the rabbis, as Jesus has done, it always refers to the Israelites' being named gods when they received the Law at Sinai.<sup>24</sup>

Thus we may assume that this mythological interpretation of Psalm 82:6-7 was known by Palestinian Jews of the first century, and that it was used according to John 10:34ff. in Jewish-Christian controversy.<sup>25</sup>

It must be noted at this point that, according to Paul Billerbeck, the Rabbinic traditions as outlined above cannot be dated any earlier than A. D. 150.<sup>26</sup> Although this is a later date than the probable writing of the Gospel of John, this tradition is not so late that it can be a priori ruled out as a possible influence on the compilation of this New Testament text.

In the article cited previously, Richard P. Jungkuntz<sup>27</sup> has developed one of the most distinctive studies of John 10:34-36, to date. He begins with a study of the etymology and the usus loquendi of  $\lambda\acute{\iota}\omega$ , the verb used in John 10:35b. Drawing upon evidence from parallel usages of this verb in John 7:23; Matthew 5:17; and Acts 5:38f., Jungkuntz concludes that in contexts such as these, the verb  $\lambda\acute{\iota}\omega$  should be de-

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 187-188.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Billerbeck, p. 543.

<sup>27</sup>Richard P. Jungkuntz, "An Approach to the Exegesis of John 10:34-36," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXV (October, 1964), 556-565.

finied, "keep from being fulfilled".<sup>28</sup> His argument is drawn largely from the Matthew 5:17 passage where  $\kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\omega$  is used in opposition to  $\pi\lambda\eta\rho\acute{\omega}$ . Drawing further upon the opinion of Friedrich Büchsel in G. Kittel's Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Jungkuntz points out that the verb  $\kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\omega$  as it is used here in Matthew can be identified in meaning with the verb  $\lambda\upsilon\omega$  as it is used in similiar contexts in John.<sup>29</sup> He also cites rabbinic evidence for his view, noting that the verbs  $\lambda\upsilon\omega$  and  $\pi\lambda\eta\rho\acute{\omega}$  have as their equivalents the terms  $\text{לְבַטֵּל}$  (to nullify, render futile) and  $\text{לְהַשִּׁיב}$  (to fulfill, accomplish).<sup>30</sup>

Jungkuntz then rejects any major significance of the rabbinic Sinai myth upon the quote from Psalm 82:6 in John's Gospel; rather he develops his argument that Jesus, when quoting Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34-36, is appealing to prophetic or advent history, to the fulfillment of the divine office of

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<sup>28</sup>Jungkuntz, p. 559.

<sup>29</sup>Friedrich Büchsel notes that the meaning of  $\kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\omega$  ("downward") is still present in  $\kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\omega$ , which is a strengthened form of  $\lambda\upsilon\omega$  in the sense "to put down". It is used in various connections, but in the New Testament usually has the same meaning as the simple form. See Friedrich Büchsel on  $\kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\omega$  and  $\kappa\alpha\tau\epsilon\lambda\upsilon\mu\epsilon\lambda\omega$  under  $\lambda\upsilon\omega$  in Gerhard Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, translated and edited by G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), IV, 338.

<sup>30</sup>Jungkuntz, pp. 559-560

the judges of Israel, which office had been instituted around the time of Moses.<sup>31</sup> The function of judging the people of Israel was primarily God's prerogative, but it was given to the leaders of Israel, as is pointed out in Deuteronomy 1:16,17 and 16:18, and these judges of Israel are then to judge righteously (Leviticus 19:15).<sup>32</sup> By comparing the judges of the Old Testament to the judges of Carthage where it is clear that the office of the judge was something to be passed on, Jungkuntz stresses the fact that the Old Testament portrays an entirely charismatic ministry and not an institution of the judges as a divine office that is continued in a line of judges.<sup>33</sup> Jungkuntz traces this divinely instituted office of judges all the way from the book of Exodus (7:1; 21:6; 22:8f.) through the Book of Judges (especially chapters six and seven) to the shepherd imagery of the judge, such as that of David in I Samuel 12:11,16, and I Chronicles 17:6-13, and to that of Solomon in II Chronicles 9:8 and 19:6. The judgment of God upon the unjust judges of Israel and the shepherd imagery of the judges is further portrayed in Jeremiah 22:2,3, and 23:1-6, again in Zechariah 10:2f.; 11:4-17; 12:8, and in the whole of Ezekiel 34. References to Isaiah 9:4-6 and Micah 5:1f. are also cited.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 561.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 564.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 561.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 561-564.

From the context of the Gospel of John (5:22; 8:15ff.; 9:39-41; and the whole parable of the Good Shepherd in chapter 10), Jungkuntz shows that God is fulfilling this office of judges in His Judge par excellence, Jesus, the Son of God. He thinks that in the prophetic history of this line of judges there is the implicit prophecy that God Himself would take on human form and pronounce judgment upon the unjust judges of Israel.<sup>35</sup> He claims that this is indicated especially in Zechariah 12:8 where the Lord says, "On that day the Lord will put a shield about the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God; like the angel of the Lord, at their head."<sup>36</sup> It is this prophetic history to which Jesus appeals when he quotes Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34, for according to Jungkuntz, Psalm 82 strongly underscores two chief elements in John 10: (1) The stern divine judgment on the unworthy judges of God's people; (2) The implicit prophecy that God Himself would in human nature become His people's Judge and Deliverer.<sup>37</sup>

Jungkuntz uses his philological argumentation regarding the verb  $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\omega$  in John 10:35b as strong support for his thesis of prophetic history and summarizes his interpretation of John 10:34-36 in the following manner:

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 564.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

In answer to His accusers Jesus again asserts His claim to divine Sonship even though He is a man, pointing out that God Himself had foreshadowed the coming of One who would be the Judge par excellence; the One who would judge righteously, would shepherd His people, and finally deliver them forever; the One who would in fact be both God and man in one person, as Psalm 82 suggests. This claim He further supports by the reminder that the Old Testament Scripture has a prophetic content, it cannot be undone, it must be fulfilled.<sup>38</sup>

In his recently published Anchor Bible Commentary, Raymond Brown<sup>39</sup> is the first to my knowledge to take cognizance of Jungkuntz' work. He points out clearly that one of the major issues is Jesus' blasphemy in the sense of the Jews' accusation that he is "making himself God".<sup>40</sup> One distinctive point that Brown makes is that the whole of Psalm 82:6 is important for the interpretation of Jesus' quote in John 10:34-36.<sup>41</sup> However, Brown departs from Jungkuntz' exegesis to a certain extent when he notes that Jesus is using rabbinic hermeneutical principles in the form of an argument a minori ad maius. To give added support for this point of view, Brown cites Matthew 4:1-11; 19:4 and 22:41-45 where similar ellipses appear in Jesus' arguments even though he is not in dispute with the Pharisees.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 565.

<sup>39</sup>Raymond Brown, The Gospel According to John, (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1966), pp. 404-412.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 408.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 409.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 410.



These summaries of the most recent studies on John 10:34-36 raise a number of issues and questions. It is appropriate that a short critique of these positions be given at this point.

In reference to the articles of O'Callaghan, Emerton and Ackerman, it should be noted that each of them have shown, in one way or another, that the term gods in Psalm 82:6 can still possibly be a reference to the judges of Israel. O'Callaghan has pointed this out in the Ugaritic legend of King Keret, Emerton in his citation of a Targum, a Qumran scroll and Origen, and Ackerman in his notation of the Rabbinic Sinai myth. The references to a collectivity of men, such as in the Sinai myth, do not rule out the fact that this can still apply primarily to the leaders of the people. The concept of the whole being identified with the individual king or leader is not unknown in Hebrew thought. Again, Ackerman has significantly pointed out that in the Sinai myth, the Israelites are not merely called gods, but they are also judged. This emphasis on judgment is an emphasis that is decidedly lacking in the commentators who refer to the Sinai myth. It should also be noted at this point that Emerton has not attempted to reconcile his notion of the gods as angels with the context of John's Gospel, a task which would be rather difficult, if not impossible. Finally, cognizance should be taken of the fact that much of the evidence cited by Emerton and Ackerman is dated within a century of the time when the Gospel of John was written, and it

therefore becomes extremely relevant when interpreting the passage under consideration.

With regard to Hanson's investigation, it is difficult to acknowledge that there is in John 10:34-36 a reference to the pre-existent Word of the prologue. The Word of God which comes to the gods in John 10:34-36 is not used in the same absolute sense of the "Word was God" as it is portrayed in verse one, part c, of the prologue. It is far more conceivable that the phrase *πρὸς οὓς ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ θεοῦ* stems from Prophetic literature in the Old Testament where these words often introduce an oracle or oracles of judgment from the Lord. Prophets such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea use terminology similar to that used in the text of John 10:35. Especially relevant are the references in Jeremiah 1:4,11; Ezekiel 1:3; 6:1; 12:21; 34:1f.; and Hosea 1:1. To say then, as does Hanson, that there is in John 10:35 a reference to the pre-existent Word is at least questionable.

The article by Richard Jungkuntz faces difficulties in both the linguistic argument and the argument from prophetic history. There are three major objections from the linguistic perspective. First, Jungkuntz draws the primary impetus for his definition of the verb *λυθῆναι* in John 10:35b from a contrast of the verbs *κετελεύω* and *πληρόω* in Matthew 5:17. But even though the contexts in which these verbs are used are similar, the fact remains that the writer of John's Gospel does not use the verb *κετελεύω* anywhere.

Jungkuntz cites Friedrich Büchsel's analysis of λύω and καταλύω as evidence for his view, but the very fact that John does not use καταλύω at all makes Büchsel's analysis questionable. The striking absence of the verb καταλύω in John's Gospel also radically questions Büchsel's argumentation. It is further notable that Büchsel produces no substantial evidence for his generalization.

Secondly, there is no contrast of the verbs λύω and πληρόω in John's Gospel, even the whole New Testament, as there is of καταλύω and πληρόω in Matthew 5:17. This fact further questions the validity of dealing with the compound καταλύω as an equivalent of the simple λύω; it also questions the validity of transferring the contrast with πληρόω from the Gospel of Matthew to the Gospel of John, in spite of the fact that the contexts may be similar.

Finally, Jungkuntz himself makes a logical error when he allows the verb καταλύω in his analysis of Matthew 5:17 to derive part of its connotation from the meaning of πληρόω. To be sure, καταλύω is here contrasted to πληρόω. But to say, therefore, that καταλύω can take over part of the meaning of πληρόω, is to say more than the text asserts. Jungkuntz has not provided sufficient evidence for such a procedure. It might be objected here that his evidence from the Hebrew and Aramaic roots concludes the matter in favor of his point of view; but the meanings of these roots, "to nullify" or "to render futile" can easily be interpreted in the simple sense of λύω, that is, to destroy or to abolish. There

is no concept of fulfillment or to keep from going into fulfillment in these Hebrew and Aramaic roots which Jungkuntz adduces.

There are also difficulties with Jungkuntz' concept of prophetic history. First of all, prophetic history cannot be adequately supported by the linguistic approach that he takes to 10:35b, as demonstrated above. Secondly, he does not avoid a movement a minori ad maius. He must still posit that Jesus is the judge par excellence in comparison to the judges of Israel. This in itself is not objectionable if his support for this movement from the lesser to the greater were not the questionable concept of prophetic history rather than, shall we say, a rabbinic hermeneutical principle. At this point two major questions must be addressed to Jungkuntz' thesis: (1) Does the Old Testament really implicitly prophesy the coming of a judge par excellence?; (2) Do the Old Testament and Psalm 82 actually implicitly prophesy that God Himself would in human nature become His people's Judge and Deliverer?

As Jungkuntz has adequately demonstrated, there are in John 10 without a doubt parallels to the Shepherd-Ruler and the Shepherd-Judge concepts of the Old Testament. But does not John perhaps use this parallel imagery merely to point out that Jesus is assuming the divine role of Deliverer and Judge of the unjust judges of Israel that God Himself had assumed in the Old Testament, as in Ezekiel 34? To say this much is to say only what is evident in the text of John 10

itself. But to say God's sending of His Son to assume this role of judge upon the unjust judges of Israel was already prophesied in the Old Testament demands some special pleading. All of the Old Testament evidence that Jungkuntz adduces for his view of prophetic history can be interpreted, and more easily so, to fit the perspective outlined at the beginning of this paragraph. Even in Zechariah 12:8 where it is stated that "the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the Lord, at their head," it must be recognized that the text says that it will be like God, not be God, and again that God is here identified with the angel of the Lord. Certainly this is no prediction of a divine-human figure who is to be the judge par excellence. Again, Psalm 82 itself does not contain an implicit prophecy that God Himself would in human nature become His people's Judge and Deliverer. Evidence for this last statement will be adduced in the following chapter where a more detailed analysis of recent exegesis of Psalm 82 will be made.

Raymond Brown's commentary on John 10:34-36 in The Anchor Bible series holds to the traditional a minori ad maius concept of moving from gods to the Son of God with a capital "G".<sup>43</sup> This is a typical "modern" position, as Jungkuntz has pointed out. As Jungkuntz also states, this position is unsatisfactory because it fails to meet the substance of the Jew's accusation

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 409.

against him.<sup>44</sup> Jesus' basic difference from contemporary Judaism was his method of interpreting Scripture.

Brown, however, does point out two things that are important for an adequate interpretation of John 10:34-36. The first is that he highlights blasphemy as one of the major issues that must be analysed, although he himself does not do so in depth. Secondly, he points out that it is important to analyse the whole context of Psalm 82 in order to provide a satisfactory interpretation of the John 10 passages.

As the above analysis and criticism has demonstrated, there is as yet no completely acceptable exegesis of John 10:34-36. However, from the questions raised by these conflicting views, it is possible to pinpoint at least four major issues or problems involved in a satisfactory exegesis of this text. These are: (1) How is the quote from Psalm 82 used in John 10:34-36? Why does Jesus use it? To whom does the phrase "the gods" refer and in what context is this term used?; (2) What is the exact nature of blasphemy and the laws condemning it?; (3) Exactly what line of thinking does Jesus' argument take in the movement from his quote from Psalm 82 to the concept of blasphemy in verse 36? In other words, what is the relation between the protasis of 10:35 and the apodosis of 10:36?; (4) What is the relation of 10:35b to the rest of the sentence? These major problems will be answered in the following chapters

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<sup>44</sup>Jungkuntz, p. 557.

by a detailed examination of the quote from Psalm 82:6, the concept of blasphemy, and the relation between these two. The interpretation of  $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\omega$  in John 10:35b should, if possible, be taken in its most literal sense unless it can be demonstrated that another interpretation is necessary. We will see in the following studies that interpretations other than the most literal sense of  $\lambda\acute{\upsilon}\omega$  are not necessary.

## CHAPTER III

### THE INTERPRETATION OF PSALM 82

Some of the interpretation of this Psalm has already been dealt with in the previous chapter since some of the recent articles on the subject of John 10:34-36 have dealt with ancient exegesis of Psalm 82. In those instances where repetition is evident, a mere summary will be given.

#### Modern Exegesis of Psalm 82

The views of Hans-Joachim Kraus, Sigmund Mowinckel, and G. Ernest Wright are representative of the modern views of the original meaning of Psalm 82. Kraus considers that the picture presented in Psalm 82 is that of God entering His heavenly council to pronounce judgment upon the unjust gods who rule over the nations.<sup>1</sup> G. Ernest Wright is the foremost English-language commentator to maintain this view in the classic manner in which it is generally held today. In his well known work on the subject, he has thoroughly repudiated J. Morgenstern's reconstruction of Psalm 82<sup>2</sup> and has at the same time adequately demonstrated that in its original sense, Psalm 82 cannot refer

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<sup>1</sup>Hans-Joachim Kraus, Psalmen (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961), II, 569-574.

<sup>2</sup>J. Morgenstern, "The Mythical Background of Psalm 82," Hebrew Union College Annual, XIV (1939), 29-126. Roger T. O'Callaghan summarizes Morgenstern's reconstruction of Psalm 82 in an article entitled "A Note on the Canaanite Background



to Israel's judges. Wright takes the term "gods" in the most literal sense. He dates the composition of the Psalm somewhere between the seventh and fourth centuries B. C., noting further that the seventh and sixth centuries B. C. were great eras of syncretism. It is likely, he then concludes, that Israel thought that her God had placed other lesser gods in charge of

of Psalm 82," Catholic Biblical Quarterly, XV (1935), 311-312, in the following manner: "In 1939 J. Morgenstern made a major study of Psalm 82 and, among other things, came to the conclusion that vv. 2-4 were not part of the original Canaanite poem which, indeed, had been transmitted to Judah through Galilee about 500 B. C. The 'elohîm of v. 1b, Morgenstern maintains, is not the subject of yispat, as suggested by Wellhausen, who had changed the preceding b<sup>e</sup>qereb to b<sup>e</sup>qirbâh. Rather, it is to be read with b<sup>e</sup>qereb, thus "in the midst of the gods," and it refers therefore not to human judges within Israel or to foreign rulers but to angels or other lesser divine beings, Yahweh's ministers and agents; this applies also to 'elohîm in v. 6. Since vv. 2-4 must refer to human judges in accordance with the same judicial terminology found elsewhere in the Bible, they cannot refer to the 'elohîm and so are excluded. Hence the crime for which the 'elohîm are now to become mortal like men is not that they neglected the afflicted and fatherless and favoured the wicked but some other more heinous crime, the expression of which in the original Canaanite poem was revolting to the editors of orthodox Jewry who then substituted for it the present vv. 2-4. What the real crime charged against the 'elohîm originally was is found in Gn 6, 1-4 where the b<sup>e</sup>ne ha-'elohîm had consorted with earthly women, a sin for which they are reduced to mortal state, eating and drinking, and living not beyond 120 years (Gn 6,3). Morgenstern's own reconstruction of Ps 82 is given on p. 122 of his study: in v. 1a he replaces 'elohîm with Yahweh; he would place 5c as 2b, the original 2a having been lost; the enarration of the original crime of the 'elohîm came then as vv. 2-5, but Morgenstern does not venture to say how it was formulated; the present vv. 6-7 follow, except that in 7b he would read uke Helel ben Sahar for uke 'ahad haš-sarîm. The present v. 8 is not included for it replaced some original mythological conclusion, now lost.

the other nations.<sup>3</sup>

Sigmund Mowinckel takes much the same view in his exhaustive studies on this Psalm.<sup>4</sup> However, he categorizes this Psalm as one of the "Thronbesteigung Psalmen" rather than an eschatological Psalm.<sup>5</sup> In this "Gerichtsmythos" God ascends His throne to judge the other gods, the other nations of the world, and the earth itself.<sup>6</sup> Israel herself is not judged, for she is righteous.<sup>7</sup> In the very fact that the other nations are judged Israel is justified, and all those who commit wrongs against her receive their just due.<sup>8</sup> But even more important is the fact that Mowinckel interprets verse eight to be a prayer<sup>9</sup> by the congregation, exhorting God to complete the judgment which He has already made among the gods.<sup>10</sup>

At this point it should be recognized, in reference to Wright's dating of Psalm 82, that a date between the seventh and fourth centuries B. C. is evidence of the fact that Psalm

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<sup>3</sup>G. Ernest Wright, The Old Testament Against Its Environment (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1950), pp. 30-41.

<sup>4</sup>Sigmund Mowinckel, Psalmenstudien (Amsterdam: Verlag P. Schippers, 1961), II, 258.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., II, 68.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., II, 165.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., II, 214.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., III, 45.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., III, 76.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., II, 174.

82 is not so far removed from the first century A. D. that this psalm is necessarily absolutely uninfluential for the interpretation of the quote in John 10.

Again, the views of all three exegetes, who take the term "gods" literally undermine the view of prophetic history which Jungkuntz sets forth for the interpretation of the quote in John 10.<sup>11</sup> A literal view of "gods" in Psalm 82 would not allow Jungkuntz' assertion that God Himself would in human nature become His people's Judge and Deliverer. Mowinkel's evidence that verse eight is actually a prayer by the people in response to the oracle further undermines Jungkuntz' view of prophetic history, for Jungkuntz has obviously regarded this verse as one of the major foci for the implicit prophecy that God would Himself in human form pronounce judgment upon the unjust judges of Israel.<sup>12</sup>

It should also be pointed out that this original sense of the Psalm does not necessarily undermine the view that "the gods" here was later understood to refer to the judges of Israel, for there is considerable evidence that this was a viable interpretation of verses one and six around the first century A. D. The only evidence at this point which would harmonize with (but not necessarily support) Jungkuntz' view of "the gods" and of prophetic history would be the Ugaritic

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<sup>11</sup>Richard Jungkuntz, "An Approach to the Exegesis of John 10:34-36," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXV (October 1964), 564.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

legend of King Keret adduced by Roger T. O'Callaghan.

Finally, it should be recognized that Kraus, Wright, and Mowinckel have stressed a point regarding the whole context of the Psalm that most New Testament commentators on the Gospel of John have failed to see: they have regarded verse six as well as the rest of the Psalm in the context of God's judgment upon the gods. Up until this time, no commentator has interpreted the whole of John's quote from verse six in exactly this sense.

#### Other Interpretations of Psalm 82

In chapter II above we noted that J. A. Emerton interprets the gods of Psalm 82 as angels; it should be added here that this view does not necessarily conflict with the interpretation which understands the term "gods" literally as gods. G. Ernest Wright gives this view some credence and even implies that it is compatible with his own view.<sup>13</sup>

Ackerman's view that this psalm reflects the rabbinic Sinai myth in which the Israelites were called gods has also been cited previously.<sup>14</sup> There is one other rabbinic tradition that should be noted even though it may have its origins in the above Sinai myth. Midrash Ruth (122<sup>b</sup>)<sup>15</sup> cites Rabbi Abba

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<sup>13</sup>Wright, pp. 31-32.

<sup>14</sup>For Ackerman's view, see chapter II, p. 13f.

<sup>15</sup>Paul Billerbeck, Das Evangelium nach Markus, Lukas und die Apostelgeschichte in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), II, 543.

B. Judah who lived around A. D. 350, as saying that Psalm 82: 6 plainly means "Wenn ich euch auch Götter genannt habe, s. Ps. 82,6, so bin ich doch Gott, dein Gott!" Both of these rabbinic traditions could possibly have influenced the text of John. As has been noted previously, the fact that the former rabbinic tradition calls the people of Israel gods does not necessarily preclude the fact that the term gods here might be understood to refer to the judges of Israel alone.

The latter rabbinic tradition could easily explain Jesus' argument in John 10:34-36, for according to this latter argument, the very fact that Jesus would address the judges of Israel as gods would allow the further fact that he is their God. This latter view could possibly be construed as an  minori ad maius argument, but this is not a necessary inference. The only problem with this tradition is that it is rather late, traceable only as far back as the year A. D. 350, that is, to a time 250-300 years after the writing of John's Gospel. It is highly unlikely, therefore, that this tradition had much influence upon the argument that Jesus uses in John 10. In any case, a tradition that is earlier or reasonably nearer to the date of writing is far more likely to have influenced the writer.

It has already been shown that G. Ernest Wright and others have confirmed the view that the term "gods" in Psalm 82 was originally a reference to the gods of other nations. Those who have held to the opposing traditional view that the term

"gods" here is a reference to the judges of Israel are John Calvin, Franz Delitzsch, A. Cohen, Davison, and A. F. Kirkpatrick.<sup>16</sup> Roger T. O'Callaghan is the only commentator of late who has presented evidence for the view that the term "gods" in Psalm 82 could have meant the judges of Israel; he has not been able to show any direct relation of the Ugaritic legend of King Keret to Psalm 82, even though there are structural similarities. Perhaps the best evidence for the view that the term "gods" here refers to the judges of Israel comes from other earlier Old Testament passages such as Exodus 4:16; 7:1; 22:8; 28; and I Samuel 2:25 where the judges are identified with God. Brown, Driver, and Briggs interpret these passages precisely in this way.<sup>17</sup> C. H. Gordon has contested the views of this lexicon, particularly on the Exodus passages, but allows that the term in I Samuel 2:25 must be allowed the meaning of "judges".<sup>18</sup> If, therefore, the term "God" in the Exodus and I Samuel passages refers to the judges of Israel, it would appear that it is also still possible to view the term gods in Psalm 82 in this same way.

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<sup>16</sup>Wright, p. 31, note 36.

<sup>17</sup>Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, compilers and editors, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1962), p. 43.

<sup>18</sup>C. H. Gordon, "Elohim in Its Reputed Meaning of Rulers, Judges," Journal of Biblical Literature, LIV (1935), 139-144.

## Summary and Conclusions

In summarizing the major points of this chapter, it should be noted that G. Ernest Wright and others have all but devastated the view that the gods in the original sense of Psalm 82 are the judges of Israel. On the basis of O'Callaghan's evidence and the evidence from the Exodus and I Samuel passages, however, a case can be made, with difficulty, for the original meaning of the term "gods" as judges in Psalm 82. Yet this evidence is precarious, for O'Callaghan has given no evidence of any direct influence of the King Keret legend on Psalm 82. Merely because the Exodus and I Samuel passages may identify the judges with God, it does not necessarily follow that the term gods in Psalm 82 means the judges of Israel. Wright's argument, therefore, undoubtedly commands the greatest amount of weight and evidence, and it must generally be accepted. This literal interpretation of the term "gods" in Psalm 82 undermines the view of prophetic history set forth by Jungkuntz because a literal interpretation of the term "gods" of Psalm 82 cannot concur with Israel's divinely instituted office of judges who are to judge the people, not gods. Mowinckel's view that Psalm 82:8 is a prayerful response of the people to the oracle is further evidence for the position stated above, for verse eight can then no longer be considered implicit prophecy if it is the response of the people.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE CONCEPT OF BLASPHEMY

#### IN RABBINIC EXEGESIS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

John 10:36 uses the term *βλασφημέω*. Since we suspect this term is important for the understanding of Jesus' response to the Jews, we turn to a detailed analysis of the concept of blasphemy. This will be done by examining rabbinic comments on three passages from the Pentateuch which deal with blasphemy.

#### Rabbinic Exegesis of Exodus 22:28

You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people. Exodus 22:28. (RSV)

The first major interpretation of this passage refers the term God to pagan gods or the judges and princes of Israel and claims that they are not to be cursed.<sup>1</sup> Evidence for this interpretation is listed by Billerbeck as follows:

Targ Onk Ex 22, 27: Den Richter sollst du nicht verwünschen לֹא תִבְרַךְ אֶת הַשֹּׁפֵט וְאֶת הַמְּלָכִים וְאֶת הַנְּסִיכִים בְּעַמְּךָ u. den Fürsten מְלָכִים in deinem Volk sollst du nicht verfluchen. --Targ Jerusch I: Mein Volk, ihr Söhne Israels, eure Richter שֹׁפְטֵיכֶם sollt ihr nicht verwünschen u. die Lehrer (oder auch die "Groszen" מְלָכִים), die zu Führen in deinem Volk bestellt sind, sollt ihr nicht verfluchen. . . . R. Jischmael (um 135) sagte: Von den Richtern redet die Stelle (Ex 22,27), s. Ex 22,8: Die Angelegenheit beider soll vor die Gottheit (nach R. Jischmael=vor die Richter) kommen. --"Elohim sollst du nicht verwünschen", da höre ich nur vom Richter שֹׁפֵט; . . . R. Jehuda b. Bathyra (um 110) sagte: "Den Richter

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Billerbeck, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus, in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1922), I, 1009.



(אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁפָּט) sollst du nicht verwünschen u. dem Fürsten in deinem Volk sollst du nicht fluchen"; soll ich daraus entnehmen, dasz man sich straffällig macht erst, wenn jener Richter u. (zugleich auch) Fürst ist? Die Schrift sagt lehrend: "Den Richter sollst du nicht verwünschen", um seinetwegen, weil er Richter ist, für straffällig zu erklären; . . . Sanh 66a Bar: אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁפָּט Ex 22,27 ist profan (d.h. es bezeichnet den Richter); das sind Worte des R. Jischmael.<sup>2</sup>

In the second major sense, the term God in Exodus 22:28 is referred to the deity, God Himself. This tradition which interprets Exodus 22:28 to mean blasphemy of God Himself stems from the time of Rabbi Aqiba.<sup>3</sup> Some of the traditions which interpret this passage in this way are the following:

M<sup>e</sup>kh Ex 22,27(102<sup>b</sup>): "Die Gottheit sollst du nicht verwünschen"; warum ist es gesagt worden? Wenn es Lv 24,16 heisst: "Wer den Namen Jahves lästert אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁפָּט, soll getötet werden", so vernehmen wir die Strafe; die Verwarnung (d.h. das bloße Verbot ohne Strafandrohung) haben wir nicht vernommen. Deshalb heisst Ex 22,27 ganz allgemein: Die Gottheit sollst du nicht verwünschen. Das sind Worte des R. Aqiba (um 135). . . . Sanh 66a Bar: . . . R. Aqiba sagte: אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁפָּט ist heilig (d.h. es bedeutet "Gott"). Ferner heisst es in einer Bar: R. Eliezer b. Jaacob (um 150) hat gesagt: Woher lässt sich die Verwarnung erweisen, dasz man dem (Jahve-)Namen nicht fluchen darf? Die Schrift sagt lehrend Ex 22,27: Die Gottheit sollst du nicht verwünschen.<sup>4</sup>

A third significant interpretation of this passage is that rabbinic tradition where it is argued that the command not to curse God is learned from the command not to curse the judges,

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Rabbi Aqiba flourished as a teacher around A. D. 110--A. D. 135. See Hermann L. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Mid-rasch (New York: Meridian Books; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1959), p. 112.

<sup>4</sup>Billerbeck, pp. 1009-1010.

as well as the fact that cursing God is much worse than cursing the judges. Consequently, both God and the judges are meant here. Among the evidence included for this perspective is:

Sanh 66<sup>a</sup> Bar: . . . R. Eliezer b. Jaaqob (um 150) hat gesagt: . . . Nach dem, welcher sagt,  $\text{אֲשֶׁר לֹא}$  sei profan, lernt man das Heilige vom Profanen (durch den Schluss a minori ad majus: ist die Verwünschung des Richters verboten, um wieviel mehr dann die der Gottheit); nach dem, welcher sagt,  $\text{אֲשֶׁר לֵאלֹהִים}$  sei heilig, lernen wir das Profane vom Heiligen (durch den umgekehrten Schluss a majori ad minus). Zugunsten desjenigen, der sagt,  $\text{אֲשֶׁר לֹא}$  sei profan, ist, sasz man Heiliges aus Profanem lernt (folgert); aber in bezug auf den, welcher sagt,  $\text{אֲשֶׁר לֵאלֹהִים}$  sei heilig, gilt: lernt man denn Profanes von Heiligem? (die Schlussfolgerung aus Göttlichen auf Menschliches, von Gott auf den Richter ist unstatthaft.) Vielleicht warnt also die Stelle (Ex 22,27 vor Lästerung) in bezug auf das Heilige, aber nicht in bezug auf das Profane? In diesem Fall müsste die Stelle schreiben  $\text{לֹא יִשָּׁחֵךְ אֱלֹהִים}$  (Hiphil), du sollst nicht verunehren; was bedeutet also  $\text{לֹא יִשָּׁחֵךְ אֱלֹהִים}$ ? Ich entnehme daraus beides (die Verwünschung der Gottheit u. des Richters). --Im Traktat Sopherim 4,5 wird die letzte Folgerung so ausgedrückt: In Ex 22,27 dient als heilig u. als profan (bezeichnet sowohl die Gottheit, also auch den Richter).<sup>5</sup>

In order to point out even further the relevance of this passage from Exodus for the concept of blasphemy, it should be noted that all of the traditions above which speak of cursing the judges or of cursing God may also actually mean blasphemy in the sense of Rabbi Aqiba. It is probably because of this great similarity between cursing and blaspheming that the final identification of the two concepts was made. The following tradition points this out clearly.

Sanh 56<sup>a</sup> Bar: . . . Sch<sup>e</sup>mu<sup>l</sup> (254) hat gesagt: . . . Oder wenn du willst, so sage ich: Die Schriftstelle

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

Lv 24,15.16 sagt: "Er verwünscht" u. "er lästert"; das will besagen, dasz er (der Gotteslästerer) durch eine Verwünschung lästert. Aber vielleicht erst, wenn er beides getan (sowohl eine Verwünschung als auch eine Lästerung ausgesprochen) hat? Das meine nicht; denn es heizt Nu 24,14: "Führe den Verwünscher hinaus", u. nicht heizt es: "Führe den Lästerer u. den Verwünscher hinaus"; entnimm daraus, dasz beides einunddasselbe ist.<sup>6</sup>

It can be concluded from the citation of all of these traditions that the cursing and blasphemy of God was strongly forbidden on the basis of rabbinic exegesis of Exodus 22:28. It can also be concluded from these citations of rabbinic tradition, especially those in section three, including the a minori ad maius principle, that cursing the judges was concomitantly cursing and blaspheming God. These two kinds of curses were often identified as one and the same thing.

#### Rabbinic Exegesis of Numbers 15: 30f.

But the person who does anything with a high hand, whether he is native or a sojourner, reviles the Lord, and that person shall be cut off from among his people. Because he has despised (blasphemed) the word of the Lord, and has broken his commandment, that person shall be utterly cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him. (RSV--parentheses mine)

Reaching out to God with a high hand is blasphemy for the rabbinic exegesis of Numbers 15. There are three basic ways in which an Israelite could reach out to God with a high hand. These are: (1) inveighing against the Torah and so against God; (2) idolatry; (3) blaspheming God in the narrower sense

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 1014-1015.

of blaspheming his name or merely saying the sacred tetragrammaton.<sup>7</sup> The following is evidence for the traditions which forbid reaching out to God with a high hand by assailing the Torah.

SNu 15, 30f. 112 (33<sup>a</sup>): "Die Seele, welche mit hoher Hand etwas tut" Nu 15,30, damit ist derjenige gemeint, der in frecher Weise gegen die Tora (oder von der Tora) spricht, wie Manasse, der Sohn des Hiskia, der dasasz u. (das Gesetz) bespöttelnde Haggadoth vor Gott vortrug. Er sagte: Hatte er denn nichts andres in der Tora zu schreiben als: "Ruben ging in den Tagen der Weizenernte aus u. fand Mandragoren" (Liebesäpfel Gn 30,14)? Oder nichts andres als: "Die Schwester Lotans war Timna" (Gn 36,22)? Aug ihn ist durch Tradition ge- deutet worden Ps 50,20f.: "Du sitztest u. redest wider deinen Bruder, auf den Sohn deiner Mutter bringst du Schimpf. Solches tatest du u. ich schwieg; du meintest, ich sei wirklich wie du." Denkst du etwa, wie die Wege von Fleisch u. Blut seien Gottes Wege? "Ich werde dich überführen u. will dir's vor Augen stellen" (das.). Es kam Jesaja u. deutete durch Tradition: Wehe denen, welche die Missetat ziehen an Stricken der Gottlosigkeit u. wie an Wagenseilen die Sünde, Jes 5,18! Der Anfang der Sünde gleicht dem Faden der Spinne u. zuletzt wird die Sünde wie Wagenseile. --Parallelstelle Sanh 99b; fgl. Sukka 52a.<sup>8</sup>

The second major way of reaching out to God with a high hand is that of worshipping false Gods. Reaching out to God with a high hand in this manner is also blasphemy, for Billerbeck states, "In SDt. 21,22 (s. Nr.3) wird der Gotteslästerer charakterisiert als einer, der seine Hand nach Gott ausstreckt. In diesem Stück wird er mit dem Gotzdiener auf eine Linie gestellt (das. u. pSanh 7,25<sup>b</sup>,9 in Nr.2,b); . . .".<sup>9</sup> It should be

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 1010.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., pp. 1010-1011.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 1016.

pointed out here that the following traditions which spell out the practical aspects of worshipping false gods indicate that such worship is also blasphemy.

SNu 15,31 112 (33<sup>a</sup>): R. Jischmael sagte: Die Schriftstelle Nu 15,31 redet vom Götzendiener; denn es heisst: "Das Wort Jahves hat er verachtet"; denn über das erste Wort hat er sich verächtlich hinweggesetzt, das zu Mose aus dem Munde der Allmacht geredet wurde: "Ich bin Jahve dein Gott. . . . Nicht sollst du einen andren Gott auszer mir haben" Ex 20, 2f. Dasselbe Sanh 99<sup>a</sup>; vgl. Hor 8<sup>a</sup>. . . . pSanh 7,25<sup>b</sup>, 9: Woher lässt sich die Warnung vor dem Götzendienst (d.h. das bloße Verbot ohne Strafandrohung) aus der Schrift beweisen? . . . Aus Nu 15,30: Die Selle, welche mit hoher Hand etwas tut . . ., die יהוה Jahve, u. diese Seele soll aus ihrem Volk ausgerottet werden. Aber steht denn nicht יהוה geschrieben (u. das bedeutet doch "lästern" <sup>a</sup> u. nicht Götzendienst treiben", wie kann also die Stelle den Schriftbeweis für Ausrottung des Götzendieners erbringen)? Es verhält sich damit wie mit einem Menschen, der zu einem andren sagt: Du hast die ganze Schüssel ausgekratzt u. gar nichts darin zurückgelassen. R. Schimon b. Elazar (um 190) sagte: Gleich zweien Menschen, die dasaszen u. eine Schüssel mit Graupen zwischen sich hatten. Der eine streckte seine Hand aus u. kratzte die ganze Schüssel aus ohne darin etwas übrigzulassen. So lässt der Lästere יהוה u. der Götzendiener יהוה kein Gebot hinterher übrig. (Der Gotteslästere u. der Götzendiener gleichen einander darin, dass sie schlieszlich das ganze Gesetz verwerfen; deshalb kann von dem einen ein Beweis hergenommen werden für den andren; die Gleichheit beider wird auch sonst betont, s. in lästert Jahve Nu 15, 30.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Diese Frage zeigt, dass der spätere Sprachgebrauch mit R. Aqiba u. Rabbi unter יהוה den Gotteslästere verstanden hat; s. bei c.<sup>11</sup>

Reaching out to God with a high hand in the third sense was to speak the tetragrammaton, or even, after Rabbi Aqiba, any manner of serving idols or other gods meant to blaspheme

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 1011.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

God in the sense of reaching out to Him with a high hand.<sup>12</sup>

The following traditions are evidence for this perspective.

Ker 79b: R. Aqiba (um 135) sagte zu den Rabbinen: Ihr habt gesagt (s. Ker 1,2 Ende): Beim Gotteslästerer  $\text{עֵלֵךְ}$  handelt es sich um kein Tun (sondern um Worte). Was bedeutet  $\text{עֵלֵךְ}$  Nu 15,30? Den, der den Jahvenamen verflucht  $\text{פִּוֹטֵי אֵלֵיךְ}$ . Pes 93b: Rabbi meinte:  $\text{עֵלֵךְ}$  Nu 15,30 bezeichne den, der den Jahvenamen verflucht. Ker 79b Bar: (Die Seele) lästert Jahve Nu 15,30. Isi b. Jehuda (um 170) sagte: Wie einer, der zum adren sagt: Du hast die Schüssel ausgekratzt u. (von der Schüssel selbst noch) etwas abgeschabt. Er meinte:  $\text{עֵלֵךְ}$  bezeichnet den, der den Jahvenamen verflucht. . . .  $\text{עֵלֵךְ}$  in der Sprache der Mischna=Gotteslästerer zB Ker 1,1: . . . Ker 1,2: . . . Die Gelehrten sagten: Auch der Gotteslästerer  $\text{עֵלֵךְ}$  (ist ausgenommen), weil es heisst Nu 15,29: "Ein Gesetz soll euch sein, für den, der in Schwachheit etwas tut." . . . Anderer Meinung war allerdings R. Aqiba, der unter dem  $\text{עֵלֵךְ}$  Nu 15,30 den Gotteslästerer verstand.<sup>13</sup>

In conclusion, it can be stated that, according to the rabbinic evidence given, the term blasphemy adequately describes all three ways in which one could reach his hand out to God, plainly because the Rabbis themselves, and especially Rabbi Aqiba, think of reaching out to God with a high hand as blasphemy. Consequently, it is significant to recognize that Hermann L. Strack dates Rabbi Aqiba as being influential around A. D. 90-135.<sup>14</sup> This dating places the traditions of Rabbi Aqiba and the other Rabbis well within the possibilities of influencing the account of blasphemy in John 10:34-36.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 1010.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 1011-1012.

<sup>14</sup>Strack, p. 112.

## Rabbinic Exegesis of Leviticus 24:11ff.

And the Israelite woman's son blasphemed the Name, and cursed. And they brought him to Moses. His mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan. And they put him in custody, till the will of the Lord should be declared to them. And the Lord said to Moses, "Bring out of the camp him who cursed; and let all the congregation stone him; And say to the people of Israel, Whoever curses his God shall bear his sin. He who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him; the sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes the Name, shall be put to death. (RSV)

The basic pattern of rabbinic exegesis on this passage is largely a repetition of the text and an explication of the fact that whoever says the sacred tetragrammaton (or even  $\text{Q}^{\prime}\text{H}^{\prime}\text{L}^{\prime}\text{X}$ ) and whoever curses his God, is to be punished by being stoned to death. Again, cursing and blaspheming God become identified, demanding the same kind of punishment. Along with the use of the term  $\text{Q}^{\prime}\text{H}^{\prime}\text{L}^{\prime}\text{X}$  (and not only the tetragrammaton) for cursing and blaspheming God, cursing the judges (who can be called  $\text{Q}^{\prime}\text{H}^{\prime}\text{L}^{\prime}\text{X}$ ) is identified with the cursing of God Himself. The first quote from rabbinic tradition is mere explication of the clear invective of the text.

SLV 24,11ff.(422<sup>a</sup>): Der Sohn des israelitischen Weibes lästerte den Namen; damit ist der deutlich ausgesprochene (Jahve-)Name  $\text{Q}^{\prime}\text{H}^{\prime}\text{L}^{\prime}\text{X}$  gemeint, den er am Sinai gehört hatte (im 1. Gebot: Ich bin Jahve dein Gott). . . . "Und es soll ihn mit Steinen werfen" u. nicht sein Gewand (d.h. ohne Gewand = nâckt er gesteinigt werden); . . .<sup>15</sup>

The following two quotes will generally point out how the

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<sup>15</sup>Billerbeck, pp. 1013-1014.

rabbinic traditions identified cursing with the concept of blasphemy itself.

Sanh 56<sup>a</sup> Bar: . . . Schemuël (254) hat gesagt: . . . Woher, dasz dieses Lästern (  $\aleph \rho \chi$  ) gleichbedeutend mit "fluchen" ist? Weil es heizt Nu 23,8: Was soll ich verfluchen  $\aleph \rho \chi$ , den Gott nicht verflucht hat  $\aleph \rho \chi$ ? . . . Oder wenn du willst, so sage ich: Die Schrifstelle Lv 24,15.16 sagt: "Er verwünscht" u. "er lästert"; das will besagen, dasz er (der Gotteslästerer) durch eine Verwünschung lästert. Aber vielleicht erst, wenn er beides getan (sowohl eine Verwünschung als auch eine Lästerung ausgesprochen) hat? Das meine nicht; denn es heizt Nu 24,14: "Führe den Verwünscher hinaus", u. nicht heizt es: "Führe den Lästerer u. den Verwünscher hinaus"; entnimm daraus, dasz beides einunddasselbe ist. (Das Ergebnis dieser Diskussion ist, nachdem auf Grund der zu Anfang gebrachten Bar verschiedene Umdeutungen des  $\aleph \rho \chi$  abgelehnt sind, folgendes: Die Lästerung oder, was dasselbe ist, die Verwünschung Gottes besteht darin, dasz der deutlich ausgesprochene Jahvename mit dem Namen einer heidnischen Gottheit gelästert oder verwünscht wird.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, these last quotes will point out that the term  $\aleph \rho \chi$ , and not just the tetragrammaton, was included in the concept of blaspheming God. These quotes will also point out that there was therefore identification, if not confusion, of the cursing and blasphemy of God with the cursing and blasphemy of judges at this point.

SLv 24,11ff. (422<sup>a</sup>): . . . "Falls er seinen Gott verwünscht": was will die Schrift lehrend damit sagen? Wenn es heizt: "Wer den Namen Jahves lästert, soll getötet werden", so könnte ich daraus entnehmen, dasz man sich des Todes schuldig mache nur wegen des einzigen (Jahve-) Namens. Woher, dasz auch die Nebenbenennungen (Gott, C<sup>e</sup>baoth, der Allmächtige usw.) miteingeschlossen sind? Die Schrift sagt lehrend: "Falls er seinen Gott (  $\aleph \rho \chi$ , nicht  $\aleph \rho \chi$  ) verwünscht"; das sind Worte des R. Meir (um 150). . . .

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 1014-1015



pSanh 7,25<sup>a</sup>,41: . . . Die Todesstrafe woher? Aus Lv 24,16: Wer den Namen Jahves lästert, soll getötet werden. --Und nach der Meinung des R. Jischmael (um 135)? Denn R. Jischmael hat gesagt: Von den Richtern redet die Stelle (nämlich Ex 22,27). Wenn sie aber betreffs der Richter (vor deren Verwünschung) warnt, dann nicht vielmehr betreffs der göttl. Nebenbenennungen?<sup>17</sup>

### Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter the attempt has been made to outline and categorize the rabbinic exegesis of three passages from the Pentateuch which have to do with the Israelite laws concerning blasphemy. On the basis of the evidence presented above, four basic inferences can be made: (1) Blasphemy and cursing, even swearing, often came to be identified as one and the same thing; (2) The basic prohibition against blaspheming the sacred tetragrammaton could also be violated in a number of other ways, that is, by inveighing against the Torah, by worshipping false gods, by reaching out to him with a high hand, and even by cursing the judges of Israel; (3) This kind of blasphemy generally demanded death by stoning; (4) The rabbinic traditions presented generally date shortly after the first century A. D. and can therefore be considered a possible influence upon the formation of New Testament texts.

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., pp. 1013-1015.

## CHAPTER V

### JOHN 10:34-36 IN ITS BROADER CONTEXT OF

#### BLASPHEMY AND JUDGMENT

##### Blasphemy

The term blasphemy occurs only once in the Gospel of John, in John 10:36. The concept of blasphemy, however is presupposed in at least two other sections of John's Gospel, in 5:16ff. and in 19:7. In the case of 19:7, the passion narrative, there is a definite parallel to the passion narrative of Matthew 26:63ff. where not only the concept, but the term "blasphemy" is itself used.

In 5:16ff. the Jews persecuted Jesus because he had healed a man on the sabbath, but when he went on to call God his Father, they tried to kill him, claiming that he was making himself equal with God. The charge that he was making himself equal with God is strikingly similar to the charge in 10:33b, "because you, being a man, make yourself God." There is another parallel to the structure of chapter ten in the fact that 5:18 reports that the Jews therefore sought to kill him. The specific manner of death is not delineated, but on the basis of the rabbinic exegesis of Leviticus 24:11ff. as given in the last chapter and the stoning in chapter ten, it takes little more to infer that death by stoning was the most likely case here also.

In John 19:7 there is another parallel to the account in chapter ten. The Jews before Pilate claim that by their law Jesus must die because he had made himself the Son of God. There are, however, some variations from 5:16ff. in the parallel to 10:34-36. First of all, the point is made that Jesus has made himself the Son of God, paralleling Jesus' own claim in 10:36 rather than that of 10:33 where the Jews had claimed that Jesus, being a man, was making himself God. John 5:16ff. had paralleled 10:33, and 19:7 now parallels 10:36. But even though there are some differences between the manner in which 5:16ff. and 19:7 parallel 10:33-36, it is evident that there are blasphemous overtones in each case. The point is that in 19:7 there is also a parallel to the blasphemy of 10:33,36.

The parallel of the passion narrative in Matthew 26:63ff. corroborates the view that John 19:7 is a parallel to 10:33-36. In both Matthew 26:63ff. and John 19:7, Jesus is persecuted because he is charged with making himself the Son of God, but in Matthew 26:63ff. Jesus' claim to be the Son of God is specifically delineated as blasphemy. It can therefore be concluded that the charge in John 19:7 is also really one of blasphemy, even though the trial scene in John 19:7 is before Pilate and not before Caiaphas, as in Matthew 26:63ff. It goes without saying, then, that John 10:34-36 is not the only instance of blasphemy in John's Gospel, but it is a theme that is found in at least two other passages.

## Judgment

It has been pointed out previously that blasphemy and cursing or pronouncing judgment<sup>1</sup> are often conceptual themes that are identified. The theme of judgment runs throughout the Gospel of John and has parallels, even in the judgment imagery, in the Old Testament and pseudepigraphic literature.

Jungkuntz has pointedly shown that the theme of judgment runs throughout the Gospel of John in his references to the verb *κρίνω* which occurs nineteen times in the Gospel as compared to the few occurrences in the Synoptics. He has noted that the theme of judgment occurs especially in 5:22; 8:15f.; 13:47f.; and 9:39-41.<sup>2</sup> To this list can be added such references as 3:18 and 8:15,16,24-27. In all of these instances, it is pointed out that the Father is giving all judgment to his Son.

There is at least one instance in the Gospel of John which speaks of judgment in terms of the law as the subject which does the judging. In John 7:51 Nicodemus puts this question to the Pharisees: "Does our law judge a man without first giving him a hearing and learning what he does?" It is further significant that Nicodemus speaks here of "our" law,

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<sup>1</sup>For the similarity in the usage of cursing and judging by the law, compare John 7:51 and Galatians 3:10.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Jungkuntz, "An Approach to the Exegesis of John 10:34-36," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXV (October 1964), 563-565.

a notable similarity to the "your" law of Jesus' words in John 10:34. The particular relevance of this fact to the text of 10:34-36 will be pointed out in a subsequent chapter.

The Old Testament passages dealing with the imagery of the Shepherd as the Ruler, Judge, and Deliverer, as well as the other related passages about God's judgment upon the unjust judges of Israel and about God's giving the task of judgment to the King, have been adequately dealt with in Jungkuntz' article of 1964, summarized in chapter two.

There is another point of importance that must be considered within the context of the judgment theme in John 10. In 10:24 the Jews ask Jesus if he is the *χριστός*, and in 10:36 the term *ἡγιασέν* is used. The question must be posed, "Do these terms and their meanings of appointed one, chosen one, consecrated one, have anything to do with the concept of judgment?" In his Anchor Bible Commentary, Raymond Brown has dealt at length with the term "consecrated", but he does not address himself to this question.<sup>3</sup>

The pseudepigraphic book of Enoch gives sufficient evidence for the fact that the terms *χριστός* and *ἡγιασέν*<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Raymond Brown, The Gospel According to John (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1966), p. 411.

<sup>4</sup>The verb *ἡγιάσω* can be identified with *χριστός* in the context of John ten because it can render the meaning "to dedicate" (BAG, p. 8) which is easily equivalent to the meaning "Anointed One" given for *χριστός* (BAG, p. 895).

can be intimately connected with the theme of judgment, for the Messiah (or the Son of Man)<sup>5</sup> is the one who is to judge the angels, the world and the unjust leaders at the end of time.

Enoch 45:3: An jenem Tage wird mein Auserwählten (=Messias) auf dem Thron der H. sitzen u. unter ihren (der Menschen) Taten eine Auslese treffen u. ihre Wohnungen werden zahllos sein.<sup>6</sup>

Enoch 55:4: Ihr Könige u. Mächtigen, die ihr auf dem Festlande wohnen werdet, ihr sollt meinen Auserwählten sehen, wenn er auf dem Throne meiner H. sitzen u. den Asasel, seine ganze Genossenschaft u. alle seine Scharen im Namen des Herrn der Geister richten wird.<sup>7</sup>

Enoch 61:8: Der Herr der Geister setzte den Auserwählten auf den Thron seiner H., u. er wird alle Werke der Heiligen (=Engel) oben in den Himmeln richten u. mit der Wage ihre

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<sup>5</sup>It could be objected here that Billerbeck's insertion (=Messias) is misleading and that the insertion should read (=Menschensohn). Even if this point is true, it makes little difference for the Gospel of John, for John identifies the terms "Son of God" and "Son of Man" in 5:25-27. The term "Son of God" is in turn identified with the term "Christ" in 11:27 and 20:31, and the term "Christ" is used to interpret the term "Messiah" in 1:41 and 4:25. It is obvious that John's Gospel uses these terms in a fluid manner and that the "Messias" or "Menschensohn" in the pseudepigraphic book of Enoch can therefore prove valuable for interpretation in this Gospel.

The further objection that the Son of Man in the pseudepigraphic book of Enoch never appears on earth does not negate the possibility that John's Gospel reinterprets the book of Enoch's Son of Man figure, portraying him as the one who is on earth, yet constantly in contact with the heavenly realm. John 1:51 states, "And he said to him, "Truly, truly I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man!"

<sup>6</sup>Paul Billerbeck, Das Evangelium nach Markus, Lukas, und die Apostelgeschichte in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud and Midrasch (München: C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), II, 968.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

Taten wägen.<sup>8</sup>

Enoch 62:2: Der Herr der Geister setzte ihn (den Auserwählten=Messias) auf den Thron seiner H. Der Geist der Gerechtigkeit was über ihn ausgegossen; die Rede seines Mundes tötete alle Sünder, u. alle Ungerechten wurden vor seinem Angesicht vernichtet (Gleiches 62,3.5; 69,27.29).<sup>9</sup>

Enoch 69:27: Er (der Menschensohn=Messias) setzte sich auf den Thron seiner Herrlichkeit, u. die Summe des Gerichts wurde ihm, dem Menschensohn, übergeben; u. er laszt die Sünder u. die, welche die Welt verführt haben von der Oberfläche der Erde verschwinden u. vertilgt werden.<sup>10</sup>

It may be concluded on the basis of this evidence, then that John 10:34-36 is also in the context of the judgment theme when the terms *Χριστός* and *ἡγιάσειν* are used. Rabbinic literature, however, does not view the function of judging the world as the role of the Messiah, but always sees God Himself as the one who will judge the world.<sup>11</sup> Another relevant point is the fact that M. Rist<sup>12</sup> dates the pseudepigraphic book of Enoch during the first century B. C., the suggested dates being 95, 63, or the reign of Herod, 37-4. These dates place the book of Enoch within a period of time when it could

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Paul Billerbeck, Exkurse zu einzelner Stellen des Neuen Testaments in Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch (München: C. J. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1928) IV. 2, 1096.

<sup>11</sup>Billerbeck, II, 465.

<sup>12</sup>M. Rist, "Book of Enoch", in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), II, 103.

possibly have influenced the writing of John's Gospel.<sup>13</sup>

### Summary and Conclusions

In this chapter we have supported R. Jungkuntz' view that the themes of blasphemy and judgment run throughout the entire Gospel of John, but are especially notable in chapters nine and ten. It has been further pointed out that there is in John's Gospel a close affinity to the judgment imagery of the Old Testament, and that the Pharisee's own law can also be the subject which pronounces judgment upon someone. Finally, evidence from the book of Enoch was given to show that the theme of judgment can also be applied to the Messiah, the consecrated one, as these terms appear in the text of John 10:24,36.

The tentative conclusion that the rabbinic exegesis of the three passages in the preceding chapter has direct influence upon the text of John 10:34-36 may already be drawn here for the sake of clarity, because each of these three passages deals with the concepts of blasphemy and judgment that are a part of John 10:34-36 and its broader contexts. These three passages may be equally as relevant for the judge imagery in John 10 as the Old Testament passages which Jungkuntz has cited.

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<sup>13</sup>It may be objected here that the book of Enoch must be used with caution when interpreting the New Testament. In the same IDB article on p. 104, M. Rist notes that the book of Enoch was well known to the Jews and later to Christians, losing its general influence only after the second century A. D. Rist believes that Charles overstates his case when he says that nearly all the writers of the NT books were acquainted with it, influenced by it, and that with the earlier fathers and apologists it had all the weight of a canonical book.



These three passages from the Pentateuch may, therefore, be part of the broader context of the themes of blasphemy and judgment as they are related to John 10:34-36.

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Nevertheless, Rist does hold that concepts found in Enoch are found in various New Testament books, including the Gospels..

## CHAPTER VI

### THE FUNCTION OF THE QUOTE FROM PSALM 82:6

#### IN THE STRUCTURE OF JOHN 10:34-36

The analysis of recent exegesis of Psalm 82 in chapter three has demonstrated that the original sense of Psalm 82:6 did not refer the term  $\text{D}'\text{q}'\text{?}'\text{x}$  to the judges of Israel. In spite of the evidence adduced by O'Callaghan and Emerton, this view of Wright and others can hardly be contradicted. On the other hand, it is even more clear on the basis of the evidence presented previously, that the traditions of the interpretation of Psalm 82 during and near the time of the first century A. D. did not so interpret the term  $\text{D}'\text{q}'\text{?}'\text{x}$ . The analysis in chapter V has shown further that the themes of blasphemy and judgment in John's Gospel are related only to the controversies between the Jews, that is, the judges and leaders of Israel, and Jesus. Consequently, John 10:34-36 is to be interpreted in this perspective, referring the gods of the quote from Psalm 82:6 to the Jews. The analysis of the theme of blasphemy and judgment in the three passages from the Pentateuch has given further validity to this interpretation by the fact that Exodus 22:28 in particular allows for the identification of the judges of Israel with God in contexts of cursing and judging. Furthermore, the influences of the book of Exodus upon Johannine theology is well known. But even though it

has been demonstrated that the original sense of the term "gods" has not been retained in the use of Psalm 82 in John, the fact remains that the writer of John's Gospel did interpret this term as a reference to the Jews, the leaders and judges of Israel at this time, and he represents Jesus as interpreting the term in this manner. Furthermore, commentators cannot isolate the term "gods" from the context of Psalm 82. Raymond Brown and others have pointed this out,<sup>1</sup> but they do not pursue the thought in detail. It is therefore to be remembered that in the context of Psalm 82, the term "gods" appears in the context of judgment, and particularly, judgment upon these gods. God Himself is the one who is pronouncing judgment upon them. This is the exact sense in which the quote from Psalm 82 is used in John 10:34-36. Jesus, taking on the function and prerogative of judgment upon the judges of Israel, a function otherwise reserved for God Himself, adduces this evidence from Psalm 82 to show that God Himself judges the judges of Israel just as he has done. Jesus then goes on to point out that if God does this, the Jews or judges of Israel certainly cannot charge him with blasphemy if God the Father is the One who sent him to actualize this judgment, God's own judgment, upon the judges of Israel. It has been pointed out previously that throughout the previous chapters in John, Jesus had claimed that the Father had sent him to judge, and Jesus has

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<sup>1</sup>Raymond Brown, The Gospel According to John, (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1966), p. 409.

been actualizing this very function in the context of John 10:34-36, particularly at the end of chapter nine and in the parable of the Good Shepherd in chapter ten.

Then, in verse 31f., when the Jews appeal to their laws which hold that this function which Jesus had been actualizing is blasphemy (probably their exegetical traditions regarding the three passages from the Pentateuch analysed previously), Jesus adduces his own evidence from their own law, Psalm 82, to support his function of judgment and to counter their charge. In doing this Jesus denies the charge that the Jews have made and reasserts the fact that the Father had Himself given this role of judgment to him. Finally, this quote from Psalm 82 which Jesus employs has all the effect of another judgment upon the Jews, for the law itself is an agent of judgment, as has also been previously pointed out in relation to John 7:51.

The task now remains to delineate the specific relationship of this use of the quote from Psalm 82 to the terms and concepts of John 10:35-36. 10:35a and 10:36 flow in a significant sequence of thought in the form of a question by using the "If-then" structure with the protasis in 10:35a and the apodosis covering the whole of 10:36. Consequently, the phrase "If He called them gods" of 10:35a is to be interpreted to mean "If He judged them", as has been demonstrated from the context of this verse in Psalm 82. The following phrase "to whom the Word of God came" cannot be interpreted as the pre-existent Word as Hanson posits, but it is to be understood as "to whom

the address of judgment came" in perspective of what has been previously shown regarding this phrase in chapter two, page eighteen. This phrase obviously reflects the same phrase that had often been used to denote prophetic judgment, not the pre-existent Word, for John 3:34 also says, "For he whom God has sent utters the words of God".

In 10:36 the phrase "Do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world" is to be interpreted to mean in effect, "him whom God<sup>2</sup> consecrated and sent to judge the world", for it has been noted previously in chapter V that the Father sends the Son for judgment<sup>3</sup> and that the term "consecrated", on the basis of evidence from the pseudepigraphic book of Enoch can also be interpreted in the context of judgment.

Finally, the phrase "'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?" is to be interpreted "'You are blaspheming,' because I said,<sup>4</sup> 'I am the judge sent from God'?" That the term Son of God is to be so interpreted has already

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<sup>2</sup>The fact that the Father is identified with God Himself is evident from such passages as 6:27,32,45.

<sup>3</sup>John 8:26 uses the terms "judge" and "sent" in close association, thereby implying that at least one function of being sent is to judge.

<sup>4</sup>The first person appears awkward at this point since Jesus is using the third person in reference to himself in the previous phrase. But this is not a difficult point of interpretation since John uses this awkward construction elsewhere, and it appears therefore to be a matter of his style. For example, Jesus makes a similarly awkward statement in 8:40 when he says, ". . . but now you seek to kill me, a man who

been pointed out in the many passages adduced in chapter V which spoke of the Father giving all judgment to the Son.

In summary, then, the quote from Psalm 82:6 in John 10:34 is to be viewed in relation to 10:35 and 10:36 in the following manner. Jesus has quoted the law of Psalm 82:6 in support of his own previous judgment upon the unjust judges of Israel, that is, the Jews. The point of Jesus' quote is that God Himself has judged the unjust judges of Israel. The law of Psalm 82:6 also judges them. How then does God's judgment upon the judges of Israel support Jesus' argument? John 10:35 and 10:36 answer that question in this manner. If God judged them to whom the judgmental address of God came, do you say of him whom the Father consecrated and sent into the world for judgment that he is blaspheming because he called himself the judge whom the Father has sent (that is, the Son of God to whom all judgment is given)? In this way Jesus points out that the Father has given him the authority to judge as the Father himself did in Psalm 82:6. Why then should his judg-

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has told you the truth which I heard from God". On the other hand, Jesus may here be making an intentional attempt to contrast the statement with the "I said" of verse 34 where he introduces the quote from Psalm 82. J. A. Fitzmeyer has noted that the "I said" formula is a common formula for introducing passages in Scripture, even in Qumran literature. (J. A. Fitzmeyer, "The Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations in Qumran Literature and in the New Testament," New Testament Studies, VII [1960-61], 301-302). Consequently, Jesus may here be using the "I said" formula to introduce the name by which he had previously called himself, the Son of God, as especially in 3:16-18 and 5:25--again in the context of his role as judge. Thus the claim to be the judge sent from God in verse 36 would be contrasted to the claim to judgment upon the judges in verse 34.

ment, Jesus says, be called blasphemy? If God can judge Israel's judges, so also can the one whom God the Father consecrated and sent to judge--without blaspheming!

At this point we also maintain that the meaning of  $\lambdaυθῆναι$  in John 10:35b needs in no way to be interpreted in perspective of prophetic history. In chapter II it has been shown that the rendering of  $\lambdaυθῆναι$  as "to keep from being fulfilled" is questionable upon linguistic grounds. The argument from prophetic history, which is itself questionable, is also invalid for this interpretation of  $\lambdaυθῆναι$ . The best rendition of this verb, then, is still the well known sense of  $\lambdaύω$  as Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich offer it, "to destroy, bring to an end, abolish, do away with".<sup>5</sup> In perspective of this meaning, the clause of 10:35b lends additional support to Jesus' argument that the judgment pronounced by both God and the law (cf. 7:51) is valid and real and that such judgment by God and the law (Scripture here) cannot be destroyed, brought to an end, or done away with. Consequently, it can be concluded that the meaning of Scripture's authority which Francis Pieper gives to this passage, even though he translates it with the awkward term "broken", is correct and true.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Walter Bauer, translated and adapted by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 485.

<sup>6</sup>F. Pieper maintains that this term and this passage means that Scripture's statements are incontrovertible; if Scripture says something, that something is a fact. See Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, translated and edited by Theodore Engelder

(St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 150), I, 31, 37, 74, 108, 138, 141, 142, 156, 163, 214, 221, 235, 238, 242, 266, 285, 307, 330, 437, 458, 467, 473, 562, II, 60, 96, 138, 424.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE CONTROVERSY OF JOHN 10:34-36

#### IN RELATION TO THE CONTEXT OF JOHN 9 AND 10

Jesus pronounces Judgment upon Israel's Judges and in so doing  
claims to be One with the Father

Jesus began his judgment upon Israel's judges in his denunciation of the Pharisees in John 9:35-41. After the confession of the believing man who had been blind (10:35), Jesus sets forth his claim that he came into this world for judgment, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind (9:39). The Pharisees who are nearby obviously take Jesus' words as a reference to themselves for they ask, "Are we also blind?" In response to their question Jesus climaxes his words of judgment by saying, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see', your guilt remains."

In the following parable of the Good Shepherd (10:1-18), Jesus continues his judgment upon the judges of Israel by referring to them in imagery that is set in contrast to the image of himself as the Good Shepherd and the Door. In 10:1,8,10 he describes them as thieves and robbers, and in 10:12,13 he calls them hirelings. That these opposing images are references to the judges of Israel is further substantiated by the fact that

this parable is enclosed, both at the beginning and the end, by references to the Pharisees (9:40) and the Jews (10:19,24,31).

In John 10:22-30 the theme of judgment is continued in Jesus explanation of the parable of the Good Shepherd. In 10:25 Jesus' very statement is an indictment upon the unbelief of the Jews. Then in 10:26 Jesus says matter of factly that they do not believe and therefore do not belong to his sheep.

Jesus' judgment upon the Pharisees in 9:41 appears problematical and mystifying on the surface, but it has direct relation to many of the statements and judgments in chapter 10. In 9:40,41 the Pharisees claim to see, yet they do not believe (10:25,26). They claim to see and yet they do not see the need of helping the poor blind man in 9:34 as did Jesus in 9:6,7. Instead, they flee like the hireling before the wolf (10:12,13) and do not lay down their life as Jesus does (10:11,14,15,17,18). They claim to see, but they are thieves and robbers because the sheep did not heed them (10:8,10), as the blind man did not heed them (9:26-34). But the blind man does heed the true Shepherd, Jesus, (9:35-38 and 10:3,4,14,16). Finally, there is a striking parallel between Jesus' judgment on the Pharisees in 9:41 and again on the Jews in 10:26.

Incensed, the Jews accuse Jesus of blasphemy

for four possible reasons

Jesus is accused of blasphemy for pronouncing such judgment upon Israel's judges. According to Jewish traditions, he has really blasphemed on a number of counts. He has first of all reached out to God with a high hand because he claimed the function of judging Israel's judges, a prerogative allowed only to God Himself. Strack-Billerbeck notes:

Nach rabbin. Anschauung ist es ausschliesslich Gott, der die Welt richten wird, . . . Eine Stelle, die unzweideutig das Welten richteramt in die Hand des Messias legte, gibt es in der rabbin. Literature nicht.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, Jesus is blaspheming because he is also by this very action of judgment inveighing against the Torah, also a category of reaching out a high hand toward God, according to rabbinic exegesis of Numbers 15:30ff. He is blaspheming because he is doing what the Torah in Exodus 22:28 had expressly forbidden about pronouncing judgment on Israel's judges.

Thirdly, in pronouncing judgment on the judges of Israel, Jesus is in effect held to be blaspheming God Himself, as has previously been pointed out in Chapter IV with regard to the rabbinic exegesis of Exodus 22:28.

Fourthly, Jesus blasphemes when in John 10:30 he claims

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<sup>1</sup>Paul Billerbeck, Das Evangelium nach Markus, Lukas und Johannes und die Apostelgeschichte in Kommenter zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch (München, C. H. Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), II, 465.

that he and the Father are one. It has already been shown on the basis of John's text itself (5:16ff.) that calling God one's Father is making oneself equal to God, and that is blasphemy. Again, Jesus has not only called God his Father, but he has used the predicate nominative claiming that "the Father and I are one". This statement must be understood in the perspective of an older tradition already represented in I Corinthians 8:4,6 where Paul himself is reflecting an earlier creed in the words "there is no God but one" and "for us there is one God, the Father". This same tradition is reflected in Romans 3:29,30 where Paul states, "Or is God the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles also? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since God is one; . . ." At this point it might be objected that the Jews also called God their Father in John 8:41. They too appear to be reflecting the tradition represented in I Corinthians 8:6, but it is significant that they do not make themselves one with God as Jesus does in John 10:30. Consequently, it appears that what is meant by the charge of the Jews in John 10:33 is that Jesus is not just calling God his Father in the traditional credal sense, but he is making himself God in the sense of being one with the Father. This is blasphemy because it is reaching out to God with a high hand and claiming the nature of God Himself.

Of all of these reasons for the charge of blasphemy, the first and the last are probably the most evident of all, although the others probably play a part as well. It is for all of these reasons, then, that the Jews, while charging

Jesus with blasphemy, attempt at the same time to stone him (10:31,33) on the basis of the penalty spelled out for blasphemy in Leviticus 24:11ff.

### Jesus' Reply

Jesus' counters the Jews' charge that he is blaspheming (ostensibly according to their exegesis of the laws in Exodus 22:28; Numbers 15:30f.; and Leviticus 24:11ff.) with another citation from their own law (Psalm 82:6), saying in effect that God Himself has judged them. If God Himself has judged them, and this Scripture cannot be abolished, then the Son whom the Father consecrated and sent as judge does not blaspheme when he calls himself the Son of God (i.e., the one whom the Father has sent to judge). Furthermore, he pleads with the Jews to believe his works if they do not believe him (10:38). These last words are in themselves practically blasphemy to the Jews because in a similar context (5:17) of his alleged blasphemy he claimed "My Father is working still, and I am working."

### Reaction of the Jews to Jesus' Words in 34-36

Jesus had denied the charge of blasphemy against him, but in doing so he had once again reasserted that for which the Jews had accused him in the first place. He goes on to reassert his unity with the Father (10:38b) by saying, ". . . the Father is in me and I am in the Father." Interpreting this

statement and the statements in 10:34-36 as further blasphemy,  
the Jews again try to arrest him (10:39)\*

## CHAPTER VIII

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

After presenting the need for an examination regarding John 10:34-36 on the basis of past diversity in research and after presenting an analysis of the present position of research, we suggested that at least one of the major issues in interpreting this important passage was the relation between the quote from Psalm 82:6 and the charge of blasphemy. Another major issue was the interpretation of ἰσοθνητεία in 10:35b.

In perspective of this understanding of the problem, we examined recent and rabbinic exegesis of Psalm 82, as well as the concept of blasphemy in rabbinic exegesis of three passages from the Pentateuch which delineates the laws against blasphemy. We then studied the relation of John 10:34-36 to the broader context of blasphemy and judgment in the whole Gospel of John, the relation of 10:34-36 to judgment in other parts of Scripture, and the relation of 10:34-36 to judgment in the pseudepigraphic book of Enoch. Then we analysed the function of the quote from Psalm 82:6 in the structure of John 10:34-36, and finally, the place of John 10:34-36 in the context of John nine and ten.

Finally, it was concluded that Jesus used the quote from Psalm 82:6 to point out that God Himself had judged these leaders of Israel. Jesus himself therefore did not commit the blasphemy of equating himself with God when he, being the Son

of God, had assumed God's function of judging the leaders of Israel. Jesus' judgment upon the leaders of Israel was not blasphemy because God Himself had consecrated and sent him to do exactly that. Consequently, Jesus' argument here is not ad hominem or a movement from the lesser to the greater (gods → Son of God), but his argument moves rather from the assuming of God's function of judging the corrupt judges of Israel to the fact that God the Father had Himself given this role of judgment to the Son.



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