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The son enthroned in conflict: a socio-rhetorical interpretation of John 5.17-23

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To my mother and the memory of my father
Abstract

In John 5.17-23 speech concerning the relationship between the father and son is presented as a response to a threat to kill Jesus. By virtue of the father/son relationship, god-like powers are attributed to the son. Interpretation of the speech has often routinely proceeded as if the mythic claim of the son’s equality with the father could be understood in isolation from the threat in John 5.18a, though the two are juxtaposed; in contrast, threat and sonship are treated as interrelated parts of one speech pattern in this study.

Socio-rhetorical interpretation attends to aspects of socially interpreted action and speech that are typical within culture from which the text emerged. Thus it is assumed that the distinctive elements of John 5.17-23 can best be interpreted after identifying the elements of the speech that are typical. Analysis of patterns of speech and action in John 5.17-23 follows three main procedures. The first and most technically detailed, analyzes John 5 according to the conventions of Hellenistic rhetoric. It concludes that John fully elaborates an absolute case within the context of a thoroughly developed thesis argument.

The second procedure is intertextual, it assumes that the argument concerning the son’s equality with God interacts with frames of significance that are taken for granted by author and audience. A frame of reference that lends coherence to the mythic pattern of lethal threat answered by an empowered god-like son, is found when John 5.17-23 is interpreted with reference to Psalm 2. Scriptural sources of early Christian testimony such as Daniel 7.13-14 and Psalm 2, reflect the pattern of the divine warrior myth; I propose that the divine warrior pattern as expressed in these texts lends coherence to the mythic sequence, mood, and the content of John 5.17-23. The content and sequence of elements of the divine warrior myth are closer to the form of John 5.17-23 than the Gnostic redeemer myth through which Bultmann interpreted this text.

The third procedure involves a provisional analysis of the social values reflected in John 5.17-23. John 5.17-23 appears to follow a familiar pattern of threat (5.18) juxtaposed with sonship speech (5.19-23). It is assumed that this pattern was generated in response to a conventional assumption that crucifixion inexorably shames its victim. John 5.17-23 is compared with rhetorically similar texts, such as accounts of the Synoptic trial question on sonship. Based on common elements found in these texts, the trial like speech in John 5.17-23 appears to reflect an already understood forensic/cultic Christian pattern of response to
the threat of Jesus’ crucifixion. A death threat is juxtaposed with images of the son enthroned.

The dissertation concludes by affirming that the argument in John 5.17-23 creates, what Hellenistic rhetoric calls, an absolute case. More tentatively it suggests that not only John 5.17-23, but also other early Christian speech reflecting a threat/enthronement pattern, might profitably be studied with reference to the pattern of YHWH’s enthronement in the context of the divine warrior myth.
Preface

To spend a space of years exploring a question is a privilege. Thus I have not been willing to treat the project solely as an exercise in gaining academic credentials. Rather I have allowed the question generating the dissertation to follow its course of speculation and discovery. The question first of all concerned my experience of certain arguments in the Fourth Gospel as dominating. The experience led me to ask 'why are these words arranged this way?'

The inquiry emerged from attempting to understand how an argument in John gains its power, and the focus of my research is there. The technical detail and density of the rhetorical analysis in chapters 2, 7 and 8 attests the place where for a long time the question remained.

However questions that cut into one's experience have a way of looking beyond what at first seems to be the problem. In the course of this research project the question about an argument in John, with which I had become very familiar, led to other questions on which I make no claim to expertise: 'what problem generated the need for such speech?'; 'is this speech pattern related to others?'; 'does it gain its power from a myth?'; 'which myth makes sense of its puzzling absolute claim?' Chapters 3-7 log the journey that was guided by what originally began as a question confined to John. In presenting an account of that journey of inquiry I do not attempt to give a detailed overview of the status of research in the many fields that are traversed. My aim in including this account within the parameters of what is ostensibly a study in John is to point to a proposal. It appears to make sense of the original question; and it represents a coherent frame of reference that might stimulate yet further research into issues parallel to the question with which I began.

Several technical matters need to be mentioned here.

A list of the major headings and subheadings of the dissertation is placed following the table of contents. It gives a reasonably detailed map of the internal structure of each chapter. It is also intended to serve as a key to cross-referencing within the dissertation.

Primary sources are included alphabetically within the reference list format; I list the date of publication last in their particular case, as is standard for classical works. Use of the

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1 I learned to ask this investigative question through reading Michael Foucault's (1972) *Archaeology of Knowledge.*
reference list format determines that some items are listed in the bibliography more than once. This is in order that each manuscript citation can easily be located in the bibliography.

I use American spelling except in quotations from British publications. Unless I indicate otherwise quotes from an English translation of the First Testament have been taken from the NRSV. In quoting from the New Testament I follow the NRSV or my own translation. Italics within quotations routinely reproduce the emphasis noted in the source I am quoting from.

Though I am vehemently opposed to the masculine bias evident in the English translation of traditional titles designating Jesus as ‘Son of Man’, ‘Son’, and so on, I have taken the line of least resistance. I have used these conventional designations rather than pour my energy into scholarly and stylistic justification of an alternate rendering. The time and effort needed to effect a widespread change in traditional usage, should properly be restitution work for well placed male scholars.
Acknowledgements

Without the help of many people I could have never completed this project. Thanks is due to all those connected with the University of Otago who have lent support. Paul Trebilco was, from the beginning, thorough and consistent in his supervision of the dissertation. David J. Bromell, Matthew B. Clerkin and Gavin Munro spent painstaking hours reading and criticizing the manuscript. Margaret Eaton, Maurice E. Andrew, and Elizabeth Duke assessed the content of various chapters at an earlier stage. Mae Cairns and Barbara J. Frame at the Hewitson Library were generous in their support of the research.

Without guidance from specialists in social and rhetorical analysis my approach to method would have been unsure. I am indebted especially to Jerome H. Neyrey and Vernon K. Robbins for their excellent advice, though responsibility for failing to take it all is entirely mine.

For the support of my family I give thanks. The work of Daniel and the tireless effort of Morrison in correcting and printing the manuscript has eased my load. Special thanks is due to Michael Johnson for the loan of computer hardware and personal expertise at a crucial time.
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Abbreviations

Where the title of a journal or reference is not given in full, the following abbreviations are employed:


**ABR**  Australian Biblical Review

**ANET**  Pritchard, Ancient Near Eastern Texts

**ANRW**  Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt, ed. H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin 1972-

**Ant**  Josephus Jewish Antiquities (= Antiquitates Judaicae)

**AOAT**  Alter Orient und Altes Testament

**Ap**  Justin Martyr Apology

**BHT**  Beiträge zur historischen Theologie

**BI**  Biblical Interpretation

**BTB**  Biblical Theological Bulletin

**CBQ**  Catholic Biblical Quarterly


**ETL**  Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses Louvain

**GHB**  Grammaire de l’Hebreu Biblique, by P. Joüon.

**HUCA**  Hebrew Union College Annual, Cincinnati

**HTR**  Harvard Theological Review

**JBL**  Journal of Biblical Literature

**JETS**  Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society

**JSNT**  Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSOT  Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSS  Journal of Semitic Studies
Jub.  Jubilees
JW  Josephus, The Jewish War (= Bellum Judaicum)
KTU  M. Dietrich, O. Loretz, J. Sammartin, Die Keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit. Teil 1: Transkription
NRSV  New Revised Standard Version
NovT  Novum Testamentum, Leiden
NTS  New Testament Studies
Praep. Evang.  Eusebius, Praeparito evangelica
sic.  substitute inclusive language
Sifre Num  Midrash Sifre on Numbers
Sir  Ecclesiasticus or the Wisdom of Jesus son of Sirach
Somn. I-II  Philo, De somniis I-II
Ta'an  Ta'anit
T. Abraham  Testament of Abraham
TR  Theologische Rundschau, Tübingen
Wis  Wisdom of Solomon
ZAW  Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
ZNW  Zeitschrift für die neuestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der Älteren Kirche
4QFlor  Florilegium (or Eschatological Midrashim) from Qumran cave 4
PART I
Overview of Part I

Part I introduces preliminary issues. It includes a selective survey of interpretation, an analysis of the internal structure of John 5, and a preliminary thesis proposal. This material is foundational for the development of the socio-rhetorical analysis of John 5 that will be found in Part II.

Chapter 1 is a selective review of recent research on John 5. It centers around three issues which are of central concern throughout the dissertation. These gravitate around the presupposition that a myth is needed to make sense of the threat answered by a superior claim of sonship in John 5.17-23. These points of reference guide my approach to John:

1) The extraordinary claim of equality with God is virtually incomprehensible unless it is interpreted within a framework of myth. The discussion of scholarly opinion on this issue takes its point of departure from Bultmann’s view on the subject.

2) I review interpretations of John 5.17-23 as speech generated in reference to a peculiar Johannine conception and experience. However, in light of the socio-rhetorical assumption that John 5.17-23 must reflect patterns of speech that are not peculiar to Johannine expression, I critique this trend in recent scholarship by arguing that 5.17-23 reflects patterns of speech that were widely understood within that culture.

3) The threat to Jesus in John 5.18, and the speech concerning the son’s relationship to God in 5.17,19-23 have often been treated in isolation from one another. In the search for an interpretive frame of reference that holds these elements together in one coherent framework, I review selected research that views John 5 from the perspective of a ‘trial’ in which the threat or accusation is formally linked to the defense concerning the son.

Chapter 2 begins by noting that John 5 is made up of discrete units of speech which have been arranged to create the impression of a trial. This suggests that traditional material was later shaped into a particular pattern of ‘trial-like’ speech. To analyze the significance of the pattern requires focus upon John 5 as a speech designed to fulfill a particular rhetorical aim. This emphasis is a departure from form-critical interest upon the fragmentary units of speech embedded within discrete layers of redaction. I briefly introduce the approach to interpretation that is assumed in socio-rhetorical method. It is followed by a detailed analy-
sis of the internal features of John 5. The analysis relies upon techniques derived from the disciplines of Classical and Hellenistic rhetoric.

By treating John 5 as a whole as one rhetorical unit, I am able to determine the role of the speech in 5.17-23 in relation to its larger context. The rhetorical analysis clarifies the dynamics of the argument in 5.17-23, and the analysis serves as a foundation; exploration of the significance of this trial-like pattern in the remainder of the dissertation presupposes the rhetorical analysis in chapter 2. In the terminology of judicial rhetoric, 5.17-23 makes an 'absolute case' which sets out the relationship between father and son as more fundamental than customary legal norms. While Hellenistic techniques of rhetorical analysis clarify the motive force and design of the argument I conclude that this technique alone is not adequate to make sense of the content of this speech.

Chapter 3 is a preliminary proposal. The 'absolute case' for the superiority of Jesus by virtue of his status as son must rely upon a culturally understood sequence of action between father and son. Hellenistic rhetorical analysis alone does not explain the significance of the divine-like claims attributed to the son in John 5.17-23. I argue that the significance of the divine sonship relies upon a myth. The apparently incomprehensible claim of the son's equality with God is mythic language that must have been understandable to the Johannine audience. However, noting that the rhetorical arrangement creates links between the threat and the son's claim of equality with God, I suggest that the myth behind John 5.17-23 could not simply account for the god-like claim; it must also explain the juxtaposition of the threat (in John 5.18) with the superior status of the son (in 5.17,19-23) within one mythic structure or pattern. I explore the possibility that the sequence of events expressed in Psalm 2 might help to interpret the speech in John 5.17-23. The pattern of threat answered by enthronement speech in Psalm 2 provides a frame of reference that lends coherence to the speech in John 5.17-23.

It may be objected that the royal sonship depicted in Psalm 2 is anachronistic, or, that it is not sufficiently god-like to do justice to the claim of equality with God in John 5. I briefly survey the development of diverse uses of the term 'son' and 'son of God' in monarchical and intertestamental and early Christian expression in answer to these objections.

This completes the preliminary agenda of Part I. In Part II, I use tools of sociological and intertextual analysis to engage more deeply with the issues that have been set out in a preliminary way in Part I. (See the introduction to Part II for an overview of chapters 4-8.)
Chapter 1

A Selective Review of Significant Issues in John 5.17-23

Questions posed to the text: an approach to the relevant research

Two distinct threads of argument are braided together in John 5.17-23. One declares the reason for the equality of the son to the father. The other states a rationale for the persecution and execution of Jesus. The narrative which frames these opposing arguments presents oi Ἰουδαίοι as adversaries who allege illegality on Jesus' part, and, for this reason, initiate proceedings against him. (See Harvey, 1976:50-52,76; Barrett, 1978:249; Hoskyns, 1947:300.) In response to legal challenges to his authority, Jesus answers that the father has given the son the power to give life and to judge and that therefore the son is to be given honor equal to the father (5.17, 19-23). Speech concerning ὁ ζωής in relation to ὁ πατήρ is attributed to Jesus. It answers a rationale for execution of him. This threat is attributed to oi Ἰουδαίοι. ¹

As I will show, recent interpretation of the text has frequently assumed that the conflict reflected in the text is an issue that can be treated apart from the claim of the son's equality with God. I will question this assumption. The statement of the son's equality with God has been identified as a distinctive Johannine expression; it has been argued that the threat of execution expresses a peculiarly Johannine response to charges of di-theism. It has been assumed that the response represents a particular problem of the community behind the text. The interpretation is plausible; and yet, the method it employs looks

¹ Though introduced earlier in 2.18 [see also 1.11] oi Ἰουδαίοι are presented for the first time in John 5.11,16,18 as adversaries who allege that Jesus' action is illegal and consequently seek to kill him ἐξήγησαν αὐτὸν ἀποκτάναι. The challenge and its response introduces a pervasive motif of conflict with oi Ἰουδαίοι which, excepting the enclosed setting of the departure discourses in John 13-17, persists through the remainder of the Fourth Gospel.
primarily to the question, "What is unique, distinctive, about this speech, this community, this concept?" 2

Another approach, even to the apparently distinctive speech in John 5.17-23, begins from a different inclination. Instead of presupposing that the key lies in a distinctive Johannine conception, the method of socio-rhetorical criticism begins by assuming that the words in John 5 reflect patterns of speech that are broadly typical in the culture of the audience. Instead of assuming that conflict in the text corresponds to conflict in the community, it pursues the possibility that the text reflects an ingrained social dynamic which provides for the expression of conflict more generally. To the extent that the conflict specific to the community is reflected in the text, socio-rhetorical analysis assumes that the unique character of the community’s conflict with authorities will be presented within a pattern that was typical within that culture.

The latter approach to the text will be developed in the chapters that follow. Here my selective review of interpretation of John 5.17-23 aims to provide an overview of scholarly opinion on key issues related to the dynamic of conflict and speech concerning sonship within John 5.17-23.

Unsurprisingly, the relationship between father and son in John has been the focus of the bulk of scholarly exegesis on this passage in contrast to less avid interest in the conflict associated with the opponents to whom it is juxtaposed. 3 John 5.17-23 has been studied as a key christological text which elaborates the Johannine conception of the father and son relationship. In commenting upon John 5, C.H.Dodd (1953b:328) remarks on the "immense importance of this careful definition" of the relationship of father to son as a concept that is "regulative" (Dodd, 1968:31) for the entire Johannine conception. The discourse advances, "at least in explicit statement," beyond any claims made previously in the Gospel (Dodd, 1953b:324). J.B. Phillips (1955:199) entitles the subheading of its translation, "Jesus makes his tremendous claim." "This section is one of the most profound in the whole Gospel" maintains Schnackenburg (1968:99), because its explanation of Jesus’ calling himself ‘Son’ is fundamental to the whole discourse: the Son carries the function that belongs to God alone. Morris (1971:311) describes it as a discourse of "critical importance"

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2 In this chapter I will attend to selected examples of recent interpretation of John 5.17-23 by practitioners of this approach.

3 Not that there has been no interest in the theme of conflict with ωτι "Ἰωάννης. I will deal with selected interpretations of this aspect of the text later in this chapter under the major heading "Interpretations which use the trial motif..."
because, as he quotes from Ryle 4 "nowhere else in all the Gospels do we find our Lord making such a formal, systematic, orderly, regular statement of his own unity with the Father, his divine commission and authority and the proofs of his messiahship." It is in John 5, says Kennedy (1984:112), that Jesus begins a theological exposition of the assertions of equality to God which had been set out in the Prologue. In John 5, ideas from the "Johannine keryma" which Schnackenburg designates as John 3.16-18, are developed Christologically, illuminating the mission of the son by explaining the relationship between father and son (1968:99).

Many of the studies that have focused upon this aspect of the text have treated Christological statements in 5.17-23 as if they were not integrally related to the threat of death (5.18), though the threat of execution creates the literary setting generative of Jesus' exalted response (5.19-23).5 I will argue that because the threat of death belongs with the exalted speech in the final form of the text, the intention of this arrangement can only be reconstructed if the significance of holding the two together is kept to the forefront. The threat of death should not be studied in isolation from the declaration of the son's equality with God. By this I do not suggest that in 5.17-23 these two parts derive from one source. To the contrary I see them as two distinct layers of tradition here combined. I do however presume that early Christians perceived Jesus' execution as a threat.6 It is reasonable to speculate that this generated the need for speech which reinforces an exalted conception of Jesus. A pattern of speech may have emerged in response to this social dynamic, which combined reference to Jesus' death with his exaltation.7 In early Christian accounts, juxtaposition of speech concerning the crucifixion with resurrection became a typical pattern. By attending to the significance of exalted speech concerning the son in relation to the threat of death which it answers, I aim to emphasize a connection that has not routinely been emphasized in interpretation of the speech concerning the son in John 5.

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4 I was not able to find in Morris (1971) the bibliographical data of Ryle's source.

5 For example, Freyne (1985:123) notes that a conflict over the Sabbath triggers a dispute that quickly passes over to the one theme central to the whole Fourth Gospel, Jesus' authority and his claim to be equal to God.

6 In chapter 4 I will give reasons for this presupposition in the major heading "the topos of crucifixion....".

7 In chapter 5 I discuss social values reflected in this pattern of speech under the major heading "A provisional reconstruction...."
Noting the division between narrative and discourse beginning in 5.19, many interpreters have approached 5.19-30 as a Christological discourse that stands on its own; the result is that the rationale for putting Jesus to death, which itself generates the discourse speech in response, does not figure prominently in interpretation of the discourse speech. The "Christological Rede" of Jesus in 5.19-28 is frequently treated as if it could be understood in isolation from the conflict that generated this reply.

There may be justification for such a division from a perspective of source criticism. However, my interpretation will focus on the link between the conflict that is juxtaposed with lofty speech concerning the son in the final form. To reinterpret the claims of the son in the light of the conflict requires a redefinition of the limits of the text under consideration.

The limits of the text for the purpose of this study begin at 5.17 and conclude at 5.23; this preserves the juxtaposition of conflict with exalted speech. In chapter 2 I will justify this division on rhetorical grounds. For the moment it is enough to note that this relatively narrow division aims to allow for intensive focus on issues I shall raise in interpretation of the text. I exercise freedom in extending these limits as the context requires.

For example, Beasley-Murray (1987:75-76) treats 5.19-30, which he entitles, "Jesus, life giver and judge," as a unit that is distinct from 5.9c-18. Though he notes that the opening clause of 5.19 "links on to v.17" the relationship of conflict in 5.18 is not considered integral in his description of the "deep consciousness of the unique relationship of the Son to the Father" in 5.19-30, as it is not mentioned again. Similarly, Barrett (1978:257) treats 5.19-47, "Jesus and the Father," as a distinct discourse. Though Schnackenburg divides the passage at 5.15-30, his discussion of the father and son relationship does not see the claim to unique sonship as integrally connected to the threat of death. (See Schnackenburg, 1980:98-113.) Nor does Braun (1964:107) note a connection between the threat of death and Jesus' work of resurrection and judgment in John 5.

Bauer (1933:84) thus entitles his discussion of the discourse section which in his commentary begins at John 5.19, extending through verse 47.

Even within the very limited frame of John 5.17-23, my focus upon the issues discussed above sets the parameter for interpretation in this dissertation. I deal primarily with the imagery in 5.17-23 that is comparable to the imagery of enthronement in other examples of early Christian speech. For this reason I do not address the significance of the son seeing the father and the father showing the son what he is doing or the puzzling statement concerning the "greater works" in 5.20. See Schnackenburg (1980:104) for a thorough discussion of the issues associated with this imagery.

See the major heading "Rhetorical analysis ...." and the subheading "Elaboration into a complete argument ....".

A case can be made for extending the text further depending upon the concerns that the interpreter brings to the text. For example from the perspective of its formal construction, Léon-Dufour's (1960-61), "Trois chiasmes johanniques" finds a chiasmus in 5.19-30 and notes the striking biblical parallelism within 5.19-30.
For example in the review of research that follows I am guided by the emphases of those whose work is being discussed. In chapter 2, I analyze the internal dynamics of the whole of John 5 as one rhetorical unit; in the process my reasons for focusing primarily upon the key rhetorical moves within 5.17-23 are set out more clearly. However, as need arises throughout the dissertation I do treat 5.17-27, or 5.1-19, or 5.16-23, or the whole of John 5 as a unit, when by doing so I can emphasize issues relevant to the argumentation in 5.17-23.

An overview of the vast literature on John 5 and related themes would be impracticable here. Thus in the review of research that follows, my selection is governed by a clear focus. I consider the following issues to be crucial for understanding the combination of threat and exalted speech in 5.17-23:

1) exploration of the possibility that the text reflects a pattern of speech which was already understood by the audience and author;

2) the recognition that the divine claim attributed to Jesus as "the son" does not make sense apart from a conceptual or mythic background which provides a framework for such speech;

3) the use of the "trial" motif as a hermeneutic that is appropriate to the pervasive polarization surrounding the speech concerning the son.

My survey of literature selects representative work on John 5 that is relevant to these issues.

Engagement with Bultmann on the uniquely Johannine conception of Jesus in John 5.17-23

Rudolf Bultmann deals with each of the three issues related to John 5 which guide my interpretation. But more significantly, his methodological stance has set a precedent for interpretation of John 5 in each of these areas. In particular, his emphasis upon the uniqueness of the Johannine conception has been influential. It has fostered the assumption of subsequent scholars that the claim of equality with God in John 5 has no significant link with early Christian tradition concerning the interpretation of death and resurrection of Jesus
within a myth of kingly exaltation. For this reason, I shall begin by briefly noting the position taken by Bultmann in respect to the three issues above as. Bultmann's perspective will then inform my discussion of other interpretations of John 5.17-23 relevant to the issue above.

Concerning the possibility that the text reflects an already understood pattern of threat and exalted speech

Bultmann sees that the healing miracle which introduces 5.17-23, is similar to Synoptic miracles, though he thinks that it derives from a σημεῖα source. The mention of the Sabbath in 5.9b, signals a secondary layer of redaction added to the traditional account of the healing. In form critical analysis, Bultmann finds that unlike Synoptic apophthegmata where a brief account of a healing leads to a controversy, here a controversy has later been appended to an already detailed miracle story. Mark 2.1-2 is likewise a secondary combination of miracle and controversy (1971:239 note 2).

The general similarity of 5.1-9 to Synoptic miracle stories is readily acknowledged. However, Bultmann does not see the combination of the rationale for seeking to kill Jesus ἐξήτων ἀποκτέιναι (5.18) and the subsequent speech concerning the son (in 5.18-28) as comparable with the kerygmatic speech in early Christian literature which juxtaposes an

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13 My discussion of individual scholars later in this chapter will give support to this argument.

14 He hypothesized that John relied upon a miracle source tradition, which included some stories such as the raising of Lazarus and the miracle at Cana, which have no Synoptic parallels.

The validity of some version of a "signs" tradition incorporated into the Fourth Gospel has been maintained by a general consensus of scholarship. See Ashton (1991:83-88) for an overview of significant explanations of the "signs" traditions discernible in John. Von Wahlde (1989:59) argues that a gospel of signs, presenting Jesus within a traditional Jewish frame of expectations was formative in the first edition of John; a second edition that concentrated on the identity of Jesus is apparent in John 5.

15 Bultmann (1971:240) argues that the reference to the feast is an editorial addition to the sign, for in his view it has no further role to play in the narrative.

16 Bultmann assumed that John has an "either direct or indirect acquaintance" with Mark's Gospel. See Walter Schmithal's (1971:3-6) introduction to the English translation of Bultmann's commentary.
account of Jesus' crucifixion with testimony to his exaltation in resurrection. 17 I argue from silence simply because the comparison is not made by Bultmann. In John 5.25 and 27 the terms ὁ νῦς τοῦ Θεοῦ and νῦς ἡθρώτου appear, which in early Christian speech elsewhere (as in Mark 13.26, 14.61-62; Luke 1.32, 12.8) have been associated with exaltation and eschatological judgment. 18 But in Bultmann's commentary on John 5 no connection is made between their Johannine significance and their use in other early Christian speech.

In commenting on 5.25 the term ὁ νῦς τοῦ Θεοῦ is ignored completely by Bultmann, though it is highly significant in Paul and Acts as a designation for the Christ exalted in resurrection. Instead Bultmann explains the "powerful statements" in 5.25 with reference to the background he associates with Gnostic myth. (See Bultmann, 1971:257-261.) The second traditional title does gain a mention from Bultmann; νῦς ἡθρώτου in 5.27, he (1971:261-262) argues defensively, is likely to be a part of an addition by a redactor eager to maintain a semblance of conformity with traditional eschatology. The use of the traditional title here is a mere veneer over what is essentially a Gnostic conception, "for to the Evangelist...the title 'Son of Man' is the title of the Revealer who walks this earth in human form" (Bultmann, 1971:261).

One does not generally look for common patterns in types of speech which have been judged to share no common inspiration. And by the time Bultmann wrote his commentary, the riddle of how to characterize John in relation to early Christian thought had already been answered to his satisfaction.

Early in his career, Bultmann's approach to the "Rätsel der Stellung des Joh-Ev. im Zusammenhang der urchristlichen Entwicklung" had already been set in place (Bultmann, 1925: 100). In brief, his comparison with the three main divisions of early Christianity, as it was understood at that time, found that John did not belong alongside Pauline Christianity, Jewish-Hellenistic Christianity (including 1 Clement, and Hebrews) or the Synoptic Gospels (which he identified with Palestinian Christianity) (Bultmann, 1925: 100-101). John is divorced from the guiding conception of Palestinian Christianity, he (1925:101) maintains, through the absolutely different (völlig andere) portrayal of the

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17 Kolenkow (1976), comparing John 5.1-38 and Mark 2.1-36, suggests, from a source-critical perspective, that in a proto-gospel a healing was linked to the consequence of persecution and execution. But as my discussion in this chapter will show, the wider possibility of a common pattern connecting the speech of John 5.17-23 and traditional speech juxtaposing the death and exaltation of Jesus has not been a matter of general scholarly interest.

18 In the Synoptic Gospels and elsewhere in John the title ὁ νῦς τοῦ ἡθρώτου is used. In chapter 3 I will review early Christian use of these terms in more detail.
proclamation of Jesus and the different position on law and eschatology. John’s separateness from Pauline thought, is indicated, among other things, by the lack of κύριος titles and the absence of a specifically cultic type of piety (Bultmann, 1925:101), similarly he distinguishes the singular Johannine conception from the mysticism of Hellenistic Christianity.

The Johannine portrait of Jesus stands in contrast to all of these, Bultmann maintains. Its Christology is not set in place by "cosmic catastrophe, nor the dying and rising of the cult god, but by the concept of revelation" (Bultmann, 1925:102). The central ground conception, Bultmann continues, is that Jesus the Son has been sent to bring the revelation given by the Father (Bultmann, 1925:102).

But here lies the riddle. The point is not what Jesus taught, nor who he was as a historical person, nor the reign of God that he proclaims. Enigmatically the function of the revealer is simply "that he is revealer" (dass er als Offenbarer gesandt sei) (Bultmann, 1925:102).

Engagement with Bultmann’s argument that a myth of a god-like being undergirds John 5.17-23

Scholars generally have noted that Jesus’ statement, ὁ πατὴρ μου ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν, καὶ γὰρ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐργάζομαι, in response to the healing and the challenge concerning the Sabbath is implicitly at least a claim to equality with God (5.17), though one could read these words as indicating imitation, or agency, as when a mystic strives to be like God, or a prophet acts on behalf of God. However, Rabbinic teaching representing traditions roughly contemporary with the Fourth Gospel provides a background to these words which appears to justify interpreting them as a claim to equality in the context of a challenge to Sabbath work. Though Israel was forbidden to work on the Sabbath, God continued to be active; the works of life and judgment were proper to God, even on the Sabbath, and entrusted to no other (as in TalBab Taanith 2a; Gen.30.22; Ez. 37.13, cited by Brown, 1986:217).

Though Bultmann’s commentary does not cite this Rabbinic background, it is unlikely that it was not known by him. And it may have been presumed in his observation that Jesus’ statement in 5.17 is taken by "the Jews" in 5.18 to be a claim of equality with God (Bultmann, 1971:244). Implicit association of the Rabbinic reflection concerning the

19 See Ashton (1991:50-62) for a more detailed discussion of Bultmann’s explanation of the relationship between the Gnostic myth and John’s distinctive portrait of Jesus.
work of God proper to the Sabbath was part of the background for reading John 5 even in the older commentaries.

However, Bultmann's interpretation of the verses that follow maintains that the equality which the statement implies is explained by presenting Jesus in the role of the Gnostic revealer in 5.19-23.

The Jews rightly understand that Jesus makes himself equal to God in these words.... One thing, however, they do not understand, namely that Jesus' Sonship, and his claim to be equal to God and to work like God, only make sense in that Jesus, as the Son and as the one who works like the Father, reveals God, and that precisely because he is the Revealer he must make the claim which sounds so blasphemous to their ears...(Bultmann, 1971:244-245).

Bultmann (1925:104) proposes that an earlier, already understood myth provides the conceptual framework which is, in a sense, the mentor of the unique Johannine presentation of Jesus. It provides a sort of parallel context which underlies and provides a framework of meaning for the text.

His commentary on 5.19 states this sentiment explicitly. The unity of the father and the son can only be related by analogy to the theme of agency typical of the prophets of Israel's scriptures, in which the unity of God and prophet is accomplished, not by the divine quality of the messengers, but in the fact that God works in them (Bultmann, 1971:250). In contrast, "the idea of the unity of Jesus and God in John was not formed under the influence of OT prophecy...." which nowhere intimates equality of the prophet with God; rather Jesus' words are interpreted, not in "terms of election, vocation, and inspiration but in terms of the Gnostic myth" (Bultmann, 1971:251). 21

Bauer (1933:82) provides an extensive survey of Jewish reflection on God's Sabbath work, which includes reference to Philo, so also does Hoskyns who includes citation from the Rabbis concerning Genesis 11 from Strack-Billerbeck (Hoskyns, 1947:266-267). See also Lee (1950:42).

It is also a standard background for interpretation in more recent works such as Haechen, (1980:248) and Carson (1991:244). Brown (1986:216-218) uses the theme of God's Sabbath work as the hermeneutical key to the division of the whole of John 5.

Bernard (1976:15-27) deals with this tradition in Philo as well as in Rabbinic literature. Bacchicocchi (1981:4-11) explores the categories, concerning the tradition of God's Sabbath work, that have been employed in Jewish and early Christian exegesis.

21 That the validity of Bultmann's thesis has been called into question on historical grounds is now generally accepted, though interest in the ascent/descent pattern as a mythic structure significant to the Johannine conception of Jesus continues. This line of research now finds sources in the angelology traditions of post-exilic Judaism. The work of Talbert (1976:419) is indicative of the trend; it challenges Bultmann's view that Christian conception of a descending/ascending savior figure is derived from a gnostic redeemer myth, by questioning the existence of a pre-Christian gnostic redeemer myth. In this new quest the sources underlying the Johannine conception are sought in redemption figures in the late Wisdom tradition and in Jewish angelology. See Ashton's (1991:350-355) discussion of recent studies related to the mythic pattern that Bult-
The statement speaks volumes about Bultmann's view of the relationship between the concept of sonship expressed in John 5.19-23 and other early Christian expression which in his view was not influenced by the Gnostic myth.

It is not necessary for me to document in detail the findings of subsequent scholarship which have led to a new consensus, that Bultmann missed the target when he tied his theory to a Mandaean Gnostic myth. I refer the reader to Talbert (1976) who directly challenges the historical validity of Bultmann’s proposal, arguing that the Mandaean myth was influenced by Christian conceptions and not the other way around. Also Ashton has admirably documented an emerging revision of salient aspects of the mythic conception proposed by Bultmann. Ashton looks, with considerable success, for new sources that may update a version of the "revealer" in a conflation of the associations which attended a variety of heavenly mediators in Jewish apocalyptic literature. (See Ashton, 1991:337-368.)

A critique of the historical problems associated with the Mandaean myth need not trouble us either, because the point that Bultmann aims to make is philosophical and theological in its import. Prophetic thought strongly distinguished between human and divine; in contrast he argues that the very different god-like agent of God in the Gnostic myth must have provided an account for the unity in being which the Johannine son displays in relation to the Father. Otherwise, he reasons, it would have little meaning, for it is alien to the strong Hebraic distinction between the divine and human beings. (See Bultmann, 1971: 246, 248,250-251). Bultmann proposed that this particular god-like myth accounts for the equality between Jesus and God declared in John 5.17-23.

Bultmann’s argument needs to be understood in reference to his acknowledgement that the picture of the world reflected in the New Testament relies upon mythic explanations of reality generally. In an article first published in 1941, "New Testament and Mythology," Bultmann most clearly set out the value and the problems intrinsic in the fact that early Christian speech is expressed in terms of a mythic world picture. Persons living in the time and culture of the New Testament writers presupposed that the world is viewed as a three-storied structure with heaven above, the underworld beneath, and earth in the center. Supernatural forces from the regions above and below intervene in the course of nature and history (Bultmann, 1984:1). Bultmann’s use of the term ‘myth’ follows an understanding of myth employed by research in the history of religions: myth is a representation in which what is unworldly and divine appears as what is worldly and human. What is transcendent...
appears as what is immanent, as when divine transcendence is thought of as spatial distance (Bultmann, 1984:42 note 5).

While recognizing that the cosmos was viewed in mythic terms generally, Bultmann maintains that a Gnostic redeemer myth reflects a particular characteristic that can be distinguished from other equally distinctive mythic patterns of thought. The Gnostic myth which he hypothesized concerns a god-like being sent down to earth from heaven; the descent and ascent of this divine being to return to heaven clearly signals the presence of the myth. The pattern of thought is, according to Bultmann, no more nor less mythological than the Jewish Apocalyptic conception of a last judgment when all the living and dead coming out of their tombs will be assembled and called to account before the throne of God. Both the Gnostic redeemer pattern and the Jewish Apocalyptic pattern are indicative of the presence of a mythic frame of reference. Neither myth is compatible with scientific description. Both reflect elements of an outdated cosmology. Though the pattern of imagery proper to these two myths can be distinguished as Bultmann recognizes (see Bultmann, 1984b:2).

Bultmann argues that only a particular kind of myth is adequate to the god-like picture of Jesus in John 5.17-23. He thinks that the Gnostic myth must provide a frame of reference that can do justice to this quality for it "speaks of the sending of a pre-existent divine being, which in its metaphysical mode of being is equal to God *Gott gleich ist ....*" (Bultmann, 1953:188 = 1971:251). The revelation of the son is "based not on intermittent inspiration but on the permanent identity of being of the divine messenger with God," says Bultmann (1971:251).

It is beyond the scope of this project to engage in the theological implications of Bultmann’s understanding of myth in relation to the New Testament. However it would be improper to mention Bultmann in the same breath as ‘myth’ without acknowledging that the primary aim of his engagement with mythology in relation to the New Testament is theological. For Bultmann, the value of recognizing that mythic pictures of the world frame early Christian proclamation of Christ, relates to how we understand ourselves in relation to ultimate reality; the point of the myth is existential and soteriological. Thus even the objectified, above/below language of the myth is incapable of conveying the transcendent meaning that it points toward. 22 In "New Testament and Mythology," Bultmann’s (1984b) aim is to show that faith itself requires demythologisation; to interpret the mythic

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22 For example, within the clear division between above and earth set in place by the three-storied universe, Bultmann’s characterization of the Gnostic redeemer myth both conforms to and transcends the conventional structure, when a figure from heaven is sent to take human form on earth.
language of the New Testament as objective science or objective history is to miss the existential self understanding that it aims to convey.\textsuperscript{23} The value of myth is found, for Bultmann, in its power to communicate on existential terms (rather than in terms of an obsolete cosmology objectified). \textsuperscript{24}

Although the language of the myth is employed in 5.19 and 20, Bultmann argues, John is free from its mythology: "John does not recognize two divine beings in a mythological sense; Jesus' activity is conceived strictly in terms of his revelation"; thus, Bultmann maintains, the decision is not do we hear what he says, but do we "believe" in him, for his word is in no way separate from who he is (Bultmann, 1971: 252).

Further, the exegetical grounds for reading 5.19-23 as a claim of equality with God are stated most convincingly in his commentary on 5.22-23:

If the Son acts like the Father, this means that he does the work which is characteristic of God, that he raises the dead and gives them life, that he fills the office of eschatological judge. Does this then mean...that they both act as Judge? No, for as the Evangelist’s comment in v.22 explains, the Father has relinquished his office to the Son. In v.23 he immediately takes steps to guard against a possible misunderstanding of this statement by adding a note as to the purpose (τὰ κτά...) of this relinquishment. According to this, what is asserted in v.22 is not, as it were, that God has been relieved by another judge; rather v.22 asserts the equality of the working of the Father and the Son, described in vv.19f. The Son must be honoured in the same way as the Father is honoured. The Father remains Judge; as indeed v.21, with its ὁσπερ-οὐτως, had affirmed that they both exercise the office of Judge. But now the meaning of the ambiguous ὁσπερ-οὐτως is made clear; for by referring back to vv.19.f., we can see that it means that God exercises his office as Judge through the Son. Moreover any possibility of misunderstanding which may still attach to the mythical formulation of the ἰνα-clause of v.23, as if there were two divine figures alongside each other, and as if the Son must be treated in an analogous way to the Father, is removed by the addition of the principle: δὲ μὴ τιμῶν κτά. One cannot honour the Father without honouring the Son; the honour of the Father and the Son is identical; in the Son we are confronted by the Father and we can approach the Father only through the Son. (Bultmann, 1971:256).

\textsuperscript{23} In my brief discussion of the theological dimensions of Bultmann (1984b) above I am indebted to conversations and private correspondence with Dr. David Bromell in 1994.

\textsuperscript{24} Problems are posed by the fact that New Testament proclamation corresponds to mythic world pictures which simply cannot be appropriated in an objective sense by people today, since one’s understanding of the world is given already with one’s particular historical situation (Bultmann, 1984b:3). One’s world picture can only be changed by genuine recognition of another way of seeing that is more real, as when the Copernican view of the universe provided a coherent explanation that made the picture of the earth as the center of the universe obsolete, or as “romanticism discovers that the human subject is richer and more complicated than the world view of the Enlightenment or of idealism allowed” (1984:3). Thus to attempt to appropriate the world depicted into the New Testament to one’s own picture of the world by “sheer resolve” involves a sacrifice of the intellect and makes communication of Christian proclamation to our contemporaries "unintelligible and impossible" (Bultmann, 1984:5).
The point is the revelation that the "Father and the Son may not be considered as two separate persons" whose work is "complementary" or "united in purpose"; rather the point of the myth is to show that the action of the father and son is "identical" (1971:251). As Bultmann has unquestionably shown, to propose that a mythic structure underlies the written text unlocks the text to a wider range of theological interaction and reflection. 25

A summary of issues relevant to Bultmann’s understanding of the myth that frames John 5.17-23

Though his exegetical/theological exposition is compelling, I disagree with the presupposition that the myth underlying the strong claims in 5.17-23 was a frame of reference which was not also shared in a wider early Christian conception of Jesus. Thus my exploration of a particular mythic frame of reference that provides a coherent frame of reference for John 5.17-23 will differ from Bultmann’s. I will argue that the narrative sequence, mood and content of that text is more clearly explained with reference to the divine warrior myth, particularly as this myth is expressed in Psalm 2, Psalm 69, and Daniel 7.13-14. In this I do not mean to deny that the speech in John 5 presupposes a conception of the son’s unity with the father that exceeds the limits of adoptionist conceptions of kingly sonship. The burden of my thesis in chapter 7 will be to address the problem of

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25 In relation to the limits of human existence myth talks about

the power or the powers that we think we experience as the ground and limit of our world and of our own action and passion. It talks about these powers in such a way, to be sure, as to bring them within the circle of the familiar world, its things and forces, and within the circle of human life, its affections, motives, and possibilities....[As] when it talks about the wars of the gods from which the arrangements and circumstances of the familiar world have all arisen. Myth talks about the unworldly as worldly, the gods as human.

[Myth expresses] the faith that the familiar and disposable world in which we live does not have its ground and aim in itself but that its ground and limit lie beyond all that is familiar and disposable and that this is all constantly threatened and controlled by the uncanny powers that are its ground and limit....Myth also gives expression to the knowledge that we are not lords of ourselves, that we are not only dependent within the familiar world but that we are especially dependent upon the powers that hold sway beyond all that is familiar, and that it is precisely in dependence upon them that we can become free from the familiar powers. (Bultmann, 1984:9-10.)

Compare David Tracy’s (1986:158-165) discussion of the language of theology as "limit language."
John’s distinctive use of the divine warrior myth in a way that identifies the ‘son’ as a being who is both god-like and royal.

Further I will emphasize the significance of a ‘before and after’ sequence which, I suggest, relates the myth to a way of interpreting the death and enthronement of Jesus as king within a cultic setting. Paul Ricoeur (1967:5) describes myth as a "traditional narration which relates to events that happened at the beginning of time and which has the purpose of providing grounds for the ritual actions" of people today. Ricoeur emphasizes the significance of the narrative sequence within a myth. Bultmann does not emphasize the significance of the narrative sequence of the gnostic redeemer myth in his interpretation of John 5.17-23 through the lens of that that he associates with myth. John 5 does not display the distinctive ascent/descent schema that Bultmann associated with the gnostic redeemer myth. The son in 5.17-23 may conform to his understanding of the god-like aspect of the redeemer, but Bultmann’s hypothetical Gnostic myth fails to account for the narrative sequence of threat answered by god-like sonship.

I see this as a weakness in Bultmann’s interpretation of John 5. In chapter 7 I will propose that another myth may provide a more adequate background to the narrative sequence in John 5.17-23. However it is not my purpose to foreshadow this proposal here. Rather, at this point I wish to acknowledge the point on which my hermeneutical approach will converge with that of Bultmann. He presupposes that a myth of some sort must provide the understood frame of significance for the strong words in John 5.17-23. This insight holds a key to reading early Christian speech about the son more generally, as I will argue. In support of this way of reading, Bultmann’s method of identifying the sequence of the text with the sequence of the myth is instructive. He compares themes from the Fourth Gospel

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26 While Bultmann acknowledged that "mythology is a mode of representation in consequence of which cult is understood..." (Bultmann, 1984b:42 note 5), he does not emphasize the cult in relation to myth, either in his commentary on John (1971) or in "New Testament and Mythology" (1984). This aspect of myth is peripheral to his (1984) theological critique of the objectification of myth in "New Testament and Mythology." Neither is it emphasized in his discussion of the hypothetical Gnostic redeemer as background to what is, in his view, a distinctively non-cultic Johannine conception of Jesus as the son. My interpretation of John 1, John 5, and John 11 through 12 in chapter 7 takes issue with a non-cultic interpretation of 'the son' in John.

27 In this context the "beginning of time" refers to the etiological aspect of the myth; stories of originary events act as a kind of explanatory prototype for events that are believed to correspond to a mythic pattern. Few would dispute that the ancient cosmology that evokes "the beginning of time" is obsolete. However, Ricoeur thinks that even myths associated with an ancient cosmology can be meaningful for moderns: "...the myth reveals its exploratory significance...its power of discovering and revealing the bond between [humans] and what they consider sacred, a dimension that is not lost to modern thought" (Ricoeur, 1967:5).
with texts which he sees as representative of the (hypothetical) Gnostic redeemer myth. (See Bultmann, 1925:105-139.) As Ashton has observed, Bultmann attempts to piece together the myth in a particular sequence representing a coherent story (1991:55). He presumed that it was the sequence or pattern associated with the earlier myth which provided a framework of coherence for the Johannine conception, rather than any form of literary dependence.

The actual myth which Bultmann proposes has since been called into question, largely on historical grounds. (See Ashton, 1991:56.) On other fronts as well scholars who hold that a particular mythic conception frames the portrait of Jesus in John have raised important questions. For example, Wayne Meeks (1986) accepts Bultmann’s general premise that some myth must underlie the Johannine conception, though in (1967:15) he undertakes to revise it thoroughly. In research on Jewish religious traditions concerning the Mosaic prophet-king as a possible background to the conception of Jesus as king in the Fourth Gospel, Meeks (1967) detects a significant aporia in Bultmann’s characterization of the Gnostic redeemer myth. In discussing the trial theme in John, Meeks (1967:306) notes that forensic elements have implications for how Jesus’ function as revealer is to be understood. "His words are revelation from on high" he speaks what he has seen and heard and his testimony becomes God’s complaint against the world (Meeks, 1967:306). Meeks finds ample ground for forensic elements attached to a revealer figure within the Jewish traditions concerning Moses as prophet-king. In contrast he observes that Gnostic myths provide no analogy for forensic function of a revealer figure. For this reason Meeks (1967:306) finds that the Moses traditions are a more adequate connection between revelation from on high and God’s judgment, in a tradition as old as Deuteronomy.

Bultmann’s hermeneutical presupposition that some myth must underlie John 5.17-23 is still a valid option for interpretation. His proposal that a particular mythic structure may be sought as a framework of significance underlying the written text was in itself a hermeneutical breakthrough. It focuses the question that should properly be asked. By allowing Bultmann’s presupposition to serve as a point of departure, the question is not, ‘Is there a myth framing the Johannine picture of Jesus?’, but rather ‘Which one?’ Thus far I

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28 I will touch upon the revision of Bultmann’s thesis in reference to the work of Meeks and Ashton below. Lindars (1971:20-24), and J.A.T. Robinson (1985) challenge approaches that see the pervasive influence of one mythic conception as the inspiration behind the distinctive Johannine conception.

29 Lindars (1975) discusses the Jewish Apocalyptic myth as a framework providing continuity between Jesus’ teachings and early Christian proclamation of the crucifixion and resurrection in terms of exaltation. Lindars interprets early Christian speech concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus within a hermeneutical perspective on myth that is comparable to Bultmann’s approach to interpretation. However in taking this approach Lindars deals with primitive Christianity generally and does not address the ‘unique’ Johannine conception.
have reviewed Bultmann’s position on two of the three key questions which I will pose of the text:

   a) Does this text share a common form with other early Christian texts?

   b) Assuming that a particular myth frames this pattern of speech, what myth is adequate to both the form and the content of John 5.17-23?

Though he responds to both, Bultmann does not see these questions as belonging to one interconnected issue. He avoids comparison between the god-like claims of Jesus in John 5.17-23 and other early Christian reference to enthronement of Jesus as the son. He argues that the Fourth Gospel is distinctive due to its reliance upon a myth of a god-like being sent from heaven to reveal God; this is the mythic structure that Bultmann detects behind the claim of equality, and he considers that it is unique to the Johannine expression.

Scholars who follow the basic insight of Bultmann, who see a mythic background as necessary to make sense of the strong language of Jesus’ equality to God in 5.15-23, still generally presume that the myth in question is one that is, in some sense, peculiarly prominent for the Johannine conception of Jesus. 30 For example Meeks (1986:141-143) discusses the uniqueness of John within the frame of Bultmann’s insight; arguing that any attempt to solve the puzzle of John would begin with the ascending and descending figure inscribed within the logic of a myth. This approach, exemplified by Meeks (1986) and Ashton (1991), is properly critical of the problems associated with the Gnostic redeemer myth. It nevertheless affirms Bultmann’s hermeneutical presupposition, that a mythic conception is needed to account for the heavenly claim that ascribes to Jesus as son, a status equal to God, and that the distinctive Johannine expression relates to a myth.

Brown (1986:LII-LXVI) does not posit a particular mythic structure as a key to the unique conception of Jesus in John. He notes that a variety of backgrounds, Wisdom, Hermetica, Qumran, Rabbinic, Mandaean, all can be seen to throw light on the unique Johannine presentation of Jesus as equal to God. In a similar vein see Hengel (1989:110-114); and Schnackenburg (1968:125-149). This moderate course gives proper weight to the diverse religious and conceptual background which appears to have had some collective influence upon the Fourth Gospel’s distinctive interpretation of Jesus. However, a general, though sound, recognition of the multifaceted "background" to John fails to pose any sharp interpretive hypothesis. To look for a mythic framework for this speech presupposes that

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30 See Appold (1976:4-8) for a survey of a second generation of scholarly discussion responding to Bultmann’s interpretation.
some unified and coherent interpretative frame of reference may 'explain' the strong speech of the son's equality to the father.

Recent research indicates that John understood and made use of a complex quilt of religious meaning. By focusing upon the unified and highly spiritual conception persistently pursued by the evangelist, Lindars (1981:83-98), J.A.T. Robinson (1985), Schnackenburg (1965), and to a certain extent Hengel (1989:90,92-97,102-104), provide something of a counter to Bultmann's thesis. Though coming from different perspectives their conclusions are similar. They propose that the singularity, depth, and clarity of thought of some authoritative figure(s) within the Johannine school, not a particular mythic frame of reference, is the driving force behind the unique Johannine conception.

Sonship as the context of the mythic claim to equality with God

Despite disagreement over the question of a mythic background to the claim of equality with God in 5.17-23, it is universally agreed that the claim is made through language of the son in relation to the father; and the father and son relationship here elaborated is an important key to the Johannine conception of Jesus.

Bultmann held that recognition of a mythic structure already taken for granted by the author and hearers of John 5, is the key to "understanding" its meaning (Bultmann, 1971:246-253). To understand the mythic structure is a key to understanding the Johannine expression of transcendent speech. While disagreeing with Bultmann on the content of this myth, I consider his methodological insight to be an approach to interpretation of this text that is worth pursuing. A mythic structure that holds together threat and exaltation may throw light on the relation between the threat of execution and the claims of equality with God in John 5.17-23.

Meeks and Ashton, who stand within the same tradition as Bultmann, recognize the weakness of Bultmann's practical application of this methodological insight. Bultmann, while to a certain extent using the mystical sources of the diverse Judaism which were contemporary with the early Christian movement, nevertheless hypothesized that the myth these sources attested was a hypothetical Gnostic myth which he characterized as the bearer of
the peculiarly Johannine conception of Jesus. By speculating concerning the structure of a hypothetical pre-Christian and non-Jewish myth, I will suggest, he neglected the significance within John's claim of equality to God, of the structure of an ancient Israelite myth that framed the conception of the supremacy of YHWH in the culture of the diverse Judaism of the first century C.E.  

Ashton follows Bultmann's reasoning that the claim of equality is not comprehensible by human analogy but needs the background of a myth. But recognizing the historical problems with the Gnostic redeemer hypothesis, he does not make the mistake of overlooking the diverse mystical traditions of post-exilic Judaism that were part of the cultural milieu of early Christian speech. He reasons that due to the centrality of the Johannine language concerning the son, which in John is attached to the mythic conception of equality with God, the background associated with sonship is a good place to begin to look for a mythic background that makes sense of the claim of equality to God in 5.17-23.

Ashton's 'account' of the framework for the myth provides part of the answer. He argues that the ascent/descent schema in John makes sense within the mythic frame of reference associated with the title 'son of man'. However, his reading of the background of the terms ὄνειρος and ὄνειρος τοῦ θεοῦ has overlooked a significant "mythic" framework for John's conception of Jesus. It relates to the apparently "kingly" use of ὄνειρος ἀνθρώπου in a way that evokes the associations of ὄνειρος τοῦ θεοῦ in 5.27.

If, following Bultmann, a myth already understood by the audience is required to make sense of the idea of equality to God in John 5.17-23, then it seems reasonable also to assume that the myth which underlies expression of the equality of the son to the father, is a mythic framework which is already associated with the language of sonship.

Scholarship on the background of the Johannine concept of the son is complicated by several factors. Firstly, a messianic conception of Jesus as a worker of signs, is associated

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31 For example, Bultmann (1925:108-10) seeks parallels between the much later Mandeante literature and the pre-Christian Odes of Solomon in the effort to justify the influence of the Gnostic redeemer myth's language and conception in pre-Christian documents.

32 In chapters 6 and 7 I will investigate the possibility that this myth provides a frame of reference that clarifies the sequence and meaning of the speech in John 5.17-23.

33 Meeks (1986:143-144) also affirms Bultmann's insight, arguing that John repeatedly communicates a "signal" or understood pattern of significance associated with the myth that ordered the social world of the Johannine community.

34 In chapter 3 I will engage with Ashton's argument in more detail under the major heading "An answer to objections...."
with the use of the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ in John 1.49 where it occurs in apposition with the term ὁ Βασιλεὺς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, and in 20.31 where it is parallel to the title ὁ Χριστός, or Messiah. Secondly, the stream of Johannine thought which has been associated with John’s "high Christology" is generally associated with the use of the title ὁ υἱὸς alone in relationship to ὁ πάτερ and this high Christology has not generally been interpreted within a messianic frame of reference. Generally in John the emphasis in father/son usage is upon the intimacy of relationship. Both intimacy of relationship and traditional titles are set alongside one another in John 5.17-27. But the use of ὁ υἱὸς in relation to ὁ πάτερ in 5.17-23, includes in the subsequent elaboration of the same argument, both the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, in 5.25 and ὁ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου in 5.27.35

The argument concerning sonship elaborated in 5.17-23

The argument concerning the relationship of Jesus as son to the father, in 5.17-23, is elaborated in 5.24-27 in such a way that mention is made of these traditional terms associated with sonship, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ and ὁ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου. 36

Recent Johannine interpretation argues two different positions on the combination of these distinct terms in relation to the concept of sonship in 5.17-28: 1) that the distinctive traditions are swallowed by the unique Johannine conception; or, 2) that the distinctive traditions are maintained within Johannine usage.

The latter view maintains that the argumentation concerning the son in 5.19-28 makes connections between the traditional meanings associated with the distinct titles son of god and son of man. The expression "my father" (5.17) lapses in to a more distanced description of ὁ υἱὸς in intimate relation to the father in 5.19,20, which overlaps with the theme of the superior status of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ in 5.22,23. ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ is explicitly mentioned in 5.25 in reference to hearing the voice of God. 37 Another sonship title, ὁ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου, associated with eschatological judgment in Daniel 7.13-14 is explicitly

35 In chapter 3 I will address the complexity of these terms in more detail under the major heading "An answer to objections..." and the subheading "Overlapping sonship titles in John 5.17-23."

36 5.24 also incorporates the term "the one who sent me" which is widely characteristic of the Johannine father/son relationship.

37 Like Bultmann, Schnackenburg (1980:110) associates this imagery with that represented in the Mandaean literature.
identified with Jesus in 5.27. In the process of the speech that juxtaposes these terms for the son, ὁ υἱὸς becomes also ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ who is granted divine power to execute judgment because he is υἱὸς ἁγίου. This view maintains that the various uses of sonship in 5.17-28, though clearly inter-related in John's perception, retain some of their proper distinctiveness. Such a view is represented by Richard, (1988:214). Similarly, Hahn (1969:314) argues that the distinct and traditional meaning of these titles is maintained in the elaboration of the discourse following the strong argumentation concerning the son in 5.17-23.

Hahn (1969:316) observes that the distinct contexts of the use of the term son, in relation to the union of the son with the father, and in reference to the unique authority granted by the father to the son can still be discerned in the Johannine writings. In the Johannine sonship, says Hahn (1969:316), "The son has legitimation from the Father, and the fatherhood of God depends upon the revelation that comes about through the Son." In John the different motifs proper to sonship in early Christian interpretations of Jesus can still be discerned. Thus to attempt to level the very stratified material underlying the predicate 'son of God' into a monolithic conception is, says, Hahn,

more disastrous than in the case of the other titles of dignity. The individual elements need to be accurately investigated and discriminated. Only so can the tradition-historical place of the respective texts be rightly determined (Hahn 1969:316).

Bultmann argues almost the opposite, that the traditional conception of sonship is not significant, and that the meaning of υἱὸς ἁγίου is completely overpowered by the quite different Johannine conception of the son as Revealer which has been elaborated in 5.17,19-23. The much more powerful Johannine argument completely upstages and reinscribes the meaning traditionally associated with sonship (Bultmann, 1971:258-261). 40 Bultmann

38 Beasley-Murray (1991:28) observes that "the most significant feature" of the son of man sayings in the Fourth gospel is their parallelism with sayings concerning ἡ υἱότης; the terms "interpenetrate" and it works in both directions as is seen most clearly in 5.19-29.

39 Coppens maintains that the υἱὸς ἁγίου logia are distinctive in style and content, come from tradition, and do not refer to the father/son relationship as it is developed in John. Coppen's article, "Le fils de l'homme dans l'evangile johannique" ETthL 52:28-81, 1976, cited in Kysar (1977:362) was unobtainable by the author.

40 See Watt (1985:74,75-85) whose analysis of the parallelism in the speech of John 5 suggests a solution that appears to conflate the options proposed by both Bultmann and Richard above.
has a point. For the argumentation concerning the equality of the son to the father is so strong that it has a tendency to overwhelm every other conception.  

But before too quickly assuming that the traditional frame of the Gospel has burst to allow a new conception to emerge, in chapter 3 I will look more closely behind the interpretation of John 5.17-27 suggested by Richard and Hahn above. My approach allows for the possibility that the new Johannine conception of sonship is new only in that it is a distinctive rendition of the elements which have belonged to a common frame of meaning all along.

A critical approach to the trend emphasizing the distinctiveness of the Johannine situation

The relation between John 5.1-27 and other early Christian speech in selected recent interpretations

The following observation is not untypical of the kind of comparisons that are routinely made between John and the Synoptics in reference to John 5.1-27. Aspects of the Sabbath healing in John 5 are widely acknowledged to be comparable to Synoptic accounts of healing.  

41 I disagree with Bultmann in that I think that various meanings associated with sonship in 5.17-27 are constitutive of the significance John attaches to Jesus as ὁ υἱός. Nevertheless I agree that the argument is designed to communicate one overpowering conception. The point that is argued has the effect of marginalizing the constitutive parts of the argument. In chapter 8 I will elaborate this observation from a perspective of ideology criticism.

42 Schnackenburg (1980:96) gives an in depth discussion of the similarity between John 5.1-9 and the Synoptic account of the cure of the paralytic.

See also Duprez (1970:138-150) who notes parallels with John 5.1-9 in Acts 9.32-35 and Matthew 9.1-17. His work is unusual in that he extends the comparison through to John 5.18, though 5.19 and following is treated as secondary. Though Duprez cannot establish rapport between John and other Sabbath healings, he finds that Sabbath healings appear to be common in two distinct traditions (Duprez, 1970:148).

to justify his action by appeal to the law, rather he is justified by appeal to his status in the
person of the son. The healing itself, and even the defense based on the authority of
Jesus’ person, are elements similar to accounts of synoptic healings; however, the reply of
Jesus to his opponents’ challenge over Sabbath action flowers into uniquely Johannine
expression.

The apparent similarity between the healings in John 5 and in various Synoptic
accounts of Sabbath healings frequently serves as the point of departure for emphasizing the
distinctive character of the speech in John 5.17-23. John sets forth the divine power of the
son in 5.17-23, in a way that is generally considered unique.

Frequently this observation serves as the basis for discussion of the distinctiveness of
Johannine Christology based upon the discourse concerning the relation between father and
son (which follows the above mentioned Sabbath controversy in 5.9-18). It typically signals
the end of the discussion of common patterns that John 5 might conceivably share with
other early Christian speech.

43 Brown (1986:216) notes that in the Synoptic tradition Jesus defends himself over the charge of Sab­
bath violation in two ways: 1) on humanitarian grounds, as in Luke 8.15;14.5, and, 2) on theological
grounds, as in Matthew 12.5-6: The theological defense is a type of argument that "leads to a majestic claim"
by Jesus that is quite similar to John 5.16-30.

Dodd (1963:174-188) based on a detailed comparison between the Sabbath healing in John 5 and
similar healings derived from the Synoptic tradition, notes that both share a common pattern. Concerning the
expansion on the healing in John 5.10-16, he says it is likely that the evangelist added detail to the traditional
story in order to supply an artificial link with the theological discussion he intended to introduce in 5.19
(Dodd, 1963:178).

44 In reference to John 5.18 Meeks (1990:309) notes that the "plot to have Jesus killed began because
Jesus was 'making himself equal to God'. This assertion can hardly be historical, so we must seek an explana­
tion for it in the history of the Johannine circle." Though he observes that it is not only Johannine Christians
who make such connections. In Mark 2.7 hostilities commence due to the claim to forgive sins, culminating
in a plot to kill Jesus springing from a Sabbath healing, Mark 3.6. And Christians prior to John appropriated
phrases originally applied to God, such as the Name and Word of the Lord, even the concept of equality to
God (Phi!. 2.6), to Jesus. But the Fourth Gospel, maintains Meeks (1990:309) is the first document that
focuses the issue so intently.

45 As Barrett (1978:249) observes, "The accusation of illegal activity on the Sabbath recalls many
Synoptic controversies, but there is no parallel to the reply made by Jesus." Though he notes that doing the
work of God may be implicit in the claim to forgive sins (Mark 2.5,7,10), Barrett (1978:250) says, "in John
the argument is given a theological significance not expressed in the earlier Gospels." In a similar vein see
Dodd (1953:320).

Carson (1991:244-247) notes that all the Gospels relate the desire to kill Jesus to the outcome of Sab­
bath conflicts, but only here does the issue develop into a relationship between Jesus and the father. Carson
sees the Johannine distinctive in reference to the Rabbinic tradition concerning God’s Sabbath work as does
Brown (1986).
Bultmann's characterization of the uniqueness of the Johannine conception provided a precedent for a trend in scholarship which has focused its concern on explaining Johannine distinctiveness by focusing upon the particularity of the community's situation and its traditions. As a result analysis of the distinctive claim to equality with God in John 5.17-23 has emphasized the peculiarity of the Johannine situation and corresponding speech.

Such analysis follows a model of analysis that begins with the literary form and on the basis of it projects back into the social situation. 46 But according to Robbins (1985a:60), the model reverses the actual process by which the speech was written into its literary form. In the context of a critique of historical-critical method in the study of aphorisms, Robbins (1985a:60) proposes another model that attempts to reflect the way in which speech emerges from a social situation as follows:

1) first come actions, attitudes, and speech intermingled in social situations;
2) second comes perpetuation of actions, attitudes, and speech through "interpretive speech";
3) third comes distilled speech which purports to give "the essence" of the person (Robbins, 1985a:60).

Though Robbins' model pertains to aphoristic speech quite different from John 5.17-23, it may be useful in one other respect. By following this model of analysis, one does not begin by noting that John's expression is distinctive, and must therefore have emerged from a distinctive situation. Rather one begins to approach the Sabbath conflict depicted in John 5 by asking what action could have generated the need for interpretive speech in which opponents challenge a conventional interpretation of Jesus' action and speech.

By using this model as a guide, my analysis of the distinctive speech in John 5.17-23, will not begin with the assumption that distinctive speech is generated by a distinctive situation and or tradition. Rather I will assume that actions generate patterns of speech, and that the interpretation of actions through speech is given according to a social code that is widely understood as the typical response to a typical action.

Rather than choosing to interpret the speech in 5.17-23 first in reference to an action peculiar to the Johannine community I have chosen to interpret it in reference to an already understood framework of interpreted speech pertaining to the actions and speech surrounding the event of Jesus' death see (5.18a). In chapter 4 I identify the execution of Jesus,

46 My critique of the emphasis on the peculiarity of literary form is adapted from Robbins' (1985a:60) critique of New Testament literary analysis of aphorisms in isolation from the social analysis of the literary context in which they are set.
foreshadowed in 5.18 as an action generating a pattern of speech that challenges the social conventions associated with crucifixion.

My focus is upon typical actions and conventional social interpretations of actions. Thus in interpretation of John 5.17-23 I will actively look for patterns of action that have already been known to generate this type of speech, even though evidence of a "distilled" literary parallel is not available.

**Community conflict as a window to distinctive Johannine speech**

My methodological starting point contrasts with a significant trend in recent Johannine scholarship. The trend maintains: 1) that the expression of conflict reflects a particular social situation experienced by the Johannine community; and, 2) that the claim of equality to God reflects the peculiar experience of that community.

Since Bultmann, and partially due to his influence, commentators with a few notable exceptions, have taken for granted that the peculiarity of the Johannine conception justifies treatment of the Fourth Gospel in relative isolation from other early Christian speech. Accordingly interpretation focuses upon the development of a unique Johannine expression through reconstruction of the way in which the traditions held by the community were shaped by the specific experience of Johannine Christians. 47

In 1968 Martyn first published his highly original historical reconstruction of the conflict behind the drama in John 9. In it he also interprets John 5 as a two-level drama, which refers to the Gospel traditions concerning Jesus through a veiled account of the struggle of Johannine testimony (see Martyn, 1979:70). 48 Thus the pervasive conflict with "the Jews" is to be interpreted primarily in reference to the contemporary Johannine experience of conflict. 49

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48 See also Martyn's (1979:90-121) analysis of the stages in the life of the community.

Critical to Martyn's (1979:37-64) reconstruction are the passages concerning the expulsion from the synagogue. The διστουνώκωος passages in 9.22 and 12.42 are indicative, he maintains, of the crisis of the Johannine community. He argues that they were rejected by the synagogue due to their confession of Jesus in a way that was construed as di-theism. Martyn attempts to tie the expulsion of the Johannine group to the Benedictions mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud excluding minim or heretics from the synagogue. 50 The conflict generated by Jesus' statement of equality with God in 5.17 is interpreted as an account of the experience of the persecution of the Johannine community for their confession of the equality of Jesus with God. 51

In reference to this reconstruction of the struggle of the Johannine community the saying in John 5.17, when read alongside Jewish understanding of the Sabbath work that was peculiar to God alone, represents a threat to monotheism, or as is stated by Martyn (1978:256) it represents the trauma experienced by the community in being accused of di-theism. Thus the charge that Jesus makes himself equal to God and the reply affirming that Jesus is right in claiming equality as the son, is an important plank in Martyn's argument.

Raymond Brown's influential study on The Community of the Beloved Disciple (1979) reflects a similar approach. Brown attempts to reconstruct the profile of various groups who were related in some way to the community behind the Fourth Gospel, based upon literary references to various personages named in the text: "the disciples of Moses," the "beloved disciple," "the Jews." In Brown's reconstruction these terms are interpreted as pointers, not primarily to contemporaries of Jesus, but to the various interest groups within or on the margins of the Johannine community. Prior to and contemporary with the traditioning process in John, these groups struggled over the interpretation of Jesus in the process of development of early tradition.

50 An opposing view is argued by J.A.T. Robinson (1985:72-77) who is skeptical of the historical grounds for the precision with which Martyn makes his bold reconstruction. See D.M. Smith (1988:339 note 12) for reference to other scholars sharply critical of Martyn's hypothesis.

51 Martyn suggests that the Johannine oi Ἰωάννης may be identified with the Gerousia who took exclusionary measures in an effort to stabilize the center of faith after the destruction of the temple (Martyn, 1979:1-36).
Hengel (1989) and de Jonge are among the body of continental scholars who are less inclined to the view that Johannine speech is a window to the situation of the community. Hengel having weighed the historical gaps and problems associated with the ἀποσυνάγωγος passages, argues that John 16.2 does not need to refer to an acute situation in the time of the evangelist but may express the "situation of the post-Easter community generally"; as such it would reflect the tradition associated with Jesus and is not just a reflection of the community (Hengel, 1989:115-117). It is a view that I share, for reasons that I will argue in more detail in chapters 4 and 5.

However, with disclaimers concerning the paucity of decisive historical evidence, the general approach of Brown and Martyn to Johannine studies could be said to represent something of a methodological consensus as regards the hermeneutical stance that has been taken to the Johannine text in recent scholarship. The two-level drama approach, developed most lucidly by Martyn, has proved fruitful. It has generated creative and plausible work aimed at historical and social reconstruction of the life of the community who wrote these texts.  

However, its weakness in relation to 5.16-23, like that of Bultmann's brilliant assessment, has been the tendency to focus only upon the exclusive Johannine province of Fourth Gospel speech. As a consequence of this trend, the juxtaposition of conflict with confession concerning the son in 5.16-23 has been studied primarily with a view to the

52 While de Jonge (1988:231-232 note 1) agrees with most of Brown's Community of the Beloved Disciple (1979) he is skeptical concerning the possibility of reconstruction of earlier sources used by John and of an earlier Christology contained within them. Elsewhere de Jonge (1973:264-266) argues that the Fourth Gospel gives theological reflection on issues in debate between Jews and Christians, rather than arguments in an acute struggle.

53 The judicious summary of scholarly opinion on Martyn's hypothesis given by D.M. Smith (1988:439) is representative of the general consensus. Smith notes that though the historical connection with the Twelfth Benediction remains obscure, "it is widely agreed that Martyn has correctly perceived the nature of the life-setting of the Fourth Gospel as it was construed by the evangelist and his community"; the direct connection with the Benediction concerning heretics is not a necessity for perceiving the nature of the problem (D.M. Smith, 1988:439).

54 Schenke's (1989) literary analysis of a dramatic replay of the life of the community in portions of John 5-10 and Whitacre's (1982) study of Johannine polemic are but two examples of research which builds upon this basic reconstruction of the community's situation.

Whitacre (1982:10) analyses conflict over the Benedictions as a challenge to Jewish identity which forced them to change their self-understanding and their relation to Jewish tradition. He considers that the Fourth Gospel aims to comfort and reassure the audience in their separation from Judaism.
specific conflict felt by the Johannine community in relation to opposition from the synagogue which had rejected their confession of Christ.  

To explain the conflict reflected in John 5 by focusing on the situation of the community is to rush through what may be a critical step in interpretation. A more circumspect reading would first explore the theological possibilities of the fact that the text reflects a pattern of conflict which is typical to a certain type of speech. Then, only secondarily and on the basis of comparison, can another argument be made. Within a socially understood pattern which already provides an understood interpretive framework for the speech of the gospel community, what is distinctive can be observed.  

Interpretations which use the trial motif to interpret the conflict in John 5

The value of the trial hermeneutic

Patterns of behavior associated with the setting of a trial offer a lens of interpreted speech appropriate for interpretation of the expression of conflict within John 5. A trial setting evokes a conventional way of interpreting the polarization between two parties in a dispute.

I do not mean to suggest that apart from viewing John 5 as a kind of trial, the structural relationship between conflict and the claims vindicating the divine authority of the son in 5.17-23 have been ignored. Commentators acknowledge it routinely. It is reflected in the predominantly negative portrayal of 'Ἰούδαοι in John, astutely documented by Bult-  

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55 Malina (1985), Neyrey (1988) and Rensberger (1989) have undertaken sociological studies of John that share these methodological assumptions. They view conflict within the text in relation to the distinctive situation of the community.

56 In fairness it must be said that Martyn does take care to address other comparable speech patterns reflecting the questions he addresses, for example, the synagogue ban (1979:42-50), forensic situations leading to testimony to Jesus (1978:55-81). His attention to the fact that early Christian speech gives evidence of patterns reflecting social situations is not at fault. What I aim to criticize is the preoccupation of the critical approach that he dramatically takes to its logical conclusion. In the effort to reconstruct the distinctive theology of the gospel community, this approach overlooks the theological significance of the patterns themselves that frame speech.
mann, which has long been a subject of scholarly interest. Shamefully Christian biblical scholars have only recently begun to expose this characterization in order to critique the germ of anti-Judaism embedded within the Fourth Gospel. It is not within the scope of this study to pursue this task directly; nor will I attempt to survey the extensive literature concerning the relation of the Fourth Gospel to Judaism, except as it relates to narrow issues relating to the rhetorical presentation of accusation and defense of Jesus in John.58

Structural conflict is observed in John even by scholars who do not overtly employ a "trial" hermeneutic. J.W. Bowker (1964:401-404), sees the Fourth Gospel as "an ordered

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57 John Ashton (1991:10-13) surveys scholars before Bultmann who noted the pervasive polemic against "the Jews" in John. My brief summary below derives from his account.

The 1820 work of Carlus Theophilus (Karl Gottlieb) Bretschneider noted the prominence given to the theme of conflict with the Jews as comparable to a strategy taken by Justin to Jewish critics in his second century Apology (Ashton, 1991:10). Bretschneider argued that the prominence of confrontation with oi 'Ioudaioi, and the numerous debates in which "the Jews" are portrayed as foolish and misunderstanding of Jesus, was a combination of apologetic and doctrine designed to answer controversies contemporary with the concerns of the author, Bretschneider, K.G. 1820 Probabilia de evangelii et epistularum Joannis, apostoli, indole et origine (Leipzig); cited in Ashton, 1991:10.

A later work by M. von Aberle (1861) described the Fourth Gospel as a repudiation of post C.E.70 Judaism, Aberle, M. von. 1861 'Uber den Zweck des Johannesevangelium', Theologische Quartalschrift, 42:37-94; cited in Ashton, 1991:11. Anticipating the thesis of Louis J.Martyn in this century, Aberle, apparently for the first time, introduced a discussion of the "Blessing against heretics" thought to have been introduced into the prayer of the eighteen benedictions by the academy of Jamnia with the aim of exclusion of Christians in mind (Ashton, 1991:11).

The pervasive anti-Jewish strain was seen to dominate the Gospel by Carl von Weizsäcker (1864) who suggests that it might have been written directly against the Jews, Weizsäcker, C. von. 1864 Untersuchungen über die evangelische Geschichte (Gotha, Stuttgart); cited in Ashton, 1991:12.

The "true fulcrum" (Hobel) of John is its polemic against the Jews in the view of William Wrede (1903 Charakter und Tendenz des Johannesevangelium (Tübingen); cited in Ashton, 1991:12). A similar approach to the theology of John has recently been taken by Rodney A. Whitacre in Johannine Polemic (1982).

Karl Bornhäuser (1928) observes that distinctions must be made between the varieties of Judaism contemporary with John (Ashton 1991:13). Bornhäuser, K. 1928 Das Johannesevangelium: Eine Missionsschrift für Israel (Gütersloh). In embryo, Bornhäuser anticipates the puzzle, articulated in more recent studies, that John is the most Jewish and at the same time it is the most anti-Jewish, of the canonical Gospels (Ashton, 1991:13; See J.W.Bowker, 1964). The observation, reiterated almost as a commonplace by Ashton, is affirmed by C.K. Barrett in The Gospel of John and Judaism (1975).


59 Rather than review again the work already done by others, I refer the reader to Meeks (1967:5 note 1 and p.20); Pancaro (1975:7); Barrett (1975); Neyrey (1987:509); Ashton, (1991:131-151) for further reference to works on this topic.
and deeply considered statement" which is an extension of the debate within Judaism; Jesus' claims in John 5.31, says Bowker are "his unsupported word against the whole weight and history of Judaism." L.T. Witkamp states that from John 5 on, conflict is "pivotal" in the construction of the Gospel and "great significance" therefore may be attached to how its opening statement is reached (1985: 26-36).

Raymond Brown (1986:5) identifies the Fourth Gospel's beginning, "...the Word was God," 1.1, and the confession within the original end, "My Lord and my God," 20.28 as an inclusio which, he says, represents the Johannine answer to the charge made against Jesus that "he was wrongly making himself God." The declaration that Jesus is rightly said to be "equal to God" in 5.19-23 replies to that charge by focusing the principle point of the Gospel for its hearers (Brown, 1986:5).

These are but a sample of scholarly comment which astutely acknowledges the formative role of opposition in the elaboration of speech declaring the divine status of Jesus. By construing such perceptions within a trial hermeneutic, they are comments that acquire significance in relation to a socially-understood sequence that is accountable to the negative characterization of oi 'Ioudoioi in John. 60

This hermeneutical perspective has a substantial history within Johannine studies. It is not my intention to give an exhaustive survey of its literature. 61 Here I only aim to

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60 I do not mean to suggest that Western, twentieth-century notions of a trial setting provide an adequate hermeneutic for early Christian speech, though they may properly serve as a point of departure for exploration of the social conventions associated with various types of trials in the Ancient Mediterranean world.

Interpreters exploring this motif have employed the "trial" hermeneutic in various ways. For example, Martyn (1978:55-89) explores a trial tradition that he argues is in some sense shared by John, the non-canonical Ascents of James, Acts, and the Synoptic tradition. Neyrey (1987:510) analyses forensic material in John and Luke by following the procedure employed in Roman legal process of which we are informed by A.N. Sherwin-White (1963); see also Schulz (1953) on Roman procedure. McKenzie (1964), Harvey (1976), and Derrett (1972) provide background to Hebrew judicial procedure.

Tcherikover (1975) while recognizing the persistence of Jewish legal institutions within Hellenistic civilization cites Egyptian papyri that preserve transactions between Jews carried out in accordance with the principles of general Hellenistic law through Ptolemaic government institutions. His research lends support to Harvey's (1976:94,95,108 and especially 123,128) argument that the author of the Fourth Gospel knew Jewish legal procedure from the inside, but also makes use of Greek legal conventions, and that John is written for an audience who were familiar with more than one legal system.

My own procedure in interpreting John 5 according to a trial motif has been to assume a background of Jewish legal procedure, that is informed by the conventions associated with judicial speech in Hellenistic rhetoric. This approach is developed in more detail in chapters 2, 3, and 4. See also Neyrey's (1984:214-217) use of rhetorical analysis in reference to Paul's trial speeches in Acts 22-26.

61 See Neyrey (1987:509-511) and Meeks (1967:65 note 1) for further documentation of the considerable scholarly interest in the forensic aspects of the Fourth Gospel.
represent two significant approaches, one cosmic, the other more pedestrian, that have been
taken by practitioners of the "trial hermeneutic" in interpretation of the Fourth Gospel.

The hermeneutic suggested by the social setting of a "trial" gives proper weight to
the conflict which is the context of the exalted speech in John 5. Interpreters who have
approached the text as a kind of trial, begin to do justice to the possibility that the dynamic
of conflict that combines a threat to Jesus life with superior speech about sonship is a
socially understood pattern already familiar to the audience.

**Bultmann's use of a trial hermeneutic**

Bultmann used a "trial" hermeneutic in order to account for the structure of polemic
against "the Jews." Following the suggestion of Hoskyns (1947:300), Bultmann interprets
the theme of witness, and the accusation and reply format which is prominent in John
within a trial framework. (See Bultmann, 1971:50,84-97,145,172,237-284.) Bultmann clas­
sifies John 5.16-23 under the heading "Jesus the Judge," he considers that John 5.1-47;
7.15-24; and 8.13-20 belong together in this section, which he characterizes in general
terms according to the trial hermeneutic. 62 He (1971:86) introduces the "trial" motif in
reference to the Baptist’s μαρτυρία to Jewish leaders who question him concerning the
Christ in 1.19.

Bultmann is aware of the anti-Jewish polemic deep within the framework of Johan­
nine expression. The "trial hermeneutic" assists him in a reading which takes account of a
structure of opposition between "the Jews" and Jesus, which is pervasive, even in places
where it is not overt. Such is the case in his interpretation of the first chapter of John where
the μαρτυρία of John to Jesus in 1.19, is not an historical note; rather, he observes, it
emphasizes the official character of the

forum which demanded it and before which it was given. The forum are the "Jews";
just as in the rest of the Gospel they appear as the opponents of Jesus, here they
appear as the opponents of his witness. This, then, is the prelude to the struggle which
runs through the whole of the life of Jesus: it is a struggle between Christian faith and
the world, represented by Judaism, a struggle which is continually represented as a
trial, in which the "Jews" are under the illusion that they are the judges, whereas in
fact they are the accused before the forum of God... (1971:86).

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62 Bultmann (1971:237), like many other scholars, maintains that the unit concerned with Jesus as
judge is artificially interrupted by John 6; see Schnackenburg’s (1980:5-9) account of the reasons that many
scholars treat John 6 as if it interrupted the sequence of narrative begun in John 5.
Bultmann, a man of his time, does not critique the ideological impact of the anti-Jewish structure of John, and the anti-semitic influence which such a scriptural prototype routinely generates. He (1971:86) does notice that oι Ἰουδαῖοι are portrayed as representatives of "unbelief" and in places (2.6,13; 5.1;5.4;7.2; 19.40) are even spoken of as if they were an alien people. The polarizing between parties in a dispute provides a social frame of reference that may help to explain this characterization not only of oι Ἰουδαῖοι, but also of Jesus as ὁ ἄνθρωπος whose authority is challenged.

The hermeneutic of a "trial" setting has the potential to provide a dramatic narrative perspective on John as a whole; though use of the trial as a loose analogy, as in the quote from Bultmann above, rather than as a carefully delineated and culturally appropriate frame of reference, has led to considerable imprecision.

The 'cosmic' trial approach

A tendency toward imprecision can be seen also in the thread of interpretation that focuses upon the cosmic character of the "trial" in John. Th. Preiss (1946) introduced the juridical aspect of the Fourth Gospel as a "cosmic trial" between God and the world; Jesus is the central figure who is the main protagonist. The suggestion that the "trial" belongs within a cultic setting is deeply insightful, and yet, it is only developed in very general terms by Preiss. Preiss suggests that the background of the peculiar Johannine conception, may best be characterized as "juridical mysticism," a perception of events and relationships which is most at home in the context of the cult.

Ignace de la Potterie's (1977:337) description of the "grand procès," as a theme which dominates the theology of John is distinguished by his rather plausible argument that this hermeneutic can be extended intermittently throughout the dramatic portrayal of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. He develops the sequence of the literary motif with reference to specific texts: the conflict with the Jews (symbolic of the world) in which the acceptance or rejection of Jesus and his message is at stake (1.9-13), is presented in the nature of a juridical controversy. The "Jews" ask Jesus to legitimize his mission by a sign (2.18,6.30). In

63 He interprets the portrayal of Jesus over against oι Ἰουδαῖοι as symptomatic of the Johannine tendency toward a monolithic characterization of "the Jews" which neglects to note the distinctions, observed in Mark and to a lesser extent in Matthew and Luke, between various sectors within the Jewish people (1971:86).
response Jesus presents a series of testimonies to authenticate his mission. But his adversaries contest the validity of his mission (8.13; 3.11, 32). They accuse him and crucify him (5.10; 9.16; 10.33; 19.7; 7.1-25). Conversely Jesus becomes the prosecutor of "the Jews" when the roles are reversed (5.45; 3.17; 12.47; 5.22-30; 8.16-26, see de la Potterie, 1977:337).

Ignace de la Potterie (1977:337) sees the Paraclete as an agent of this forensic drama who assists the disciples in holding to the cause of Jesus in the same conflict; he suggests that the promises of the Spirit are both kerygmatic and forensic within the context of a trial between the unbelieving world and the disciples. In addition, Potterie (1977:337) notes the role of an "autre Paraclet" whose task is not forensic, but rather, to sustain the work of Jesus within the disciples.

Ashton (1991:226-229) does not interpret the departure discourses within a forensic frame, as does de la Potterie, rather he holds that the trial motif is insignificant in John 1-4 and 13-17. Nevertheless he interprets the more overtly forensic passages as a framework which heightens the drama of the story by presenting "two great sequences": John 5-10 (the informal trial), and 18-19 (the official and Roman trial) (Ashton, 1991:226). This narrative framework provides the setting for the dominant motif of judgment, and for the reinforcing of opposition that displays the division effected by Jesus' revelation. However, as Ashton (1991:228) has noted, gaps become apparent when one tries to hold the entire Gospel within this single hermeneutical frame.

Meek's description of recent scholarship which has emphasized the significance of forensic terminology in the Fourth Gospel provides a succinct summary of the hermeneutic provided by the "cosmic trial" approach, which the interpreters above have employed:

...The action in the Gospel adds up to a cosmic legal process, in which witnesses produce their testimony, accusations and counter-accusations are delivered, and judgment is rendered. The trial bears a highly ironic character, for the principal witness, the "Son of Man," though he is "attested" by the Baptist, by his own "works," by the Scripture of Moses, and by God himself, becomes the accused because "the world" refuses to accept his "testimony" or his "attestation." It is this very refusal, leading to the condemnation and execution of the witness, which exposes "the world" as condemned in the Judgment of God. Thus the "trial" of Jesus becomes his enthronement as King and judge and at the same time the "judgment of this world." (Meeks, 1967:305)

The weakness of this approach, as I indicated above, is the failure to identify a concrete social or literary setting which provides a mythic sequential frame of reference for interpretation of the trial-like actions and speech in John 5, and elsewhere in John.
A step toward a more precise frame of reference for the trial is taken by Allison Trites (1977:23,78-123). He employs the "cosmic trial" hermeneutic by reading John in reference to a type of witness speech derived from background in Jewish legal assembly; he analyzes John 1-12 as a form of witness speech patterned after the Israelite form of controversy speech. Based upon extensive research in biblical, intertestamental and first-century legal usage Trites argues that "witness," more aptly than "kerygma," characterizes the core of, not just the Johannine, but the Christian message generally as opposition to the world that will not trust Christ (Trites, 1977:1).

The controversy speech, he notes, does not aim to find the truth through reciprocal interchange between speech and counter-speech; rather it is designed to present a point of view, determined in advance with forcefulness, in order to elicit the surrender of the opponents (Trites, 1977:26,22). He interprets both the σμαίνω (a display of external evidence) and the ἀμεν (the legal form of an oath) in Johannine speech as terms which belong to the realm of witness.

Though he goes this far in establishing a specific frame of reference, Trites' comparison of John 5 in particular (and the Fourth Gospel in general) with the "great controversy between God and the world" in Isaiah 40-55 lacks concrete exegetical detail. Though Isaiah 40-55 provides some conception of a cosmic ribh of God against the people, Trites fails to provide the evidence needed to demonstrate that there is any clear formal similarity between these texts. For this reason his conception of a "cosmic trial" remains a background study that contains little exegesis of specific texts in reference to Israelite models of trial speech.

Imprecise handling of the trial hermeneutic also characterizes the approach, discussed above, of Bultmann and Preiss, as well as Trites. All use a "trial hermeneutic" for interpretation of John 5 in a way that tends to emphasize the cosmic dimension of the conflict, and the role of Jesus as the heavenly witness and judge, at the expense of concrete formal analysis and mundane forensic detail which could provide a more precise social grounding for this hermeneutic.

64 Pancaro (1975:7) notes that this aspect of the "trial" motif—the divine presence of Jesus provokes a krisis which requires a decision of faith or unbelief, salvation or judgment—has been analyzed in detail by J. Blank, (1964 Krisis. Untersuchungen zur johanneischen Christologie und Eschatologie (Freiburg i. Br.)). I have not been able to obtain this work.
A more 'pedestrian' approach: emphasis on concrete formal characteristics of the trial procedure

Pancaro's (1975) study on Law in the Fourth Gospel attempts to redress this imbalance. It claims to be the first major study, within the tradition of scholarship that reads conflict in John according to a trial motif, which takes seriously the concrete legal aspects of the rationale for persecution of Jesus and his corresponding defense in John.

In this respect Pancaro's method is like the work of Neyrey (1987) and Harvey (1976), whom I shall discuss later in this chapter. In this approach Johannine material which presents a clear formal likeness to forensic speech is compared to the procedures followed in actual forensic settings that are roughly contemporary with the Fourth Gospel. The concrete literary and cultural comparisons set interpretive parameters upon the tendency of the interpreters to indulge in cosmic expansions. By beginning from a pedestrian legal perspective, in this approach to the trial hermeneutic, specific customary aspects of forensic procedure become visible intermittently in John 5 through John 12.

Harvey's use of the trial hermeneutic

In my view the most insightful of the works which see John 5 as speech appropriate to a trial setting, is Jesus on Trial: A Study in the Fourth Gospel by A.E. Harvey (1976). Of particular interest is Harvey's explanation of the Johannine rationale for the accusations and counter-accusations exchanged between Jesus and οἱ ἱναρετεύοντες. Assuming that it was understood that Jesus had been tried and condemned by a legally constituted court, Harvey argues that the Fourth Gospel can be conceived of as a re-trial designed to put the case in defense of Jesus (1976:1-17). Such a strategy, Harvey argues, is in keeping with the stated purpose, in John 20.31, to persuade readers to believe that he is the Christ, the Son of God (1976:6,123).

65 Ashton (1991:226-228) criticizes Harvey's tendency to ignore the Roman trial in John at the expense of his focus upon Jesus' answers to οἱ ἱναρετεύοντες in John 5-12. In chapter 7 I suggest that one justification for emphasis upon the trial-like character of the disputes in John 5-10 may be found in the observation of Meeks (1967:60), and in much more detail Crossan (1988:46-59): the question concerning sonship is omitted from the Roman trial. I will pursue this aporia by suggesting that the trial and the question in John can be found in the argument concerning sonship in John 5.17-23 within the larger context of John 5-10. See the subheading "The missing sonship question..." under the major heading "Patterns of trial..." in chapter 7.
Reviewers have criticized Harvey's ambivalence concerning the historicity of the trial material that he in effect reconstructs. See for example, Sloyan (1978:634). Does he aim to provide an historical reconstruction of conflict experienced by Jesus? Or is his focus upon the level of the interpretation of Jesus' actions by the Johannine community? The question is valid because Harvey does not clarify his methodological stance in respect to tradition history, and does not appear to take account of the two level hypothesis of Martyn (1979).66

This weakness, does not invalidate the strength of Harvey's perspective. Whereas the trend of recent Johannine scholarship is to confine interest almost exclusively to the second level of the drama (the significance of the legal complaints in 5.10,16,18 for the peculiar situation of the Johannine community), Harvey, in contrast, attends first to the stated charges against Jesus. He asks how these might be related to a more general complaint, which was perceived by Christians and non-Christians alike to be an obstacle to belief in Jesus as messiah.

Behind the rationale for persecution which is portrayed in 5.10,16,18 Harvey interprets the specter of the rejection, legal condemnation and execution by the death penalty; these represent a slur on Jesus' character which requires a reasoned defense (Harvey, 1976:13). In keeping with this line of approach Harvey (1976:126-128) suggests that one way of reading the Fourth Gospel is to characterize it as a defense given in a literary form that is comparable to the Hebrew tradition of the literary form of a lawsuit or ribh.

John emphasizes the legitimacy of the legal procedure which is demanded and observed by Jesus' opponents as Harvey (1976:46-66) observes. The opponents' rationale for persecution of Jesus is mooted in a way that is coherent with the proceedings of a Jewish trial; he argues that John 5 portrays a trial procedure congruent with the custom of accepted forensic practice. Thus Harvey concludes that the author intended that John 5 was to be interpreted in reference to a forensic setting.67 For example, he maintains that in the context of John 5.10-16, it is appropriate to interpret διώκειν in 5.16 as meaning 'to prosecute'; the forensic setting supports his translation, "it was works of this kind done on the

66 Similarly Bogart (1978:86) criticizes Harvey's historical ambivalence.

67 This contention is supported by Parunak's (1983:538) observation that the basic structure of accusation and defense is confirmed by the aorist middle construction of ἔποιηκενε in 5.19, attested elsewhere only in John 5.17, and noted by Moulton and Milligan (1930:64) as a form that without exception is used in legal reports in which it means 'replied' of an advocate or party in a suit. Parunak concludes that the evangelist uses legal idiom to stage Jesus' discourse as a defense to the Jewish charges; the reply in 5.19 is a transitional device. It creates the impression that 5.10-16 stands to 5.19-47 as initiating utterance to a continuing utterance (Parunak, 1983:538).
Sabbath that stirred the Jews to seek to bring a charge against Jesus" (Harvey, 1976:50-51). Further Harvey notes that the progression of a trial initiated in 5, continues intermittently through John 10.39.\(^68\)

Harvey’s approach raises an important question: ‘what is the rationale for using a trial as a literary device? Clearly this format evokes the social setting customarily associated with the polarized patterns of action and speech belonging to a forensic confrontation. The question naturally lends itself to another: ‘what social perceptions generate the need for presentation of a defense of Jesus in this form?’

According to early Christian, Jewish, and pagan sources the execution of Jesus posed a problem for those inside and outside the circle of Jesus’ followers.\(^69\) Harvey (1976:1-17) sees the fundamental case against Jesus as representative of a complaint that he had been rejected by a properly constituted Jewish court. If unanswered the complaint appears to justify social conventions that would automatically assign the label of ‘shame’ to his experience of condemnation for a capital crime. Harvey interprets the testimony attributed to Jesus in John as a defense, which followers of Jesus would have needed to make in such a situation. It is designed to uphold the honor of Jesus in answer to gibes that he has justly been condemned to death as a criminal.

The insight that for some reason it was considered appropriate to set speech defending Jesus within the socially understood literary context of a trial serves as a point of departure for my analysis of John 5. Harvey’s hypothesis provides a good starting point for interpretation of the process by which legal allegations are overcome by claims to divine authority in John 5.

The trial motif, evoked by the juxtaposition of accusation and defense in John 5.10,16-23, provides a conventional type of interpreted speech, within which it may be possible to begin to assess, both what is typical and what is distinctive, in the actions and speech attributed to Jesus in John.

Complexity attends the process relating actions and speech of Jesus and the written words eventually shaped into the text of John 5; it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to try to reconstruct possible links between historical actions of Jesus and speech later attributed to him. Rather I will focus upon the hermeneutic of the trial. It mediates action

\(^{68}\) Harvey notes a pattern that reoccurs in 7.28-31, 8.19-21,59: "utterance of blasphemous words, attempt to seize or punish, unexpected obstacle to the course of justice." Finally a verdict is delivered in 10.30-33 when Jesus’ accusers take up stones, though again he eludes arrest 10.39 (Harvey, 1976:49-54).

\(^{69}\) See my discussion under the major heading "The topos of crucifixion..." in chapter 4.
and the distinctive words of the text through a socially understood framework of interpreted speech. 70

70 The trial hermeneutic introduced here will be discussed in the context of exegesis intermittently throughout the dissertation. I will explore this motif more fully in chapter 2 by using the tools of Hellenistic rhetoric for an analysis of John 5 in reference to judicial forms of speech generally employed in the Greek speaking world of the first century C.E. I set the trial motif in John 5 alongside two distinct forensic traditions specifically associated with Jesus, Papyrus Egerton 2, and the Synoptic trial tradition, in chapters 7 and 5 respectively. In chapter 4, I explore social dimensions of John 5 as a form of forensic narrative.
Chapter 2

Rhetorical analysis of the internal features of John 5

Preliminary methodological considerations: John 5 is a trial-like speech composed from discrete formal units

My survey of recent interpretation of John 5.17-23 has focused on three issues:

1) the possibility that the expression of lethal conflict juxtaposed with speech exalting the son in John 5.17-23 does not simply reflect a unique experience of the community situation, but relies upon conventional patterns of speech;

2) recognition that the claim of the son's equality to God makes little sense unless it is understood within a mythic frame of reference;

3) the observation that the trial motif assists interpretation of speech; it is a socially understood pattern of interaction through which John expresses conflict between Jesus and οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι in John 5.

In this dissertation I will explore the possibility that these three issues are interconnected. To do so requires a method that attends to the multi-dimensional character of patterns of speech. Traditionally form criticism aims to isolate distinct forms within the text. Within the broader frame of traditional historical critical analysis, identification of discrete forms aids in discernment of the significance of distinct layers of redaction. Because traditional form and redaction criticism tends toward fragmentation of the distinct forms and layers of redaction that are identified within the final form of the speech, another approach to interpretation is needed in order to assess the function and significance of the speech taken as a whole. 1

1 See Robbins (1985a) for a critical assessment of the tendency of form-critical analysis to fragment the text. He begins to develop another approach that emphasizes the interpretive significance of the context within which discrete forms of speech have been transmitted.
Below I will use the formal complexity of John 5 as an example of the need for another method of analysis. By attending to the whole text as if it were one speech, the discipline of rhetoric focuses upon the persuasive strategy reflected in the final form of the text. It assumes that this strategy includes the intentional combination of formerly discrete units in this particular way in order to make a certain impact upon the audience of the speech.

John 5 combines a diverse collection of smaller units of speech which appear to represent discrete layers of redaction. The mention of the feast in 5.1 is added to the miracle story (5.2-9). A later addition introduces the Sabbath (5.9b) and with it sets the scene for a controversy through a narrative expansion (5.10-15); the complaint about Jesus’ Sabbath action could almost serve as a conclusion to this narrative. However, a saying of Jesus is juxtaposed to it in the form of a reply designed to answer the challenge concerning Sabbath action. By means of the link which the arrangement of the saying in 5.17 provides, Jesus’ act of healing in the miracle story is associated with the Sabbath work of God which is the privilege of God alone.

John 5.17 may actually derive from sayings concerning the signs of Jesus more generally, though here it is specifically linked to the healing of the lame man at the pool. Its strategic and tailored placement cleverly links a gibe against Jesus attributed to οἱ ἱουδαῖοι (he calls God his own father making himself equal with God) with a rationale for prosecution of the death penalty against Jesus. The two summaries of complaints against Jesus (5.16 and 5.18) may relate to quite separate strata of tradition, as Neyrey (1988:10-12) suggests. However, they are arranged in such a way that Jesus’ saying (5.17) comes to function as a forensic reply. Though the saying in 5.17 appears to belong to the strata concerned with the charge of blasphemy or di-theism, it is deftly framed as a response to the complaint that ‘Jesus did these things on the Sabbath’. By virtue of this arrangement, the formal rationale for persecution which it answers (5.16) rhetorically becomes a charge or accusation. The saying attributed to Jesus, "...my father is still working and I also am working" (5.17), builds upon the theme of Sabbath work in order to effect an implicit statement of equality with God. Accordingly, the second rationale for persecution (5.18) comes

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2 As noted by Neyrey (1988), Bultmann (1971:240-256), and others.

3 Parunuk (1983:538-539) describes the use of ὀπεξηγήσεως, which is technical ‘trial’ language found only in legal documents, as a transitional technique designed to create the impression that the speech in 5.17 and 5.19ff. is part of a reply. Further, I suggest that these words are used in this way to create the impression that this speech belongs to a trial scenario.
to function as a second accusation against the offending claim in 5.17; it in turn is answered by yet another saying, one which, in its elaborated form (5.18-20a), has been characterized by Dodd (1968) as a parable about a son as apprentice. However, again, the precise arrangement of these words serves an incisive purpose. The seemingly modest and innocuous saying of Jesus is arranged as an answer to a lethal threat (5.18), in order to create a specific rhetorical impression. In this context the saying (or parable) is transformed into a forensic reply to the accusation of blasphemy. The father and son imagery, which initially (5.19-20a) in parable-like form is highly accessible to a wide range of experience, is elaborated into a discourse. In this expansion, speech evoking the power of the son which is power accessible to God alone is employed (5.21), as are sayings concerning judgment day (within 5.21-29). Further, a form of witness speech, which I will not discuss in detail is added in 5.31-47.

The overview above aims only to indicate that numerous forms are combined within the complex speech of John 5. However, the aim of this chapter is not to focus upon these discrete units, but rather to note that these discrete forms have been combined in order to create the rhetorical impression of one speech. While it builds upon the insights of traditional form and redaction criticism, rhetorical criticism focuses upon the impact the arrangement of the whole complex of speech is designed to create in its final form. The diversity of the distinct units is made to serve a clear rhetorical aim. Fragments of saying and story are combined to create the impression of a trial. Those who challenge Jesus’ authority and threaten to have him put to death are answered by speech displaying the superior divine status of Jesus as the son. As a result of his answer the tables are turned and they are challenged to honor him and are confronted with his power to judge.

Interest in source and redaction theories as such goes beyond the socio-rhetorical focus of this dissertation. Nevertheless, my observation concerning the complex arrangement of discrete units of speech into a form which is “trial-like” requires that I take some position concerning the redaction of the text and its relation to the Synoptic tradition. Though the detail of the ongoing scholarly debate on this vexed question lies beyond the scope of this study, a brief summary will serve our purposes here. Kysar’s (1977:366)

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4 See also Lindars (1981:85).

5 See Lindars (1971) and (1981) on John’s homiletic development of sayings of Jesus into the form of discourses.

6 I refer the reader to the comprehensive overview provided by D.M. Smith in John among the Gospels: The Relationship in Twentieth Century Research (1992).
description of a consensus of vectors in recent scholarship is still representative: the Fourth Gospel originated in a Christian school related to a marginal non-normative form of Judaism. It preserved a distinct tradition related in some way to the Synoptic tradition. Out of that tradition developed a unique theological perspective amid struggle with the synagogue. The community was marked by its distinctive logos Christology, and the authority of a beloved founder. (See Kysar 1977:366.)

I will briefly state my point of view with reference to this consensus because it will affect the strategy that I follow in interpretation of John 5. I presuppose that at an early stage John’s tradition was similar to that behind the Synoptics; but within the Johannine community the traditional sayings attributed to Jesus were used with emphasis upon the oneness of Jesus with God his father. Only at a later stage were traditional accounts of miracles and sayings, which within the community had developed into discourses expressing a distinctive perspective, edited into a gospel genre, comparable to the genre of the Synoptics. 8

My suggestion is congruent with one stream of interpretation of the tradition history of the Fourth Gospel. Bultmann (1971:237-239)9 and Brown (1986:XLVII) assumed that John drew upon an independent source of tradition similar to the sources which underlie the Synoptics. Both share the view that John was first composed on the basis of other traditional sources and was later revised in light of the Synoptics. (See D.M. Smith, 1992:69-70.)

John 5.17-23 appears to reflect a redactional process. The saying in 5.17 has been shaped into a trial motif relating to sonship. A distinctive perspective is expressed in 5.17; it emphasizes Jesus’ relationship of oneness with his father. In an earlier form this saying may have belonged to a tradition of Synoptic-like sayings and stories. John 5.17 is a saying concerning the oneness of Jesus’ work with that of his father. The canonical shape of John 5.17-23 reflects, I suggest, a late redaction which develops this saying via a particular pattern of speech concerning the death and exaltation of Jesus as the son. I suggest that the canonical form of John 5 is designed to evoke a trial-like pattern comparable to the sequence of the Synoptic trial question on sonship. The shape into which the discrete units of speech in John 5 have been arranged reflects a pattern of significance which author and

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7 Hengel (1989:91) presupposes that John knows the Synoptics but exercised liberty of thought; thus redaction refers to a Johannine reworking of its own sources, not a revision of Synoptic tradition.

8 See D.M. Smith (1992:69,136) for a summary of scholarly opinion that would support this general position.

9 See especially Bultmann (1971:237 note 4; 238 note 1; 239 note 2).
audience already associated with a pattern of gospel speech, in which threats to the son are answered by evoking his enthroned status.

M.-É. Boismard (1977: 236) considers that it is of little significance whether John depends upon Mark, or Matthew, or Luke, or a source common to the Synoptics; what is essential in redactional procedure is to verify that a text of the Synoptic tradition under consideration is integral within John. Based primarily upon a comparison between the interrogation of Jesus by Pilate in Mark 15.2 and John 18.33-37, Boismard (1977) maintains that John does make use of some version of the Synoptic tradition. He suggests that in John 18.33-37 use of a redactional technique called Wideraufnahme can be detected: a gloss which is a kind of commentary on the primitive tradition is followed by inserting expressions which recapture the link between the redactor’s development of the tradition and the primitive expression.

D.M. Smith considers that though Boismard follows a more sophisticated redactional procedure his conclusion is compatible with the later view of Bultmann and Brown that the canonical version of the Fourth Gospel betrays knowledge of the Synoptic Gospels in a final stage of composition only. D.M. Smith reviews a further development in the work of Rosel Baum-Bodenbender that is compatible with these source theories. Based upon an analysis of the trial before Pilate in John, Baum-Bodenbender, maintains that an original narrative layer was characterized by high Christology; it interpreted Jesus’ death as triumphal return to his father and victory over the world; in another layer of redaction this theology, which is not theologically opposed to that of the Synoptics, works in elements of the Synoptic passion narrative and further accentuates the hostility of the Jews. 10

My own research in John has led me to agree with the general position that the trial-like narrative in John 5 reflects arrangement of earlier materials into a pattern that is comparable to aspects of the Synoptic speech. As I will argue in my comparison of John 5 with the Synoptic trial narratives in chapter 5, discrete traditional units of speech have been redesigned to fit a particular trial-like pattern that bears resemblance with the sequence of the Synoptic trial question concerning sonship. Thus John 5 creates a familiar impression: a particular pattern of forensic confrontation is answered by speech evoking images of the son enthroned, which is attested in the Synoptic Gospels and elsewhere. 11 Thus, the argument


11 In chapter 5 I also compare John 5.17-23 with a comparable pattern in excerpts from the Acts speeches and the Mark 11.15-12.13 narrative of the temple incident and parable of the wicked tenants.
for the son’s equality with God in 5.17-23 reflects a viewpoint that is distinctively John­nine, though it shares traditional patterns with other early Christian expression.

I have not digressed into an area which is of only contingent relevance to my thesis for no reason. My view that John 5 was latterly shaped into a form that evokes the impression of a particular type of trial-like speech connects the three ideas guiding my investigation: 1) that in some pattern threat and the superiority of sonship belong together; 2) the pattern relates to an understood myth; and, 3) within this familiar pattern the extraordinary claim of the son’s equality with God makes sense. But to attend to the admittedly distinct complex of speech in John 5 as if it were framed to fit a known motif raises the need for an appropriate methodological perspective. Below I shall introduce an approach to interpretation that actively looks for patterns reflected in the larger, rather than simply the discrete, formal unit of speech.

**A socio-rhetorical approach to interpretation**

My socio-rhetorical interpretation of John 5.17-23 begins by assuming that the text must reflect patterns of speech which are operative elsewhere in the culture at large, and more specifically in settings which generate comparable Christian speech. Of course this assumption could be said to be shared in traditional historical-critical method; but the two approaches are different in emphasis. Socio-rhetorical method aims to discover patterns of persuasion, even where it cannot be proved that a text displays evidence of literary parallels or explicit reliance upon a shared literary source.

Rhetorical investigation attends to patterns which effect persuasion. In order to communicate, people must share a common language. The use of language by people who inhabit the same social world reflects social conventions assumed by speaker and audience. These conventions are reflected in the patterns chosen for construction of a speech.

To begin to understand a speech one must first ask what in it represents the typical social conventions or mores of the culture to which the audience for whom it was created belong. Speech is formulated in patterns that respond to commonplace situations. 12 The

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12 Bator (1988:42) maintains that judgment is an activity carried out in and dependent upon a context, thus arguments in texts must be evaluated in reference to the social contexts to which they are designed to respond.
patterns provide the vehicle for a socially understood response to the matters which are at issue in a particular text.

The discipline of Classical and Hellenistic rhetoric attends to conventional speech patterns, formed through action and speech proper to situations stylized by social habit. Conventional patterns of understanding and speech are the building blocks, the foundation, upon which distinctive arguments are constructed.

Three key factors figure in rhetorical persuasion: the audience, the speaker, and the speech (Kennedy, 1984:15). Attention to the audience represents the general cultural and social situation which generates the occasion or need for the text (or speech). The speaker intends to communicate a particular message. This can only be accomplished through construction of a speech which builds upon the framework of understanding and the forms of expression which are already accepted by the audience.

In order for the intention of the orator to be accomplished, the speech will respond to the attitudes already held by the audience. The speaker will build upon familiar images and patterns understood by the audience in order to invent a speech. It is the distinctive task of the speaker to design or invent (inventio or heureis in rhetorical terminology) a speech that accomplishes the speaker's purpose. Generally the speech is designed to persuade the audience to share the perspective of the speaker in relation to the matter of the speech. (See Kennedy, 1984:14-15.)


See the introduction to the rhetorical method of Kennedy (1984:4-5,10), also Burke (1968:206-211) who identifies conventional form as the staple of rhetorical communication.

In the context of discussion of rhetorical analysis, I use the word 'speech' in a way that is intended to correspond to the meaning generally associated with the final form of a 'text', 'speaker' or 'orator' in a way that generally corresponds to 'author', and 'audience' in a way that is comparable to 'readers for whom the text was written'.

Rhetorical analysis focuses on patterns of meaning more than demonstrable literary parallels or sources. Similarly it tends to emphasize the oral dimensions of texts (or speeches) that have been formulated into writing. For background on the oral dimension of writing, see Ong (1980) and (1982). On the orality in Gospel texts see Kelber (1983) and Wilder (1964).
Rhetoric is concerned with the speaker's design and arrangement of familiar patterns of speech in a way that accomplishes the particular aim of the speaker in respect to the opinions already held by the audience. (See Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1.1.1355-1356.)

In rhetorical analysis of an ancient text, therefore, in order to discover the aim of the speaker, it is useful to attend first of all to aspects of the speech which are typical. Then the aspects that are distinctive can be discerned. The speech itself is formed in reference to cultural and social conventions already shared by audience and speaker. For the speaker cannot but build upon these in order to communicate a message. Upon investigation and comparison with other comparable types of speech it may be possible to make an educated guess concerning the conventional opinions held by the audience and the social world of the people to whom the speech is designed to appeal. The critical discipline of Classical and Hellenistic rhetoric evolved in reflection upon the means of persuasion already embedded within the social institutions of ordinary life.

In "Sociolinguistics and Biblical Interpretation," Cotterell (1986:65) describes five presuppositions of genuine discourse:

1) knowledge of the listener—on this knowledge depends the choice of information that should be given, as opposed to what can be assumed to be present--facts, prejudices, and beliefs form the basis for the discourse;

2) cooperation from the listener without which the discourse cannot proceed;

3) comprehensibility—the assumption that language will be used in a conventional manner;

4) contextual appropriateness—all participants will correctly identify the context and observe the appropriate social and linguistic conventions;

5) vocabulary and linguistic structures make the proposed discourse possible.

Similar considerations concerning discourse figure within socio-rhetorical interpretation of biblical texts. (See Robbins, 1992b:xix; xxiii and 1985b:35.) The point that the speaker desires to make is designed to move the audience, on the basis of what they already understand, by modifying their conventional perception of the matter of the speech in some way. For example, the speech may be designed to intensify and affirm the opinions the audience already holds, or to demonstrate and clarify or even refute a particular position with respect to their opinion, or to question and deliberate upon the best course of action.

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16 Cotterell derives these presuppositions from H.H. Clark and E.V. Clark in *Psychology and Language* (New York:Janovich, 1977).
which they should follow on the basis of their opinion. In Classical rhetoric these three possibilities are related to the categorization of speech as either epideictic, judicial or deliberative in its aim. 17

Respect for the values of the social world that are expressed in an ancient text demands recognition that it is different from the picture of the world assumed by any twentieth-century interpreter. The discourse shared by the author and first audience of the text belongs to a different complex of meaning from that assumed by modern Western audiences (Neyrey (1991:xvi-xvii) and Malina (1991:1-15)). Interpretation must respect the conventional social values and linguistic assumptions embedded within biblical texts. Attention to these presuppositions is assumed in the process of socio-rhetorical analysis. It identifies elements in the speech which appear to be conventional. On this basis it explores how the speaker has used understood conventions creatively in order to communicate a particular message through the speech. The distinctive thought and expression of the speaker is understood to be developed within the framework of conventions that are already accepted by the audience.

The adaption of the principles of rhetoric to the reading of texts is justified, in a general sense because the discipline of rhetoric offers a precise analytical tool that should prove useful in interpretation of almost any text. The practice of this discipline was deeply embedded in the education and models of public life shared by Greek-speaking persons within the Mediterranean world. Palestine and Diaspora Jewish communities were part of this larger cultural milieu during the first century C.E. Thus rhetorical patterns of speech construction have particular relevance to analysis of early Christian texts. 18

The insights of Classical and Hellenistic rhetorical analysis have been extended in recent years. I mention but a few notable proponents of contemporary rhetorical theory who

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17 See Aristotle (Rhetoric 1.3.13578); Mack (1990:34-45). See Kennedy (1984:39-72) and Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca (1971:13-31) for a general background to these types of speech and the persuasive techniques generally associated with each.

18 I assume that rhetorical patterns of speech were sufficiently pervasive within the milieu of the New Testament world to make Hellenistic rhetoric a particularly apt tool for its analysis. However it is beyond the scope of this study to make an historical case for this assumption. I refer the reader to Kinneavy (1987:39-99) who argues that the influence of rhetoric is probable on semantic and historical grounds. Black (1990:62,69) holds a similar point of view. Janowitz (1983:352) maintains that the same cultural milieu was shared in Hellenism and Judaism. Goldstein (1981) reaches a similar conclusion. See also Kennedy (1984).

A critical appraisal of the extent to which rhetorical technique can be considered influential on New Testament speech is suggested by Burridge (1991:649-651). Feldman (1986) argues that Jews in Palestine were much less influenced by Hellenism than Jews in the Diaspora, and that Greek was not widely spoken in Palestine.
have influenced my understanding of the discipline. The theory of "intertextuality" proposed by Julia Kristeva (1969, 1986), is concerned with the context of meaning that is already understood, as the playground within which speech interacts. She builds upon the poetics of the novel developed by the Russian theorist Bakhtin (1990). Kenneth Burke (1955) attends to literature as rhetoric which is designed to appeal to human motives. Booth (1974) attempts to break down artificial distinctions between logical proof and ethical and emotive persuasion. 19 Sociological analysis provides a tool for analysis of the conventional values and social divisions, understood by speaker and audience which are reflected in texts.20

While I draw upon rhetorical and sociological approaches to analysis of texts, I do not attempt to write a treatise on method in the process of my analysis of John 5.17-23. In the body of my dissertation I nevertheless do practice rhetorical criticism in a way that makes use of a variety of contemporary insights into rhetorical theory.

I am guided by the framework for describing the method of socio-rhetorical investigation that is outlined briefly by Vernon K. Robbins. In his introduction to the paperback edition of Jesus the Teacher, Robbins narrates the literary influences that were a catalyst in his understanding of an emerging process of socio-rhetorical method (1992:xiii-xlilii). He articulates a programmatic description of what had become for him an intuitive socio-rhetorical approach; it requires a combined process of reading a text and at the same time respecting the need to open the world of the text (Robbins, 1992b:xxiii). At the risk of stating the obvious, twentieth century readers must attend, not only to the message the text appears rhetorically designed to communicate, but also to imagining how its significance relates to the very different social framework of first-century Mediterranean culture.

In brief Robbins (1992b:xxiii) introduces a framework which names the "four arenas" of interpretation that are emphasized in socio-rhetorical interpretation:

a) rhetorical-literary features internal to the text;

b) intertextual aspects of the text;

c) social and cultural dynamics in the text;

d) ideology.

19 See Bator (1988:40) on Booth's assessment of the impact of rhetoric on the practical discourse of communities, and the possibility of improving beliefs through community participation in shared discourse.

The approach has the advantage of directing the interpreter toward the multi-dimensional character of the text and its world. The four pronged approach supports analysis that attends to recent developments in literary and sociological theory; and it is compatible with the precise procedure for analysis found within the discipline of Classical and Hellenistic rhetoric.

In the remainder of this chapter I will employ Classical and Hellenistic rhetorical technique in an analysis of John 5, that belongs within the arena of features internal to the text. In Part II of the dissertation I will introduce tools proper to social, intertextual and ideological analysis with respect to the four arenas of interpretation listed above. I will discuss the methods proper to each arena more fully as it occurs within the body of my investigation.

**Rhetorical analysis of the internal structure of John 5**

*The aim of rhetorical analysis of the internal features of John 5*

My aim in analyzing John 5 in the light of the conventions of Hellenistic rhetoric is to explore the internal dynamics of its arrangement. I assume that the Greek speaking audience and the author of John were acquainted with the rhetorical patterns of public and legal address that were conventional in the education and public life of the Hellenistic world generally. I do not assume that they were acquainted with rhetoric in a technical sense. Rather my purpose in using the technique of rhetorical analysis is to focus upon the internal design of the actions and speech attributed to Jesus in John 5. Via the analytic procedure of Hellenistic rhetorical technique, I hope to precisely assess the function of John 5.17-23 within John 5 as a whole.

I use Hellenistic legal terminology, such as "absolute case" and "lese majesty," in order to precisely identify what is at issue in the challenge and reply within 5.17-23. However the validity of this analysis does not rest upon the question of whether John had technical acquaintance with these terms or with the theory of Hellenistic judicial analysis as it is set out in the *Progymnasmata*.

Nor do I claim that analysis of the internal rhetorical features of the text explains the significance that the audience and author of John would have attached to the argument in
John 5.17-23. The meaning generated by arranging these words in this way requires attention to patterns of significance which I will discuss in the chapters that follow.

Nor do I propose that the technique of rhetorical analysis exhausts the formal possibilities of the speech in John 5. 21 The aim of my analysis here is simply 1) to identify the rhetorical aim of the speech; 2) to see how the reply concerning the son generates its authority; and, 3) to attend to the function of conflict within the dynamic of the speech.

The expansion of the chreia in John 5

At a pool where sick people gather daily seeking healing, Jesus commands a man long paralyzed to "rise, take up your mat and walk." The man does so.

The act attributed to Jesus is expanded into a sequence of short scenes. (See Mack and Robbins, 1989:11-22; 51-63.) The effective words of Jesus give rise first to the opponents' preliminary charge that, "It is not lawful for the man to carry his mat on the Sabbath." The healed man defends himself by referring them to "the one who made me whole," who told him to "rise take up your mat and walk." Yet Jesus is identified by his opponents as "the one who told you to carry your mat." See Pancaro (1975:14); also Brown (1986:208). Thus he is eventually implicated as the one responsible for "loosening" or undoing, ἔλυσεν, the Sabbath (5.18a).

The chreia 22 provided the simplest building block of rhetorical technique. From the act attributed to a notable person the student could choose one thread of the narrative as the basis for expansion of the chreia, sometimes to lead to 'a moral of the story' or a salutary observation concerning the person, which could then be expanded into an argument. The exercises of expansion and elaboration of the chreia were designed to teach boys how to argue in the law courts and public assemblies (Hock and O'Neil, 1986).

Analysis of John 5 up to this point has assumed what appears obvious, that John 5, due to its trial-like format, is a species of judicial rhetoric, the kind of speech derived from

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21 For example, Léon-Dufour (1960-61) sees a chiasmus in the closely interwoven text of 5.19-30. Van der Watt (1985:71-73) builds an analysis upon the extensive use of parallelism within the structure of this section. Vanhoye also notes in 5.19-30 both a chiasmus and a modeling of the whole on the model of biblical parallelism, in "La compositions de Jn 5,19-30" Mélanges B. Rigaux. 259-274; this article is cited in Beasley-Murray, (1987:72) but was unobtainable by the author.

22 Robbins distinguishes between various types of chreia, active and passive chreiai, action, saying, or mixed chreiai, in Mack & Robbins, 1989:13. Jn.5.1-9 is an example of the latter. To simplify I will here include words of Jesus in 5.1-17 under the heading of 'acts' (albeit speech acts) attributed to the person.
argument within the law courts. However its internal rhetorical movement is complex. Though the design of the chreia leads up to an accusation and defense, indicating a judicial format, Jesus' response to charges (17.19-46) is characterized less by legal figures, than by reasoning designed to present him as an honorable person. (See Mack and Robbins, 1989:164.)

In his analysis of pronouncement stories, Vernon Robbins (1984, 1987b) observes that the basic unit of action and/or words attributed to Jesus underlies the various types of pronouncement stories; in the pronouncement story form, the chreia has been expanded variously in order to accomplish specific rhetorical aims. This leads Robbins (1984:97) to observe that epideictic rhetoric underlies every pronouncement story because in its germinal form, the chreia as an action attributed to a notable person aims to display the ethos of a particular person, though this is often expanded to include other rhetorical features.

Within this guiding ethos of the pronouncement story genre, basic types can be identified, by observing the species of rhetoric used to attain the "rhetorical goal" of the speech (Robbins, 1984:95-105). Robbins identifies six basic types of pronouncement stories:

1) Display
2) Thesis
3) Exhortation
4) Defense
5) Praise
6) Censure

John 5 can initially be identified as a defense story, because of the centrality of charges and replies to these in the elaboration of an argument in defense of Jesus. However, the defense incorporates the establishment of a thesis argument (5.17-23); the supporting arguments include exhortation (5.24-25), and take a distinct turn toward an epideictic conclusion in which Jesus' self praise, contrasted with his opponents censure, is used to personify their refusal to accept the witness in defense of his honor (30-37).

Thus the completion of the pronouncement story ends having gone full circle from its beginning. The simple display of the ethos of Jesus (5.1-9) reaches a finale which incites indignation, censuring those who will not honor him (5.37-47). The combination of all of these moves is one clue that John 5 elaborates a complete argument. Because the epideictic tendency of the speech is pervasive, it can be characterized as a speech which, though
epideictic in its goal of praise and censure, employs the formal reasoning of judicial rhetoric.

**Elaboration into a complete argument: outline and commentary**

The elaboration of the argument in John 5 follows the outline of the thesis argument (Mack and Robbins, 1989:52; Mack 1990:42), with slight variations. I will first identify the parts of the complete argument in John 5 and then comment on features of each part.

**Introduction** 1-16

**Thesis Argument** 17-29

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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>proposition</td>
<td>Ο πατήρ μου ἐως ἡρτι ἐργάζεται κἀγὼ ἐργάζομαι</td>
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<tr>
<td>18b</td>
<td>rationale</td>
<td>πατέρα ἰδιὸν ἔλεγεν τὸν θεόν ἵσον ἔπαινον ποιῶν τῷ θεῷ</td>
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<td>19a</td>
<td>opposite and rebuttal</td>
<td>οὗ δύναται ὁ υἱὸς... ἀφ' ἐποτοῦ οὐδὲν ἐὰν μὴ τι βλέπῃ τὸν πατέρα ποιοῦντα.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19b</td>
<td>contrary of opposite</td>
<td>ὁ γὰρ ἀν ἐκείνος ποιή, ταῦτα καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ὁμοίως ποιεῖ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>restatement of rationale</td>
<td>ὁ γὰρ πατήρ φιλεῖ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πάντα δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ ὁ αὐτὸς ποιεί.</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>example of rationale</td>
<td>ὡσπερ γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ἐγείρει τοὺς νεκροὺς... οὕτως καὶ ὁ υἱὸς...ζωοποιεῖ</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>contrary example of rationale</td>
<td>οὐδὲ γὰρ ὁ πατήρ κρίνει οὐδένα ἀλλὰ τὴν κρίσιν πώσιν δέδωκεν τῷ υἱῷ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
23 conclusion

\[\text{ίνα πάντες τιμῶσι τὸν ὕδων καθὼς τιμῶσι τὸν πατέρα}\]

23b contrary of conclusion

\[\text{ὁ μὴ τιμῶν τὸν ὕδων οὐ τιμᾷ τὸν πατέρα τὸν πέμψαντα αὐτῶν.}\]

24 analogy

The one hearing...has life

25 example

The dead will hear and live

26 summary of rationale

\[\text{ὡσπερ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ἔχει ἱωὴν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, οὕτω καὶ τῷ ὕδω ἔδωκεν ἱωὴν ἔχειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ}\]

27 judgement

καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ κρίσιν ποιεῖν, ὅτι ὕδως ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν.

28 exhortation

(by maxim recalling judgment scenes)

**Peroration 30-47**

30 summary of reasoning

Oὐ δύναμαι...ἀπ’ ἐμαυτοῦ οὐδὲν καθὼς ἀκούω κρίνω...οὕτω ἵνα ἐξητῶ τοῦ βέλημα τὸ ἑμὸν ἀλλὰ...τοῦ πέμψαντος με

31-40 witnesses

introduced with paraphrase of 5.19

ʻΕὰν...μαρτυρῶ περὶ ἐμαυτοῦ...οὐκ...ἐστιν ἀληθῆς ἀλλὰς ἐστῖν ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ ἐμοῦ...ὅτι ἀληθῆς ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία...

33-35 John the Baptist

36 the works I do
(introducing indignatio from v.37b)

37-38  
the Father  whom you never heard nor saw

39-40  
the scriptures  though you refuse me

indignatio (praise and blame reinforcing proposition v.19a)

41-43b  
noble  I do not receive glory from humans

disgraceful  you do not know the love of God

noble  I have come in my Father's name

disgraceful  you have not received me

contrary  If another comes in his own name him you will receive

summing up "in person"

44-47  
How can you believe?

self honor not God honor

I do not accuse you, Moses accuses you

If you had believed Moses you would have believed me

you do not believe his writings you do not believe my words

Introduction- The basic chreia (5.1-9a) is expanded (5.9b-17) in order to prefigure the charge of undoing the Sabbath. This development unfolds in tension with the portrayal of the ethos of Jesus as the one who raises the sick to wholeness (5.8,9,12) and who judges
The expansion leads into the first account of the situation, indirectly a charge against Jesus (5.16) which generates a response.

Proposition- Jesus’ reply to the first charge is the proposition (5.17) which begins to set in place the thesis argument. Because it is introduced through the expansion of the chreia, the statement of the case or narratio rehearses the circumstances and clarifies the issue by establishing the proposition with a reason aitia, ratio (Mack, 1990:41). See also Mack and Robbins (1989:57).

Note the shift to direct discourse. Reference to the father picks up associations from 1.18; 3.35; 4.12,21-23. In the context of John 5 "my father" is a new term, but in the wider context of the Fourth Gospel the audience’s associations with "father" have already been set in place.

Because 5.17 makes sense even when separated from the healing in 5.1-9, it does not appear to be a saying of Jesus which was intrinsically associated with this basic chreia. However, in relation to the specific context of the Sabbath this pronouncement takes a crucial position on the conflict at hand. In early Christian rhetoric, every move may combine a number of rhetorical features internally (Mack & Robbins, 1989:28). John 5.17 may be a general pronouncement on the character of the works of Jesus, while specifically it is designed as a reply to the charge of undoing the Sabbath. In the same move it takes a position on the issue in question which articulates the proposition of the argument. (See Mack, 1990: 38.)

Variations on the designation 'Ο ποιησας με νυγη (11a, 13a, 14b), reinforce the image of Jesus as the one who gives life. Jesus’ encounter with the healed man in the temple is a digression which adds another dimension. Jesus in this narrative is also portrayed as the one who gives divine warning. The episode foreshadows the theme of judgement. It adds to the chreia’s characterization of the ethos of Jesus (5.14). The need for clarification of the identity of Jesus is also prefigured, for the man "did not know" who Jesus was (5.13).

As a general statement about the character of the works of Jesus, 5.17 could have made an appropriate pronouncement relating to Jesus’ actions in healing the official’s son 5.52-53, or the temple expulsion 2.23-21, especially v.16, "Stop making my father’s house a market" or in support of testimony supporting "doing the truth" in 3. 19-21; or the "one who comes from above" (3.31-36).

Similarly, in Mark 11.27-33 the question, ‘who gave you the authority to do "these things"?’ ταυτα ποιεις, is placed in a context which points to the temple expulsion. Yet the question also could include reference to the actions of Jesus generally. (See Juel, 1977; Hultgren, 1979; Trocme, 1968.) Likewise in John 5.17, Jesus’ reply to the implicit challenge of his authority to do these things, ταυτα ενσεναι, is designed as a reply to specific charges of undoing the Sabbath, and yet it could also be interpreted as an allusion to the works of Jesus which have been described in the Gospel up to this point.
18b Rationale- The second charge: "He calls God his own father making himself equal to God"\[\text{πατέρα ὑιόν ἐλεγεν τὸν θεὸν ὑιὸν ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ θεῷ}\] doubles as an accusation and (ironically) as the hypothesis of the argument. This literary arrangement is similar to the device of Johannine misunderstanding. The argument is furthered and strengthened by a pointed statement which, in a dramatic sense, is misunderstood or wrongly construed. Because it emerges out of the conflict of pleas, it is also the place that most clearly expresses the stasis of the argument.

Rather than denying this charge, Jesus' next reply elaborates upon it.

Often, in elaboration of a chreia, the proposition emerges from the chreia encoded in figurative language, the reason serves to "decode it by restating it in declarative form" (Mack, 1990:42).

In John 5, the rationale "he calls God his own father making himself equal with God" advances the argument by precisely stating how the proposition "the father is working...I am working" is logically to be understood. It gives the reason for the position that is taken in the proposition (Mack, 1990:38).

The explicit statement of this reasoning is jarring. Perhaps that is why this λόγος is dressed in wolves' clothing; it is given as the reason Jesus' adversaries seek his death. However, the "accusation" makes explicit the rationale in defense of Jesus.

19a Contrary of the proposition, opposite and rebuttal \[\text{οὐ δύναται ὁ νῦς... ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ οὐδὲν ἔδω μὴ τι βλέπῃ τὸν πατέρα ποιοῦντα.}\]

Refutation and opposite- One way of refuting an argument is by not granting one of its assumptions, by showing that what one's opponent thinks is a parallel case is shown to be dissimilar (Cicero, De Inventione 1.53.100). John 5.19 refutes the charge that Jesus makes himself God by affirming the son's utter reliance upon the father. In principle, the argument must proceed by distinguishing itself from the other side of the question.

In "strictly judicial" situations the opposite refers to refutation of the opposing view; in declamation it gave opportunity to increase the plausibility of the argument by bringing in a contrasting perspective (Mack, 1990: 42,45). In John 5.19 it does double duty as both rebuttal and as a dialectical move which clarifies the intended interpretation of the rationale. 5.19 restates 5.17 in the contrary, while at the same time it (tacitly) refutes the opponents' charge that Jesus attempts to acquire honor.
Restatement of the rationale—Below I will argue that the restatement of the rationale develops the proposition and rationale into a syllogism. Before attempting to show how this occurs in John 5.12-23, I will describe the use of examples as part of the formation of a syllogism.

The three part form of syllogism most familiar today is known through the old saw:

- All humans are mortal
- Socrates is human
- Therefore Socrates is mortal.

In argumentation it was common for some parts of the argument to be expanded while other parts, which were already assumed by the hearers, were unstated, as follows:

**Term 1 (T1)** unstated
- reason for T1.

(All humans are mortal)
- I have never heard of anyone who lived forever.

**Term 2 (T2)**
- reason for T2.

(Socrates is human)
- Just like all his companions, Socrates put on his trousers one leg at a time.

**Term 3 (T3)** Conclusion
- summary of T3.

Socrates is mortal.
- Therefore Socrates, for all his virtue is only an ordinary person.
- Seeing that he is mortal like us, we can all aspire to be as clever as he.

Cicero held that the deductive argument has five parts, as stated by Aristotle and others, not three only (De Inventione 1.34. 57-58). In the process of presenting his point of view, he gives an example demonstrating how the parts of the major or minor premise which are self-evident may be omitted, making the argument seem to have only three or four parts. Below my summary of his example follows the customary division into three parts (T1, T2, T3) showing the examples and reasons given to prove the premises, as subsidiary parts of that premise (De Inventione 1.34.60) as follows:25

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25 I have added labels such as T1, example of T1 to the material that I quote or paraphrase from Cicero (De inventione 1.34.60).
"Those who think that the syllogism ought to be divided into five parts say that first one should state the basis of the argument in this way:

\[ T1 \quad \text{‘Things done by design are better managed than those which are governed without design.’ This they count as the first part. Then they think it should be supported by a variety of reasons and the greatest possible fullness of expression” (Cicero, De Inventione 1.34.58).} \]

The reasons may take the form of examples, as follows:

example of \( T1 \). The designed house is better than the one which is built haphazardly, (and so on) (Cicero, De Inventione 1.34.58-59).

The examples serve to prove the major premise, completing two parts of the syllogism.

"When the major premise has been proved in this fashion, and two parts of the syllogism have been completed, in the third part, they say you should state as a minor premise what you wish to show, this being in line with the thought of the major premise" (Cicero, De Inventione 1.34.59).

\[ T2 \quad \text{‘Of all things nothing is better governed than the universe.’} \]

This gives specific point (by a negative example) to the thought of the major premise.

The next part introduces a proof of the minor premise:

example of \( T2 \). The sun follows a fixed order, and the seasons are adapted to the advantage of nature.

This example serves as proof that the world is governed by no ordinary intelligence. The conclusion states the necessary deduction from all parts:

\[ T3 \quad \text{therefore the universe is governed by design.} \]

"...Or, [the conclusion] after bringing the major and the minor premise together in one brief statement adds what follows from them, after this fashion" [Cicero’s alternate version of the conclusion follows:]

\[ T3 \quad \text{‘if better by design than not, and nothing better than the universe, then the universe is by design’ (De Inventione 1.34.58-59).} \]
By applying Cicero’s pattern to the reasoning in John 5.17-23 we find a deductive argument which has been expanded by examples (e.g.) and reasons in the same way.

**T1** *Major Premise* (unstated)

**example of T1.** οὔ δύναται ὁ υἱὸς... ἀφ' ἑαυτοῦ οὐδὲν ἔδω μή τι βλέπῃ τὸν πατέρα ποιοῦσα. (19b)

**reason for e.g.** ὧ γὰρ ἐν ἐκείνος ποιή, ταῦτα καὶ ὁ υἱὸς ὁμοίως ποιεῖ (19c)

**T2** *Minor Premise* πατέρα ὕιον ἔλεγεν τὸν θεόν ἰσον ἑαυτὸν ποιῶν τῷ θεῷ (18)

**reason for T2.** ὧ γὰρ πατήρ φιλεῖ τὸν υἱὸν καὶ πάντα δείκνυσιν αὐτῷ ἢ αὐτὸς ποιεῖ (20)

**example of T2.** ὡσπερ γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ἐγείρει τοὺς νεκρούς... ὡτός καὶ ὁ υἱὸς... ἔζηκε (21)

**contrary T2 e.g.** οὐδὲ γὰρ ὁ πατήρ κρίνει οὐδένα

**contra all τὴν κρίσιν πᾶσαν δέδωκεν τῷ υἱῷ (22)**

**T3** *Conclusion* ἵνα πάντες τιμῶσι τὸν υἱὸν καθὼς τιμῶσα τὸν πατέρα (23a)

**contrary T3.** ὡ μῆ τιμῶν τὸν υἱὸν οὐ τιμῶ τὸν πατέρα τὸν πέμψαντα αὐτῶν

The example for the first term shows that the relationship of child to the father begins as one of reliance upon the action of the father. The reason given is the general principle of equality between the work of father and son. As a result of this relationship of reliance, the father in love gives all the work of judgment to the son in order that equipped with the power to enforce this judgment, the son should be given honor equal to that already given to the father.

In a culture where sons typically were apprenticed to their fathers (Dodd, 1968:34-40) and family honor was ascribed from parent to child, this would have doubled as a an accessible social analogy. Here it reinforces the image of Jesus as "the" child of "the" father. (See Jn.1.18.)
The analogy v.24, (which may come from the sayings of Jesus) uses a general type of person "the one who hears" to apply the thesis argument (Mack, 1990:40).

The example, which in Hellenistic rhetoric usually is an historical example, (here, v.25), is a saying concerning the imminent day of reckoning.

The part of the argument called "judgment" in judicial cases typically cited other authorities who functioned as legal precedents. In this citation of judgment the argument is restated yet again to reinforce the conclusion that Jesus is not only the eschatological judge, the son of man but he is the one who is now (present tense) in a position of authority. As judge he has power to enforce the scenario of judgment depicted in 5.23-25, on the criteria of honor of Jesus equal to honor of God:

\[
\text{W(57rep 'YCxP b 7rCLT:ryp exe, IW:ryV 8V 8CivTii>, OVTWlT KCi' TW vIii> eowKev IW:ryV exew 8V 8CiVTii>
\]

Compare this with Cicero's alternate version of the conclusion which "...after bringing the major and the minor premise together in one brief statement adds what follows from them," after this fashion:

Therefore if those things are administered better which are governed by design than those which are administered without design, and nothing is governed better than the universe, then the universe is governed by design (De Inventione 1.34.59).

In John 5.27 the conclusion is restated on the basis of the premises in such a way as unequivocally to identify Jesus as the one given power to judge those who do not honor him as they honor the father.

The peroration sums up the whole speech by running over the arguments. Typically it has three parts, the summing up, the indignatio, and the conquistio or the arousing of pity or sympathy.

Observe the use of the first two techniques in In.5.30-49: in the summing up matters discussed previously are brought together to refresh the memory of the audience (Cicero De Inventione 1.51.98).

First the summary of reasoning revisits the point of departure for the thesis argument in 5.19:
Où δύναμαι... ἃ πεποίησα καθὼς ἁκούω κρίνω... ὅτι οὐ ζητῶ τὸ θέλημα τὸ ἐμὸν ἄλλα... τὸν πέμψαντός με. (5.30).

As Mack observes, the period is formed by returning to the point of departure (Mack, 1990:46).

Summing up the arguments can be accomplished in two ways. At times Cicero says you should run over your own arguments one by one, but at other times you can bring on stage some person or thing and let this actor sum up the argument (De Inventione 1.52.99). In John 5 we find a striking combination of both techniques.

A variation on the argument introduces authoritative witnesses who are cited as external evidence of the truth of what Jesus has argued.

31-40 witnesses

31-32 introduced with paraphrase of 5.19

'Εὰν... μαρτυρῶ περὶ ἄμαντον... οὐκ... ἦστιν ἀληθῆς... ἄλλος ἦστιν ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ ἐμοῦ... ὅτι ἄληθῆς ἦστιν ἡ μαρτυρία...

33-35 John the Baptist

36 the works I do

(introducing indignatio from v.37b)

37-38 the Father whom you never heard nor saw

39-40 the scriptures though you refuse me

The part of the peroration called indignatio is designed to excite ill-will by bringing the dynamic of praise and blame to bear upon the previously argued position in relation to the present (Mack & Robbins, 1989:52). It includes the introduction of authorities who ought to carry the greatest weight, including the "immortal gods," and also forefathers and authors of laws (De Inventione 1.53.101-54.105).
indignatio
(praise and blame reinforcing proposition v.19a)

noble I do not receive glory from humans

disgraceful you do not know the love of God

noble I have come in my Father's name

disgraceful you have not received me

contrary If another comes in his own name you will receive

This indignatio incidentally serves as a "summing up" in first person by Jesus, designed to "work up" the audience against his opponents. To cap it off, a yet more dramatic technique is added.

Cicero gives this example of how the summing up can be accomplished "in person." What if the author should appear and ask, 'why do you hesitate since this has been proved?' (De Inventione 1.53.100). Or "what if the laws could speak? Would they not make this complaint to you? what more do you, jury, desire, as this has been made plain?" (De Inventione 1.53.100).

In a strikingly similar form of speech Jesus asks:
How is it possible for you to believe, receiving glory, δόξα, from one another, and you do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God?

He concludes by nearly "bringing Moses on stage," by speaking "in person" for Moses:

summing up "in person"

44-47

How can you believe?
self honor not God's honor:
I do not accuse you Moses accuses you
If you had believed Moses
you would have believed me
you do not believe his writings
you do not believe my words
The epideictic strategy of John 5

In its final form John 5 is constructed as a complete argument in the pattern of judicial speech. However the epideictic goal which it achieves suggests a complementary rhetorical strategy which appears to be a substratum of the surface judicial presentation.

Epideictic speech proceeds by developing good and bad qualities through amplification in a framework that confirms generally held values; it treats members of the audience as observers who are fortified in their existing judgment, not as judges who must decide whether the defendant is innocent or guilty in relation to an action in the past (Mack and Robbins, 1989: 162).

In John 5 the speaker elaborates a rationale which is designed to fortify and amplify the honor of Jesus. The audience already assumes that Jesus is "the one who made people whole." From this starting point, the issue is less, 'is he guilty?' than 'how does this judicial encounter more clearly display the magnitude of his honor?'

The thesis argument is designed to display his honor yet more explicitly to the audience by arguing further. As well as making people whole, he is the one to whom the father has given all judgment. Because he has been given the powers of making life and judgment God has given him equal status with God, and therefore he is properly to be honored in the same way that God is honored.

The aim of persuading the audience to give Jesus a grant of honor equal to that given to God is reinforced in the indignatio. It juxtaposes the exemplary relationship of Jesus to the father over against the disgraceful spectacle of those who deny him equal honor. Thus, the audience is reinforced in their original identification with the ethos of Jesus, but now they make that identification in terms of the thesis argument, over against those who are presented as seeking to convict him of a capital crime on the grounds of this seminal claim, "The father is working...and I am working."

The form of argumentation in John 5 was generated in a post-crucifixion situation. The stereo-typed role of those who reject and prosecute Jesus to death has already been cast. Within this script, the opponents of Jesus are those who refuse to give a grant of honor to one whom they see as a deviant who undoes the social order and is therefore deserving of public condemnation and death. The challenge they issue elicits the elaboration of formal reasoning for giving Jesus honor equal to God.
Before turning to judicial aspects of John 5 as the elaboration of a complete argument, I will dwell upon the epideictic substrata of two contrasting roles which speak through the text of 5.1-9a,17 and 5.9b-16,18. The goal of one role is to display the ethos of Jesus. The Goal of the other is to censure him.

The epideictic character of 5.1-19 follows a pattern strikingly similar to that of the Synoptic Beelzebul controversy, identified by Vernon Robbins in the tradition common to Mat.9.32-34; 12.22-37; Mk. 3.19a-30 (Mack and Robbins, 1989: 161-169). Robbins sees two chreiai operative in this traditional unit. One, which is abbreviated into a form which could serve as an accusation, characterizes the opponents of Jesus who slanderously attribute his exorcisms to Beelzebul. The other which is elaborated into an argument refuting the first, contains a saying attributed to Jesus which is elaborated into an argument that make the slanderous chreia seem implausible (Mack and Robbins, 1989:162-165).

Suggesting that the tradition may include two separate chreiai, Robbins argues that the first chreia, representing slander against Jesus, is coupled with a second, a saying attributed to Jesus which is elaborated into an argument against the slander.

An example which Theon (205,9-19) uses to characterize the strategy of "double chreia" helps to explain this rhetorical device (Mack & Robbins, 1989:162-163).

**First chreia:**
Alexander, the Macedonian king, stood over Diogenes as he slept and said: "To sleep all night ill suits a counselor" (Iliad 2.24);

**Second chreia:**
and Diogenes responded: "On whom the folk rely, whose cares are many" (Iliad 2.25 cited in Robbins).

The double chreia serves to create particular character traits for particular people; a technique used in the Beelzebul tradition to characterize groups of people as role complements or role opposites of Jesus (Mack & Robbins, 1989:163).

Robbins notes this pattern in the common Beelzebul tradition:  

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26 The book co-authored by Mack and Robbins (1989) contains chapters written by either Mack or Robbins. Rather than list each chapter title separately in the bibliography, mention of Robbins cited as (Mack and Robbins, 1989) indicates that I quote from a chapter by Robbins.
1) *Abbreviated chreia*- They said, by the ruler of the demons he casts out
demons.

2) *refutation* (by a second expanded chreia)- He said, a kingdom divided...and a
house... and if Satan...if a strong man.

Further, in his analysis of Matthew's version of the 'Beelzebul' tradition, Robbins
notes similarities between the pattern in Mathew 9.32-34 and Theon's (*Progymnasmata*
205, 1-3) characterization of a responsive chreia a chreia containing some remark to which
a response is made:

*Situation*: A demoniac was brought. When the demon had been cast out the
dumb man spoke.

*Remark by the crowds*: they marveled, "Never was anything like this seen,"

*Response by the Pharisees*: "He casts out demons by the ruler of demons"

Robbins compares this with an epideictic unit in Plutarch, in which one notable state­
ment from the main character, Alexander, elicits divergent responses, which are consistent
with the respondents' role in relationship to the protagonist (Mack and Robbins, 1989:169).
I have summarized Robbins' example as follows:

*Situation*: Situation: Alexander is presented with a situation offering the pos­sibility of a nighttime attack.

*Response*: Alexander answers, "I will not steal my victory."

*Response by some*: "whereupon some thought he had made a vainglorious reply,
and was jesting in the presence of so great a peril."

*Response by others*: "Others, however, thought that he had confidence in the
present situation...." (Alexander 31.10-13, cited in Mack and Robbins,

Some blame Alexander, others consider his response sensible and astute.
Robbins cites another similar example from Plutarch, *Alexander* 3.5-7:

*Situation*: the birth of Alexander on the same day that the temple of Artemis
was burnt.
Response by one Hegaesias: "It was no wonder that the temple of Artemis was burned down, since the goddess was busy bringing Alexander into the world."

Response by the Magi: "...seeing the temple's disaster as a sign of further disaster, ran about beating their faces and crying aloud that...great calamity for Asia had that day been born." (Abridged from Mack & Robbins, 1989:169.)

Epideictic rhetoric is designed to characterize the roles associated with responses of praise and blame. One event can elicit dissenting responses depending upon the roles of those who respond in relation to the main character.

Let us now see if these patterns help to clarify the development of the argument in John 5.1-19. In John 5 one stream in the narrative characterizing Jesus as life giver and judge (cf.5.21,22) is expanded. From effectual action and word in 1-9 it stretches out to include his word of warning to the healed man in the temple and his concluding pronouncement: The Father is working even until now and I am working (5.17).

An opposing role and response to Jesus also emerges in the expansion; it may have originally been developed from a separate chreia.

This thread within the narrative introduces the day as the Sabbath after the fact (5.9.b). Those who initiate charges on account of Sabbath illegality respond to the healed man carrying his mat with censure (9b-12,16,18). Their allegations of illegality associated with Jesus' act reach a climax when Jesus' pronouncement concerning his actions "the father is working and I work" (which tacitly implies that God is free to work on the Sabbath) is set in response to their allegations of Sabbath breaking. In response to this pronouncement they "seek to kill" him, certifying their role as "enemies of Jesus."

Throughout, the healed man maintains an ambiguous character by acting as the link between the ethos of Jesus as the one who made me whole and their censure of his actions (5.6,7,12,13,15). 27

In the common Beelzebul tradition, Robbins observes that the slander which functions as an accusation against Jesus contains no assertions of illegality; the attack is presented rather as an attack on Jesus' character (Mack and Robbins, 1989:164-165). Allusions to

27 Morris characterizes him as an "informer" (1971:306). Others have contrasted his role with that of the man born blind in John 9.
illegality do feature in the accusations against Jesus in John 5.10,16,18. But as in the Beelzebul tradition, the reply in John 5 is a defense of Jesus personal status rather than as a justification dealing with specific matters of customary law. (See 5.17,19-23.)

**Analysis of the stasis**

The first step in constructing a judicial case in Hellenistic rhetoric is to identify the question at issue in the case. The technical term for it is variously issue or stasis or question. (See Robbins 1988:25.) Hermogenes maintains that questions become systatic questions (capable of stasis):

1) when they have either "both a person and an act to be judged or, by all means at least one of these,"
2) when, from either side, they have arguments which are both apt for persuasion and strong in proofs, and,
3) when what is before the jurors is "uncertain before the trial but capable of being judged" (Hermogenes, *Stases*: 391-392).

The epideictic aim of John 5 has already been discussed above. However a judicial stasis is employed to accomplish that aim. The question in John 5 is clearly capable of stasis because:

1) The conflict of the two contrary positions concerns both the person (5.18b) and act (5.8,10,16,18a).
2) The charges are consistent with customary legal practice and thus implicitly must be taken seriously.
3) Presumably, the audience is already "on Jesus' side" they are predisposed toward his innocence of the charge in 5.16. However, the fact that a complete judicial argument is

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28 The Greek of 5.16 ὀδοκεῖν can be interpreted as ‘to prosecute’, not only, ‘to persecute’ διώκειν. (See Harvey, 1976:50.)

29 The narrator relates two formal accusations by Jesus’ opponents (5.16,18) and Jesus replies to these ἀπεκρίθηκεν (5.17,19). Parunak (1983:538) notes that the basic structure of accusation and defense is confirmed by the formal prefix: and Jesus replied and said ἀπεκρίθηκεν (5.19). This construction is in the indicative "answered and said," unlike the participle common in the Synoptics where it "always implies response to what goes on before." Here ἀπεκρίθηκεν is aorist middle, elsewhere attested only in Jn.5.17. This form ἀπεκρίθηκεν in the middle aorist occurs often in papyri but they are "without exception legal reports in which it means ‘replied’ of an advocate or party in a suit."
elaborated in response to the opponents’ charges indicates that the matter at issue would not have been clear to the audience without this confrontation; the audience needed to be convinced of the question emerging out of Jesus’ response (5.17) to the opponents’ charge.

The rhetorical handbooks were widely used as modes for teaching rhetoric in the Hellenistic world. Students learned to invent judicial proof in order to refute opposing arguments. My analysis of John will follow the common procedure that the handbooks lay out for invention of judicial arguments, and for analysis of a case. To find the precise matter at issue in a legal case the handbooks teach students to do the following:

1) Find the issue or stasis of the case. Under this heading Cicero includes the subsidiary questions: Is it a simple or complex case? Does the decision turn on general reasoning or written documents? (Cicero *De Inventione* I.8,10;12-13,17).

2) Find the justifying motive.

3) Find the central point of the accusation which is presented in opposition to the justifying motive in the defense.

4) From this arises the question for decision, and the point for the judge’s decision (*krinomenon*). (I have summarized this outline of the method from *Ad Herennium* I.16.26. See also Cicero *De Inventione* I.8,10.)

The substance of the case or stasis can be traced directly to the divergent positions of the accusation and the defense. In every subject which contains a controversy to be resolved by speech and debate, this is the question from which the whole case arises, says Cicero (*De Inventione* I.8.10). It emerges in the first conflict of pleas which arises from the defense or answer to the accusation, in this way: "You did it"; "I did not do it" or "I was justified in doing it." (1.8.18).

The stasis can be identified as one of three main types: 30

1) Conjectural when it is a question of fact, as in the question, ‘Did Jesus actually heal the lame man?’;

2) Legal when it turns on the letter of the text. 31

For example, ‘how can we define Sabbath? Is 6.p.m. on Friday the Sabbath?; Or could not the spirit of the law be interpreted to allow carrying a mat if the man was in desperate need of it?’

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30 Cicero (*De Inventione* I.7.10-12) identifies four types: fact, definition, quality, jurisdiction, in a more complex typology. I have followed the simpler version of *Ad Herennium* I.16.26 in which definition and quality are both included under the one heading of legal stases.

31 The legal stasis is divided by *Ad Herennium* into six main subtypes: letter and spirit; conflicting laws; ambiguity; definition; transference; and reasoning from analogy (*Ad Herennium* I.11,18-19).
3) Judicial when there is agreement on the act but the question turns on whether the act is right or wrong. ‘Was it right or wrong to command a lame man to "rise, take up your mat and walk"?’

The two main subtypes of judicial stases are absolute and assumptive. A question is absolute when "we contend that the act in and of itself was right." It is assumptive when other extraneous considerations are brought in; for example, the plea is for mercy, or that the act was done without intent (Ad Herennium 1.14.24).

If we apply this procedure to John 5 we shall begin by looking for the stasis. From this we shall determine the motive, the point of the accusation, and the point for adjudication, keeping in mind the question ‘is this a simple or complex case?’

First, the stasis is found by "joining the primary plea of the defense with the charge of the plaintiff" (Ad Herennium 1.10.). We can look for the stasis in John 5 by juxtaposing the first accusation against Jesus’ first defense.

The two conflicting pleas can be arranged in a dialectical structure:

**Accusation 1** - the opponents first begin to prosecute him because he "did these things" on the Sabbath (5.16).

**Defense 1** - in reply Jesus answers, ‘My father is working even now and I work’.

The stasis emerges out of the tension between the first conflict of pleas. Because Jesus neither denies the act in question, nor proposes a different interpretation of the (unstated) customary law by which they challenge him, the issue appears to be one of jurisdiction. They claim Jesus’ action is wrong. He justifies it as right.

The question, ‘is this a simple or a complex case?’ has already been answered in a preliminary way. Analysis of the expanded chreia identified two streams of narrative designed alternately to praise the authority of Jesus and to censure it. The elaboration of the thesis argument fulfills its goal in an invective against those who refuse to give Jesus a grant of honor. Thus, though John 5 employs judicial rhetoric, the case it presents is a complex mixture of adjudication about a past action of Jesus, with an overriding aim to praise Jesus and censure those who oppose him.
This is not an unbiased case between two parties who have equal representation. It gives only one side of a polemical dispute. Thus, to the extent that the opposing perspective is given any space at all, it is invested by the author with the stereotypical motive of censure of Jesus' authority. The role is associated with designs against Jesus aimed at legal condemnation and death.

Within this rhetorical framework, attention to the justifying motive of each opposing party enables us to identify the stasis more precisely. (See *Ad Herennium* 1.16.26.) How would the author and audience of this speech have perceived the conflict of motives? On one hand John 5.10-19 is interwoven with tacit censure of Jesus. Any censure alleging illegality threatens to undermine the integrity of one's actions and person. (See Malina and Neyrey, 1988.)

Aristotle, reflecting widespread ancient values which persist into Hellenistic pedagogical practice, noted that the relation between person and act is unstable. Constant interrelationship and community operates between person and acts. (Perelman, 1963:171-172.)

The person is the support for acts and evaluations of them, giving them coherence and significance. The popular use of the act attributed to a person, or *chreia*, in ancient and Hellenistic rhetoric demonstrates the widespread cultural practice underlying Aristotle's discussion of the dynamic relation between act and person. The instability between person and act may help us to understand the motive behind *inventio* of the case in defense of Jesus.

The act of healing creates the notion that Jesus is a person with special authority. But the conflicting emphasis on another aspect of the act, the command to carry a mat, strictly forbidden on the Sabbath in Rabbinic law, is disreputable, associated with deliberate provocation of unlawful behavior.

The audience of a speech fits information which they hear into a tacit social hierarchy of values, connected with socially constructed facts (Perelman, 1963:170; Malina, 1981a). For example, a person who is valued as a just person acts consistently in obedience to the fact of customary law. An unrighteous person subverts it. The values associated with esteem of Jesus (the man who made me whole) can be threatened by subsequent acts or accusations

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32 In this 'legal dispute' our text represents the author's perspective. The divergent response of censure in response to Jesus' testimony is stereotyped into the author's perspective on those who allege Jesus is usurping the law by "undoing" the Sabbath (5.10, 16, 18). They are implicitly associated with his public degradation as those who "began to prosecute" Jesus, and "sought to kill him" (5.16, 18a).

Such retrospective accounts served to vilify Jesus' typecast hostile opponents. Their presence, introducing conflict into the display of Jesus' honor, provided an explanation of sorts to the conventional assumption that the crucifixion of Jesus meant that he was accursed and rejected by God as a criminal. (See Hultgren, 1979; Harvey, 1976; Malina & Neyrey, 1988; Horsley, 1989.)
which would tie the person to illegal or improper actions (it is not lawful for you to carry
your mat on the Sabbath day). A later act or accusation may create a precarious relation between the values one associates with this person and his acts.

This conflict destabilizes the consistent relation which his admirers wish to establish between Jesus' person "the one who made me whole," and his act of commanding a paralytic to "take up your mat and walk" when it was the Sabbath day.

New acts either reinforce the previous makeup or reconstruct the person (Perelman, 1963:171-175). The assessment of the person may change if subsequent acts appear to be inconsistent with the integrity of one's original understanding of the relationship between the person and acts attributed to him or her. For this reason the stability of the person is never completely assured (Perelman, 1963:171).

Allegations of improper Sabbath action threaten to destabilize the consistent link between Jesus' acts and his honor as a person. Jesus responds by displaying his work as work in tandem with the father (5.17).

The author of the speech portrays two conflicting motives. One aims to display the honor of Jesus. The other would bring dishonor on his person by alleging that his acts and words were improper in respect to the Sabbath and to God.

The "question for the judge's decision," the point to adjudicate, arises from the first conflicting pleas between the two parties, as follows in an example from Ad Herennium:

"You killed Ajax"
"I did not"

Where the point for the judge to adjudicate is, "Did he kill him?" (Ad Herennium 1.17.26-27).

In John 5 we determine the central question and point of adjudication thus:

prosecution: ...Because he did these things on Sabbath

justifying motive: My father is working...I am working

accusation opposing the justifying motive: He calls God his own father making himself equal with God

The central point of the accusation which is presented in opposition to the justifying motive of the defense is the place to look for the question for the judge's decision (Ad Herennium 1.16.26). Thus the point for adjudication should be found in relation to the statement: "He calls God his own father making himself equal with God" (5.18).
5.18a clearly shows that Jesus' opponents maintain that it is wrong for Jesus to make himself equal with God (presumably according to their customary law). Their reasoning can be expanded as follows:

\[ T1 \quad \text{It is not lawful to do these things on the Sabbath (See 5.10) } \\
T2 \quad \text{Jesus did these things on the Sabbath (16.b) } \\
T3 \quad \text{καὶ διὰ τὸ τὸῦτο ἐδίωκον οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι...ὅι τὰ τοῦτα ἐποίει ἐν σαββάτων 16a} \]

There is no conflict over the fact that Jesus healed on the Sabbath, or over the command to carry the mat, or over the interpretation of the law, (i.e. 'Is it allowed since the man had been ill for a long time?'). None of these are at issue.

Rather, against the accusation that his act is wrong, Jesus, by replying, "My father is working...and I am working," argues that it is right.

In analyzing 5.17-18 as a judicial conflict of pleas we find an issue of jurisdiction, concerned with conflicting questions of whether an agreed upon act was right (as 5.19b-20) or wrong (as 5.10,16,18).

An absolute case

Let us now study the issue more precisely under the category of jurisdiction. In a judicial case the defendant argues that the act was lawful, over against those who claim that it was not. The case is an "absolute issue" (*Ad Herennium* 2.13.19) when the defense is not grounded upon interpretation of mutually accepted previous law but upon the cause of the act itself. Such a defense is built by returning to the fundamental constituents of law as that which undergirds the cause of the act in question. In such an absolute case appeal is made to that which constitutes the authority of law in general. The fundamental constituents of legal authority fall under the following divisions: nature, statute, custom, previous judgments, equity (agreement with truth and general welfare) and agreement (founded on a contract between parties) (*Ad Herennium* 2.13.19-20).

Rather than an appeal to an existing law that both parties in the conflict mutually agree upon, the absolute case pushes beyond existing law. It makes the demand that this case be decided upon the more fundamental cause of legal authority.

In the manner of an absolute case, Jesus does not accept that his action is implicated in illegality according to the customary rule: "It is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for you to carry your mat" (5.10). Rather he appeals to the more fundamental constituent or cause of the act, "My father is working even now and I am working" (5.17).
Jesus' appeal to "My father..." is an appeal to a more fundamental criterion of justice. Because the appeal is made to the parent/child relationship, this absolute case falls under the division which Ad Herennium describes as "nature" (2.13.19).

When opposing parties fundamentally disagree about whether an act is right or wrong, the party challenging the customary judicial practice (or the status quo) must argue for a more basic criterion of justice than the prosecution. In legal decisions that diverge from the status quo of customary law "change and change alone needs to be justified" (Perelman, 1963:63-64). In other words, the appeal to "my father" needs to be set out in the form of a demonstrative argument that makes a case which is stronger than the prevailing appeal to customary practice ("it is not lawful to carry a mat"). In an absolute case the new basis for law may be formulated by appeal to nature or universal human experience or some other principle of justice which is deemed more compelling of assent than judicial precedent (Cicero De Invention II. 22,69-23,71).

The argument proceeds by establishing that the son's relationship to the father determines that he should be treated in the same way as the father.

Establishing the essential equality between persons has from ancient times been a fundamental move in articulating the basis upon which legal cases are to be judged. In principle those who are essentially equal in status or role should be treated equally by law. In explaining the principle of equity as a basic rule of justice, Perelman (1963:14-15), a twentieth-century philosopher of legal logic, follows Aristotle who notes that there is a likeness between beings to whom justice is administered: family first, then tribe, then city, then territory, then all humankind. He sees this situation between individuals as something in common whereby partial identity may be established; it is prerequisite for any attempt to realize justice between them. Where there is no common measure there is no identity, and the question of justice does not arise, for example, between human and plant, (Perelman, 1963:14-15).

The principle of equity between father and son is established in 5.19-23. The equality of father and son serves as the basis for the consequences that follow: Those who do not honor the son equally with God, do not honor the father (5.23).

In contrast to customary legal practice [like John 5.10] which is based on the traditional code already recognized by the group, formal justice, a narrower concept, shows an act to be just when it is the result of applying a certain type of rule (Perelman, 1963:45). "An act is formally just when it observes a rule which sets out the obligation to treat all the members of a given category in a certain way," says Perelman (1963:45).
Formal justice is defined as "observing a rule which lays down the obligation to treat in a certain way all persons who belong to a given category" (Perelman, 1963: 40). John 5.17-23 sets out the common work shared by father and son as the basis for treating them both equally. On this foundation it is possible to plead "against the written law on the basis of natural law and equity" (Perelman, 1963: 101). Against the rule "thou shalt not undo the Sabbath by commanding others to carry their mat," Jesus justifies his action on the basis of his essentially equal status with God (5.10,16,17).

By the time of Cicero the dictum of Aristotle had become a truism of every schoolboy: if the written law is against the case, we must appeal to the universal law (Rhetoric 1.14.1375). The argument in John 5.17-23 appears to exemplify this practice. Rather than centering on divergent interpretations of a law observed by both parties, the defense makes its case by appealing to a more fundamental claim to justify the action in question.

Ad Herennium lists "nature" as the basis for an absolute case which is grounded in the duties observed because of kinship or family loyalty. Familial bonds constitute the natural law causing parents to be cherished by their children and children by their parents (Ad Herennium 2.13.19). Jesus appeals to this relationship as the cause justifying his Sabbath action in spite of customary legal practice. The relationship between father and child justifies his status as essentially equal to God. That status removes him from the jurisdiction of those who charge that it is illegal for him to command the carrying of a mat. While maintaining that Jesus is right, the absolute case rests on the equality of his status as son with the status of God "my father."

Characterization of this defense as an 'absolute case' shows how a familial relationship that was a fundamental basis for law, is cited to justify Jesus' action. It does not however adequately account for the fact that in this speech the father is God. By the principle of equity if the son is to be treated 'just as' the father, Jesus is to be honored as God (5.21-23). While rhetoric can show how the argument gains its power to persuade it provides no explanation of the significance of this extraordinary type of father/son relationship. In chapter 3 I begin to explore a particular social scenario in which the relation of a human son to a divine father serves as the basis for legitimation of the authority of the son in answer to the threat of challengers.
A case of lese-majesty?

The audience to whom John 5 is addressed has been presented with allegations that Jesus' acts are contrary to customary law. Jesus' character remains credible only if the integrity between his acts and his person is maintained.

The honor of an ancient Mediterranean man is defined by his role as a father and accordingly the head of the house (Malina and Neyrey, 1991:25-29). Likewise it is assumed that the son of a powerful father is ascribed honor passively by virtue of the honor implicit in the family bond. Jesus' defense, "My father...," links himself with God's status by appeal to this fundamental cause. In a contest of honor, as in tennis or duelling, only equals can play. Only if the charge against Jesus is made by social equals will it be answered on equal terms. First his opponents charge that he does "these things" on the Sabbath. To this he replies, "My father is working and I work." His answer implies that he is not their equal. In response to the charges against him, he claims that kind of honor that is ascribed from parent to child. His opponents "seek to kill him" in response to his reply. From this dramatic reaction the audience is given the cue (5.18a) that the opponents perceive that he now identifies his status as equal to God, by virtue of the parent-child relationship.

This complicates what we had earlier identified as a simple issue of "right or wrong." Because Jesus answers them in terms of his status in relation to God, it may be that the author intends us to interpret their challenge in like fashion. If their implied accusation "he did these things on the Sabbath" is intended to charge him with dishonor of the status of the Sabbath then it could be interpreted (in the terminology of Roman legal practice) as comparable to a charge of lese-majesty.

Ad Herennium defines the charge of lese-majesty as follows: "He [or she] impairs the majesty of the state who destroys elements which constitute its dignity" (2.12.17). He cites a case in which one citizen is charged with lese-majesty because he attempted to prevent a crucial decision of the assembly by destroying the bridges which made it possible for the assembly to meet in the Comitium. The case is used as an instance of the stasis of definition as follows.

The prosecutor first adjusts the definition to fit this particular case: the suffrage of the people and the counsel of the magistry constitute the dignity of the state.

Then the accusation follows: "No doubt, then, in demolishing the bridges of the Comitium, you have deprived the people of their suffrage and the magistry of their counselling."
The defendant answers the charge by reasserting the definition with a different referent for what constitutes the "dignity of the state":

Likewise in reply, 'he impairs the sovereign majesty of the state who inflicts damage upon its dignity'. I have not inflicted, but rather prevented damage, for I have saved the Treasury, resisted the license of wicked men, and kept the majesty of the state from perishing utterly (Ad Herennium 2.12.17).

If the accusation in John 5 is construed as a charge of lese-majesty, then the stasis has a slightly different emphasis. The charge is not simply 'Jesus is wrong'. But rather, 'Jesus does dishonor (see διακονεῖ 5.18a) to the status of the Sabbath'. Awareness of this subtle shift allows us more precisely to identify the question for adjudication.

'Jesus equal to God', develops as the point upon which honor or dishonor turns. Jesus' defense demonstrates that he does possess equal honor. The excuse given is found from "nature," the father loves the son and so gives (ascribes) all honor that is his own (5.20). (See Cicero De Invention 1.13.18.)

Cicero defines lese-majesty as the "lessening of the dignity or high estate or authority of the people or of those to whom the people have given authority"; and he also quotes another conventional definition. Lese-majesty is "doing some public business without authority" (De Invention II.17, 53; 18.55).

He describes a case of lese-majesty which evokes interesting parallels to John 5: A certain Gaius while tribune of the people seditiously proposed an agrarian law to the people against the wishes of the senate and in general contrary to the desires of all the upper classes. As he was haranguing the popular assembly his father dragged him from the rostrum and was charged with lese-majesty. The charge is, 'You committed lese-majesty in that you dragged a tribune of the people from the rostrum'.

The answer is: 'I did not commit lese majesty'.

The question is, 'Did he commit lese-majesty?'

The excuse is, 'I used the authority which I had over my son'.

The denial of the excuse, 'On the contrary, one who uses the authority belonging to him as a father--that is private authority--to lessen the authority of a tribune--that is the authority of the people is guilty of lese majesty'. (Summarized from De Invention II.16,52-53.)

Unlike Cicero's case, which contrasts the honor of the parental relationship to the honor of those vested with public authority, Jesus' defense dovetails the two. The dual basis in conventional values of honor, the very public honor appropriate to God in a theocracy
and the more intimate inner motivation of filial honor toward one's father, is the foundation for a powerful case.

Already the peoples' public grant of majesty and authority to God is the basis for honor of the Sabbath.

Thus if the charge is lese-majesty, the rationale for prosecution can be expanded as follows:

1 Observance of Sabbath regulations represents one's honor of God;
2 Jesus did "these things" in provocation of the regulations on the Sabbath;
3 Therefore he does not respect the high status of the Sabbath;
3a For this reason we must take out legal proceedings because he undid (ἐλυσα) the honor of the Sabbath.

Jesus replies, The father is already working and I am working (5.17).

This reply (to my hypothetical construction of the accusation) picks up the assumption of Jewish first century audiences, that while Sabbath work was prohibited for Israel, God continued to be active. The works of life and judgment were proper to God, even on the Sabbath, and entrusted to no other. 33

The opponents' objections (5.18) are presented as if they already presume this truism; it forms an unstated assumption which fills out their reasoning as follows. 34

\[
\begin{align*}
T1 & \text{ (Only God [the Father] works on the Sabbath)} \\
T2 & \text{ Jesus says, the father is working (on the Sabbath) and I am working} \\
& 'Ο πατήρ μου ἔως ἥρται ἐργάζεται καὶ ἐργάζομαι \\
T3 & \text{ (Jesus is not God, he should not work on the Sabbath) to do so dishonors the} \\
& \text{ sovereignty of God who alone is free to undertake Sabbath work}
\end{align*}
\]

This leads to a second line of reasoning by the opponents:

\[
\begin{align*}
T1 & \text{ (To call God Father implies quality with God)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

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33 TalBab Taanith 2a, Gen.30.22; Ez. 37.13, cited by Brown (1986:217); see also Lee (1950:42).

34 Robbins (1985b, 1987b) shows how the words that are stated in the text can aid in examination of the reasoning that is unstated. Below I apply this technique to John 5.16-18.
Jesus calls God Father
Jesus implies equality with God

Which leads to a third:

(T1) (It is wrong for anyone to imply equality with God)
   i.e. it dishonors the sovereign majesty of God
(T2) Jesus implies equality with God
(T3) (Jesus is wrong he dishonors the majesty of God)

Which leads to a fourth:

1 (Jesus is wrong to imply equality with God)
2 διὰ τοῦτο ὃν μᾶλλον ἐξήτουν αὐτὸν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι ἀποκτείναν
3 ότι...πατέρα ἱδιον ἔλεγεν τὸν θεόν ἵπον ἡαυτὸν τοῖς τῷ θεῷ

A logical demonstration of the son’s equality with the father

Jesus answers their hostile response with an argument designed to defend his statement, on the basis of his relationship with the father, but not by debating their notions of proper Sabbath observance.

It puts in place a logical demonstration of his equal status with God.

(T1) major premise (unstated)

example (e.g.) of T1. οὐ δύναται ὃ νῦν... ἄφι 'ἐαυτὸν οὐδὲν ἐὰν μὴ τι βλέπῃ
tὸν πατέρα ποιοῦντα. (19b)

reason for e.g. ἃ γὰρ ἄν ἐκεῖνος ποιή, ταῦτα καὶ ὁ νῦν ὁμοίως ποιεῖ. (19c)

The statement attributed to the opponents actually serves to develop the rational of the argument in defense of Jesus as follows:
In other words, Jesus’ reply to the opponents actually proves that what they say about his equality with God is true. Based on this reasoning the conclusion logically follows:

\( T_3 \) conclusion

\[ \text{ινα πάντες τιμῶσαι τὸν θεὸν θεὸς τιμῶσαι τὸν πατέρα} \] (23a)

\( \) contrary\( T_3 \).

\[ \text{ὁ μὴ τιμῶν τὸν θεὸν οὐ τιμᾷ τὸν πατέρα τὸν παραπάντα αὐτὸν} \] (23b)

The thesis argument is set out very fully by giving reasons and examples to explain the terms of the argument. Thus the proposition is established. Because a sufficient basis in argument has been set forth, the argument stands on its own reasoning. In effect this allows it to serve as a more fundamental statement of ground for sabbath action than previous customary rulings.

If the speech is designed to appeal to the judgement of the audience then an analogy may be drawn with legal practice. Judges are bound to decide in conformity with the conventional rulings which safeguard the status quo, says Perelman; the onus is upon the person putting forward the claim tending to modify the status quo to establish that it is well founded; the status quo cannot be modified without a legal decision (Perelman, 1963:104). The argument in John 5.19-23 which defends the rightness of Jesus sabbath action, by implication challenges customary sabbath law. Therefore it is set out in full, as a kind of logical demonstration, justifying Jesus’ action.
In contrast, legal argumentation involving norms which are already taken for granted as the status quo such as ‘it is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for you to carry your mat’ (5.10) need only to be mentioned. In this case, the onus is upon the defense to show that Jesus’ reply sets out a more foundational criterion for honor of God than that which is conventionally assumed by the audience.

The opponents’ accusations (5.16,18) may contain connotations of lese-majesty. Clearly the conclusion of Jesus’ defense sets in place a rationale which allows him to turn the tables by charging them with lese-majesty. As in the example from Ad Herennium above, the defense redefines the terms of lese majesty. Jesus redefines the honor of God on the fundamental basis of equality of treatment proper to the son who has been given all the work of the father. Thus the person of the son should be honored equally with the person of the father.

The healing, which was not contested by Jesus’ opponents, stands as evidence for this logical proof. The proof lays the foundation for reversing the charge (5.23).

Thus, on the basis of this complete argument in his defense, Jesus can prosecute his opponents for lese-majesty: They stand in danger of judgment if they refuse to honor his person with honor equal to that due to God. The proof is a tautology. They insult the honor of God by their refusal to honor the acts of the son as equal to the acts and work of the father.

By following this reasoning Jesus’ reply goes full circle, turning the charge against them. On the same basis, by the principle of equity between father and son, Jesus deserves to be treated in the same way as the father. Because the works of ‘creation’ and ‘judgment’ are given entirely to the son by the father, Jesus has the power as judge to enforce the grant of honor which is expected from the audience. He "has been given power" as judge to enforce the demands that this reasoning makes on them ὃ ἔχει ἀνθρώπου ἐν σοί (5.27).

The summary of the argument in 5.27 identifies Jesus with the eschatological judge of the living and the dead. The judge has the power to enforce the verdict.

The reversal is in keeping with traditional Jewish legal procedure as it is described by A.E. Harvey (1976:16,46-49): Jewish trial proceedings were informal, the roles of witness and judge were not clearly separated, and could change during the course of the trial. The emphasis was not upon logical proof of guilt or innocence. Rather, the deciding factor was to establish the reputation or status of the witness. The object of the case was to present oneself as a person who deserved to be believed. This was done effectively by repeating the same thing over and over with small variations in detail and with repeated insistence upon
one’s credentials; judges who failed to believe a reliable witness stood in danger of the judgment of God.

When Jesus appeals to the honor ascribed from father to son and the parent in question is God, the tour de force overwhelms the opponents’ pedestrian vision of lese-majesty. Clearly it adds complexity to the absolute character of the case by pitching the level of relationships beyond the ordinary kin of "nature." Malina (1985: 13-16) characterizes such Johannine constructions as a kind of "anti-language" which have no equivalent meanings at all in the language of the ordinary society. 35

On the basis of this logical demonstration, Jesus reverses the accusation by requiring a grant of honor (belief in his authority which conforms to the explicit terms set out in the argument) from the audience. Should they refuse he implicitly threatens them with a charge of lese-majesty, failure to give proper honor to the sovereign authority of God (5.23).

This turn in the argument is particularly evident in the paraphrase of the rationale in 5.26:

\[\text{νοστηρ γὰρ ὁ πατὴρ ἔχει ζωὴν ἐν θεωτῷ, οὕτως καὶ τῷ θεῷ ἔδωκεν ζωὴν ἐχει ἐν ἐαυτῷ καὶ ἐξονικαὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ κρίναν ποιεῖν, ἵνα οὐς ἄνθρωπον ἐστίν.}\]

The υἱὸς ἄνθρωπον was understood to be judge of the living and the dead. To the peril of opponents who fail to capitulate to the terms of this argument, that judge is identified with Jesus. 36

**Concluding summary**

Thus by means of argumentation, the crucial link between Jesus as the son and God is set in place, overwhelming customary applications of justice. The audacious tour de force is undergirded by a careful logical construction. In formal judicial style it lays out the rational basis which provides a defense of Jesus’ action.

The issue in question is a matter of honor. The absolute judicial question of whether Jesus’ action was right or wrong is resolved through a defense which builds the foundation

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35 In chapter 7, I argue, to the contrary, that what appears to be an unexplainable "tour de force" actually relies upon the unstated mythic structure associated with the victory of the divine warrior king.

36 See my more detailed discussion of this usage of υἱὸς ἄνθρωπον in chapter 3.
for a case of lese-majesty against any who would accuse him of impropriety in respect to the Sabbath.

The author makes use of the framework of the judicial form of the complete argument. Judicial reasoning furthers the essentially epideictic goal of this discourse. In the manner of an absolute case, the stasis or impasse over the action in question is overcome as one party finds a line of defense based on principles yet more basic than preconceived applications of customary justice. The argument for Jesus’ defense overcomes the impasse by constructing a principle of equity between Jesus and God.

Thus the thesis argument sets in place a deductive rationale which displays the honor of Jesus as equal to the honor of God (5.17-23). On the basis of this reasoning all who hear these words are required to give that grant of honor to Jesus or else be cast in the same role as those who "honor themselves" while denying Jesus this honor, who consequently stand under judgment (John 5.24,44).

Within this context the issue is not simply, ‘Is Jesus right or wrong?’ The audience’s basic sympathy with Jesus’ side of the case appears to be a foregone conclusion which does not need to be argued. Rather the author introduces conflict over the statement, "My father is working...and I also am working," in order to construct a firm logical basis for requiring the audience to give a grant of honor explicitly equal to that given to God.

"Absolute" judicial reasoning secures this line of defense. The argument may be designed to give de jure status to formulations of what was probably already a less explicit de facto defense, identifying Jesus with the work of God (as 5.17). For hearers who accept its premises, the argument provides an irrefutable defense. It demonstrates that, in spite of those who refuse him honor, Jesus’ Sabbath works prove that he, as son, is equal in status to the father who is God.
A preliminary proposal: Psalm 2, sonship, and a mythic frame of interpretation for John 5.17-23

The aim of this chapter

My preliminary proposal responds to issues highlighted in the history of interpretation and observed in the rhetorical analysis of John 5.17-23. In chapter 2 I found that though John 5 uses judicial rhetoric, the goal of the trial-like speech is to display the honor of Jesus against the foil of his opponents. The extraordinary claim of equality with God focuses the central issue in John 5 by defending the superiority of Jesus’ actions and speech solely on the basis of the relationship of the son with the father. In the terminology of judicial rhetoric, the claim to equality with God makes an absolute case.

However, attention to how the argument is made does not do justice to the actual content of the claim. To argue that Jesus, a Jewish man, is the son empowered by God to create life and judge really makes very little sense, unless the meaning of “the son” is understood within a familiar way of speaking. The claim must refer to something, a way of understanding sonship, that is already familiar. If these words belong to a pattern of action in which it is typical for God to be the father who empowers the son to act as God, then the claim of Jesus can be appropriated within a comprehensible frame of reference.

I propose that the absolute case defending Jesus’ actions on the grounds of his relationship to God as father relies upon an understood pattern of relationship between father and son that is reflected in Psalm 2. On the grounds of the relationship between father and son, Psalm 2 answers threats of adversaries. The king declares that by virtue of his relationship to God as son, God has granted him the power of universal dominion after the pattern of YHWH’s reign. The relationship between father and son in Psalm 2 helps to explain the strong language in John 5.22-23.

Further, I will argue that the form of Psalm 2 evokes the rhetorical structure and

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1 In chapters 6 and 7 I will discuss other texts which attest to a comparable pattern.
mood of John 5.17-23. The pattern of threat and exaltation in John 5.17-23 reflects formal similarity with Psalm 2: the king answers threats to his own authority by a declaration that God has declared him to be God's son. Psalm 2 holds the formal elements of threat answered by exalted speech together in one pattern. This pattern makes sense of the final form of the speech in John 5.17-23.

In the latter part of this chapter following my analysis of John 5 within the formal frame of Psalm 2, I shall address two possible objections to the proposal stated above:

a) that the concept of sonship in Psalm 2 is not sufficiently god-like to do justice to the extraordinary claim of equality with God in the speech concerning the son in John 5;

b) that it is anachronistic to relate John 5 to a concept of sonship derived from the period of monarchy.

I will respond to these objections by surveying post-monarchic uses of the terms 'son' and 'son of God'.

The preliminary proposal that I have outlined above aims to respond to three key issues emerging out of my analysis of internal features of John 5 in chapter 2: 2

1) it points to a mythic framework that begins to makes sense of the claim of equality with God;

2) it assumes that speech follows cultural patterns, thus the speech of John 5.17-23 is not to be treated in isolation, as unique in itself;

3) it holds together the elements of threat and exalted speech within one coherent pattern.

Because I assume that a myth is required to make sense of the speech in John 5.17-23, I do not aim to prove literary dependence of John 5 upon Psalm 2. Rather I suggest that a pattern that is common to a variety of texts may underlie the exalted speech concerning the son in John 5.17-23. The significance of this pattern is the central theme of Part II of the dissertation. My proposal in this chapter is preliminary. Analysis of John 5 in reference to Psalm 2 and discussion of meanings associated with the term 'son', only introduces a conceptual frame of reference. In Part II I will use this proposal as the basis for exploration of other arenas of interpretation of John 5.17-23.

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2 In part two of the dissertation I will respond to these issues within a broader context, an analysis of social values underlying the speech in John and other early Christian examples of the killing/exaltation pattern, and analysis of the pattern in reference to the divine warrior myth.
Reasons for proposing Psalm 2 as a frame of interpretation for John 5.17-23

'Absolute case' inadequate to explain the content of 5.17-23

In the rhetorical analysis of internal features of John 5.17-23 I noted that the son’s claim of equality with the father, on the authority of his relationship with the father, constituted what Hellenistic judicial rhetoric calls an ‘absolute case’. The authority generated by this speech overpowers accusations against Jesus. It places the son in a position of superiority where he is identified with the ultimate authority of God.

It is not inaccurate to characterize this rhetorical strategy as a ‘tour de force’. However, this does not help to make sense of the actual content or significance of the speech. A relationship between a human father and son that generates such power goes beyond the limits of ordinary experience. Clearly the father in the speech refers to God. Thus, I suggest that it is likely that some mythic conception associated with sonship in relation to God may have already been understood as the frame of reference for this speech. It is reasonable to look for such a frame of significance in order to render this relationship between father and son comprehensible. I propose that the pattern of events in Psalm 2 provides a prototype for the arrangement of John 5.17-23.

Formal similarity between Psalm 2 and John 5

In Psalm 2, rebel vassals challenge the authority of YHWH’s king. He repels their threats by recounting to them the decree of YHWH: God has publicly declared to me, ‘this is my son’, and has given me the right to reign. By virtue of his sonship, the king relates that God has empowered him to execute judgment upon all who refuse to honor him as the legitimate king, the son of God.

The pattern of lethal threat answered by speech displaying the status of the son is the rhetorical structure which holds together the complex of discrete forms of speech within 5.17-23. The narrative structure of Psalm 2 provides a coherent explanation for the pattern of speech of John 5.17-23. Conversely, it appears to me that the formerly discrete forms (for example, a saying in 5.17, a parable in 5.19-20) have been arranged in this final form specifically to create the rhetorical impression of a Gattung such as is exemplified in Psalm 2.

Myth provides an ordered pattern or sequence of significance that explains human
experience that is at the limit of understanding. In chapter 7, I will address the problem of how this text, which appears to refer to an ordinary human king, could be said to provide a framework of myth within which John’s claim that the son is equal to God could be sustained. In the next major section in this chapter I will discuss the use of the terms νιός or ὁ νιός τοῦ Θεοῦ in reference to god-like beings associated with the throne of God.

However, to characterize a being as divine as opposed to human, though royal, does not scratch the surface of the task accomplished by the structure of a myth. To identify mythic images in uses of the term νιός or ὁ νιός τοῦ Θεοῦ is one thing. To make sense of these within a coherent framework or sequence of significance is quite another. Therefore in this section I will suggest that the myth that underlies John 5.17-23 follows the plot or sequence of events that is expressed in Psalm 2. If 5.17-23 relies upon an understood mythic pattern, then the significance associated with the myth must have helped to explain the extraordinary speech concerning the son; the myth provided a frame of interpretation for John’s audience’s understanding of the experience of Jesus that it expresses. The meaning already associated with the myth functions as a vehicle for the significance of speech attributing to Jesus the power and honor that is generally associated with God alone. By juxtaposing the pattern of speech in Psalm 2 with the otherwise incomprehensible ‘tour de force’ concerning sonship in John 5, I hope to tie the abstract term ‘myth’ to a particular example; the mythic sequence reflected in Psalm 2 explains the stunning, but otherwise cryptic, sequence of speech in John 5.17-23.

**Discussion of Psalm 2 as a prototype**

The idea that Psalm 2 provides a prototype that is followed in formulation of speech concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus is not novel. Weren (1989:189) presents an outline of the structure of the kerygma that shows marked similarities to early Christian interpretation of Psalm 2.

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3 See the discussion of “myth” in chapter 1 under the subheadings “Engagement with Bultmann’s argument that a god-like myth...” and “A summary of issues relevant to Bultmann’s understanding of the myth....”

4 I do not mean to suggest that Psalm 2 is the pattern for the myth. Rather I see it as one text which provides a particularly clear expression of a mythic pattern of threat answered by enthronement speech that can be discerned in a variety of texts. In chapter 6 I identify this pattern with the divine warrior myth.

5 I refer the reader to Weren’s (1989:189-190) review of research which sees Psalm 2 as a prototype for early Christian proclamation. See also the work of Crossan which I will discuss below.

6 Weren builds his analysis of the use of Psalm 2 in Luke-Acts upon the outline proposed by van Iersel. It characterizes Psalm 2 as the basis for the kerygmatic form of 1 Corinthians 15.3-5 and some of the speeches in Acts. Weren’s version of van Iersel’s outline follows:
Further Weren (1989:196-203) notes the extensive influence both of explicit and implicit quotes from Psalm 2 in reference to sermons in Acts 4.23-31 and Acts 13.27-37. Though it supports my hypothesis generally, Weren’s analysis of the kerygmatic pattern is too general to serve as a form-critical analysis of the specific pattern of killing/exaltation reflected in Psalm 2 and in John 5.17-23 as well as other early Christian speech.

Crossan (1988: 61,95,111) argues that reflection on Psalm 2 as prophetic scripture was the inspiration behind the earliest strata of the trial, passion and resurrection narrative which is extant in the Synoptic tradition. He supports his thesis with evidence that Psalm 2.1-2 was cited in the Acts 4.25 quotation of Psalm 2.1-2 as an explicit reference to the trial and crucifixion. It was cited at Qumran as a reference to the rage of the Gentiles against the messiah. Further he documents its use, as fulfillment of the Passion and as explanation for the resurrection, in Justin, Ireneaus, Melito of Sardis, Tertullian, and the Apostolic Constitutions (1988:61-95,111). This external evidence does show that Psalm 2 provided a frame of interpretation for the passion and resurrection of Jesus. Less successful is his attempt to link the external evidence with his hypothesis about Psalm 2 within the extant text of the Gospel of Peter.

In chapter 5 I will criticize the tendency of Weren and Crossan to focus upon the literary influence of one text, rather than upon the similar pattern of myth reflected in many scriptural texts, of which Psalm 2 is one particularly lucid expression.

The outline is part of B.M.F. van Iersel’s conclusion to ‘Der Sohn’ in den synoptischen Jesusworten. Christusbezeichnung der Gemeinde oder Selbstbezeichnung Jesus? 2d revised ed., Leiden, 1964, 66-89. Weren also notes the work of K.H. Rengstorf, Old and New Testament Traces of a formula of the Judaen Royal Ritual NT 5, 1962, 229-44. Both of these were unobtainable by the author.

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kerygmatic summaries

1. You have put him to death Ps.2.1-2, the passion
2. as its foretold by scripture Ps. 2.7: raising from the dead
3. God has raised him to life again
4. he has a new function
5. as testified in scripture Ps.2.7 refers to 2 Sam.7.14
6. We are witnesses
7. and summon you to repentance Ps.2.10-12 summons

The outline is part of B.M.F. van Iersel’s conclusion to ‘Der Sohn’ in den synoptischen Jesusworten. Christusbezeichnung der Gemeinde oder Selbstbezeichnung Jesus? 2d revised ed., Leiden, 1964, 66-89. Weren also notes the work of K.H. Rengstorf, Old and New Testament Traces of a formula of the Judaen Royal Ritual NT 5, 1962, 229-44. Both of these were unobtainable by the author.

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Crossan attributes the matrix of the trial tradition in the Gospel of Peter 1.1 and 11.46 to reflection on Psalm 2. He attempts to identify the earliest strata of the Gospel of Peter’s account of the crucifixion (1.1-2 and 2.5b-6.22), tomb (7.25 and 8.28-9.34) and resurrection (9.35-10.42 and 11.45-49); and he argues that this layer of redaction creates a narrativization of Psalm 2 (Crossan, 1988:95). The lack of formal similarity between these texts, and the absence of an actual trial narrative in the Gospel of Peter, means that internal evidence for his argument is a virtual argument from silence. This is particularly so since he fails to explain how he sees the trial and resurrection formally as a "narrativization" of Psalm 2.
Though it is a Psalm which appears to date from the monarchy, Psalm 2 continued to be influential in transmitting the ancient ideal of Israel's kingship in the Intertestamental period. 8 The 17th Psalm in the Psalms of Solomon verses 22-32 describes the messiah in imagery evocative of Ps.2 and Ps.72: The messiah raised up to be their king will rule with the strength to destroy unrighteous rulers and to drive out sinners from the inheritance, "to smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter's jar.... He will judge the tribes...their king shall be the Lord Messiah" (cited in Charlesworth, 1979: 197). It is an example, says Charlesworth (1979:198), of the survival in the Intertestamental period of a way of thinking which is very close to Old Testament concepts and images of the messiah, and was deeply influenced by Psalms 2 and 72.

The pattern of conflict related to kingship in Psalm 2 is quoted and interpreted in the Qumran messianic oracles of 4Q Florigielium indicating that it was known in Jewish circles roughly contemporary with the emergence of the Jesus movement. 9 :

[Why] do the nations [rage] and the peoples meditate [vanity, the kings of the earth] rise up, [and the] princes take counsel together against the Lord and against [His Messiah] (Ps.2.1). Interpreted, this saying concerns the [kings of the nations] who shall [rage against] the elect of Israel in the last days. 10

Psalm 2 was widely quoted in the New Testament in reference to the baptism of Jesus when a voice from heaven declares, 'this is my son'. (See Mt.3.17; 17.5; Mark 9.7; Luke 3.22;9.35). It is cited in 2 Pet.1.17 in reference to the transfiguration; and is also quoted in Acts. 13.33, in Hebrews 1.5.5; 5.5;7.28 and in Revelation 2.26; 6.15; 11.15,18; 17.18; 19.19. These stress aspects of Psalm 2 which concern the divine sonship of Jesus and the rebellion of hostile nations who are defeated by the son. (See Kraus, 1986:180.)

John 5.17-23 interpreted within the frame of Psalm 2

In Psalm 2 threats to the authority of the king are answered by recalling his status in relation to God. Its form juxtaposes challenge and riposte around the question of sonship. The similar mood, display of honor in a situation of threat, also bears comparison with John 5.17-23. There discrete forms of speech are combined in a way that creates the

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9 See Dimant (1984:519) and M.Black (1971:2).

10 In the translation of Vermes (1962:244) cited by Black, (1971:2).
impression of a trial. By reading John 5.17-23 as a trial experienced within the cultic setting evoked by Psalm 2, Jesus answers in the role of the king. He gives those who do not acknowledge his privilege to act as king, an account of his status as son. The plot and mood of Psalm 2 is evocative of the rhetorical arrangement of John 5.17-23.

**Threat**

Ps.2.1, Jn.5.18

Rulers threaten God's anointed [Acts 4.25-29]. They sought to kill him. He makes himself equal with God.

**Answer**

Ps.2.7-11

The son replies to the threat of the rebels by reciting to them the decree of YHWH, "He said to me, You are my son...ask of me and I will make the nations your heritage." Therefore, rulers submit or perish.

Jn.5.17;19-23 ‘My father’... loves the son and shows him everything he does. The father gives the son the power to make life and to judge, that they might honor the son as they honor the father.

In Psalm 2 threats to the authority of the king are answered when the king recounts speech associated with the coronation event, ‘He said to me, you are my son, this day I have begotten you, ask of me and I will give you the power to rule and judge the nations.’¹¹

When interpreted within this royal setting the words of John 5.22-23 take on a particular significance. ¹² Jesus in the role of king answers the rebels; he recounts to them his legal status by virtue of his relationship to God, publicly declared in the coronation decree of Yahweh. This exercise, displaying the legitimacy of the king's divine authority, repels the challenge of his foes. The decree properly belongs to the liturgy of the ritual of coronation. It legally seals the adoption of the king as YHWH's son, by declaring the realm over which YHWH reigns to be the legal inheritance which God has empowered the king to rule as his son and heir. The words recount divine acknowledgement of the king as son of God, and the empowerment of the king to demand that his status be acknowledged. The language of John 5.17-23 makes cultural sense within this frame. It evokes the cultic scene in which YHWH's king is publicly and legally enthroned as king and "son" of God.

¹¹ My interpretation follows Dahood’s (1965:6) translation of Psalm 2.

¹² The exegetical background to the interpretation asserted below is documented more fully under the major heading in this chapter: "An answer to the objection...." and subheading "The king’s relation to God...."
Do Psalm 2 and John 5.17-23 share a common Gattung?

In the proposal above I have suggested that the "trial" motif in John 5.17-23 can best be understood against the background of the royal cult of Israel. The cultic display of the honor given to the king is a ritual scenario which accounts for the pervasive epideictic character of speech in John 5.

The criteria which define a Gattung are:
1) sharing the same Sitz im Leben;
2) containing a collection of moods, and ideas in common;
3) having a common Formensprache. 13

The differences between the pronouncement story setting of John 5 and the coronation setting of Psalm 2 must be acknowledged. However, my interpretation presumes that the pattern of speech in John 5.17-23 is shaped into a final form (albeit from smaller units, a saying in 5.17, a parable in 5.19-20) that is designed to evoke a coronation setting such as is expressed in Psalm 2. Thus the speech in John 5.17-23 is made to fit the already understood pattern of a Gattung which deals with the exaltation of Jesus as ó uioç in response to a lethal threat. Though it is understood to respond to the threat represented by the rejection and shame of Jesus' execution as a condemned man, the criteria defining it as a Gattung are shaped around a scenario such as that depicted in the plot of Psalm 2.

This "mythic" setting provides a parallel social environment, and an already known sequence of significance, within which the strong declaration of the son's equality with the father begins to make sense. In chapters 5 and 6 I shall discuss, in more detail, dimensions of this Gattung which justify description of it as a myth in reference to the threat which the crucifixion posed to the authority of Jesus. For the moment it will suffice to describe it as a mythic narrative which lends sequence and order and transcendent significance to an event at the limit of conventional patterns of experience.

My interpretation of John 5.17-23 within the plot and setting and mood of Psalm 2 is necessarily intertextual; in other words, it assumes that an already existing, and in some sense anachronistic, frame of significance is relied upon. This older frame of significance lends meaning to the use of speech in the present. In chapter 5 I shall discuss the method of my intertextual reading in more depth. For the moment it will suffice to acknowledge that no one can pretend that John 5 actually is cut of the same cloth as Psalm 2; to observe the radically different social settings proper to each would mitigate such a claim. The concrete

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setting of John 5 is a confrontation between Jesus and his opponents, following Jesus’ Sabbath healing of a lame man. Only at another level of abstraction can John 5 be said to belong to the Gattung expressed in Psalm 2.

In chapter 2, I found that epideictic display of the honor of Jesus is made through affecting a contrast with his opponents, who are depicted as contemptible in their response to him. This rhetorical display is achieved by juxtaposing speech designed to display Jesus’ honor alongside speech describing opponents who seek to put him to death, ἔχτιστον αὐτοῦ οἱ Ἰουδαίοι ἀποκτάνειν. In the final form of John 5, the rationale for persecution is set within the structure of the speech in such a way that it creates the impression of a threat to the honor and life of Jesus (5.16,18; see also 5.11). John 5.16,18c probably refers to distinct charges against Jesus, and may even represent distinct layers of redaction. (See Neyrey, 1988:10,15-19.) Nevertheless these words are arranged in this way in order that the final form creates the impression that ‘this is a trial’. The rationales for persecution (5.16,18) are juxtaposed to sayings of Jesus. It is unlikely that the sayings originate from a trial setting at all. But they are framed in the form of a forensic reply which defends the authority of Jesus which has been challenged (5.17,19).

In contrast Psalm 2 belongs to a monarchic coronation-like setting. It is the pattern of meaning associated with Psalm 2 on another level of abstraction that controls the meaning of John 5; the meaning of Jesus as son belongs on another level of significance from the very different concrete circumstances depicted in John 5. 14

Reading Psalm 2 with reference to a monarchical setting

I am aware that significant historical, political, institutional and cultural distance separates the monarchic frame of Psalm 2 from the first century setting of John in which the Israelite monarchy was literally an anachronism. Nevertheless, it is proper to attend to its probable monarchical background along with discussion of its use in the time leading up to the early Christian movement. 15

The majority of scholars, while acknowledging the difficulty of dating the Psalm precisely, consider that it derives from a monarchical origin, yet they allow for some altera-

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14 Further exposition of this theme follows in chapters 4 and 5. In chapter 8 I give a more theoretical account of what I mean by the “controlling” character of the argument in John 5.17-23.

15 See Gerstenberger (1988:49) and Kraus (1988) for reference to significant literature on Psalm 2. Below I aim only to highlight significant features that will be relevant to interpretation of John 5.17-23 in relation to the setting evoked by imagery in Psalm 2.
tion in language though the course of the history of its tradition. Dahood (1965:xxix) tentatively dates Psalm 2 within the early monarchy, perhaps as early as the tenth century, though the universalism of the Psalm suggests that it may have been adapted through use in the exile.

The background material below aims to provide a monarchical frame of reference for reading Psalm 2. Also, I suggest that reading Jesus’ sonship with reference to the setting in which the king claims to wield absolute power, may help to make sense of the ‘absolute’ case John 5.17-23 makes. Absolute language concerning sonship characterizes both Psalm 2 and John 5.17-23.

It is not my aim to reconstruct the original setting, nor to trace the history of tradition of the Psalm, nor to venture an explanation of its meaning for early Christian understanding of Jesus. Rather I aim only to give a brief summary of views of other scholars on a possible coronation setting for Psalm 2, in order to show that the coronation frame of reference lends coherence to the speech in John 5.17-23. To some extent Psalm 2 appears to have provided a vehicle through which concepts associated with a monarchical scenario persisted even after the demise of the institution of the Davidic monarchy. For this reason its significance in relation to the trappings of monarchy may help to interpret the meaning attached to Psalm 2 even in very different social settings.

Kraus (1986:180) expresses a consensus of recent scholarship in relating its Sitz-im-Leben to a royal ritual in which Psalm 2 was sung or spoken in relation to the enthronement of the king in Jerusalem. But he gives a more nuanced account of how the threats in verses 1-3 might relate to the celebration. He notes that historically a change in rule was frequently a time when vassal states took advantage of the opportunity to throw off the yoke of the powers who lorded over them. Such a setting fits the interpretation of O.H. Streck which is quoted by Kraus (1988:126):

The psalm assembles standard phrases which the king is obliged to speak after he has taken his place on the throne in the palace. The psalm is the ritual expression of the statement that the Jerusalem king, because of Yahweh, is unassailable and invincible; therefore we have in v.1-3 the contrast of a renewed chaotic revolt of the nations, but one which because of Yahweh’s subduing of the chaos of the nations ...is indeed doomed to fail from the start.

16 An example of this view is represented by Kraus (1988:125).

17 While there is scholarly agreement on the fact that Psalm 2 displays court language, many question whether this "reflects authentic or anachronistic ceremonialism" (Gerstenberger, 1988:45).

18 Gerstenberger (1988:45) relates the language "why?", "to what end?" to borrowing from forensic speech in a trial context where it indicates direct confrontation with the accused (Genesis 31.30; Jer. 26.9; Job 7.19-21), though he notes that the third party speech of Psalm 2.1 relates to a complaint form, such as Psalm 79.10.

Rather than trying to identify the forces gathered against YHWH's anointed with a specific historical setting, Dahood (1965:8) notes that by the tenth century, "kings" and "princes" in rebellion against the monarch had become stock literary figures belonging to the genre of the royal Psalms, compare the assembled kings in Psalm 48.4-7. Thus Psalm 2.1-3 as a ritual expression within the terminology of threats to the monarchy may on another level relate to the situation of chaos of nations in rebellion against YHWH. They are derided for their rebellion by the superiority of YHWH, the enthroned one, who laughs down at them from his seat in heaven (see Psalm 2.4).

The reference to the investiture formula for enthronement could as well have been used liturgically in connection with an annual enthronement festival or a "royal Zion festival."

Within this enthronement context, the pattern of conflict over the authority of the king has been given ritual acknowledgement. Psalm 2 proclaims that the king enthroned in Jerusalem is not at all threatened by rebellion. As son of YHWH he is invincible (Kraus, 1988:126). Johnson detects within Psalm 2 the ritual pattern associated with the myth of YHWH doing battle with enemies and emerging in triumph victorious over his foes. But the absence of an actual account of a battle leads him to see the Psalm as belonging to a ceremony of enthronement which occurs subsequent to the suppression of hostile powers (Johnson, 1955:77-126). By interpreting Psalm 2 within the setting of a (hypothetical) series of festival events, Johnson locates the use of Psalm 2 within the part of the ceremony that follows the dramatized battle and procession. The ritual battle in which the king is brought to the edge of disaster and then restored in triumph through God's intervention, precedes the confident event of enthronement that Johnson (1955:118) sees depicted in Psalm 2; according to his assessment it belongs to the final stages of the enthronement rite as depicted in Pss.110 and 21. Such reconstructions of dramatic enactment of mythic events in a festival drama are disputed by scholars, as I will indicate in chapter 6.

Johnson's conclusions are challenged by Eaton, who points to the sense of urgency which permeates the Psalm. Eaton (1986:112) reads the Psalm as a warning to the nations.

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20 This suggestion developed by Kraus in *Die Königsherrschaft Gottes im Alten Testament* (1951) is cited in Kraus (1988;126). See also; Gerstenberger (1988:46); Eaton (1986:112-113).

21 This element of conflict is part of the pattern of the divine warrior myth that I discuss in more detail in chapter 6.

22 Ollenburger (1987:64-65) acutely distinguishes between the themes of Psalms of Zion (46,48,76) and Davidic royal ideology. In the former the symbol YHWH's kingship is utterly detached from the earthly king; only the latter includes the motif of the king who is threatened by hostile powers. My discussion of the divine warrior myth in Chapter 6 will address this distinction.
in a time of transition when they are not yet compelled to give homage to the king. The threat to the king's authority is answered first when he states his identity and status: "But I have been anointed his king upon Zion his holy mountain" (Ps.2.6). 23

Within monarchical terminology, Psalm 2.7 refers to the enactment of the terms of the investiture of the king. Craigie (1983a:67) identifies the decree as a document renewing the covenant to the dynasty of David given personally to the king during the coronation ceremony, as in 2 Kings.11.12. Formal similarities exist in conceptions associated with kingship in the Ancient Near East though they are to be noted with reserve, for the practical applications and functions of the king would not have been parallel, for instance between Egypt and Israel. See Whitelam (1992:42-43) and Eaton (1986:87-101). Nevertheless comparison with the contents of the decree in the monarchies of other nations in the Near East is instructive.

"The divine decree which established a king's legitimacy" contained, in the Egyptian ceremony, a list of his titles (Dahood, 1965:11). Dahood also finds Canaanite evidence of such a decree based upon a partially preserved tablet which enumerates some of the titles of king Niqmepa, the son of Niqmad (UT, 10077:4-7) which translates "Legitimate Lord, governor of the palace, king of the city, builder king" (Dahood, 1965:11). The decree was a royal protocol which was recorded at the enthronement to identify the legitimate ruler (Kraus, 1988:130). See Kraus (1988:130) and Dahood (1965:11) for excerpts from decrees from extant Egyptian sources on the ritual of the installation of the ruler. In these a formal writing confirms the extent of the rule of the monarch. 24

In the context of an actual coronation the words, "you are my son, today I have begotten you" (Ps.2.7) would have been said liturgically, possibly by the high priest. The royal ritual enacted the legal adoption of the king by God to become the son of God. Thus the ruler was installed as the "son" of YHWH, the earthly representative of YHWH's power and justice. The king thus chosen and anointed, took his place at YHWH's side as the heir of God's divine reign (Kraus, 1986:180).

23 I follow the translation of Dahood who argues that "this begins the description of the king's reaction to the conspiracy." Dahood justifies his translation by arguing that the subject changes from God to his anointed, as is patent from the use of waw adversativum, as in Joion, GHB, 172a (Dahood, 1965:6,10). In the NRSV, YHWH is the speaker in this verse. Kraus also maintains that the king alone is the singer and speaker (1988:126).

24 Gerstenberger (1988:45-47) argues that the Psalm reflects Israelite reinterpretation of Egyptian and other ancient Near Eastern royal ideologies, in its adoption formula and its mythic structure.
Sonship the basis for divine inheritance: Psalm 2.7-8

The decree legally sealing the status and powers of the king is recited in response to the challenge of rebels in Psalm 2 it vindicates his authority to act as king by judging the impertinence of any who dare to challenge his authority. Having stated his identity and status as the son of YHWH, "I have been anointed his king on Zion," the king legitimates his royal authority by reference to the legal statement of his powers as king. "Let me recite the decree of the Lord. He said to me: 'You are my son, this day I have begotten you. Ask wealth of me and I will give it'" (Psalm 2.7). In Psalm 2, the reply concerns receiving the nations as a possession. Thus it directly refutes the rebels who are characterized as kings, princes and peoples who rage against the authority of the king (2.1-3).

One privilege accorded to the king thus empowered is, according to Psalm 2.8-9, the freedom of request. The request is prompted by the promise to transfer the nations and the ends of the earth to the son. The concept of world dominion is founded upon the concept of God as ruler of all creation. As Lord of the world, YHWH conveys this authority to the chosen king in Psalm 2. Though as most commentators note, "the ideology of world dominion seems strangely out of place in any Israelite historical context" (Gerstenberger, 1988:47-48). The absolute supremacy associated with the kingship of YHWH and his son, is the setting within which the absolute quality of the relationship and the claims in John 5.17-23 can be interpreted, as I will suggest in chapters 7 and 8. The son is heir of all that the father as lord and creator of all the universe possesses (Kraus, 1988:132). Along with world dominion, the power to judge all nations is conveyed from father to son (Ps.2.9).

Psalm 2 is not just an account of a coronation, it combines a "puzzling variety" of forms and speech patterns (Gerstenberger, 1988:48). It answers a threat by recounting the legitimation of the king by royal decree. Within this complex setting, the ritual account of the king's power to exercise judgment both belongs to a cultic ceremonial setting and serves a forensic function as well. The outcome of the ceremony is a demonstration of the forensic power of the king to act as judge. One of the powers granted the king by the right of request in Psalm 2.8-9, is the power to rule over the nations. The dashing to pieces of pottery can be related to the Egyptian coronation rituals, in which the king demonstrated his lordship over the world by smashing vessels upon which were written the names of all nations under his dominion. (Kraus, 1988:132) Mesopotamian texts frequently mention the ruler smashing the nations "like pottery"; as of Sargon it was said, "he shattered the lands like pottery and bridled the four corners of the earth," a conception which tended toward, in Kraus' words (1988:133), "universal, judiciary absolute power."

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The warning in Psalm 2.10-12 is really an ultimatum to the rebels—if they continue, they will be destroyed. The advice to "serve" the Lord has political implications, implying that foreign nations should submit as vassals to Israel’s God. See Gerstenberger (1988:48). To "kiss the son" is in this context an action denoting submission (1 Kings 19.18). But all who seek the protection of YHWH will be blessed (Kraus, 1988:133).

An answer to the objection that a royal concept and setting are inadequate to the mythic statement of sonship in John 5:17-23

Two objections: 'the son' in Psalm 2 is not god-like, and a monarchic conception is anachronistic

Two possible objections to the preliminary proposal above must be answered. First, John Ashton considers that the kingly connotations of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ are inadequate to account for the claim of equality with God. Thus he, following a well established body of research, maintains that it is in the term υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου that explanation for the myth underlying the Johannine conception can be found. It is generally acknowledged that the angelic apocalyptic setting of Daniel 7 evokes a mythic conception that helps to explain the use of the term ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in relation to the exaltation of Jesus in John.

I accept the validity of the research that associates specific Johannine uses of the term ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου with a mythic interpretation of death as exaltation (as Ashton, 1991:363-368). However, the proposal which I have introduced here aims to develop a different approach to John’s handling of the death and exaltation of Jesus, by emphasizing a mythic pattern of enthronement. I shall suggest in chapter 6 that this myth related to the enthronement of YHWH, and the king as son, provides a frame of reference for John 5.17-23. Insights from the preliminary reading of 5.17-23 within the formal framework of Psalm 2 will be developed in Part II, in a socio-rhetorical investigation of two interconnected aspects of John 5.17-23 which I consider have been neglected. I will argue that John 5.17-23 relies upon a mythic frame of reference associated with an enthronement scenario, and, that this pattern of speech responds to a conventional cultural identification of the crucifixion with shame.

26 It lies beyond the scope of this project to explore the extensive research which associates this title with the distinctive Christology of John. For an overview of the research see Neyrey (1982:594-601) and Burkett, (1991:16-37). See Ashton (1991:337-373) for a discussion of the key issues in relation to recent Johannine scholarship.
Psalm 2 expresses a pattern associated with the sovereignty of YHWH as the divine King who is enthroned above the chaotic sea. I will establish this assertion in chapter 6. For the moment it will suffice to say that the myth of the victory of YHWH who is enthroned over all hostile forces of chaos and enemies has a marked similarity with the structure and mood of John 5.17-23. Because of the formal similarity between John 5.17-23 and Psalm 2, noted in the chart above, I have introduced my thesis proposal by using the expression of the myth within Psalm 2 as a key example. However, this mythic pattern does not exclude the influence of texts like Daniel 7.13-14, as I will show in this chapter as well as in chapters 5, 6, and 7. The myth derives, however, from a much more ancient Canaanite sequence of threat followed by victory and enthronement. Images of the enthronement of YHWH and his king were derived from these. 27 My emphasis is on the pattern associated with the myth, more than on one specific text which bears this pattern. In Daniel 7.13, as I will show in chapter 6, a heavenly figure identified as ‘the son of man’ is attached to this pattern. In Psalm 2 it is a kingly figure whom YHWH calls, ‘my son’. I will emphasize the underlying pattern of the myth, and not one particular expression of it, in Daniel 7 or in Psalm 2. Because I hold that the mythic pattern provides a frame of reference for Johannine sonship, I suggest that to focus narrowly upon the νιός ἀνθρώπου background to Johannine sonship (see 5.27), is to present only one part of the picture.

In support of this argument I will briefly review a selection of recent research on the meanings associated with the terms νιός and δι νιός τοῦ Θεοῦ, noting that a mythic, god-like conception of ‘the son’, associated with post-monarchical use of the terms ‘son’ and ‘son of God’ in reference to the heavenly council, has been neglected by Ashton. He objects that the background to this term is not sufficiently god-like to account for the claim of equality with God. I will answer him by noting uses of the term δι νιός τοῦ Θεοῦ in which royal and heavenly associations overlap. Here I present this material only as background that will support my proposal generally, but, in chapter 7, I will argue for a use of the myth associated with the title δι νιός τοῦ Θεοῦ which does account for the claim of equality with God in 5.17-23.

The second objection to my proposal is that it is anachronistic. To associate a setting proper to Israel’s monarchy with the very different political, religious, institutional and social situation of early Christian speech implies a time warp. I accept the validity of this objection entirely. I counter it only by admitting that I do not claim that the monarchical setting provides a literal explanation of early Christian use of monarchical imagery of enthronement. Nor do I attempt to justify post-monarchical use of this imagery on historical grounds; to do so would exceed the limits of this study. Rather, I focus upon the per-

27 I shall give reasons for this assertion in chapter 6.
Thus, while recognizing the validity of this objection, I refer the reader to the work of others who have attempted to trace the history of the persistence, in Israel’s post-monarchic traditions, of speech derived from a monarchical setting. They affirm that the culture that nourished Jewish sacred traditions continued to hold the patterns associated with monarchy as meaningful. Though the monarchy was defunct, the patterns formerly associated with it continued to live in connection with the persistent metaphor of YHWH as King of the universe.28

Son of God: a place to look for a myth adequate to John 5.17-23?

Bultmann (1971:248-257) argues that an already understood framework of myth must underlie Jesus’ claim to equality with God in John 5.17-23. Otherwise it would not make sense to the audience. Bultmann rejected the suggestion that ‘Son of God’ associated with a monarchical frame of reference is the key to the myth behind the Johannine conception. He believed that the mythic inspiration of the Johannine conception was unique among early Christian expression, and therefore must be found in sources distinct from those drawn upon in the Synoptic tradition. 29

However, John Ashton (1991:308-328), who agrees that some mythic framework must be understood behind the claim to equality in John 5.17-23, looks for a mythic frame of reference associated with Israelite use of the term "son of God" (υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ) and finds none. The Johannine use of the term, he argues, is primarily messianic and therefore, does not fulfill the criteria of the mythic claim to equality with God, because the king, no matter how exalted, was never thought to be more than a mere man. Ashton suggests, in line with the general thesis of Bultmann, that the myth needs to account for a divine, pre-existent being, sent from heaven.


29 See my discussion in chapter I subheading "Engagement with Bultmann’s argument that a god-like myth...." Bultmann considered that neither king nor cult figured prominently in the distinctive Johannine conception.
My study of the background of the term 'son of god' will attempt to show, to the contrary, that none of these mythic criteria are alien to aspects of ancient, intertestamental, and early Christian use of the term \( \nu \dot{i} \dot{o} \dot{c} \). In describing a monarchic setting associated with Psalm 2 earlier in this chapter, I aimed to set out a sequence of coronation-like events that would assist interpretation of John 5.17-23. According to Ricoeur's (1967:5) definition, myth provides a ritual sequencing of events that creates a narrative frame of reference. Identification with this sequence makes it possible to transform ordinary events into actions that point to a transcendent meaning. The pattern of events in Psalm 2 appear to provide a frame of reference that lends sacred significance to the juxtaposition of a threat with the answer concerning the son in John 5.17-23. If the pattern concerning sonship expressed within Psalm 2 does clarify the sense of the claims attributed to Jesus in John 5.17-23, then it is reasonable to look for the mythic background to John 5.17-23 in reference to uses of 'son' \( \nu \dot{i} \dot{o} \dot{c} \) originally derived from a kingly setting.

Like Ashton, I accept the premise of Bultmann, that the claim of the son's equality with the father does not make sense unless it is supported by the already understood structure of a myth. But unlike Ashton, I consider that the background associated with 'the son of god' is mythic in a way that clarifies the extraordinary speech in John 5.17-23. On the grounds that 'mythic' in the context of John 5.17-23 connotes 'god-like and pre-existent', Ashton finds, to the contrary, that kingly associations with the term \( \nu \dot{i} \dot{o} \dot{c} \tau \dot{o} \dot{u} \Theta \dot{e} \dot{u} \dot{u} \) do not do justice to that extraordinary God-like claim of Jesus.

**Ashton on 'son of God' in the context of John 5.17-23**

Ashton maintains, as I do, that the claim of equality to God in John 5.17-23 only makes sense when framed within an already understood mythic conception. He also acknowledges that Bultmann missed the target when he identified the Johannine conception with the Mandeans. (See Ashton, 1991:341.) Accordingly, Ashton takes up something of a renewed quest for a myth that might provide a framework of meaning for the Johannine portrait of Jesus. He begins to look in John 5, where the "mythic" claim to equality with God is elaborated most clearly. Thus his search begins with the term 'son of God'.

As stated in chapter 2, the argument in 5.17-23 sets in place the specifically Johannine conception of the relationship between father and son, and is thus crucial to the structure of John's "high Christology."

In 5.25 the son of God (\( \nu \dot{i} \dot{o} \dot{c} \tau \dot{o} \dot{u} \Theta \dot{e} \dot{u} \dot{u} \)) appears to be a synonym for \( \nu \dot{i} \dot{o} \dot{c} \) whose relation to the father has just been established in the previous argument (5.17-23). For
reasons such as the above, Ashton’s discussion of Johannine use of the term ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ naturally centers around the use of ὁ υἱὸς in 5.17-23. Thus Ashton’s study of Johannine use of the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ focuses upon the "audacious" claims made in John 5.22-23 (1991:324-325): Jesus is said to be given the twin powers of creation and judgment. Ashton addresses the problem of understanding how John 5.17-23 accomplishes the shift from a human analogy for sonship to one which is so exalted that it cannot be explained by ordinary language. Behind the Johannine usage of sonship in 5.19-23 he identifies customary conceptions of agency which derive from diplomatic conventions, and which later came to be fundamental to the concept of the prophet as the agent of God: The concept of equality is communicated, in part, by employing the terminology of legal agency.

Further the insight of Bultmann, that the divine claim is inadequately explained by human analogy, leads Ashton to note with some disappointment, the predominantly messianic background of the term ‘son’ and ‘son of God’. The kingly associations of ὁ υἱὸς applied to Jesus in 5.17-23, are perceived by Ashton as inadequate because, he argues, in order to provide the framework of the extraordinary claim that Jesus is equal to God, a mythic framework which provides the background for a divine figure who is conceived of as god-like is needed. Legal analogies concerning agency clarify the significance of the transfer of authority which is communicated in 5.22-23, as Ashton (1991:323-326) acknowledges. However, these cannot account for the extraordinary claim of equality to God which, in effect, Jesus makes in John 5.17-23. Though legal concepts of agency constitute the concrete matter of argumentation in 5.17-23, yet the puzzle of the argument is its power to effect a Gestalt, which somehow communicates the fundamental equality of Jesus with God (Ashton, 1991:324-326). Ashton (1991: 326) concludes that, in respect to the interpretation of this text, Bultmann is right in his perception that only the structure of a myth can account for the shift between human and divine perception. He finds that both the kingly and the legal agency’s use of υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ is but a human conception. It lacks the god-like potential required to explain the distinctive Johannine emphasis on the son’s oneness with God in John 5.17-23. Thus he looks for the background to the myth elsewhere.

30 In Philo, Questiones et solutiones in Exodum II. 68, the two powers of God are associated with the cherubim attached to the ark of the covenant in whose midst is the λόγος; see Neyrey (1988:25-28) for further background to this tradition in Philo. (See also De fugae et inventione 101 and Mos. II. 99.)

31 Meeks (1976:56-59) notes the tension between "imitation" in 5.19, and the invoking of the standard rule of agency in 5.23,24 which are combined in such a way that they effect what he calls a "redefinition of Χριστός as Son of God in a way that is impossible for Jews to accept" (1976:55); see also de Jonge, (1973:246-270).
Overview of distinct uses of the terms son (or sons) of God

Research on the background of the terms υἱός and υἱός τοῦ Θεοῦ raises two questions.

First, is speech concerning the king's relation as son to God, who rules all the earth, devoid of mythic connotations? Does the universal reign of Israel's king not rely upon a pattern of identity with the reign of God over all creation? If so, is not the king, on earth, to be honored as a ruler whose status and honor can only be compared with that of God? I ask this while acknowledging the fact that the Hebrew monarch was understood to be human and was adopted as son in coronation. A view of the earthly king patterned on divine kingship is evidenced in Psalms 2, 89, and 110. This concept of royal sonship was influenced by the Egyptian conception of the king as descendant of the God, or deus incarnatus.  

The second question responds specifically to Ashton's complaint that the primary background associated with the term υἱός τοῦ Θεοῦ relates to a monarchic setting and is a reference to a human, not a divine being. Scholarly investigation into the background of the term has shown that in ancient Hebrew tradition the concept 'son (or sons) of God' belongs to three distinct settings:

1) the divine, god-like or angelic beings surrounding the heavenly council;  
2) the representative role of the collective nation of Israel as υἱός of YHWH;  
3) it was used to refer to an individual only in reference to the king who was adopted as the son of God. 


33 Son or (sons) of God was used in reference to divine or angelic beings, who belong to a divine council or heavenly court surrounding the throne, but who are clearly subordinate to YHWH (Job 1.6; 2.1; 38.7; Pss. 29.1; 82.6; 89.6). Israelite religion transformed to the service of YHWH, the Canaanite idea of an assembly of gods under the supremacy of El. Ps. 89.7-8 even designates YHWH as "master of the great council of the holy ones," a Ugaritic term for "gods," who could also be called sons of gods, as the parallelism of Ps. 89.6-7 indicates (Fossum, 1992:129).

34 Sonship as a collective expression for Israel's filial relationship with YHWH is the unique privilege of Israel which in turn demands a peculiar loyalty and obedience. This usage never implies divine paternity, but rather it metaphorically expresses a unique and intimate relation founded upon the fact of YHWH's election and creation of the people of Israel as in Deuteronomy 14.1;32.5-6,19-20 and Is.43.6-7 (see Byrne, 1992:156).

35 Only in the person of the king is the privilege of sonship ever focused upon an individual in Israel's scriptures. Fossum (1992:128) surveys the evidence, relevant to Egyptian, Akkadian, Syrian, Canaanite, Sumerian and Israelite dynasties to support his statement that in the entire Near East, the enthroned king, ritually acting in the name and role of the god, could be designated as "Son of god" or even 'God." The idea of the king as son of the deity, after the pattern of divine descent, influenced the Israelite monarchy. In Israel the king was understood to be human and to become the son of God in law upon enronement by adoption. (See Fossum, 1992:128-129.)
The meanings tend to overlap somewhat in intertestamental and early Christian use. Below I will provide a brief selection of sonship imagery that emphasizes the mythic conceptions associated with the various uses of the term son of God. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to reconstruct the tradition history of the distinct uses of the concept. The primary meaning which will be the focus of this study relates to the term 'son of God' in reference to the king.

The king's relation to God in monarchical conceptions of sonship

The concept of the deity as king, and the relationship between the deity and the earthly occupant of the throne, was an important feature of kingship in many societies of the ancient Near East (Whitelam, 1992:43).

It was common practice in Near Eastern cultures of that period that the high god was the king of the state, and that the earthly monarch ruled as the representative of the god. The monarch’s rule was seen as a mere reflection of the reign of the heavenly king (Whitelam, 1992:43). The Canaanite vassals in the Amarna letters address their Egyptian sovereign as "my god," "my sun," "my breath." The Egyptians regarded their ruler as the very son of the gods by birth; pharaoh was thought to be the earthly manifestation of the gods, Horus, Seth, and Osiris (Szikszai, 1962:14). In Egypt the Pharaoh is deus incarnatus (Kraus, 1988:130). In Ps.110.3 the reference to the "womb of the morning" may poetically allude to such a divine origin of the king. In Canaanite culture, the king was believed to be an offspring of the gods and to have been suckled at divine breasts (Dahood, 1965:11).

The monotheism of Israel, and the significant divergences between other Ancient Near Eastern accounts of kingship must be taken into account in reading the Royal Psalms against the background of comparable material on kingship. In biblical literature no claims are made for the king's divinity, nor did prophetic Yahwism ever attack Hebrew kings on this score (Dahood, 1965:11; Cooke, 1961:202-225).

In Babylon the title "god" was used for the king, but it signified that the king was the divine servant of the gods and goddesses who was conceived as a son by adoption and not by nature. This divine adoption gave the king superhuman qualities, but because his divinity

Though the explicit title "son of God" never occurs, according to Byrne, the idea appears in the ancient royal Psalms, 2.7 and 110.3, and features prominently in the dynastic oracle to David’s house, 2 Sam.7.14; (See also 1 Chr.17.13;22.10;28.6; Ps.89.19-37). These texts employ a concept of divine descent which echoes the monarchical ideology of Egypt (Byrne, 1992:156).

In Israel, the filial relationship is clearly rooted in the covenantal theology which applies to the whole people of Israel; thus in, Byrne’s (1992:156) view, the "royal" sonship can be seen as a microcosm of all Israel.
was "functional" rather than metaphysical, he was never worshipped (Szikszai, 1962:15). The Hittites never recognized a living king as a god, but revered the divinity of their dead kings. Syrian kings were neither regarded as offspring of the gods, nor were they deified after death. The Canaanite Ugaritic documents indicate that kings of the legendary past were regarded as demigods. King Keret was suckled by Asherah the goddess, and Keret was himself called the 'son' and 'servant' of El, the high god, from whom he received immortality (Szikszai, 1962:15). UT 125.10-11 identifies king Kirta as the son of El, the offspring of Lutpan and Qudshu (Asherah) (Dahood, 1965:11).

Mettinger (1976:13-14) notes a distinction between Israel's traditions concerning civil kingship, characterized in the historical books, and the more narrow tradition of "divine kingship" witnessed in selected texts such as Psalms 2, 89 and 110, as well as 2 Sam.7. They attest to the Hebrew tradition of "divine sonship" in which identity of the king with YHWH is upheld on the basis of divine descent. 'Divine descent' is his way of describing this particular conception of kingship. Mettinger finds that Psalms 2, 89, and 110 understand sonship in terms of an adoption, though they rely upon an Egyptian influence which is translated into Israelite conception (Mettinger, 1976:260-261). Similarly, Kraus considers that the words investing the king in Jerusalem as "son" of God lie somewhere between the Egyptian and Mesopotamian conceptions (1988:130-132).

Mettinger maintains that the Israelite conception of an identity between the king and God based on a concept of divine descent, leads to a portrait of the king as one who holds the position of deus incarnatus on earth (1976:13-14). 36 In this "Hochmessianismus" conception, Mettinger (1976:13-14) argues it is because the king can be seen as of divine descent, albeit by adoption, that he can function as the object of the Israelite cult.

*Overlapping settings in late use of "son" and "son of God"

Hengel (1976:42), Byrne (1992:157) and Fossum (1992:131) show that in the intertestamental period diverse use of the term 'son of God' developed as its formerly distinct usages became overlapped. As examples which I will cite indicate, the distinct associations evoked by the term when used in speech referring to the king, overflowed into reference to divine beings in the heavenly council, the heavenly status was also extended to pious individuals who were designated as sons. The distinct concepts of the son, or sons, of God which were traditional to Israel, were expanded upon in the diverse Judaism of the Diaspora.

The traditional collective designation of Israel as "son" continues as late as the Rabbinic writings (Byrne, 1992:157 and Hengel, 1976:42). However, Byrne (1992:157) notes that in the intertestamental period, the term is often found in eschatological contexts, as an ideal portrait of Israel purified and restored (Jub.1.25-28; Pss.Sol.17.30). Frequently in this period acknowledgement of sonship is associated with images of rescue or immunity from death. Byrne (1992:157) connects this imagery with expectation of a future awaiting the righteous; they are to be restored to an angel-like immunity from death, such as was enjoyed before the fall in Eden (1 En.69.11; 2 En. 30.11; Wis. 1.23-24). In Wisdom 5.5 and 2 Baruch 51.3-12 other angelic privileges, of shining appearance, beholding a vision of God, and attendance at worship in heaven, accompany this use of the term 'son' (Byrne, 1992:157).

Fossum (1992:131) notes that an example of the overlapping of formerly distinct sonship associations can be seen in Joseph and Asenath, the Hellenistic Jewish romance; Joseph is called "son of God" in 6.3,5;13.13 and God's "firstborn son" in 18.11;24.4, whereas the people of Israel in general are described as the "sons" of God. Far more than a righteous Jew, Joseph is presented in kingly attire (5.4-6), people bow to him, and he is called the "sun from heaven" (6.2), possessing beauty and omniscience "because of the great light that is inside him" (6.6). In a similar image in T.Abraham. 12, Abel the son of Adam acts as the heavenly judge. He sits on a crystal throne blazing like fire, and he is described as a "wondrous man shining like the sun, like unto a son of God, ὑσίατις θεοῦ (Hengel, 1976:44 note 87). In the intertestamental period images of sonship tended to overlap; those that traditionally had belonged to settings proper to corporate Israel, those of angelic beings, and images related to the king combined with one another (Byrne, 1992:157).

The divine council meaning had a tendency to overlap with other meanings in later usage of the term. Thus to say that John's use of it is "primarily messianic" does not isolate its messianic connotation from other overlapping meanings associated with sonship. Messianic associations with ὅ ὑσίατις τοῦ θεοῦ contemporary with John were not devoid of god-like meaning in cases in which the messianic significance of the term had become overlapped. Imagery of angelic, god-like beings surrounding the throne of God was not alien to early Christian messianic imagery.

In addition, an individual application of the term is found in Jewish wisdom in reference to particular wise and righteous persons (such as Sir 4.10), whereas it had been a term reserved for the Davidic king in earlier texts. In the Talmud, the worker of signs or the mystic who ascends to God in visions is frequently called "son" or "my son" by God (as in Taan.24b; 25a; III Enoch 1.8) (Hengel, 1976:42-43). 37

37 Honi the miracle worker speaks to God saying "your sons have turned to me, because I am a Son of your house" (m. Ta'an. 3.8; Fossum, 1992:130).
Hengel notes other evidence that the tradition of the king as "son of God" was not alien to first century Palestinian Judaism. A fragment from Cave 4 at Qumran (4QFlor) cites Messianic quotations of 2 Sam.7.14 and the first verse of Psalm 2 (1976:44-45). 38 Also a Cave 4 text from a Daniel apocryphon testifies to a ruler who shall be called "...the son of God, and Son of the Most High (brh dy 'lywn yqrwnh). As comets (flash) to the sight, so shall be their kingdom...." (Hengel, 1976:44 quotes the translation of J.A. Fitzmyer.)

Byrne (1992:157) disputes that this text provides direct evidence of the individual 'son' or 'child of God' title "applied to a Davidic ruler in the titular way associated with later Christian messianism." But he observes the singular use of \( \text{u} \hat{o} \text{s} \ \text{to} \text{u} \ \text{O} \text{θ} \text{e} \text{o} \text{u} \) or \( \text{t} \text{o} \\hat{o} \text{u} \ \text{O} \text{θ} \text{e} \text{o} \text{u} \) denoting the righteous individual whose "ultimate immunity to death and destiny to eternal life" is acknowledged by persecutors in Wis.2.16-18.;5.5. Further the sonship motif figures prominently in the conclusion to Wisdom 10-19, a midrash on Israel’s deliverance from the persecution of Egypt in her pursuit. According to Byrne (1992:157), this represents a democratization of the individual use of sonship in reference to the privilege of divine discipline, favor, and rescue from death at the hands of enemies (12.7,20; 16.1,26; 18.4, 13; 19.6) earlier in the book.

The overlapping associations in intertestamental use of the concept of sonship suggest that the previously distinct meanings proper to a kingly, or heavenly or corporate Israel, setting had become more fluid by the first century C.E. John 5.17-23 uses a pattern of threat answered by claims of enthroned sonship that is coherent with the royal setting of Psalm 2. This does not exclude the possibility that the royal mythic pattern may have overlapped with associations proper to god-like beings attached to the heavenly throne.

**Complexity in overlapping early Christian use of sonship imagery**

In light of evidence that the once distinct settings for this term—heavenly council, person of the king, and corporate Israel—overlapped somewhat in intertestamental usage, is it accurate to say that early Christian use of the term \( \text{u} \hat{o} \text{s} \) in a way that evokes a monarchical scenario may not also be associated with a heavenly setting? Mythic associations with the heavenly council surrounding God’s throne lend complexity to the use of the term when it becomes joined to imagery of messianic enthronement. 39 Daniel 7.13-14, for example,

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38 The Qumran quotation from Psalm 2 is cited in the first major section of this chapter.

39 Philo, in *De confusione linguarum* 146, and *Legum allegoriae* I:43, also uses titles to describe the intermediary figure whom he calls, among other names, "God’s Firstborn, the Word, who holds the eldership among the angels, Beginning, Name of God, Man after his Image, God’s ‘Son’ who oversees the life of the universe ‘like a viceroy of a great king’" (Fossom, 1992:131). See also Tobin (1990) on the common background between John’s Prologue and Philo; and Dillon (1977) on the middle Platonic background of this.
evokes images proper to both a divine council and the transfer of dominion proper to a royal enthronement setting.  

40 The term  νικός in early Christian speech is, as Ashton admits, complex (1991:316, 326-228). The background of ὁ νικός in John 5.17-23 is complicated, not only by the complexity of usage of the term within the Fourth Gospel, but also by the several contexts associated with its use in the diverse Judaism contemporary with early Christianity.

During the first century C. E., the term νικός could be used of a pious person’s righteous relationship to God. It was also a collective term for Israel’s relationship to YHWH. Its much more rare use referred to the unique relationship of an individual to God, a use primarily associated with reference to the king as the son of God.

Jesus called God 'abba. This way of speaking may have been understood in the context of pious address of God as father in his time according to Fossum (1992:133). 41 It is beyond the scope of this project to attempt to track the progression from Jesus’ address of God as 'abba (as attested in Mark 14.36; compare Gal.4.6, Rom.8.15) to the early Christian traditions which identify Jesus as the unique ‘Son’ of ‘the Father’. 42 ‘The son’ in the latter context is an address which is clearly within the kingly tradition, which sees sonship as the divine privilege of one unique individual. Following his crucifixion and in order to interpret the experience of resurrection according to scripture, Jesus’ followers came to refer to him as ‘the son’. 43 The title indicated that, in his resurrection, he had been exalted and given dominion to reign as the ‘son of God’ in keeping with the kingly tradition of sonship.

Willi Marxsen’s attention to the logic of this process may help to explain the complexity related to early Christian interpretation of Jesus as ‘the son’ in terms of exaltation in stream of Jewish thought.

Justin, without literary dependence upon John, appears to be indebted to a Judaism similar to that of Philo, which allows him to attribute all of the theophanies and titles of divine attributes in Hebrew scripture to "the son." See Dialogue with Trypho 61.1; 126.1;125.3-5; cited in Fossum, (1992:132).

40 J.J. Collins (1977:144) identifies the νικός ἀνθρώπων as a variant of heavenly angelic savior figures as represented in texts such as 1 Enoch 46.1, the Qumran War Scroll 1QM 17:7-8 and the Melchizedek scroll 11QMelch verse 10. He relates the figure of the Ancient of Days to El who in the imagery of Canaanite myth is the high god who presides over the divine council of the gods (J.J. Collins, 1977:100-101). See also Ashton’s (1991:357-363) discussion of the mythic figures represented in Daniel 7.13-14.

41 Though this is disputed. The unusual character of address of God as 'abba is emphasized by Barr (1988).

42 Nor do I attempt to survey the literature on this topic. I refer the reader to the introductions to research on the topic by Fossum, (1992:133), Ashton (1991:326), and Lee (1950:42-51).

43 Lindars maintains that the kingly tradition appears to have provided an explanation, or in his terms an "apologetic," for the resurrection of Jesus, after the pattern of the enthronement of the king as son. (See Lindars, 1961: 32-72.)
resurrection. In the context of his work on Christological predicates, Marxsen attempts to reconstruct the process through which people come to Christological confession. He suggests that they first have an experience of God through the activity of Jesus. Then they infer backwards from the experience: ‘Why is God known so decisively through his [Jesus] actions?’ Christological titles are the product of this line of questioning. The titles express the traditions from which they are drawn, resulting in some over-interpretation, though the excesses of one title can be corrected when it is played off against another. At a further stage of argument people ask, ‘How did Jesus come to be this special person?’ In the process the inquiry shifts from the experience of God as known through the actions of Jesus, to explanation of the identity of the person of Jesus, and faith becomes belief about the person of the messiah as much or more than trust in the saving God experienced through his actions.

Marxsen posits a hypothetical eyewitness at the tomb. She experiences something, but what? It is not an ordinary event. What does it mean? It does not make sense until attached to an ‘understandable’ frame of reference. Thus speech concerning resurrection represents an inference. What has been experienced is so overwhelming it can only be attributed to God. The experience of resurrection thus assumes an interpretative perspective through which it cannot be treated as an historical event of the same order as crucifixion, for it is meaningful only in reference to the action of God. I will suggest that to express this kind of meaning, only the transcendent sequence and image of myth is adequate. Something happened. But, to express what it means, inferences are made. The conclusion, that Jesus is the son who, in resurrection, is exalted to reign over all creation is expressed through interpretation of images attributing kingly sonship to the overwhelming power of God. Inevitably over-interpretation results when this inference related to the language of myth, this interpretive conclusion, that Jesus is exalted after the pattern of God’s action, is presented or received as if it in itself were the experience of God’s action through Jesus.

Lindars, (1975: 368-379) notes that early Christian speech concerning the crucifixion is routinely attached to speech concerning the resurrection. In this context he comments, no doubt resurrection is of prime importance, but "the fact remains, however, that it has a peculiarly ambivalent quality, and this is because it is never treated simply as resuscitation for continuing life on earth." Resurrection is persistently identified with the theme of exaltation; he suggests that one could argue that the idea of exaltation can be reached even without experience of resurrection by following the sequence associated with the apocalyptic myth which expects that the death of the righteous may result in transition to a position in heaven (Lindars, 1975:380).

Lindars sees the apocalyptic myth of an imminent intervention of God as the conceptual framework that provides a link between Jesus’ preaching of the kingdom and, in continuity with this, his disciples’ identification with the crucified and exalted one as the divine agent of judgment; within the framework of this mythic sequence, Lindars (1975:380) suggests, the experience of resurrection might have confirmed belief, in Jesus exalted to God’s right hand as agent of judgment, instead of originating it; the experience of resurrection “cinches the argument” and removes further doubts.

In my interpretation of Marxsen above I am indebted to conversations with and correspondence from Dr. David J. Bromell, 1994.
From a resurrection retrospective, Jesus’ intimate address of God is again reinterpreted. 46 Through this secondary layer of messianic meaning, yet another perspective of Jesus’ address of God as his father emerges. (See Ashton, 1991:326 and Fossum, 1992:133.) In Matthew 28.18-20 the resurrected Jesus delegates to the disciples the divine authority to baptize in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. As Fossum observes, the commission "follows upon the word about all authority having been given to the Son" who by resurrection had been divinely empowered (1992:133). From this interpretive vantage point Jesus is seen as king, exalted and enthroned by virtue of his status as the son of God. The complexity of the meanings associated with Christian use of sonship relates to this interpretive process. 47

The resurrection of Jesus was interpreted in relation to the kingly scenario of enthronement. 48 Through exaltation in resurrection, Jesus is seated upon the divine throne at the right hand of God. 49 The resurrection of Jesus did not signal his enthronement as an earthly messiah but as the heavenly occupant of the divine throne. Thus the traditionally distinct meanings proper to the king or the heavenly council are overlapped in confession of the resurrection of Jesus. The pious son of Israel, the heavenly being attached to God’s throne, and the king given authority to reign as the son of God, are once diverse meanings that can be seen to converge in early Christian characterization of Jesus as ὁ υἱὸς Θεοῦ.

46 A different perspective is offered by Greig (1968:9-10) who suggests that the Gospels may have laid special emphasis upon Jesus’ relationship with God as ‘abba, "as one means of underlining their normal exegesis" of texts such as Psalms 2.7 and 89.26ff. In light of this reasoning, Greig suggests that Jesus’ piety is presented in order to reinforce this way of reading messianic texts, by reinforcing ‘abba as a slogan. Greig characterizes John 5.18 as a late and sophistic overworking of a primitive report on arguments between Jesus and opponents concerning the status of messiah.

47 See the introduction to Mack’s (1988) A Myth of Innocence which offers a critical assessment of this traditioning process. He observes that New Testament scholars typically work on the assumption that the resurrection can be treated as a foundation. Rather he argues it is the gospel resurrection narratives themselves that are foundational. Mack’s argument is comparable to Marxsen’s discussion of Christological predicates above. In both cases the result of treating early Christian speech about resurrection as foundational, I suggest, is that the conclusion of Jesus’ followers is treated as if it were the first premise of faith in Jesus.

48 See Acts 13.32 which quotes the declaration of sonship in Psalm 2.7 in explanation of the resurrection.

49 Hahn (1969: 173), noting that the proof from scripture characterizes the earliest passion reports which employ the "exaltation" framework, argues that the passion story from its start "owes its structure, not to missionary preaching, but obviously had its life situation in the cultic reading of scripture."

50 Fossum (1992:134) maintains that intertestamental use of the term ‘son of God’ included reference to the pious individual who ascends to heaven and becomes part of the heavenly council, an angelic being or even the glory of God. He relates this characterization of the son to early Christian use of the title ‘son of man’.
Overlapping sonship titles in John 5.17-23

In exegesis of John 5.17-28 some commentators have observed a comparable phenomenon: traditionally distinct scenarios associated with sonship overlap in the argument displaying the relationship of Jesus to God. Though John 5.17-23 does not overtly refer to the resurrection of Jesus, nevertheless, Hahn argues that John 5, like 1 Thessalonians 1.10 and Matthew 28.18-20 provides evidence of the confluence of previously distinct ideas concerning sonship. The diverse backgrounds proper to the use of the terms, 'son', 'son of God' and 'son of man', overlapped, says Hahn, in early Christian interpretation of the significance of Jesus (1969:286).

The synoptic conflation of the distinct traditions associated with these titles provides an instructive comparison to the interplay of the titles, ὁ υἱὸς, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ, and ὁ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπων in 5.17-28. Juxtaposition of titles, the messianic son of God and the eschatological son of man, are also found in the Synoptic accounts of the forensic process against Jesus in association with a question concerning sonship. For example in Mark the high priest asks, "Are you the messiah the son of the Blessed One?" to which Jesus replies, "I am; and you will see the son of man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming within the clouds of heaven" (Mk.14.60-62). The reply quotes Daniel 7.13 conflated with Psalm 110.1. It functions as a reply which combines the enthronement/exaltation theme of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ with the apocalyptic imagery associated with ὁ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπων.

I suggest that an already understood mythic context of sonship serves as background to this type of early Christian response in which images of heavenly enthronement are used to answer a challenge to the life and honor of Jesus. In John 5.17-27 the complexity of sonship imagery is even more pronounced. The intimate relation of the son with the father (which could evoke associations with the theme of pious sonship) is argued in a context of agency in which powers are transferred to the son (in a way that recalls the dominion given to the king in the context of enthronement). Yet the powers themselves, the power to create life and to be the ὁ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπων, the judge, (5.27) are powers that evoke the role of the One enthroned in heaven. (See Daniel 7.13-14.) The whole sequence associated with the transfer of authority seems to recall the coronation of the king, adopted as the one who is uniquely the son of God; but the setting evokes images of the transfer of the power of God as Creator and Judge. This goes beyond expectations associated with the monarchical scenario, though the king by virtue of kingly status is given the divine power to enforce

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51 See chapter 5 for a more detailed comparison of John 5.17-27 with the synoptic trial question accounts.
order and to judge, as in Psalm 2. John 5.17-23 uses the diverse images of sonship in an interdependent way: the relationship of intimacy is employed in order to justify the point of the argument which is the god-like power of creation and judgment that legitimates the authority of the son.

The powers given to the son are those proper only to God in 5.21-22. Further the transfer of power which "belongs" in a royal sonship setting is stated in a way that alludes to Daniel 7.14. Hamerton-Kelly (1973:224, 235-236), Ashton (1991:357), and Nickelsburg (1992: 146) all note that the υἱὸς θεοῦ τοῦ Δαίμονος terminology and imagery that appear in John 5.27 employ the language of Daniel 7.13,14

I saw one like a human being [υἱὸς θεοῦ τοῦ Δαίμονος] coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples...should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed. (Daniel 7.13-14.)

He has given him authority because he is υἱὸς θεοῦ τοῦ Δαίμονος (John 5.27).

Ashton (1991:357) points out that the saying in John 5.27 is unique in two ways: it places ὁ υἱὸς side by side with υἱὸς θεοῦ τοῦ Δαίμονος; and it is the only occurrence in the gospels of the anarthrous form υἱὸς θεοῦ τοῦ Δαίμονος which duplicates the Greek of Daniel 7.13, in both the Septuagint and Theodotion's version of Daniel 7.13. 52 Linguistically υἱὸς θεοῦ τοῦ Δαίμονος in John 5.27 is identical to the usage in Daniel, unlike the more cumbersome ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Δαίμονος as a title for Jesus (Ashton, 1991:357). 53

Both John 5.27 and Daniel 7.13 share a common content—the idea of transfer of divine authority—with John 5.22-23. Todt (1965: 286-288) argues that the ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Δαίμονος sayings in the Synoptic Gospels are free from the concept of kingly exaltation by virtue of adoption into sonship; in contra-distinction from the Synoptic ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Δαίμονος sayings, he identifies images of exaltation with the tradition of the enthronement of the Israelite King by adoption (Todt, 1965: 286-288). It is beyond the scope of this pro-

52 Because in both John 5.27 and in Daniel 7.13 the title υἱὸς θεοῦ τοῦ Δαίμονος appears without the article, the Johannine usage may reflect a stage in the tradition before the term had become fixed as a title for Jesus, argues Hamerton-Kelly, who on these grounds would locate the Johannine usage somewhere between the use of the image in Jewish apocalyptic and its use in the Synoptics (1973:236). Hamerton-Kelly's observation cites the work of S. Schulz Untersuchungen zur Menschensohn-Christologie im Johannes-evangelium (Göttingen, 1957, pp.109-114).

53 Burkett (1991:166-174) limits his examination to Johannine use of the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Δαίμονος, which excludes υἱὸς θεοῦ τοῦ Δαίμονος in John 5.27. He argues that Johannine use of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Δαίμονος derives from Proverbs 30.1-4 though it is identified with a variety of entities in Israel's scriptures. The Johannine use of the title ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Δαίμονος, he concludes, has no connection with the υἱὸς θεοῦ τοῦ Δαίμονος in Daniel 7.13-14 (Burkett, 1991:173).
ject to explore the meaning of the Synoptic ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνθρωποποιήσεως sayings. However, with reference to the quotation from Daniel 7.13 within the Synoptic trial accounts of the question concerning sonship (Mark 14.61-64 and Matthew 26.63-66, Luke 22.66-71), I suggest that an enthronement scenario is evoked. Matera (1982:115-16,187,189) argues this point very strongly, arguing that the royal significance of the quotation from Daniel 7.13-14 has been neglected. The reference to the υἱὸς ἀνθρωποποιήσεως in John 5.27 clearly alludes to Daniel 7.13. It follows a declaration of the transfer of power to the son (5.22-23) that, I suggest, echoes the declaration of the sonship and empowerment of the king as in Psalm 2.7-11. The transfer of dominion accorded to the υἱὸς ἀνθρωποποιήσεως in Daniel 7.13 is congruent with the power to judge all nations given to the king in Psalm 2. This common element suggests to me that images associated with kingly enthronement, proper to a king as son of God, had already overlapped with the image of the heavenly υἱὸς ἀνθρωποποιήσεως by the time of Daniel.

A comparison with 1 Thessalonians 1.10 suggests that a comparable confluence, of kingly exaltation with a divine being sent as judge, provided a mythic background for early Christian interpretation of the resurrection which was not restricted to Johannine interpretation of Jesus. Hahn (1969:286) observes that in the use of ὁ υἱὸς in 1 Thessalonians 1.10, the resurrection/enthronement meaning generally associated with ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ title is fused with the apocalyptic context of "the son from heaven whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath that is coming."

Summary: enthronement, crucifixion, and a death/exaltation pattern

I began this section by replying to an argument of John Ashton, that the messianic background to the term ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ is inadequate to the exalted claim of the son’s equality with God in John 5.17-23.

I argued that Psalm 2 provides a patterned structure within which the threats of challengers and the response legitimating the exalted status of the son are held together. In Psalm 2, rebel vassals challenge the authority of YHWH’s king. He repels their threats by recounting to them the decree of YHWH: "God has publicly declared to me, ‘this is my son’, and has given me the right to reign." Solely on the grounds of his status as ‘son’ of God the king replies that God has empowered him to execute judgment upon all who refuse to honor him as the legitimate king. The pattern reflected in Psalm 2 provides a prototype for the arrangement of John 5.17-23. The juxtaposition of lethal threat with an answer displaying the status of the son, is the rhetorical structure that holds together the complex of discrete forms of speech in 5.17-23. The narrative structure of Psalm 2 makes sense of the pattern of speech in John 5.17-23. The formerly discrete forms (for example, a saying in
5.17, a parable in 5.19-20) have been arranged in this final form specifically to create the rhetorical impression of a Gattung such as is exemplified in Psalm 2.

Based on a comparison between John 5.27 and the apocalyptic presentation of the son of man in 1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch, Ashton finds that his quest, for the mythic source of a god-like figure adequate to John’s high Christology, has been rewarded. In the ascent and descent of the heavenly figure of the Johannine οὐκ ἔρχεται ἐκ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, Ashton (1991:355, 365) sees imagery of a divine being sent down to earth from heaven. The apocalyptic conception fits most of the mythic criteria that Bultmann was seeking in his hypothesis of a Gnostic redeemer myth. And, as Ashton observes, the son of man is closer to the heart of early Christian expression than Bultmann’s Gnostic redeemer.54

The ‘discovery’ of this background provides part of the answer to the quest for a mythic background adequate to the claim of equality with God in John 5.17-23. However, as I argued above, Ashton fails to appreciate how an enthronement scenario, associated with the concept ‘son of God’, can clarify the setting and significance of the exalted speech in John 5.17-23. My proposal in this chapter makes preliminary steps in this direction.

Further steps must be taken, however, if an enthronement scenario is to be seen to justify the extraordinary claim of the son’s equality with God in John 5.17-23. Psalm 2, in its context within Israel’s monarchy, does not claim to refer to a king who is other than human. In John 5.17-23 claims are made for the son which characterize his role as divine. This discrepancy must be addressed if the pattern of threat and exaltation reflected in Psalm 2 is to be seen as a mythic framework adequate to the claim that the son is equal to God (5.17-23).55 In John 5.17-23 a threat to Jesus life is answered with enthronement-like scenarios.

54 Ashton considers one key aspect of Bultmann’s assessment of the Johannine conception to be missing from the background associated with δ οὐκ ἔρχεται ἐκ τῶν ἀνθρώπων (1991: 372-373). Pre-existence is the criterion which the ‘son of humanity’ does not satisfy in Ashton’s reading of the apocalyptic sources. However it would be worth exploring other later traditions, which may provide background supportive of a concept of the pre-existence of God’s son. Below I note material cited by Fossum (1992) which might be worthy of further investigation. The idea of pre-existence is associated with the messiah in the Pesikta Rabbati 36.1 where the primal light of creation in Genesis 1.3 is taken to be the light of the Messiah which God conceals under his throne, Fossum (1992:135) suggests that the tradition appears to be very old for Aristobulus takes the light to be Sophia (apud Eus. Praep. Evang. 13.12.9-11) and Philo identifies it as the divine word (Somn. 1.75). Pesikta R. 33.6 says that Messiah is pre-existent as is proved by Gen.1.2 since Is.11.2 says the Spirit of God will rest upon the ‘messianic’ king. The Jewish Sibyl (5.108) calls messiah “a certain king sent from God” (Fossum, 1992:135).

Hamerton-Kelly (1973:15) argues that the idea of pre-existence, which came to full flower in Jewish apocalyptic, can be traced very early in the Israelite conception in association with the "name" as the agency through which God is present in the temple and in other revelatory events. Fossum (1992:131) cites other evidence of a pre-existent intermediary who is related to creation in the synagogue prayers of the Apostolic Constitutions 7:26:3 and 8:12:9; though the work gives evidence of Christian interpolation, he suggests that the titles which depict creation through an intermediary associated with the divine "Name" may reflect a pre-Christian stage of the prayer.

55 Above I have reviewed an approach to this type of problem which has already been developed by other scholars in reference to post-monarchic use of the concepts δ οὐκ and δ οὐκ ἔκ τοῦ ᾿Οσῖ δ derived from monarchy. I develop a specifically socio-rhetorical approach to the problem in my exploration of the divine warrior myth in chapters 6 and 7.
speech legitimating the son as the equal of God. In surveying the mythic potential of inter-testamental use of the terms "son" and "son of God" above, I have indicated one line of approach that others have already taken to this problem. In part two of this dissertation I will begin to develop another approach; I shall defer treatment of the distinctive Johannine use of an enthronement pattern, until I have explored the pattern of threat juxtaposed with exalted speech that is shared by John 5.17-23 and other selected early Christian texts. (Chapter 5 contains this comparative study.)

However, another observation of Ashton will serve as a guide to my analysis in Part II of the social values reflected in the pattern of speech in John 5.17-23. Nicholson (1983:141-144) and Ashton (1991:348-356), among others, have observed that the ascent/descent schema in John, though it uses the above/below conception which is typical of apocalyptic, is nevertheless a kind of Johannine code. It signifies the sending, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

As Ashton's findings on the Johannine use of the term conclude:

...the Son of Man, heavenly being though he may be, is identified with the figure at the heart of the Christian faith...and that faith is focused first of all not on ascent and descent but upon crucifixion and resurrection. One of the most singular features of Johannine Christology is its vision of the crucifixion, that horribly painful and ignominious death, as itself a kind of elevation (1991:364).

The characterization above refers primarily to the way ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is used in John 1 and 3 and 11, passages which have generally been interpreted as references to crucifixion and resurrection. It is an interpretation that has not routinely been extended to the use of υἱὸς ἀνθρώπος in 5.27. (See Nicholson, 1983:60.) However, in examining the grounds for the exalted claim in 5.17-23 in chapter 4, I will assume that the issue of crucifixion and resurrection is the controlling theme.
PART II
Overview of Part II

Part I introduced preliminary considerations required for socio-rhetorical interpretation of John 5.17-23. The significance of the trial-like setting of the speech in John 5.17-23, the conviction that it represents a pattern not peculiar to John, and the presupposition that it must rely upon a particular mythic frame of interpretation, all are elements emerging from Part I that will be developed more thoroughly in Part II of the dissertation.

In Part II I propose that John frames the claim of equality with God within an understood pattern that was formed in response to the shame of crucifixion. In the discipline of rhetoric, attention to the social assumptions of one's audience is a prerequisite of an adequate interpretation and construction of a speech. From a socio-rhetorical perspective the trial-like pattern of lethal threat juxtaposed to enthronement speech concerning sonship must relate to cultural patterns of action and speech. Chapters 4 and 5 focus upon the possibility that John 5.17-23 is framed within a pattern that was understood to respond to this problem. The forensic threat of execution is answered by declaring that the son is enthroned. I borrow from form criticism a concern with a typical social setting that the pattern of speech in John 5.17-23 reflects.

Chapter 4 introduces methodological tools. These are employed in analysis of the conventional social values that are reflected in the speech dynamics of John 5.17-23. Chapter 5 makes use of these tools in a comparative study of John 5.17-23 alongside of other texts that display similar rhetorical features. I compare John 5.17-23 with the accounts of the Synoptic trial question on sonship, the Temple expulsion and parable of the wicked tenants in Mark, and excerpts from the speeches in Acts 3.1-4.30 which concern the death and resurrection of Jesus. In all of the texts that I compare with John 5.17-23, the threat that Jesus' crucifixion represents is answered with reference to a quotation from Israel's scriptures. This leads me to explore the possibility that John 5.17-23 also gains its mythic significance within a similar scriptural frame of reference. The texts compared with John 5 were chosen because they are rhetorically similar to it. I suggest that John 5 may be similar to them in its reliance on a scriptural frame of reference as well. On the basis of this comparison I outline an intertextual method for reading John 5; 'intertextual' means that the text is signified within other culturally understood frames of meaning. The 'intertextual'
method that I develop is informed by C. H. Dodd’s discussion of the scriptural frame of reference or substructure of New Testament theology.

Chapter 6 is a background study. It is a survey of the divine warrior myth as it is expressed in early Canaanite myth and in selected texts from Israel’s scriptures. Chapter 6 does not attempt to develop my argument with respect to John 5, the aim of the chapter is simply to provide background that will be needed for understanding the proposal in chapter 7. The aspects of the divine warrior myth that are described in chapter 6 support my argument in chapter 7. I argue that the problem of shame associated with crucifixion is answered by the divine warrior sequence of threat/victory/enthronement. I compare the threat to the life of Jesus with the pattern of YHWH’s enthronement above the waters.

In chapter 7 I propose that the divine warrior pattern provides a frame of coherence that ‘explains’ the threat answered by speech concerning Jesus as the son in John 5. The groundwork for this assertion is found in the prominence of the motif of kingship in the Fourth Gospel, and in John’s use of scripture that appears to reflect a kingly setting. Intertextual readings of three Johannine texts with reference to portions of Israel’s scriptures that depict the divine warrior pattern are given in support of this proposal. The pattern is most clearly displayed in John 11 and 12. There, the programmatic statement of sonship (John 5.17-23) is re-developed in a complementary narrative form. Based upon this interpretive analysis, I suggest that John’s distinctive use of the divine warrior pattern in respect to the crucifixion may be detected by reading the Prologue also with reference to that myth.

Chapter 8 asks, ‘what does the argument in John 5.17-23 do to an audience?’ It addresses both hermeneutical and rhetorical aspects of this question. I argue that John 5.17-23 employs the pattern of killing answered by enthronement in support of a controlling ideology. Assuming that the pattern was already understood to interpret Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, I observe that John 5.17-23 employs this pattern to clearly declare that the son is equal with the father. The statement is framed in such a way that it develops an absolute and controlling line of reasoning.
Chapter 4

The topos of crucifixion

and the formal incongruence between challenge and riposte in John 5.17-23

A methodological assumption: relating social settings to typical speech patterns

In 5.17-23 the reply that Jesus is equal to God is juxtaposed with a threat to kill Jesus (5.18). Thus it is reasonable to explore the possibility that this speech concerning the son may have been framed within a pattern of response to the threat that the crucifixion represented in that social world. Shame was conventionally associated with the public condemnation and execution of slaves and traitors (O'Collins, 1992:1207-1208).

To pursue this possibility is to take a particular approach to interpretation of John 5.17-23. If it is characterized as a type of speech that responds to assumptions concerning crucifixion, then interpretation of John 5.17-23 is related to interpretation of speech concerning the killing or crucifixion and exaltation of Jesus more generally. The type of speech identified within a text informs one’s interpretation. In this chapter I will show why I find the pronouncement story dispute form inadequate to the language declaring the son’s relationship with the father in John 5.17-23. Further to do justice to formal analysis of this complex speech, I will suggest that it is both a pronouncement story and, on another level of abstraction, it is also a cult myth.

In order to show how these two possibilities may be linked it is necessary for me to develop methodological tools appropriate to the speech dynamics in John 5.17-23. Thus in the course of developing and linking both a social and formal analysis, I will introduce tools which will be used throughout the remainder of the dissertation.

I approach the social values reflected in the text from a methodological starting point that socio-rhetorical criticism borrows from form criticism. Form criticism is concerned
with the social setting of typical patterns of speech. In the context of a discussion of the history of individual units of the tradition Bultmann (1963:3-4) maintains that "...the literary 'category', or 'form' through which a particular item is classified is a sociological concept and not an aesthetic one." The proper understanding of form criticism," says Bultmann, rests upon the judgment that the literature in which the life of a given community... has taken shape springs out of quite definite conditions and wants of life from which grows up a quite definite style and quite specific forms and categories. (Bultmann, 1963:4)

Every literary category has its life situation--not "an individual historical event, but a typical situation...in the life of the community" (Bultmann, 1963:4). In determining the life situation characterized by a typical form of speech the following questions must be raised: Who speaks? Who is the audience? What mood prevails? (Koch, 1969:33). Traditional forms of speech are used as "technical devices" that fulfill a social function (Bultmann, 1963:4). Their function is associated with the habitual social patterning of the practices which delineate the identity of the community.

Form criticism shares this assumption in common with rhetorical criticism. Given the life situation of the speaker and audience, rhetoric asks how can persuasion be accomplished through the aid of a particular 'form' of speech? Both are concerned with discovery of the social influences that have molded the formation of the speech. Both assume that within a common cultural milieu language will ordinarily share social patterns, literary forms and conventional assumptions.

Attention to a shared pattern of speech distinguished from prevailing approaches to interpretation of conflict in John

In introducing criticism of John 5 in chapter 1 I have already described a tendency for Johannine pericopes, with no obvious parallels, to be treated in isolation from formal aspects of other early Christian texts. Notice of the independence of Johannine theological expression has led to an inclination to treat distinctive Johannine speech, as if it could adequately be studied in isolation from the more typical forms of speech within which it is framed; even though the frame, may represent a pattern shared with other early Christian writings.¹ For example, exegesis of John 5.17-23 has focused upon the distinctive Johan-

¹ For background to this trend in scholarship see D.M. Smith (1992: 68-69).
nine speech in John 5.19-23, even though it has been acknowledged that John 5.17-27 is comparable in sequence to the Synoptic trial question on sonship.²

Similarly, sociological analysis of John has focused upon the specific situation of the Johannine community. The peculiar situation of the Johannine community has been studied in relative isolation, on the assumption that it is the counterpart of exclusively Johannine patterns of speech. For example Meeks (1986), Malina (1985), Rensberger (1988), and Neyrey (1988) make use of social analysis while limiting that analysis to John's community.³

As I indicated in chapter 1, this stance in reference to John 5 has been influenced by the view of Martyn which relates the dynamic of conflict in John 5 to the particular experience of the Johannine community. Martyn (1979:72,160 and 1986:106) relates the threat of execution in 5.18 primarily to the crisis experienced by Johannine believers who are charged by Jewish authorities that they worship Jesus as a second god.⁴ This is what Martyn calls the second level of the drama. While it is plausible as regards the distinctive speech in 5.18b, it is an analysis that typically does nothing to clarify the juxtaposition of the distinctive accusation, 'he makes himself equal with God', alongside the more typical form of 5.18a.

Neyrey's (1988:9-12,15-18) interpretation of the conflict that is represented in John 5 is another example of this approach to the conflict which surfaces in John 5.16 and 5.18. He reads 5.16 and 5.18 as two separate charges representing distinct stages within the life of the Johannine community. The first charge in 5.16 relates to earlier challenges over the Sabbath practice of the community. The second, 5.18, is the only one in which the high Christology is developed. It reflects a later crisis when Johannine Christians were expelled from the synagogue for their confession that Jesus is equal to God. The argument reconstructing a possible situation of conflict peculiar to the Johannine community is plausible. But, as I argued in chapter 1, it has had the effect of discouraging reflection upon the sense in which John's community could be said to share a common social milieu with other early Christian audiences.

² See my discussion in chapter 5 under the heading "The Synoptic trial question....".

³ Holmberg (1990:125-128) criticizes Meeks' analysis in which Johannine images of Jesus are explained sociologically as a reflection of the sect-like mentality of the community.

⁴ Martyn's identification of the charge as "di-theism" builds upon the research of Käsemann (1968) and his generation of scholars. See Martyn (1986:119 note 14) on the scholars whose work guides his interpretation.
My social analysis of John 5 will identify typical social values which the text reflects in relation to other comparable early Christian speech. Only after this step will I assess the aspects of the speech in John 5.17-23 that are distinctive.

I read the juxtaposition of speech concerning the son alongside the lethal threat as evidence that the distinctive Johannine speech has been framed within a Gattung that typically replies to the problem of Jesus' death, as I shall argue below. Within this frame of interpretation, John 5.17-23 may be viewed in reference to a pattern of death-and-resurrection speech.

My approach to the social dynamic underlying the text does not exclude the possibility that the matter of Jesus' death might also have become a focal point through which trauma specific to the community's own experience of persecution was expressed. In other words, I do not exclude Martyn or Neyrey's view as a possible reconstruction of the community's situation. But in clear distinction from that approach, I presuppose that the crucifixion is the central issue which gives form to this speech. I allow that the crucifixion may well have become the frame of reference within which conflict specific to the community was interpreted. Such a phenomenon is explicitly stated in Acts 4.25-27 in relation to its depiction of the experience of the early church.

However, to attempt to understand the conflict in John 5 as related primarily to an idiosyncratic community situation emphasizes the distinctive at the expense of the typical elements in this speech. I will first attend to the common pattern. Once the typical elements in the speech become clear, a more accurate account of the part that appears to be distinctive to the Johannine community's expression can be given.

I began by assuming that John 5 is typical of Christian speech responding to a particular cultural assumption. The reason for "seeking to kill" Jesus which is widely regarded as peculiar to John is stated in John 5.18: he calls God his own father, making himself equal to God. Hints of common elements in the tradition relating to this specific charge can be found elsewhere in early Christian accounts. See my comparison under the subheading the "Synoptic trial question..." in chapter 5. However, John 5.18b is carefully crafted to accomplish a particular persuasive task, as my analysis of internal features of the text demonstrated in chapter 2. Granted, 5.18b is uniquely crafted to fit the particular rhetorical aims of this speech. It is thus an unlikely place to look for expression typical of early Christian speech generally.

5 The analysis is limited to John 5.17-23 in this chapter, though I expand it to include several other comparable texts in chapter 5. Attention to the distinctive elements in John 5.17-23 is deferred until chapter 7.
In contrast, accounts foreshadowing the death of Jesus by portraying religious leaders who seek to kill him that contain some features comparable to John 5.18a are widely attested. (See for example, Mk. 8.31; 9.30-32; 10.33; 11.18; Mt. 17.22-23; Lk. 9.43-45.) When compared among themselves the passion predictions in Mark (8.31; 9.31; 10.33) contain distinct characteristics and yet a comparable sequence of statements. All three contain the name of ὁ νεκρὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, the phrase "rise after three days" and the term "kill." (See Todt: 1965: 152-153.) Some similarity can be observed with John 5.18a through the device of treating the three passages as if they were a self-contained summary of the kerygma. This allows the three statements to be reduced to one basic type identified by Heinz E. Todt (1965:153) as follows:

1) the name ὁ νεκρὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου;
2) to be delivered, rejected;
3) the groups of authorities who take part in the 'delivering';
4) the killing;
5) the rising after three days.

John 5.18a provides a rationale for 'the Jews' inception of a plan to kill Jesus. οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι belong within the genus of religious authorities who in various places in gospel texts are associated in some way with the 'killing' of Jesus. In general it can be said to bear some relation to 3) and 4) above. The similarity, partial though it is, indicates to me that John 5.18a may reflect at least some relationship to part of some pattern in early Christian expression that connects religious authorities with the event of Jesus' death. In chapters 5 and 7 I will suggest that a resurrection perspective related to mention of the son of God in 5.24 and son of man in 5.27 is developed distinctively, but within a pattern comparable to a kerygmatic summary in John 5.17-23.

The relation between conventional wisdom and speech construction

My focus on the social values associated with the challenge of execution in John 5.18a will make use of insights from Aristotle's topical theory. In discussion of the relation between conventional opinions and the design of arguments responding to these in his Topics, Aristotle introduces a line of inquiry that reasons from opinions that are generally

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accepted as a way of "standing up to an argument" (Topics 1.100, 18). It is an aspect of rhetorical analysis, defined by Aristotle, which concerns itself with the relation of an argument to the generally accepted opinions that are taken for granted by the audience. Topical theory assumes that a given argument is routinely formed in a characteristic way because it is generated in response to conventional social assumptions which it sets out to answer or address.

In order to understand an argument, one must first understand the audience to whom one is speaking, and this includes understanding their conventional wisdom. (See Aristotle Topica 1.100 a18 and Rhetoric 1.3.1359a-1366a.)

"Topos" is a phrase used both of a conventional form of response to a typical audience assumption, and of the problem or situation itself that represents the conventional assumptions of the audience. Aristotle insists that "the arguments a rhetor invents originate in the commonplaces of a culturally determined discourse" (Consigny, 1989:284). The speaker's construction of an argument is located within the discourse of the audience for whom the speech is created. The argument proceeds in the commonplace questions and assumptions of the audience. These reflect social patterns that are enculturated, almost as a kind of second nature. "The rhetor in effect 'dwells' in the culturally determined discourse of the audience...." (Consigny, 1989:284.)

Observe, for example, one topic cited by Aristotle: If the end of something is possible, so is the beginning, since all things that occur have a beginning (Rhetoric 1.3.1392). Aristotle categorized analytic commonplaces such as these, in the language of abstract generalities, but he insists that every abstraction derives from experience. He notes that questions of past fact assume that if an occurrence that sequentially must follow another event has happened, then the event itself has happened; for example, if it has thundered then lightning has struck (Rhetoric 2.19.1392). He gives examples of an experience that generates a socially learned logic of the commonplace: If the shoes can be made, then "the front slit and toe piece" (Rhetoric 1.3.1392). Similarly, according to conventional socially learned logic, if a man has been crucified then he has been shamed.

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7 My description of "topos" derives directly from Aristotle and commentary upon his topical theory by contemporary scholars in the field of rhetoric such as Gage (1984:158), Consigny (1989) and Murphy (1972). It is to be distinguished from the more narrow technical definition of the topos as a particular New Testament form of speech proposed by Mullins (1980:547).

The topos of crucifixion: the question of honor in reference to conventional social perceptions of the shame of crucifixion

The topos of crucifixion is not quite as simple as the one relating to shoes. If the shoes can be made, then also the front and toe piece. However the logic is not dissimilar: if anyone who has been crucified then that person has been shamed. Any event of public execution is complicated by the charges against the accused, the question of the justice of the act, the social status of the victim, the power of the powerful over the one who is condemned, the horror of the public spectacle of cruelty. Yet at the risk of oversimplifying the multiplicity of associations potentially attached to public perception of crucifixion, I will attend to one strand of socially learned inference: to be crucified is to be publicly shamed.

Aristotle reasoned that the audience is inclined to an act by its pathos. Pathos includes the motivation to stay in equilibrium, in terms of behavior accepted as appropriate to one's role within one's social system (Murphy, 1972: 45-46). Pathē for Aristotle is not emotion, but a state of being acted upon which causes one to experience or to suffer (Murphy, 1972: 45).

Since one is motivated by the desire to act according to one's proper role within the social system, Aristotle reasoned, the way to move an audience is by appeal to socially acquired "premises" which imprint typical patterns of behavior. For instance, anger is a desire for revenge on account of a "slighting of what a man (sic) cares for; a slight implies one's worthlessness; hence men who feel superior are more apt to feel slighted." They feel slighted mostly by inferiors and friends from whom they expect good and do not get it (Rhetoric 2.2). One is easily angered when the slight is public. Likewise shame is pain caused by evils that bring ill repute, especially by evils done publicly and conspicuously. Those who are honorable and of distinguished ancestry are prone to shame, likewise those with many admirers (Rhetoric 2.6).

The assumptions above are characteristic of the unwritten code of what is expected in society according to one's role and status. By his analysis of patterns of behavior such as these Aristotle provided a pool of social assumptions from which rhetors could draw. An argument can be based upon one of these in order to appeal to audiences in terms of their expected patterns of social interaction.
The shame normally associated with a crucified person was a persistent *topos* which generated a typical pattern of response from early Christians. The prominence which is given to mention of Jesus' death in early Christian speech indicates to me that the spectacle of his crucifixion needed to be addressed in relation to a commonplace of shameful associations.

Early Christian writers reflect the "general perception of crucifixion in the Greco-Roman world as 'shame' (Hebrews 12.2), that is, a stumbling block to belief (1 Corinthians 1.23)" (Neyrey, [forthcoming]). The brutal progression of humiliation and loss of honor inevitably experienced by the victim were only the physical manifestation of the effort to insult, deride and dishonor the person through shameful public exposure. (See Neyrey, [forthcoming].)

Crucifixion was occasionally practiced among Jews during the Hellenistic-Hasmonean period. 10 Josephus (*Ant* 13 #380-383; *JW* 1#97-98) reports that Alexander Janneus (between 103-76 B.C.E.) had 800 Pharisees crucified and ordered their wives and children to be slaughtered before their eyes as they died. The text of Deuteronomy 21.22-23 associated executed idolaters and blasphemers hanged on a tree with the sign that they are accursed by God (O'Collins, 1992:1207). Deuteronomy 21.22-23 really deals with the exposure of the corpse of an executed criminal (Fitzmyer, 1978:511). That the text was applied in pre-Christian Palestine to those who died by crucifixion seems apparent from the Qumram cave 4 *pesher* of Nahum; the connection between Deuteronomy 21.23 and crucifixion is also made in Qumram 11Q Temple 64.6-13, which leads O'Collins (1992:1207) to suggest that crucifixion may have been an Essene punishment for some very serious crimes.

The topic of crucifixion is consistently, though variously, addressed in Paul, the earliest discernible layers of tradition in the Gospels and Acts, as well as in Justin's apology for Christian faith. Outside the circle of Jesus' followers, the crucifixion is a basis for arguments against belief in Jesus. (See Hengel, 1977:1-10.) Such arguments continue to be expressed well into the second century. Lucian (*Death of Peregrinus* 13) and Celsus (Origen *Against Celsus* 2.29f.) ridiculed the Christian's belief in a crucified savior (Gager, 1975:43,63).

Justin's *Apology* (i.3-9) is found within the literary context of a forensic defense on behalf of Christians who have been condemned on charges of atheism. Among the com-

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9 See also O'Collins (1992) and Hengel (1977:22-32).

plaints that it addresses, that of faith in a crucified savior is found (see Apology i.13). Defense against this commonplace is presented as a matter of public argument to be backed up by convincing proofs: Justin (Apology 33-51) presents prophecies foretelling the events concerning Christ including desolation of Judea, the work and death of Christ, his rejection by "the Jews," his humiliation, and his royal majesty as the king of glory, the coming son of man. Though he could present more he argues that these are sufficient for persuasion of those who would hear,

considering that [they] are able to see that we do not make mere assertions without being able to produce proof.... For with what reason should we believe of a crucified man that he is the first-born of the Unbegotten God, and Himself will pass judgment on the whole human race, unless we had found testimonies concerning Him published before He came and was born as a man, and unless we saw that things had happened accordingly--the devastation of the land of the Jews, and men [sic.] of every race persuaded by his teaching through the apostles....

(Justin, Apology i.53.)

Thus this truth of the Gospel had become a matter of demonstration for which Christians offer proof. To do so is indeed necessary, Justin maintains, "for they proclaim our madness to consist in this, that we give to a crucified man a place second to the unchangeable and eternal God, the Creator of all; for they do not discern the mystery that is herein, to which as we make it plain to you, we pray you give heed" (Justin, Apology i.13). Justin’s concern to answer the problem of crucifixion is clear: "but if anyone objects that He was crucified, in this also he is on par with those reputed sons of Jupiter of yours, who suffered as we have now enumerated [in the preceding chapter]" (Justin, Apology i.22.3).Justin continues that his argument will undertake to show that, in the uniqueness of his passion, Jesus was superior (Apology i.22.3f) to the suffering of pagan gods. Hengel (1977:1-2 note 1) interprets Justin’s explicit apologetic for crucifixion in Apology i.22.3 as an indication that "the dishonour involved in the death of Jesus by crucifixion was one of the main objections against his being son of God."

The persistence of the commonplace of crucifixion as shame suggests that it posed a widespread problem and question. Argument answering the problem is attested within the gospel writings.

Gager (1975:41-42) identifies the execution of Jesus as the crucial event which created a major obstacle or problem for followers of Jesus of Nazareth who were unprepared for the unexpected death of their leader. He gives evidence for his argument in specific Gospel texts. Whether or not one interprets the predictions of Jesus’ death in Mark.8.27-33; 9.30-32; 10.33-34 as recounting events that actually occurred in Jesus’
lifetime or as an account of the early church in retrospect upon the event, the point is
emphasized that the suffering of Jesus posed a problem from the beginning; the disciples
completely failed to comprehend this possibility in advance, and it was an obstacle to their
understanding of Jesus (Gager, 1975: 41; see Mt.16.22).

In the conversation on the road to Emmaus, the risen Jesus corrects the disciples' dis-
may over the crucifixion by explaining that it was both necessary and profitable (Luke
24.21-25). Malina and Neyrey (1988:122, 123) describe such a move as a neutralizing
strategy in which Jesus' responsibility for the event is denied and is shifted to God.

Gager (1975:45) cites the Markan predictions of the passion as evidence of doubt and
distress on the part of followers of Jesus concerning his death; it represents a process of
rationalization, he argues, in which the early church sought to persuade others that Jesus' death was both necessary and beneficial (as in Luke 24.21-25). Such texts lead Gager to the view that the death of Jesus stood in conflict with the belief that Jesus was the Messiah, disconfirming it to such an extent that even experience of resurrection, which is presented as equally unexpected to the disciples, seems not to have eradicated doubts and problems associated with the crucifixion (Gager, 1975:43).

There is conflict between the logic of the commonplace, if crucifixion then shame, and the conflicting belief of the followers of Jesus, that Jesus is exalted in status. The conflict defined what needed to be said in response. As in classical invention in rhetoric, construction of an argument did not consist simply in "finding something to say" but in investigating reasons for the solution of a given question (Gage, 1984:159).

The underlying logic expressed in the argument that Jesus is exalted is defined by the experience of conflict with conventional values which identify his crucifixion with shame.

Tannehill's (1975:55) description of "tensive language" may be relevant here. The dramatic impact of particular stories of Jesus, he says, comes from tension expressed in the structure of the story itself. It is a structure of interaction between Jesus' word, and contrast with the word of another. The word of Jesus "resonate[s] against the assumptions of [his] conversation partner" (Tannehill, 1975:153). Sayings that are in tension with cultural assumptions "cannot appeal for easy acceptance because easy acceptance always

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11 See Lindars' (1961:75-137) extended discussion of early Christian use of Israel's scriptures as "passion apologetic."

12 Tannehill describes tensive language in reference to Luke 9.58 and Matthew 6.2-6,16-18; 7.3-5; 19.12, though I consider that his insight concerning the way that conflict is structured into certain stories about Jesus applies more generally.
takes place within the prevailing structures of interpretation. These texts do not seek easy acceptance but change.... Thus the tension in the text is necessary to its purpose" (Tannehill, 1975:55). The tension enables the text to "resist being digested" by the prevailing patterns of interpretation and instead challenges these patterns, observes Tannehill (1975:55).

Similarly Gage describes the need to challenge the conventional logic of a commonplace: such argumentation was undertaken only in the face of disagreement, it did not concern an invented question but was the outcome of one's "presence in a conflict of belief" (Gage, 1984:159).

The commonplace that shame is routinely the outcome of crucifixion is a conventional assumption. When Jesus was crucified objection to the commonplace generated the need for an answer to counter the conventional topos of crucifixion.

Topical theory recognizes that a place of conflict with socially accepted mores generates a particular type of argument; the need to respond to the mores creating that place of contention shapes the form of the argument. The conflict over definition of what is socially valued defines the statement put forward in reply. Gage’s conclusion confirms my theory: this discovery is not made by the speaker’s individual choice but "by virtue of a conflict between what the speaker holds to be true and the knowledge already held by others" (Gage, 1984:159).

In the case of Jesus’ followers, the conflict was generated in opposition to the conventional association of a crucified person with shame. The followers of Jesus already believed that he was not shamed finally, whereas others already knew that he must be. The lines that the argument must take are therefore found, not by the choice of the speaker, "but by virtue of a conflict" between the conviction of what one already knows "and the knowledge of others" (Gage, 1984:159).

If one understands the topos generating the need for the argument then, maintains Aristotle, it is possible to reason from generally accepted opinions about the problem set before us (Topica 1.100.18) in a way that is sensible and non-contradictory within the framework of that cultural milieu.

If it is the conventional perception that Jesus has been shamed then it is necessary for an argument which touches upon considerations concerning the death of Jesus to reply to that assumption. To the point that it resists the easy path of the conventional assumption it

13 Based upon this description, Tannehill characterizes tensive language as a response to the assumptions of others that blocks the "easy path"; the path to which it points is difficult (1975:55).
is tensive language. It ceases to be tensive however, when it becomes the patterned justification for an alternate reading of what is socially acceptable. At this point it becomes a 'pat answer', or a predictable argument. The term 'topos' is also used to describe a typical argument. 14

For those committed to the point of view that the crucifixion is not a problem, the topos of crucifixion is a pat answer that counters the conventional view that crucifixion connotes shame. In chapter 5 I will tentatively reconstruct a conflict of social values that might have originated the 'tensive' structure of conflict in the speech in John 5. However the 'pattern' of threat/exaltation speech appears to reflect a later stage, when the conflict of values was already formulated into a 'counter argument'. Thus as a 'pattern' it is no longer a tensive form of speech.

**Jesus' death foreshadowed through the pronouncement story in John 5**

I will argue that the pattern of speech framing John 5.17-23 signals that the monumental shame conventionally associated with crucifixion must be answered if the honor of Jesus is to be defended. I will proceed by treating this proposition as a working hypothesis in reference to the social values at work in the speech in John 5.17-23.

The narrative of John 5 begins as a story or healing. It develops into a series of small scenes which give rise to controversy (5.10-16). In response, a saying of Jesus (5.17) fuels further controversy (5.18) to which the remainder of the chapter is Jesus' extended response. The story of a notable sign done by Jesus, the saying of Jesus attached to the sign, the controversy with opponents generated by the sign and (or) saying, all of these are elements which John 5 holds in common with other early Christian accounts of controversy between Jesus and his opponents.

I have already identified John 5 as belonging to the "genus" of pronouncement story and the "species" of a defense story in chapter 2, following Robbins' (1984:95-96) typology

of the pronouncement story form. Others have coined different labels. However, my concern at this juncture is not with its label, but with the function of John 5 as a pronouncement story which dramatizes conflict with opponents who "seek to kill" him. Hultgren's classical form-critical analysis of, in his terms, the "conflict story form" has been upstaged by recent developments in rhetorical criticism; however, it is valuable for its general insights concerning the function served by certain pronouncement stories depicting the opponents as a lethal threat to Jesus.

The conflict stories were, Hultgren (1979) argues, designed to establish the status and authority of Jesus in sharp relief against the background of conflict from his historical opponents, as a way of clarifying the stand of the contemporary church in reference to those perceived as rivals. Following Tannehill (1975), Hultgren observes that these stories effect a type of tense narrative form; the tension assumes a narrative form, the persons who act and speak in opposition are its poles (Hultgren, 1979: 54).

They also served another function. Hultgren maintains that the foreshadowing of the cross in these narratives was intentional in the effort to provide hearers with an explanation for the condemnation and death of Jesus (1979:177-178,180) which was required as part of the rhetorical situation of the early church.

Hultgren's (1979:50-53,88,161) research concludes that in many cases traditional sayings material, which was not intrinsically controversial, was intentionally arranged within the form of lively dialogues with opponents. The saying in John 5.17 may belong to such a category. As well as being apologetic material, he maintains that the collection would have provided an answer to the question, "Why was Jesus put to death?" (Hultgren, 1979: 177). He describes its purpose as an explanation of Jesus’ death, without narrative of

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15 Rudolf Bultmann identifies the controversies of the Synoptic tradition with the form of apothegms: a little scene which is only a frame for a saying (1934:38-40). By using the rabbinic disputes as a pattern, Bultmann is led to conclude that their Sitz im Leben is concerned with points of law (Bultmann, 1934:40-41).

Martin Dibelius by assuming their similarity with the chreia, classifies them, like chreia, as paradigms of moral education: Christian paradigms of Jesus as the hero and norm, followed a chreia form designed for use in preaching (Hultgren,1979:36).

Hultgren defines the "conflict story" form as 1) introductory narrative; 2) opponent's question or attack; and, 3) dominical saying (Hultgren, 1979:52-58).

16 The classification of pronouncement stories is reconceived by Robbins (1984), and (1988). Using a rhetorical approach to pronouncement stories, he builds upon the work of Dibelius and others by showing that the pronouncement story includes various types of chreia development. Robbins (1985a) critiques the method of fragmentation of the saying of Jesus from its context, affirming that the setting can be the vehicle for transmission of tradition as much as is the saying. Robbins' criticism is a response to the method of J.D.Crossan (1983) as set out in Crossan's book In Fragments.
the Jerusalem events "comparable to that form in Acts 2.36; 3.13-15; 4.10; 5.30; 7.52; 10.39; 13.28 in which, without a narrative of the crucifixion, Jesus' death was 'explained'" (Hultgren, 1979: 177-178).

**Tools for analysis of the social values reflected in the ‘trial-like’ speech in John 5.17-23**

**Honor and shame in analysis of the form of John 5**

In order to analyze the social dynamics which are built into the speech anticipating Jesus' death in John 5.18, I will analyze that speech by the challenge/riposte form, which was conventionally associated with agonistic public encounters in the Mediterranean world.

In a review of Hultgren's (1979) form-critical work, Bruce Malina argues that the formal category of "challenge-riposte encounter," more than "conflict story," provides an accurate and precise description of both the form and typical social function of the tension between Jesus and his adversaries reflected in the texts analyzed by Hultgren (Malina, 1981b:132).

Malina's critique relies upon application to biblical studies of an established body of sociological research. The values of honor and shame were considered pivotal in the cultures of Greeks, Romans, and Judeans (Neyrey, [forthcoming]). Public interaction between social equals in the ancient Mediterranean world were understood as tests of the honor of the participants. (See Gilmore, 1987:2-4.) Almost every public encounter between males was perceived as a contest in which both parties risked the loss of esteem in the eyes of

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17 See Gilmore (1987) on the general consensus in social science that honor is a pivotal value within the Mediterranean world. Malina's (1981a:25-48) research relates the insights from cultural anthropology to the social world of early Christianity. He identified the matter of 'honor' as a key to understanding the social world that early Christian speech reflects. The model has since been used more widely in sociological approaches to biblical exegesis. See Betchel (1991), McVann (1988) and Malina and Neyrey (1991:25-65) for more recent applications of the model within the field of biblical studies.
onlookers. The slight of an opponent would bring public ridicule or shame, unless it was promptly defended. 18

Most commonly, honor is acquired through the "face-to-face game" of challenge and riposte which is an integral part of public social encounters between males of equal status in the ancient Mediterranean world. In such an encounter, someone sends a message by a culturally recognized and public channel to an individual, and this produces an effect. Because public reaction is at issue, the public character of the message serves as a guarantee that the recipient will react.

The interaction involves not only the protagonists, but also the public reaction to them, in at least three phases, as follows: 19
a) challenge;
b) perception of the challenge (by the individual, but directed to the public at large);
c) reaction of the receiving individual, and evaluation of the reaction by the public at large.

It results in a "highly stylized" interaction which includes the typical elements: 20
a) claim;

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18 Honor is a claim to worth and the public's acknowledgement of it. The expectation of honor and the agonistic contests accompanying its protection and acquisition, were however especially a part of the expected public behavior of males (Malina, 1981a:28).

For those unfamiliar with this concept I include a brief summary based on Malina's (1981a:28) account below. For men in Mediterranean society in the first century there was a constant dialectic between the norms of society and how one could produce them in specific behavior. When a man thinks that his actions do produce the ideals of society, he expects acknowledgement. What should result is public affirmation of a grant of honor or reputation. "To honor a person is to acknowledge publicly that his or her actions conform with social ought. Honor as a pivotal value...implies a chosen way of conduct undertaken with a view to and because of entitlement to a certain social treatment in return" (Malina, 1981a:28). One's claim to honor is not honored automatically. It requires that onlookers to the encounter acknowledge that they believe or honor the reputation of the one who makes the claim, before it becomes honor in fact. This is a grant of honor or reputation. If one's claim to honor results in no social grant of reputation, one's action and person may be labelled ridiculous. Thus, the problem of honor revolves around how it is claimed and on what grounds others will judge it (Malina, 1981a:28).

19 The analysis below is from Malina & Neyrey (1991:29-30), and Malina (1981a:28-42). A more detailed account of the social see-saw between honor and shame in public agonistic encounters is provided by Malina and Neyrey (1991:25-66) and Malina (1981a:25-48) and Neyrey [forthcoming].

b) challenge;
c) riposte;
d) public verdict.

The challenge in John 5.10,16 that Jesus had acted illegally poses a threat to Jesus’ honor. If integrity between his reputation as a person, and his acts is to be maintained, the challenge that Jesus is acting improperly must be answered, as I argued in chapter 2. Without a defense of his honor, the allegedly illegal act threatens to undermine his reputation as a person. In challenge/riposte terminology, the allegation of illegality (5.10) formally (though indirectly, as it is addressed to the healed man) poses a public agonistic challenge. It confronts Jesus’ claim to authority, "Rise, take up your mat and walk" (5.8). His answer, "My father is working and I am working" is a riposte in defense of his honor and authority (5.17).

Malina (1981b:132) sees the challenge/riposte form as appropriate for analysis of what Hultgren terms ‘conflict stories’. Thus it is worth pursuing in formal analysis of John 5 simply as an expression of public confrontation between Jesus and his opponents. The challenge/riposte form pervades public encounters in that social world, its relevance could hardly be confined to analysis of early Christian speech that mentions the threats to the life of Jesus within a setting of conflict. Though the form occurs much more widely, my interpretive interest justifies using this form for analysis of the values reflected in John 5.17-23 and other comparable early Christian speech that does specifically mention the ‘killing’ or crucifixion of Jesus. In the pattern of killing juxtaposed with speech declaring the enthroned status of the son, the challenge/riposte form, which audiences understood was typical for all manner of public sparring, shapes a typical Christian reply to the particular problem of shame conventionally associated with crucifixion.

The elements of the challenge-riposte pattern can be found in John 5 as follows: 21 The preliminary claim of the healing sets the context for the claim which introduces Jesus’ exalted speech. The question and answer are not categorized as challenge or riposte for two reasons. The challenge/riposte encounter belongs to sparring between social equals. The lame man does not act like an equal of Jesus.

Question
Do you want to get well? (5.6).

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21 I acknowledge the advice of Jerome H.Neyrey in personal correspondence (October, 1993), as a contributing factor in this analysis.
However, the command of Jesus (5.8) does function indirectly as a claim. Guardians of the Sabbath feel a need to respond to the action of the healed man with a challenge concerning the legality of carrying his mat. The man defers to the authority of the one who healed him as a superior. Thus the onus is upon Jesus to answer the challenge to the legality of the action that he authorized.

**Claim**

Rise, take up your mat and walk (5.8).

**Challenge**

(addressed to the healed man) It is not lawful (5.10).

Deferral to Jesus as the authority behind the healed man's action of carrying his mat (5.11,15).

**Challenge**

(directed to Jesus) They began to prosecute Jesus because he did these things on the Sabbath.

**Riposte**

The father is working until now and I am working (5.17).

Because it is the Sabbath, the command, "Rise, carry your mat and walk" is perceived as an infringement upon the sacred space already upheld by the existing guardians of Sabbath law. They perceive the riposte, "Rise, take your bed and walk" to be an intrusion upon the prevailing social order (5.1-11).

Honor, like a material commodity in limited supply, was understood to be acquired by one at the expense of others (Malina, 1978:168-170). Thus claims to power over a domain guarded by others would have been perceived as a threat. (See Malina, 1981a:75; Neyrey, [forthcoming].)

In respect to the territory of Sabbath propriety thus defined, Jesus' riposte (in 5.17) doubles as a new claim which sparks further controversy.

**Claim**

The father is working until now and I am working (5.17).

**Challenge**

They seek to kill him because he calls God his own father making himself equal with God.

**Riposte**

The son acts just as the father. The father loves the son. Just as the father raises the dead and gives life, so also
the son. The father has given all judgment to the son that they may honor the son just as they honor the father.
One who does not honor the son does not honor the father (5.19-23).

Verdict (Unstated)

[There is no stated indication of the audience's response. But the riposte is designed in such a way that acceptance of the claim is the only verdict compatible with honor of God. In a society in which the entire legal and social order is posited upon honor of God, the riposte uses divine authority in order to apply pressure upon the audience who hear this interchange to come to a verdict which conforms to the claim. By granting honor to Jesus the audience can acknowledge the validity of his claim in 5.17.]

Honor is either ascribed passively by birth or adoption or appointment, or it is acquired. In the case of acquired honor, another authorized person awards honor in acknowledgement of one's superlative efforts, as in the Olympic games. To attempt to claim honor for oneself, to award to oneself honor and status, was considered to be an ultimate social evil.²² The challenge that Jesus 'makes himself God' violates the deeply held social virtue of not grasping honor for oneself. The challenge he makes himself equal to God, aims to undermine the propriety of Jesus' address of God as "father" by publicly accusing him of making an empty claim, or attempting to heap honor on himself (Neyrey, [forthcoming]).²³

Neyrey's discussion of a comparable dynamic in the trial of Jesus before Pilate is instructive in this regard. Pilate judges Jesus innocent (John 19.5,6). The verdict is answered by a new charge, "By our law he ought to die, for he made himself the son of God" (John 19.7). Neyrey [forthcoming] analyses this challenge from the perspective of honor and shame:

This type of challenge reoccurs throughout John, as Neyrey notes: Jesus is challenged in 5.18 with making himself equal to God; in 8.53 he is asked, "Who do you make yourself to be?"; in 10.33 he is accused, "You a mortal, make yourself God"; in 19.7, "He made

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²² Ascribed honor resides in one's inherited family name, or in status that is given by a superior in a position to bestow honor upon another. Yet, as Neyrey observes, individuals are also called by 'honorific' titles, such as Rabbi (Mt.23.7), or Prophet (John 9.17) or Christ (John 7.26) and as these labels function as claims to precedence, and public esteem, they are "likely to be bitterly contested" (Neyrey, [forthcoming]).

²³ Neyrey [forthcoming] notes that disparagement of the empty claim to honor was a common phenomenon in antiquity; (see Acts 8.9; 12.22-23; Josephus, JW. 2.55,60; Ant. 17.272,278).
himself the Son of God"; and in 19.12 the derogatory, "Everyone who makes himself" a king sets himself against the emperor. 24

The author of John deals with the recurring challenge in a consistent way, by dividing the challenge into two parts, says Neyrey:

(1) It is denied that Jesus "makes himself" anything, but (2) it is defended that he is such-and-such (Neyrey 1988:20-23). For example, Jesus claims in 5.19-29 that he is "equal to God." This is no empty claim, for he insists that God has granted him both creative and eschatological powers and the honor attached to them. The father (1) shows him all that God is doing (5.20), (2) has given all judgment to the Son (5.22), (3) has granted the Son also to have life in himself (5.26), and (4) has given him all authority to execute judgment (5.27; Neyrey, 1988:20-25). Thus Jesus does not "make himself" anything, for that would be a vainglorious claim and thus false honor. But he truly is "equal to God," "King," and "Son of God," because these honors roles and statuses are ascribed to him by the most honorable person in the cosmos, namely God.... 25

Neyrey acutely analyzes the cultural conventions by which Jesus' claim (5.17) could have been conceived as improper. However he does not here take note of the social conventions associated with the threat of being condemned for a capital crime. Allegations of illegality as a rationale for public execution routinely would have been perceived as a threat to Jesus' honor.

**Forensic narrative**

Jesus' death is foreshadowed by depicting its cause in the rejection and hostility of "the Jews." The forensic character of the narrative becomes apparent in 5.18a, as I have already shown in chapters 1 and 2. Harvey (1976:16-20,47-77) argues that John 5 accurately portrays informal judicial procedure: preliminary charge, accusation of the accused in public by elders, the calling of witnesses, the reversible role of defendant, witness and judge. This is concrete formal evidence that John 5 is intended to be understood as forensic speech. However, John 5 is a literary account, not the transcript of an actual legal proceeding. Thus it functions in the quasi-legal form of forensic narration.

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24 Paraphrased from Neyrey (1994 [forthcoming]).

25 The underlining and bibliographical citations reproduce the original. I quote from Neyrey, ([forthcoming]).
John 5 was written from a resurrection perspective. Witness the exalted language attributed to Jesus in 5.20-27. It is possible that, as Harvey (1976:1-17) suggests, the death threat and exalted speech were placed within the form of a controversy taking place during Jesus' ministry in order to stage a kind of re-trial of Jesus in which the case for Jesus is designed to overshadow the charges made against him.

Judicial rhetoric identifies the narrative, prior to the judge's decision to prosecute, as an essential part of a public trial. Rhetoric trains the one giving testimony in favor of a defendant to present the statement of facts narrating the point for adjudication in such a way that the judge may not only comprehend the elements of the case, but also may follow the events that transpired from the same perspective as the one giving testimony sees them.

The term 'forensic narrative', as defined by Patrick and Schult (1990:63) in reference to texts within Hebrew scripture, can only be applied by analogy, for the narratives under consideration are not placed in the context of legal address; rather they are written for readers and thus placed within a larger narrative complex. As in 2 Sam.7 and 2 Kings.9-10, quasi-judicial transaction accounts were often the vehicle of forensic narration (Patrick & Schult, 1990:65).

Similarly John 5 is speech designed to defend one whose status has been publicly violated (5.17-27). My analysis of 5.37-47 in chapter 2 showed that it aims to evoke hostility for Jesus' opponents; thus the argument. John 5.17-27 sets Jesus in place as the judge of all. John 5.37-47 foreshadows the grounds upon which opponents will be prosecuted.

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26 Malina and Neyrey (1988:120, also 55,99) describe the dynamics of the retrospective process of representing conflict between Jesus and opponents from a resurrection perspective in reference to selected texts in Matthew.

27 The forensic narrative is sometimes called the statement of the facts or case. See Mack and Robbins (1989:55).

28 Quintilian states it succinctly: "...A statement of the facts is not made merely that the judge may comprehend the case, but rather that he may look upon it in the same light with ourselves" (Inst.4.2.21). (See Patrick & Schult, 1990:60-61.) The statement of the facts or forensic narration requires the invention of dialog. By this means the speaker weaves together the known facts of a case into a story which convicts or exonerates the parties involved (Patrick & Schult, 1990:60).

29 Patrick and Schult use this model to identify forensic narrative as a standard part of Israelite judicial proceedings; traces of it are extant in Exodus 20.22-23.19, and in the context of judicial proceedings in 2 Samuel 14.4-7 (Patrick & Schult, 1990:60-61).
These quasi-forensic functions of the speech justify its characterization as a kind of forensic narrative.

**Re-labelling in John 5.17-23**

Another way of accounting for the conflict between Jesus and his opponents in John 5 is suggested by the sociological approach of Malina and Neyrey (1988) to the accusation and trial material in Matthew. In the context of discussion of controversy with opponents more generally, they point out that within ancient Mediterranean culture, the crucifixion served as a public and formal ritual of degradation to one’s person and status (Malina and Neyrey, 1988:88-90). However, they note that, within Christian arguments in defense of Jesus’ honor, the crucifixion is not accepted by the followers of Jesus as a ritual which finally labels him as a social deviant; rather, motivated by their experience of his resurrection, Jesus’ followers effectively reversed the deviant label (customarily associated with victims of crucifixion) among at least a number of his former following (Malina and Neyrey, 1988:39).

In sociological terminology, a "prominent" is a person who is out of place in a positive sense. A deviant is socially out of place in a negative sense. Labels of deviance locate persons outside the values endorsed by the group (Malina & Neyrey, 1988:xvi). The labeling of Jesus as a prominent, is, according to Malina and Neyrey (1988:95-96), designed to transform the conventional reaction to Jesus as a deviant assumed by conventional association of him with the shame of crucifixion. The labels of deviance include Sabbath breaker, demon-possessed, blasphemer—culminating in, accursed, a category apparently confirmed by his crucifixion as a criminal. To the challenge that Jesus is a deviant, the typical riposte of Christians replies that, rather, he is a prominent; the labels of deviancy typically stand over against the labels that, his followers attest, declare his prominence, the messiah, the son of God, the anointed, the beloved of the father. (See Malina and Neyrey, 1988:ix-xi,49.)

In the crucifixion, Malina and Neyrey (1988:40) maintain, Jesus’ opponents were successful in publicly shaming Jesus as a deviant, a person who is out of place in a derogatory sense, a lawbreaker, criminal, destroyer of the social order. However, in the retrospective account of Jesus’ conflicts with his opponents leading up to his death, the shame associated

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30 See also McVann (1988).
Formal analysis of John 5.17-23 as a ‘trial’ does not clarify the incongruity between challenge and riposte.

By applying tools of ‘relabeling’, forensic narration, and honor/shame it is possible to see that the case for Jesus is made by answering the charges which his opponents had attached to him and turning them around:

**Challenge**
- It is unlawful, he destroys the Sabbath, he promotes himself, blasphemously making himself equal with God (5.10,16,18).

**Riposte**
- He does the Sabbath work of salvation and judgment in tandem with God (5.17), he takes nothing for himself but has been given all by the father (5.19,22).

Such an argument is plausible in that the new labels do answer and reverse the old ones. Formal analysis of John 5 by the challenge-riposte grid shows that this encounter serves two social functions. It transform the labels of illegality (or in sociological terms,

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31 Another approach is proposed by Lindars (1975:366-380). He suggests that apocalyptic myth provided continuity between Jesus’ preaching of the imminence of a crisis ushering in the kingdom of God, and the images of Jesus exalted at the right hand of God as the agent of this impending judgment. Lindars suggests that the logic of the apocalyptic myth already identified with Jesus’ through his teaching may have led Jesus’ disciples to interpret his death as exaltation to the presence of God from whence he would act as God’s agent of impending judgment. This picture could be sustained by interpretation of the meaning of Jesus within the sequence of the myth, Lindars suggests, even without experience of the resurrection. However, Lindars appears to conclude that experience of Jesus’ continuing living presence following a proverbial three days of reflection on his death may have followed, rather than preceded, interpretation of his crucifixion in relation to his exaltation at the right hand of God.

Another way of expressing this line of reasoning is to observe that the mythic image of resurrection, may have already carried significance within the framework of the myth of God’s imminent presence. Experience of resurrection confirmed it rather than generating it ex nihilo.

In other words, the mythic images associated with Jesus’ exaltation may better be understood as a product rather than a cause of the church’s reflection on the honor of God in respect to Jesus crucifixion; for this latter insight I am indebted to Dr. David Bromell’s reflection in private correspondence (December 1993).
deviancy) by identifying Jesus as a prominent, relabeled as the son of the father, who is ὁ νικός ὁ Θεός and ὁ νικός ἀνθρώπων (5.19,24,27).

The argument John 5 functions as a forensic narrative because it presents objections to the legitimacy of Jesus' authority (5.11,18) in the context of the negative characterization of those who "seek to kill him," it concludes on a note that evokes the style of prophetic prosecution, "those who do not honor the son do not honor the father who sent him" (5.23).32

Compare 1 Samuel 2.30b, "Those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be treated with contempt," which uses a form of forensic narrative to effect a prophetic prosecution by God. In noting this example Patrick and Schult identify the classical prophetic form of the 'genre' of prophetic prosecution as a commission and messenger formula, and an accusation or indictment or sentence (Patrick and Schult, 1990:65).

A comparable literary structure is not clear in John 5. But the function of this genre of prophecy is comparable with that of the account of challenge and riposte encounter in John 5; it is designed to show that those who do not acknowledge Jesus' honor stand in danger of the judgment of God. (See also Mark 12.6-12.)

In Jewish thought, God's throne is established over the whole social order, and judgment in Israel is a type of God's reign. As I have noted earlier, citing Baumgarten (1979:219-221), in Judaism contemporary with the first century, the Sanhedrin was conceived as a model of the heavenly court.

In other ways also the heavenly dimension of divine governance penetrates Jewish forensic conception. Trites (1977:43-48) notes the sustained use of controversy speech that derives from the setting conventionally associated with Jewish legal assemblies. Further he finds in the context of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha that in Pirke Aboth 5.29, God is

32 In Israelite tradition, one function of forensic narrative, as defined by Patrick and Schult (1990:65), is prophetic prosecution. Forensic narratives of offenses ending in a prophetic word of judgment against the offender, as in 1 Samuel 1.12-36, are a development which, according to Patrick and Schult (1990:65), constitute profound images for Israelite self-consciousness. Stories are told which explain and justify the quasi-judicial event of the prophecy. "The narrative is not addressed to judges but to the Israelite people in defense of [Yahweh the] Judge's decision" (Patrick and Schult, 1990:65).

The trajectory from strict forensic narration to this literary extension of it can be traced through a transitional form. In a number of legal narratives in the Pentateuch, the narrator tells the story rather than quoting the narratio of the plaintiff or defendant. The account of the origin of the law of blasphemy in Lev. 24.13-16 is preceded by the story of the case which purportedly called it into being (vv.10-12). The purpose seems to be to provide the authoritative forensic narration, rather than the potentially flawed one of the interested parties (Patrick and Schult, 1990:146 note 18).
not only ‘the judge’ and ‘the witness’, but also ‘the adversary’ in the lawsuit (the ba’al din)" (Trites, 1977:48). 33

Harvey (1976:47) and others have shown that witness and judge were reversible roles in Jewish legal procedure. In light of these considerations, there is a sense in which even the cultic setting of exaltation of the enthronement of YHWH as the one empowered to execute judgment over all the earth is a forensic setting, of sorts. Harvey (1976:16) notes that the origin of the Hebrew literary form of the trial or ribh has its origins, not in the procedures of civil court but in the ultimatum of a king against a state which has broken a sacred alliance.

In John 5 the forensic setting is not one in which two opposing parties are adjudicated by a third party. Rather one of the contenders in the conflict answers that he is to adjudicate, from the position of the divine throne, over the party that brings the case to court. To say that forensic description of this setting is inadequate, is to fail to account for the sense in which the cultic setting of the divine throne of judgment is forensic. Matthew 18.23-35 is a parable within a cultic setting with forensic implications: the wicked slave who refuses to forgive others is handed over by the king who activates forensic procedures. The king turns the slave over to torturers until he pays all his debt.

In Pospisil’s (1971:124-125) anthropology of law, an essential feature of a legal decision is that a third party (authority) possesses the power of jurisdiction over both parties in a dispute. Feud and law are distinguished as follows: law presupposes an authority holding jurisdiction over both litigants and respected by both parties; in contrast a feud is an intergroup fight in which all the participants ignore or even defy the jurisdiction of the overall political authority, which is usually weak or uninterested (Pospisil, 1971:8). In John 5 Jesus is both presented as if he is one of two parties in a forensic dispute, and at the same time is identified as the son who is the judge of all. Thus within a frame of reference in which cultic and legal authority are not sharply separated, even the setting of exaltation upon the throne can be conceived as forensic, in keeping with the mood of portions of 5.23-47: that all may honor the son just as they honor the father. Anyone who does not honor the son does not honor the father. He is the son of man [the judge] (5.23,27). The one who hears has life (5.24,25), but judgment is the verdict on those who deny him honor (foreshadowed in 5.37,40,42-47).

In 5.17-27, mention of the killing of Jesus is answered finally by identifying the son with the ultimate legal authority (5.27). Jesus does not put forward this claim to be adjudi-
cated by a judge who is in some sense a third party in the dispute. Thus according to Pospisil's definition, the dispute in John 5 has more in common with a feud than a legal decision. 34

Social description of the labels and counter-labels assigned by the parties in this dispute is a useful tool. But it does not take adequate account of the incongruity in social position between the apparent setting of the challenge as opposed to that of the riposte. 35 Malina and Neyrey (1988:129-131) interpret the crucifixion as a status degradation ritual which is transformed by the sequence within which threat is answered by enthronement in heaven, effectively, a status elevation ritual. 36

Malina and Neyrey analyze the passion tradition in Matthew, as a process of neutralization and ultimately transformation of negative labeling of Jesus. By giving God full responsibility for the crucifixion, the blame and ridicule of Jesus is neutralized, they argue. However, they do not comment upon the important difference in status between the position from which challenges are launched against Jesus, and the superior status of enthronement from which he delivers his riposte (See Malina and Neyrey, 1988:122-123, 129-131.)

Harvey is content to characterize the trial in John 5 as like Jewish forensic procedure in that the role of Jesus as witness and judge is reversible; he fails to acknowledge the incongruity of social position in the shift of Jesus from earthly defendant to heavenly judge. (See Harvey, 1976:47,51-52). But surely this is a problem if forensic description aims to give an account of the social dynamic reflected in the text.

34 A similar perspective is argued on different grounds by Ashton (1991:124-159) who characterizes the disputes with other Jews over the claim to equality with God as "family rows"; Neyrey characterizes the Johannine social situation as a revolt against the authority of the synagogue, generating the high Christological speech. It is he says a "code for social control-functioning as an ideology of revolt against all things past and all previous controls, structures and classifications" (Neyrey, 1988:204-209).

35 In the context of a discussion of proclamation of Jesus as a prominent in Matthew 26-27, Malina and Neyrey (1988:122-123) explain that the problem of crucifixion is neutralized by arguing that God is given full responsibility for Jesus' arrest, trial, and crucifixion, both by presenting the passion as the will of God to which Jesus humbly submits, and by describing the passion "according to scripture." This relabeling exercise, is designed, they argue, to present God, not Jesus, as the one responsible for his death. Thus Jesus assumes the virtuous (in that culture) posture of the obedient son; and God is put in the position of giving the riposte to the challenge of the shame of crucifixion. In John 5.22-27, note a subtle shift. Rather than quoting scripture Jesus makes an argument concerning the son, which makes it clear that the prerogative of judgment has been given over entirely from the father to the son, it is now the job of the son. The transfer of the prerogative to the son in John 5.22,27 appears to me to represent a distinctive variation on this theme.

36 See McVann (1988) on the crucifixion as a status degradation ritual.
Form-critical characterization of John 5 as a trial in which Jesus is accused simply does not do justice to one important fact. The charges against him belong to a forensic setting. But this space in which accusation is made against him is quite distinct from the space from which he replies to the accusation. (The same observation holds of Jesus’ reply to the sonship question in the Synoptic trial in chapter 3.) I will continue to engage with this question in chapter 5 in the context of comparison between the reply to the topos of crucifixion in John 5.17-23, Mark 12.1-12, and excerpts from the speeches in Acts 3.1-4.30.

**John 5.17-23 as a cult myth?**

Socio-rhetorical analysis borrows from form criticism the insight that patterns of speech are shaped by their typical social setting. I propose that the formal incongruity between the pronouncement story setting of accusation and the cultic mood of the reply in John 5.17-23, may be clarified if the speech concerning the son is characterized in form-critical terms as a cult myth. The identification of the genus and species of John 5 makes a difference to how it is read.

My use of the term "cult myth" follows Mowinckel’s use of the term in reference to the myth of the feast in which the ‘salvatory deeds’ not of Moses or any holy hero, "but of the Lord," are retold and re-experienced, and "we may therefore call them the myth of the cultic feast" (Mowinckel, 1962:109). Though I use the term "cult myth," following Mowinckel (1962) its usage is interchangeable with "cultic legend," which is Koch’s (1969:196) English translation of the same concept. The Scandinavian school clarifies the significance of the term further in a collection of articles on *Myths in the Old Testament*. One of their number, Benedikt Otzen (1980:6-13), defines the typology of "cultic myth" as words accompanying cultic action. The religious cult myth is a form of speech which is recounted in the event of a ceremony. In form-critical description the cult myth(=legend) is a part of liturgy concerned with mythic or historical events which are fundamental to the belief of those who participate in that ceremony and form of life. Koch identifies the Babylonian creation epic *Enuma Elish*, which is read as the text for the New Year festival,

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37 See Ronald M.Hals’ (1985: 45-52) survey of the diversity and confusion surrounding the plethora of meanings associated with the English word "legend" in form-critical work.

38 Otzen (1980:6-9) defines ‘myth’ by distinguishing it from the saga and fairy tale and limiting it to the cult myth.
as a cult legend (= cult myth). Paul's handing down of the words in 1 Cor.11.23, "This is my body...this is my blood" is clearly a cult myth in this sense (Koch, 1969:196). In the ritual actions of the breaking of bread and the lifting of the cup followed by the eating and drinking of those who partake, the combination of words and actions dramatically re-enacts being 'in Christ', in a festival which eludes chronological time. The cultic legend is not recited for edification primarily; it is more like a drama which celebrates a remote event by reliving the past and linking it with the present (Koch, 1969:196).

A coronation setting within which Psalm 2 may be interpreted would allow a reading of this speech as a cult myth. Cultic speech establishes the significance of cultic action. The king relates the proclamation of YHWH "you are my son," to the ceremonial enactment of the decree in the coronation. This ceremonial transaction publicly declares the king's legal authority to rule the domain he shares with YHWH. By evoking images associated with the cultic action of empowering the king to rule, the language of sonship in John 5 may echo a cultic setting.

**Dramatic re-enactment: maximum and minimum boundaries of the form 'cultic myth'**

If John 5.17-23 in some sense recounts a 'cult myth' the criteria that qualify the speech as a cult myth need to be clarified. I will follow Otzen's (1980:6-13) definition of cult myth as 'words accompanying cultic action'. Within this definition the boundary of what constitutes 'cultic action' needs to be clarified.

Dramatic reenactment is at the maximum side of the scale of 'cult action' as ritual participation. Some scholars of Israel's royal cult reconstruct the kingly festivals as ritual dramas which concretely re-enact the mythic event of YHWH's victory and enthronement. This though is disputed; see Eaton (1986:3-26) for an overview of this literature. Evidence of dramatic enactment of festival events is plentiful outside of Israel in rubrics associated with the Babylonian New Year. The Babylonian king did act the part of the god in a dramatization of the cultic myth.

On the other side is a less demonstrative, but no less cultic, action in which the myth is read or sung in worship. Gottlieb (1980) describes the experience of coming to greet the child Jesus, which many worshipers experience in singing the carol, "O Come all Ye Faithful," as such a re-enactment of the speech associated with the cult. His example may be taken as a minimalist boundary of speech which can be characterized as cultic legend. The
myth can be activated in worship in three ways, as it is acted out, read and conceptualized, or sung (Gottlieb, 1980:65).

The cultic milieu reflected by the Mishnah, according to the sociological analysis of Jack L. Lightstone (1988:64-70) appears to me to belong at the minimalist end of the scale. Lightstone characterizes the idealized Temple system as sacred space imagined by the early rabbis, a response that reflects the social context of the wars of 70 and 135 C.E. in which the concrete institutions of social authority for Judean society had been all but destroyed. The Second Temple was concretely in rubble but a coherent vision of the temple system functioned whole in the minds of the Rabbis. In such a setting, the minimalist but none the less cultic setting, Lightstone claims that:

the circle of master and disciples will have provided an island of order in this sea of chaos. Here in this insular structure, the early rabbis adumbrated in the realm of the mind a Temple state.... The maintenance of an ordered universe rested upon a taxonomy of insulated domains about the Temple and upon neutralizing resulting anomalies, ambiguities, and impingements from without, similar to the perception that rabbinic circles must achieve with respect to the chaos about them. (Lightstone, 1988:68-69.)

Critical to the question of whether a form can be seen as cultic, rather than simply a narrative about the cult, is the question of whether it makes the spiritual reality present. Paul's handing down of the words in 1 Cor.11.23, "This is my body...this is my blood" is clearly a cult myth in that it makes the reality to which it refers present to the worshipers (see Koch 1969:196). The discourse portion of John 5 is at the minimalist end of this scale. It engages participation conceptually not by eating or drinking within the context of ritual action. Nevertheless Jesus’ appeal to the audience in present tense and first person Aμὴν ὁμάδων λέγω ἦμαν ...ο ...ἀκούων καὶ πιστεύων ...ἐῖη in John 5.24 (5.19) supports the participatory cultic character of that speech, even though it is set within a narrative framework. It is potentially no less evocative of participation in a primal mythic event. In this minimalist sense, it can be described as a cultic myth along with 1 Cor.11.23. 39

39 The setting of coronation words within a narrative frame in John 5 can be compared with the Synoptic narratives of the feeding of the multitude which, at the point at which the miracle is about to take place, attributes to Jesus the sequence of actions associated with cultic blessing and distribution of the Eucharist: He took, blessed, broke and gave. (Compare Mark.8.41 and 1 Cor.11.25.) Catacomb graffiti suggests that such a connection had been made in early Christian worship.
The cult myth in Psalm 2: a frame for key issues in John 5.17-23

The scenario of kingship depicted in Psalm 2 is a frame which has the formal capacity to hold together two crucial issues present in John 5.17-23: the topos of crucifixion and the claim that Jesus is equal to God. A scenario of enthronement in the face of the threats of enemies is adequate to answer the problem of his rejection and crucifixion, (events foreshadowed in John 5.11,16,18). The declaration of the equality, of work and power and honor, ascribed by father to son (John 5.19-23), makes perfectly good sense in the context of the coronation decree. To characterize John 5 in relation to Israel's cultic declaration of the king as son of God, is to detect within a narrative presenting charges against Jesus by opponents, the persistence of another form of speech. It already contains the equipment to deal with the conflict over conventional social values related to Jesus' crucifixion. 40

1) The royal pattern of exaltation of the king over his foes deals with the threat of evil. The pattern of Israelite kingship which will form the background for my reading of John 5 can be traced in Psalms 2, 89, 110, and 118. The threat of enemies is overpowered by the superior power of YHWH in all of these Psalms. Early Christians quoted from Psalms 2, 110, and 118. This indicates that they were familiar with the pattern of defeat of enemies inscribed therein. It is the plot line underlying the exaltation of the king over the threats of enemies. YHWH's victory and enthronement over all the forces of the deep and all enemies of Israel, is adequate to deal with the topos of shame associated with Jesus' rejection and death. As his son, the king likewise is depicted in Psalm 2 in a position of absolute dominion.

2) In John 5.17-23, speech elaborating the sonship of Jesus forms a riposte to lethal challengers of his authority. In the manner of the monarchical decree, it bespeaks absolute power ascribed to the son who acts after the pattern of God on earth. This characterization of the son within the monarchy legitimates the central and absolute character of kingly power (by virtue of kingly sonship). As son he is given power to reign over all creation, and therefore over the social order.

40 The two issues which I introduce below will be developed more fully elsewhere. See my discussion of the king as a type of YHWH's victory over all foes in chapter 6. In chapters 6 and 7 I discuss the relevance of the divine warrior pattern to the topos of crucifixion and relate it to key texts in John. I discuss the absolute character of the speech in John 5.17-23 more fully in chapter 8.
A tentative digression on the incongruity of John 5.31-38 in a cultic setting: what need for witnesses?

The following section diverges briefly to focus upon an aspect of the speech in the wider context of John 5 that appears to be at odds with speech appropriate to a cult myth. I include it here because it may clarify the ironic character of forensic settings in which charges against Jesus are answered with exalted speech.

I have argued that the speech in John 5.22-23 is formally similar to the decree of sovereignty given to the king in Psalm 2.7-8, and that a cultic setting makes more sense of the reply concerning the son than does the concrete formal context of a trial (John 5.10,16,18).

However, if we take seriously the wider context of John 5.19-23, it is undeniable that the legal trappings are prominent alongside the speech in 5.20-23. Witnesses are marshalled. Accusations are cited. The credibility of the son is presented as a judicial question of belief. Authoritative testimony is attached to preeminent names in support of belief in the claims made for Jesus (5.31-47).

If the speech intends to evoke a royal ceremony of coronation, is it likely that the solemn declaration of the king’s status of sonship and the ascription to him of the power of absolute rule, would need to be followed by the testimony of witnesses? If he is now in a position to act and to judge as God’s representative, if his words are ex-cathedra, then what need do we have of witnesses? 41 By calling witnesses to affirm his credibility does not the king undermine the absolute authority of the claims he has just made?

The possibility that a deconstructive turn is implied in the need for witnesses is not the interest of this study. I raise the question simply to indicate the apparent incongruity. Why are witnesses called at all if the speech in John 5.17-23 is at home in the authoritative context of a cultic declaration. The calling of witnesses in John 5.31-38 does not exactly fit within the frame of legal defense of Jesus’ actions; the witnesses are only said to give edifying testimony on his behalf, without addressing his credibility in reference to the speech or actions that challengers to Jesus have called into question (5.10,16,18).

The apparent divergence between the royal and the two distinct legal scenarios underlying the meanings of 5.10-38 is a puzzle. Notice of a puzzle assumes that the pieces are designed to fit into a coherent picture, which is a rhetorical assumption about speeches.

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41 Compare the irony of the question in Luke 23.71 with the calling of witnesses in the ‘alternate’ trial setting of John 5.
But as a composite product of more or less distinct layers of tradition, it may be the case that John 5 cannot be expected to fit neatly into one pattern of speech.

John 5.19-23 is a riposte which presents the son as the heavenly judge who, by virtue of his status, is not accessible to his opponents on the level of their forensic challenge. Thus Jesus does not stand on the same footing with his opponents. They demand a certain type of obedience to Sabbath law in accordance with honor to God. Jesus assumes a position above that, by virtue of his claim of honor equal with the honor due to God. The speech is both forensic (Jesus is accused 5.16,18 and is judge 5.27), and it is cultic, for the reply in 5.22-23 evokes a setting of enthronement to reign in power, in this exalted position the son has received authority to have jurisdiction over all. (Compare Psalm 110.1-2.)

Form-critical analysis needs to take account of the shift between forensic accusation of Jesus in the role of transgressor, versus imagery of the son enthroned alongside of God. Even the subsequent appearance of witnesses in John 5.31-38 does not necessarily belong to a context of adjudication over right or wrong action. The speech of these witnesses is edifying. The thread of witness speech designed to dishonor Jesus' opponents does not commence until 5.38.

One possible clue to this puzzle may be found by comparing the edifying role of the witnesses in John 5.31-37 with a comparable kind of edifying witness that is given in another setting. A comparison with the role of witnesses to the hallowing of the New Year festival, in the Mishnah tractate on *Rosh ha-Shanah*, may be instructive in this regard.

Here I only introduce the possibility that reading John 5 within the context of a festival milieu, such as the New Year feast of Rosh ha-Shanah, may lend coherence to otherwise incongruent dimensions of the speech in John 5. Later I will develop this approach in more depth. 42

The tractate on *Rosh ha-Shanah* deals with instructions concerning the celebration of New Year festivals, claiming its authority from ancient practices. The theme of witness is prominent because the timing of each festival was based upon a judicial decision concerning the acceptability of testimony of the persons who claimed to have seen the new moon; the appearance of the new moon was the sign that the time for the festival had arrived. Witnesses who claimed to have seen it were called and examined by a court of elders who, when satisfied with the credibility of the witnesses, proclaimed, "It is hallowed," and then the celebrations began (*Rosh ha-Shanah*, 1.5,6,7; 2.5-7; 3.1).

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42 See my discussion of the quotation from Zechariah 9-14 and allusion to Isaiah 6 in John 12, where this theme is developed more fully in chapter 7, major heading "John's distinctive perspective...," subheading "Events in John 12...."
The witnesses serve an edifying, not an agonistic function. Their role is cultic, as it anticipates the festival, even though as witnesses their role is by definition forensic. They are called to testify and their testimony is to be judged by the court (Rosh ha-Shanah 1.6-2.9). 43

The Rabbis stipulate the various circumstances which make persons eligible to bear witness. Fathers and sons are eligible to bear testimony as long as other witnesses are called as well:

If a father and his son saw the new moon they may [both] go [to bear witness]; not that they can be included together [as a valid pair of witnesses], but that if one of them is found ineligible the other may be included to make a pair with some other [witness]. (Rosh ha-Shanah 1.7.)

If the witness was not known [to the judges] another was sent with him to testify of him (Rosh ha-Shanah 2.1).

Once the witnesses, who claim to have seen the new Moon, had been judged eligible to testify, the tractate says, they are to be assembled in a large courtyard and examined. The process is not an ordinary judicial one. Witnesses are desired by the court and are cultivated by the offer of food: "And they prepared large meals for them the witnesses so that they might make it their habit to come" (Rosh ha-Shanah 2.5).

The process of giving testimony and hallowing the day are treated as an experience that is edifying and to be encouraged. Even when the words of the first witnesses are found to agree and there is no real need for more to be examined, the counsel of the rabbis is to examine the others briefly anyway, "not because there was need of them, but that they should not go away disappointed and that they might make it their habit to come" (Rosh ha-Shanah 2.6).

The excerpt from the Rosh ha-Shanah tractate below concerns a situation when the court of judges itself, and no others, claim to have seen the new moon, which is the sign that it is time to hallow the festival:

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43 M.J. Moreton (1968) identified the tractate on Rosh ha-Shanah as one which, in its emphasis upon the themes of judgment and witness, provides significant background to John 5. She suggests that this feast may correspond to the unnamed feast mentioned in John 5.1. The mention of a lame man in relation to Sabbath law, the discourse on judgment and the use of witness in John 5, are all themes which are included in the tractate on the festival of New Year. Moreton's reading of John 5 in relation to the Rosh ha-Shanah festivals builds upon the work of Aileen Guilding (1960). Guilding argued in great detail that the Fourth Gospel is based upon the Jewish lectionary. The subsequent critique of Leon Morris (1964) maintained that her thesis is not historically verified due to the dating of the extant lectionaries subsequent to the writing of the Fourth Gospel. However, Moreton (1968:209-213) in her study, argues that feast, sign, and discourse are more closely linked in chapter 5 than elsewhere in John.
If the court alone saw it, two [of them] should stand up and bear witness before them, and then they may say, 'It is hallowed! it is hallowed!' If it was seen by three who [themselves] make up the court, two [of them] must stand up and set [two] of their fellows beside the single [other judge] and bear witness before them, and then they may say, 'It is hallowed! It is hallowed!' For no single person can be deemed trustworthy in himself. (3.1)

The judicial process for hearing witnesses described in the Rosh ha-Shanah tractate is epideictic in aim, though it makes use of forensic process.

It is beyond the scope of this project to pursue the matter of witnesses in John 5 further, as it is only tangential to the speech in John 5.17-23. Yet some account must be given for the formal incongruence between the two levels of forensic action (accusation in 5.10,16,18 and edifying witness in 5.32-38).

I suggest that speculation on the role of witnesses to the festival of enthronement of the son may lend a new dimension to the irony at work in John 5.

Though his accusers judge him according to customary justice, Jesus responds to them as if they were a court assembled to hear testimony concerning the hallowing of the festival. He recognizes that it is festival time (5.1). They do not recognize him as either witness or messenger or son who belongs at the side of the enthroned One (5.18). They harangue him like an ordinary court, and do not see themselves as the court who by lifting their hearts on high have the power to see the sign of the festival and so begin to hallow the feast. 44

44 The tractate cites the image of the serpent on the pole, quoting Numbers 21.8. In relation to this image it comments on the power of the festival to make right the hearts of those who directing their thoughts on high keep their hearts in "subjection to their father in heaven" (Rosh ha-Shanah 3.8). The limited scope of this project prohibits comparison of this speech with the image of the Son of Man in John 3 or the sayings associated with the celebration of the eucharist: Lift up your hearts, we lift them up to the Lord.
Chapter 5

A Comparative study leading to an intertextual inquiry: similar features in John 5.17-23, the Synoptic trial question on sonship, Mark 11.15-18;11.27-12.12; and excerpts from the speeches in Acts 3.1-4.30

The scope of this chapter

My analysis in this chapter is guided by the question, "What does John 5.17-23 have in common with other rhetorically similar examples of early Christian speech?" For comparison I have selected texts that, like John 5.17-23, display Jesus' honor against the foil of those who "seek to kill" him. All the texts follow a sequence: threat to the honor and life of Jesus is answered by speech that evokes a setting of exaltation or enthronement. Further all of the texts are set within wider literary contexts of forensic confrontation and defense.

Following this comparative study, I use statements extracted from Acts 3.1-4.30 to tentatively reconstruct an agonistic public encounter which relates to my observations concerning the 'topos of crucifixion'. I suggest that conventional social values associated with crucifixion may be reflected in the pattern within these texts; threats to Jesus' life are answered with exalted speech concerning sonship. My reconstruction highlights the controlling influence in this speech of the exalted response. In all of the texts which I examine, the response routinely relies upon quotation from Israel's scriptures. (John 5 is the only exception to this rule, but as I have shown, John 5.22-23 appears to allude to Daniel 7.13-14 and Psalm 2.) Based upon this comparison I propose that the significance of the killing/exaltation sequence seems to be dependent upon interpretation of Israel's scriptures; the quotations, from Psalm 118 and Daniel 7.13-14 that frame the exalted replies, attest to this. I suggest that the pattern, of threat answered by images of enthronement, derives from an already understood mythic sequence to which these quotations attest. It is expressed in a
variety of Israel’s sacred stories which had been applied to the events of Jesus’ rejection and crucifixion, and the myth provided a frame of interpretation for his resurrection.

A pattern of significance, not limited to one scriptural testimony, appears to form the frame of reference for the sequence of threat and exaltation, as I will show in my comparative analysis. Intertextuality, which falls within the ken of socio-rhetorical interpretation, is an approach to reading. It assumes that texts do not create meanings in a vacuum but are written and read in reference to already understood networks of significance. The pattern of threat and exaltation in my comparative analysis appears to be shaped by already understood patterns of thought signified by testimonies from Israel’s scripture. Thus it is appropriate to use intertextual analysis in order to interpret the pattern of threat and exaltation in John 5.17-23. Accordingly, in the later part of this chapter I describe the intertextual approach that I will use. It is developed from the method that C.H. Dodd (1952) employed in his study of the scriptural substructure of New Testament theology.

Dodd looked for common ‘plot lines’ running through key texts in Israel’s scriptures. He isolated New Testament quotation from Israel’s scriptures, or the technical term ‘testimonies’, that were repeatedly cited by New Testament authors as the understood frame of significance for the rejection, death and resurrection of Jesus. In chapter 7 I will adapt this method to an intertextual analysis of John 5, John 11-12, and John 1. In chapter 6 I provide background material for that intertextual analysis by attending to the narrative sequence of the divine warrior myth as it is expressed within key texts in Israel’s scriptures.

Comparative studies of texts that share elements of rhetorical similarity with John 5.17-23

The Synoptic trial question on sonship compared with the trial sequence in John 5

The arrangement of the text in the final form of John 5 creates the impression that this is a trial. John 5.16 and 18c likely refer to distinct charges against Jesus and may even represent distinct layers of redaction, as has been argued by Neyrey (1988:11-19). But the rationales for persecution (5.16,18) are juxtaposed to sayings of Jesus which (though they likely do not originate from a trial setting at all) are framed in the form of a forensic reply; it defends the authority of Jesus who has been challenged (5.17,19). I have already dis-
cussed the value of a "trial" hermeneutic for understanding the polarized structure of this pattern of speech. 1

A.E. Harvey argues that John 5 makes sense when it is interpreted within the social framework associated with a trial. He observes that the forensic sequence proper to the customary practice of Jewish jurisprudence is followed in a trial-like sequence:

- the giving of a preliminary warning (5.11);
- the informal gathering of witnesses against the accused who register a legal complaint and initiate formal legal proceedings (5.16);
- the reply of the accused (5.17);
- which in the ears of the witnesses against him incriminates him in a more serious charge (5.18).

- It generates a second rationale for prosecution, this time by the death penalty. 2

In John 5 "the Jews" challenge the legality of Jesus' and "seek to kill" him as a consequence of his response to their allegation (5.10,16-18). It is widely noted that part of the "trial-like" sequence in John 5 (and also 10.30-39) follows a pattern similar to that of the Synoptic trial question on sonship (Mark 14.61 and Matthew 26.64; see also Luke 22.67). Noting the marked similarity in form between John 5.18 and the charge of making himself God in John 10.22-39, Meeks (1976:56) suggests that material in John 5 and 10 may derive originally from a passion trial tradition of some sort. In this he is supported by Brown (1986:408-409).

Freed (1965:62-63) observes that Johannine speech concerning sonship is related to the accusations in 5.18 and 10.33. Further he notices that these passages appear to have some similarity to the trial tradition. Though he does not elaborate on this, he observes that

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1 Previous use of a trial hermeneutic in reference to this text is surveyed, in chapter 1. Chapter 2 uses Hellenistic judicial rhetoric for analysis of John 5 as a type of judicial rhetoric; chapter 4 discusses John 5.17-23 as a forensic confrontation over the honor of Jesus.

2 The trial scenario initiated in John 5 concludes in 10.29-39 with an attempt to carry out the sentence of stoning. It invites comparison with Jewish judicial traditions described by Dion (1991:173,147,165). These attribute a prominent role to blows administered by the witnesses themselves. In Deut.13.2-18 any prophet who incites Israel to worship deities other than Yahweh is to be put to death. Likewise denunciation and stoning of any relative or friend giving the same advice, and utter destruction of any community welcoming such propaganda is prescribed. Deuteronomy 13Ab anticipates the legal objection, "How can we deny our following to a prophet supported by a miraculous sign? Is not his word confirmed by Yahweh himself?" This concern says Dion (1991:165), is out of touch with the spirit of Deuteronomy which presupposes that "action must be taken against inroads of other religions no matter how prestigious or dear the tempter, no matter how large the community involved." Jesus' testimony in conjunction with a sign may have been perceived as a similar threat.
5.17-23 and 10.29-39 both address the issue of Jesus’ claim to unique sonship as a major theme, though in John 10.31-39, in contrast to the Synoptics, the sonship is emphasized by Jesus’ repeated address of God as "my father" (Freed, 1965:62-63). The question of the high priest concerning Jesus’ sonship in the Synoptic accounts of the trial before the Sanhedrin (Mk.14.61; Mt.26.64;Lk.22.67) is associated with an accusation that Jesus blasphemes; in John 5.18 a comparable charge of making himself equal to God, is generated in response to Jesus’ address of God as "my father" in 5.17. In a markedly similar passage, John 10.31-39, Jesus is explicitly charged with blasphemy. (See Freed, 1965:60-65.) The reply, quoting scripture concerning the ‘son’ is the rationale for his execution in Mark.14.61, and Matthew.26.64.

A common pattern can be found in the Synoptic trial question (Mk.14.61; Mt.26.64;Lk.22.67) and John 5.16-23 (see also 10.30-39):
- challenge to the status of Jesus
- his response concerning sonship
- which generates charges of blasphemy
- and the threat of death by execution

The chart below is designed to highlight the common sequence without overlooking the considerable differences in the related texts:

**A setting of impending legal challenge**

**John 5.10**  
Reaction to the healed man carrying the mat ("it is not lawful") is traced to Jesus who commanded this action. (Prior to John 5.18 no mention of putting Jesus to death has occurred in John.)

**Mark 14.55**  
They were looking for testimony to put Jesus to death and found none. (So also Mt.26.59.) A preliminary round of interrogation of Jesus follows in the Synoptic accounts. (Luke does not indicate that the assembly had decided in advance to condemn Jesus to death.)

**Preliminary challenge**

**John 5.16**  
After the healed man divulges the identity of Jesus 5.15 as the one who commanded him to carry his mat on the Sabbath 5.11, the Jews (οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι) start persecuting (δίωκοντες) or as Harvey reads this text, prosecuting Jesus because he was doing such things on the Sabbath.

**John 10.24**  
Οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι gather around Jesus and say, "How long will you keep us in suspense, if you are the Messiah tell us plainly."
Mark 14.57-60  (Re destroying the temple) Have you no answer? (=Mt.26.62)

Luke 22.67,70  They (the assembly of the elders, chief priests and scribes who were gathered) said: If you are the Messiah tell us.

_Preliminary riposte_

John 5.17  My Father is working still and I am working also.

John 10.25-30  I told you, you do not believe.... The father and I are one.

Mark 14.61  ( = Mt.26.63)  Silence.

Luke 22.67  If I tell you you will not believe.... But from now on the son of man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.

_Challenge_

[In John the challenge takes the form of a rationale for persecution.]

John 5.18  For this reason ὁ Ἰουδαῖος the more sought to kill ὁ πέτετων Jesus because he was calling God his own father making himself equal with God.

John 10.31-33  ὁ Ἰουδαῖος took up stones again to stone him. Concluding an interchange with Jesus who asks why they are stoning him. They say... "for blasphemy ἀλλαγματίας because you, though only a human being are making yourself God."

_question_

[In the Synoptic accounts a pointed question intervenes. It initiates the response concerning the enthronement of the son.]

Mark 14.61  The high priest asked: Are you the Messiah, the son of the Blessed One? Ὑμῖν ἐστι ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς...

Matt.26.63  (The high priest) I put you under oath before the Living God, ἐστι σὺ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ.

Luke 22.70  Are you then the son of God? ... ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ.

_Riposte_

John 5.19-23,27  The son can do nothing without the father...(the father has given the son the power to create life and to judge, compare Luke 22.69) As the father creates life and judges so the son, that all may honor the son just as they honor the father. Anyone who does not honor the son does not honor the father who sent him.... He has given him authority to execute judgment because he is the υἱὸς ἀνθρώπων.
John 10.34-38 Jesus cites scripture: ‘Ye are gods’...can you say the one the father sent is blaspheming because I said ‘I am God’s son’?... Believe the father is in me and I am in the father.

Mark 14.62 "I am," followed by quotation from Daniel 7.13 (and Psalm 110) anticipating the son of man enthroned at the right hand of power Ὅδὲ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν, Ἑγώ εἰμι, καὶ ἄφησε τὸν θεὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκ δεξιῶν καθήμενον τῆς δυνάμεως καὶ ἐρχόμενον μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ.

Matthew 26.64 "You have said so but I tell you...." (the reply follows the above quote from Daniel 7.13 concerning τὸν θεὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.

Luke 22.70 "You say that I am...." Compare Luke 22.69 ὁ θεὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου will be seated (enthroned) at the right hand of the power of God.

Opponents respond with charges of blasphemy and threats of execution

Mark 14.64 =Mt. 26.65-66 The high priest tore his clothes saying, "'Why do we still need witnesses, you have heard his blasphemy! What is your decision?' and they all condemned him as deserving of death" θανάτου.

Luke 22.71 What further testimony do we need? (compare the witness motif in John 5.31,37-38). Only in Luke is Jesus transferred to Pilate without any decision having been made concerning his guilt or innocence.

Note a similar plot or sequence in the chart above: Jesus’ reply concerning his filial status is perceived as an offending statement, it generates charges of blasphemy and a decision to put him to death.3 The sequence of two charges in John 5.16-23 and 10.22-39 is similar to the sequence of two questions by the high priest in Mark 14.62. 4

The central question around which the synoptic trial narratives are focused "Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?" is not overtly addressed in John 5.17-18 where filial status is

3 Boers (1989:68-70) argues that the Markan trial must be fictitious because is a travesty of justice that would never have been allowed within Jewish forensic practice. In comparison he notes the standards for capital trials set out in the, later but possibly relevant, traditions recorded in the Mishnah tractate, Sanhedrin. Boers maintains that, in contrast to the Markan version, Luke’s version of the trial makes a point of remaining within the bounds of legal justice that were understood to be operative at that time.

Noting similar problems with the Markan account, Juel (1977:59-67) argues that its purpose is not historical documentation, but rather dramatization of the theme of rejection of Jesus through a trial narrative.

4 In Luke there are two questions by the assembly, one concerning "messiah" the second concerning the "son of God." (See Brown 1986:408-409.)
only implied by Jesus’ address of God as ‘father’. Only in John 5.19 is mention of ‘the son’ introduced.

The most striking similarity is found in the ripostes above. John 5.19-27 develops an argument affirming that Jesus has superior status as the son. In the Synoptic accounts an affirmative reply (though it is evasive in Matthew and Luke) is followed by a quotation concerning the enthronement of the son. John 5.22-23,27 alludes to Daniel 7.13-14, the same text that is quoted in the Synoptic accounts, riposte. The similarity is most acute in John’s summary statement in John 5.27: ‘and he has given him power to execute judgment because he is the son of man’.

5 Matera (1982:77,88,111) argues extensively that Daniel 7.13-14 evokes a royal enthronement as well as an eschatological judgment scenario; The text of Daniel 7.13-14 makes this almost self-evident. The quotation in Mark 14.62 is designed to ironically confront Jesus’ accusers with images of the coming of the son of man as king enthroned to judge his accusers.

Noting that marked similarity in the language of John 5 and Mark 14 only begins at the point of the ripostes, I suggest that the speech concerning ὁ νικός, that evokes the enthronement scenario reflected in Daniel 7.13-14, has been edited on to speech from another tradition concerning Jesus’ relationship to God as ‘father’ in John 5.

5 In assessing this similarity it may be useful to digress briefly to Boismard’s (1977) discussion of traditions that can be discerned as common to John and the Synoptics in specific texts. Boismard thinks that John did make use of the Synoptics at a late stage of redaction, and he argues that John uses a literary procedure called Wiederaufnahme. In this procedure an interpolator who inserts a gloss in the midst of a text that is already constituted is often obliged to recapture, after the interruption of the gloss which has been inserted, expressions which create a liaison between the primitive expression, and the commentary on it by the redactor (Boismard, 1977:235). An example of this redactional procedure, Boismard argues, can be found when the question of Pilate to Jesus is compared in Mark 15.2 and John 18.33-37. Boismard (1977:236) notes, “Jn fait en quelque sorte un {{commentaire}} du texte que lui offrent les Synoptiques”; John has inserted a Christological development, a more precise reading concerning the royalty of Jesus; but after the insertion of his commentary he is obliged to recapture the question posed by Pilate (Jn.18.33 and Mk.15.2) in a more simplified form “So you are a king?” He pulls the commentary on the tradition together with recitation of its primitive form by placing back in its true context the reply of Jesus, “You say that I am a king” (John 18.37b and Mark 15.2b) (Boismard, 1977:236).

6 Though the possibility of a comparable redactional procedure is less clear than in the comparison that Boismard notes above, I suggest that the allusion to Daniel 7.13-14 in both John 22-23 and John 5.27 may represent a Johannine redaction. First, the answer to those who accuse him of ‘making himself equal with God’ (5.18) compares with the Synoptic charge of ‘blasphemy’. The argument describing the son who has been empowered to create life and judge ‘just as’ the father (5.17-23) that they might honor the son just as they honor the father, could be interpreted as a free ‘commentary’ on the meaning of the Synoptic use of the quote from Daniel within a comparable trial setting. But in 5.27, John returns to restate the form of the primitive tradition more literally with reference to the power and judgment of the son of man. Interestingly the sole Johannine use of ὁ νικός ἀνθρώπου occurs in John 5.27, exactly replicating the LXX of Daniel 7.13. Whereas the comparable Synoptic reply to the trial question, like other instances of Johannine usage, uses ὁ νικός τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.
A tradition that emphasizes oneness between Jesus and the one he calls "my father" (John 5.17 compare 10.30) may have been reworked to fit into a pattern of threat (5.18) answered by speech concerning sonship (5.19-21). In its final form it evokes an enthronement scenario in a way that resonates with the Mark 14.61-62 quote of Daniel 7.13-14 (conflated with Psalm 110.1).

However, the differences are as instructive as the similarities. The Synoptic use of the pattern of threat/enthronement in the trial account nowhere develops an explicit argument for the equality of Jesus with God, though the reaction—"blasphemy"—suggests that a comparable offense was signified by the quote from Daniel 7.13.\(^7\) However "I am" is no more explicit than John 5.17 which tacitly implies oneness with God. That John 5.17 implies equality of status would not be clear were it not elaborated as it is in 5.18-23 through a pattern associated with kingly enthronement in heaven. The pattern of threat/enthronement that is found in the Synoptic trial accounts becomes, in John 5, a vehicle for developing the idea of Jesus' relationship with "my father" into an absolute case. In John 5 the argument is built solely on the filial status between the father (God) and the son (the king, alias Jesus). On the grounds of a coronation-like display it demands that the son must be given the same honor as the father (5.23). John 5.22-23,27 alludes to an enthronement setting (see Daniel 7.13-14). The pattern of threat answered by speech concerning the empowered status of the kingly son of God in 5.17-23 echoes the mood and sequence of Psalm 2. John 5.21 which is the most god-like image of all, resonates with the resurrection scenario in Daniel 12.1-2, as I will show in chapter 7.

John elaborates the saying (5.17) via the mythic sequence (threat 5.18 and enthronement 5.22-23). The use of this sequence in Mark 14.61-64 attests that it was already associated with a pattern of trial (foreshadowing death) and enthronement (displaying the resurrected status of the son of man as heavenly judge). An explicit meaning is drawn out of 5.17 through the argument in 5.19-23 that is developed within the threat and enthronement pattern. Jesus as the son has been given the power of creation and judgment and thus the son is to be given the same honor as due to the father.

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\(^7\) Mark 14.62 could be interpreted as a tacit affirmation of divine-like status. In their commentaries on Mark, Anderson (1976) and Taylor (1957:568) both mention an alternate attestation of Mark 14.62 ἰμας λέγετε ὃν θαλάτη εἰμι. It is not included in the critical apparatus of the 3rd edition of Aland’s Greek New Testament. Though attestation for the text is not overwhelming, Anderson and Taylor both prefer this reading, on the grounds that, "You say that I am" is more congruent with Markan secrecy and reserve than the more direct "I am," and that it may help to account for the Matthean and Lukan versions of the tradition.
Comparison between John 5.17-23 and Mark 11.15-18;11.27-12.12

Even a cursory look at early Christian literature shows that mention of the "killing" or crucifixion of Jesus was a very prominent feature in early Christian expression. But in relation to the particular pattern of speech in John 5, we must ask how the mention of the killing of Jesus is related to the defense which is attributed to Jesus. Is this a pattern, or typical style of argument?

In John 5 "the Jews" challenge the legality of Jesus' and "seek to kill" him as a consequence of his response to their allegation (5.10,16-18). Mark 11.15-18 [11.27-12.12] is another story of conflict in response to an action of Jesus (11.15-18) to which religious authorities respond by seeking to kill him. 8

Both John 5.19-28 and the parable in Mark 12.1-12 use a metaphor of agency to communicate an image of the son as the one who is personally vested with the authority of the father. 9 Others have already identified parallels between the Jewish customs concerning the legal status of 'son of the house' and the portrait of the son in Mark 12.1-12. To become 'son of the house' was to be ascribed a legal status, comparable to the power of attorney today. One who is granted power of attorney legally acquires extensive powers to make decisions for the person and property of another. Ashton extends the comparison to show that the son who has been legally empowered by the father to transact business in his place in the parable in Mark 12.1-12, throws light upon the status of the son in John 5.22-23. The son is legally to be given the same honor as the father. In both Mark 12.6 and John

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8 For the purposes of this study I will treat the "son" in the Mark 12.1-12 parable of the wicked tenants as a messianic reference, which the church applied to Jesus. This is not to deny that the implications of the parable may be wider than reference to Jesus, as has been noted by Derrett (1978:66). Derrett identified comparable accounts in Sifre on Deut.#312, where the son is not identified with the messiah; even though in its canonical form, he observes, the church has "seen, or imagined it saw, the son in the parable as Jesus" (Derrett, 1978:66). Milavec (1990) also argues that the 'son' is not necessarily identified with Jesus.

Further, I interpret the quotation of Psalm 118.22 in Mark 12.10 from the resurrection perspective of early Christian tradition, even though I recognize that both the parable and the quotation in an earlier form could have been employed differently, and may even have been included in the remembered teachings of Jesus. Investigation of this aspect of the text lies beyond the scope of my project. See Ashton (1991:319-322) for an overview of scholarship that sees the parable as part of the Jesus tradition.

9 See Ashton's (1991:323-325) pertinent discussion of research on the legal status assigned to one who is appointed to become 'the son of the house'. Even natural sons had to be assigned this position. Ashton (1991:316-328) provides an in-depth summary of recent scholarship on the concept of 'son of the house' as a concept that is used in an analogous way in John 5.19-23 and in Mark 12.1-12.
5.23, the same crucial expectation is attributed to the father: "they will honor my son." (Compare John 5.43.)

Analysis of Mark 11.15-18;27-33;12.1-12 as a challenge/riposte encounter discloses further similarities. The riposte in Mark 12.9-10 is linked to the unresolved challenge over Jesus’ authority to expel merchants from the temple (11.15), as follows:

**Mark 11.15-18; 27-33**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claim</th>
<th>Jesus drives out merchants from the temple (11.15-17).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>When they heard it they looked for a way to kill him (11.18).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question</strong> (by challengers related to claim)</td>
<td>By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them (11.28)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counter question:</strong></td>
<td>Was John’s baptism from heaven or of human origin?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Answer</strong></td>
<td>Due to fear of consequences challengers say, &quot;We do not know&quot; (11.31-33).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The matter is unresolved. But the challenge is replayed dramatically within the plot of the parable: the owner of the vineyard gives a riposte to the wicked tenants who refuse to honor the authority of his son (12.1-9).

**Mark 12.1-12**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claim</th>
<th>The one who planted the vineyard sent his beloved son, saying they will honor my son (12.6).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Challenge</td>
<td>The tenants of the vineyard said, ‘This is the heir, let us kill him’. So they seized him, killed him and threw him out (12.7-8).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riposte</td>
<td>What then will the owner do? He will come and destroy the tenants. The stone the builders rejected became the cornerstone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verdict</strong> (indirect)</td>
<td>[The narrator indicates that his opponents realize he has put them down through the parable.] They fear the ire of the crowd, indicating that the crowd consider that Jesus won in this instance. Accordingly, he gets the grant of honor (12.12).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By treating Mark 11.15-18;11.27-12.12 as one composite challenge/riposte encounter, it is possible to see that the form of John 5 is comparable in highly significant ways. Both
John 5.1-23 and Mark 11.15-18; 11.27-12.12 can be broken down into two distinct claims and challenges, as I have shown in their individual analyses above. Below I conflate these somewhat in order to highlight the similarity between these two texts.  

10 (The action represents Jesus’ claim to authority.)

**Claim**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action-</th>
<th>Challenge to Authority</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Healing (John 5.1-9). The father is working and I am working 5.17.</td>
<td><strong>Seek to kill ἀποκτένων, he makes himself equal with God (John 5.18).</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expulsion of temple merchants (Mark 11.15-18) father sent a beloved son, they will honor, Ἐντραπῆσοντα, my son (Mark 12.6).</td>
<td>Looking for a way to kill ἀπολέσων him (Mark 11.18).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By what authority, who gave you authority? (Mark 11.27).</td>
<td>By what authority, who gave you authority? (Mark 11.27).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let us kill ἀποκτείνωμεν the heir (Mark 12.7-8).</td>
<td>Let us kill ἀποκτείνωμεν the heir (Mark 12.7-8).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Riposte-God’s Doing**

The son does nothing apart from the father. As the father does, so the son. The father gives the son the power to create life and to judge that all may honor (τιμῶ) the son just as they honor (τιμῶ) the father. Anyone who does not honor the son does not honor the father who sent him (John 5.19-23). Compare Mark 12-6.

The owner will come and destroy the tenants. ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, this was God’s doing’ (Mark 12.9-11).

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10 For a more precise breakdown of the challenge/riposte form see the analysis of John 5.1-23 and Mark 11.15-18; 11.27-12.12 in the places where I treat them separately. John 5.17-23 in chapter 4 under the major heading “Tools for analysis...,” in the subheading “Honor and shame...” Mark 11.15-18; 11.27-12.12 earlier in this chapter under the major heading “Comparative studies of texts...,” and the subheading “Comparison between John 5.17-23 and Mark...”
Both the Markan temple expulsion and the healing in John 5 are strategically placed in reference to the trial of Jesus. John 5.18 is the first mention of witnesses against him who seek to prosecute him by the death penalty; it introduces intermittent forensic conflicts that culminate in John 10.31 where his opponents take up stones, to attempt to execute the penalty for blasphemy themselves, as was the custom in Jewish legal procedure. (See Harvey, 1976: 50-54.)

In Mark the temple expulsion is presented as the catalyst for accusations that culminate in the crucifixion. 11 Apart from this indirect connection, Mark 12.1-12 is not clearly forensic in setting as is John 5. However by placing the parable of the vinegrowers in the context of speech against his opponents (Mark 12.12), the incident in Mark generates even more harsh polemic concerning rejection of the son. 12 If the parable is interpreted as a way of talking retrospectively about the crucifixion, then the seizing, beating, killing of the son and heir is seen as a retrospective forensic narrative designed to prosecute Jesus' adversaries. 13

Hultgren observes that the opponent's challenge in Mark 11.28-33 is a simple question of jurisdiction: who? What jurisdiction gave you the right to do these things? It is met with a counter-question which silences his challengers, who fear making a public statement

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11 Juel (1977: 56-65,138) deals extensively with this connection. He observes that the Temple charge (Mark 14.58) is repeated in mockery in Mk.15.29, where it is treated precisely as the second charge. Juel detects deep irony in the accusation concerning the temple. Mark uses this irony to lead the reader to view the charge that Jesus destroys the Temple in terms of judgment on the temple establishment. Juel maintains that the irony serves to intensify the theme of rejection of Jesus that is developed through the trial narrative.

12 Milavec's (1990:30) interpretation attempts to avoid anti-Judaism by a source-critical analysis that argues that "the son" is not necessarily identified with Jesus.

13 The reason for preserving this tradition in this specific formulation of question and counter-question, is, concludes Hultgren, a Christological interest; thus "the question of authority" tradition in conjunction with the temple cleansing presents Jesus as agent of eschatological authority (Hultgren, 1979:73) with divine authority to act in judgment. Hultgren (1979:74) maintains that in both Mark and Q the sayings concerning Jesus as the ὁ θεός designate his exousia or right versus opponents who attack him; in both he is the one having full authority, an authority at which his opponents take offense. In the context of the temple cleansing, Hultgren (1979:74) maintains, the son of man sayings "make explicit that the activity of Jesus in the temple was in fact an act of ὁ θεός τοῦ ἁνθρώπου working with authority from above" (1979:74).
concerning the authority of John the Baptist. 14

At the earliest stage of the tradition, Hultgren maintains, the question of authority referred to the temple cleansing. This is confirmed by the immediate response by opponents to the temple cleansing in John 2.18: "What sign have you to show us for doing this?"

Though the John five account is independent, it is yet conscious of the connection. If it was composed with knowledge of the Synoptic tradition (though not of the written Gospels), Hultgren says, "the connection may have existed in that tradition at an early stage" (1979:72). Because in both John ἐκ τῶν ἑρεμίων (John 5.16b) and the Synoptics ἵνα ταῦτα ποιήσῃς (Mk.11.28), the question of authority is associated with "some action" of Jesus, Hultgren reasons that the pericope was unlikely to have circulated without some reference to the action to which ἵνα ταῦτα ποιήσῃς referred:

It must have been used in connection with the decisive occasion, still remembered, by which the confrontation was provoked. That was most likely the Temple Cleansing.... The question of the opponents to Jesus in the temple would have been a question about authority in its most elementary sense: "Who authorized you (or gave you the permission or the right) to do this?" (Hultgren, 1979:72)


14 Gam Seng Shae (1974:28-29) traces three levels of tradition history in Mark 11.27-33. The core of the story is made up of the question, "Who gave you authority to do these things?" and the corresponding counter-question of Jesus, "Was the baptism of John from heaven or from human origin?" Shae sees this "core" as an authentic memory of Jesus, probably related to conversation with former disciples of the Baptist concerning the authority of Jesus in relation to John. The second level of tradition is assigned by Shae (1974:28) to the early church's employment of part of this authentic memory in the construction of a conflict story in which Jesus is questioned by representatives of the Sanhedrin concerning his authority to cleanse the Temple. Thus in the third level Markan rendition of the question, the antecedent of the Sanhedrin leaders' question of Jesus' authority to do "these things" (Mk.11.28), refers to the expulsion of the merchants from the temple (Shae, 1974:28-29). He concludes: in a cumulative sense the Markan arrangement of this question subsequent to accounts of Jesus' teaching and miracles suggests that the question, "By what authority do you do these things?" goes beyond the immediate temple cleansing episode and its theological implications to the authoritative works of Jesus since the beginning of his ministry (Shae, 1974:29).

A similar situation may characterize the authority of Jesus to do "these things" (on the Sabbath) in John 5.16b. John 5.17 may have derived from a more general saying concerning the works of Jesus before it was made to fit the setting of a Sabbath conflict. In the confrontation in John 5, the authority of Jesus is at issue, even though John 5.16,18 does not mention διδωσιά.
Comparison between Acts 3.1-4.30 and John 5.17-23

The second block of text selected to set alongside John 5.17-23 is Acts 3.1-4.30. Significant features make them suitable for comparison. Both concern the healing of a man who had long been unable to walk and thus is dependent upon others. In both, the healing is attributed to the power of Jesus. In both, the healing leads to initiation of public questioning and trial procedures. In both, the authorities initiate a public confrontation related to the healing, and in neither do they give Jesus a grant of honor.

But the dissimilarities are also notable. John 5 is set before the crucifixion and resurrection. The Acts healing is performed by the agency of Peter and John and is set after Pentecost.

This divergence may lead one to ask why another miracle of healing, for example Luke 5.17ff, which shares some common elements with John 5, was not chosen for comparison instead. Common elements can be discerned in Lk.5. 18, 20, 21, 24b, but not the ones that are significant for our study.

In contrast the Acts healing is similar in rhetorical function to John 5. The sign in Acts 3.1-10 initiates recurring forensic confrontations, extending through 5.42 interrupted only by Acts 5.1-12. Similarly, John 5 commences forensic proceedings re-occurring through chapter 10. Further, the healing, though accomplished by the agency of Peter and John is attributed to the presence of the risen Jesus (Acts 3.16). Thus following the healing Peter speaks to the crowd as a witness of the authority of the risen Jesus. In this context Peter repeatedly gives witness to the "killing" of Jesus; this is a significant link with John 5.18 and Mark 11.18; 12.7-8.

In the narrative setting of the first series of sermons in Acts, the resurrection is proclaimed to people who are accused as guilty of complicity in the death of Jesus. See Acts 3.13-15; 4.11 and 2.22-24.

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15 In both he is later referred to as the man who had been healed τὸν ἀπεθανέκεινα (Acts 4.14; Jn.5.10,13).

16 The elaboration of Jesus’ argument in John 5 relies upon the witness of the works the father has given him (5.36).

17 Peter’s sermons in Acts 3-4 concerning the death and exaltation of Jesus are set within a literary context of confrontation of those who were present at his execution. In this context it is notable that the reference to sin, which is generalized in 1 Cor.15.3, points quite specifically at the sin of rejection of Jesus which led the people to become guilty of complicity in his crucifixion. (See Acts 3.17-21; 2.36-38.) In response to Peter’s claim that Christ is risen, vindicated as Messiah, they are called to repent for their very
On a forensic level, one could interpret the narrative setting as implying that Jesus died because of their sins in rejecting him and asking for him to be crucified. The crowd who were spectators to if not participants in his execution are called to account: "You killed him." He died because of the sin of those who in malice and ignorance did not honor his words and actions, but rejected and plotted against him (Acts 1.16-20), though more emphasis is laid on presentation of the event as within the plan of God (Acts 4.17-18).

The appeal to the audience is not made on the grounds that they are guilty of killing Jesus; that is excused under the heading of ignorance. Rather the issue of whether they will honor Jesus turns upon whether they will now recognize him as the one who is exalted to the right hand of God following his resurrection (Acts 3.17,26 4.2,11-12; 2.36-38). The significance of the resurrection is the issue upon which the requirement that the audience give Jesus a grant of honor turns.

In the conclusion of the first series of Acts sermons, the bothersome forensic hassles that Peter and John suffer as preachers of the resurrection (4.2) are identified with the rejection and plots devised against Jesus according to scripture in Acts 4.25-30.

The prevailing mood is an important consideration in identifying a common form (Koch, 1969:33). Though the Acts material is set within an explicitly forensic framework of arrests, imprisonments, floggings and public questioning, yet the overall feeling of the narrative is something like an historical novel. Acts 3-4 relates an account from a certain distance; it contrasts with the profoundly polarized atmosphere that permeates John 5 and Mark 11.15-12.12.

The Acts material is more expository in style. Its prevailing mood is lighter than the foundational display of the authority of Jesus which is characteristic of John 5 and Mark 11.15-18;11.27-12.12; they present conflict over the authority of Jesus in a primary setting: Jesus and his opponents are set over against one another. In contrast, in Acts 2-5 no one "seeks to kill" the disciples who act as witnesses of Jesus, even though their persecution is portrayed after the type of Jesus' persecution, death (Acts 4.23-31) and resurrection (Acts 5.22-23). The typology of the disciples' persecution and release after the manner of their Lord (Acts 4.27-30) suggests that the Acts narrative is intended to provide a secondary account after the type of the fundamental conflict.

However, a statement within each of Peter's sermons is close to the prevailing mood of John 5 and Mark 12.1-12. Its tone is forensic. It accuses those who reject the authority specific action in rejecting the claim of Jesus and allowing the plots of ignorant and malicious persons to be carried out.
of Jesus. To identify a ‘form’ one attends not only to formal patterns, or types of language, but also to "a common fund of thoughts and feelings" (Koch, 1969:3).

Below I include excerpts from the Acts sermons that immediately precede and follow those related to the healing. The repeated mention of the "killing" of Jesus is stated in a direct language of accusation:

Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power...you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up (Acts 2.22-24).

But you rejected the holy and righteous one and asked to have a murderer given to you, and you killed the author of life whom God raised from the dead (Acts 3.15).

Jesus Christ of Nazareth whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, this Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you the builders; he has become the cornerstone (Acts 4.10-11).

The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree (Acts 5.30).

The statement ‘you killed him’ which is routinely at the core of Peter’s speeches, is in Acts 3.15 and 4.10-11 placed within the context of the healing and a resulting forensic investigation. The context appears to have some relation to healing and trial tradition that may also be reflected in John 5. 18

The core statement, 'you killed him' is the part of the Acts speeches that comes closest to the prosecutorial mood of Mark 12.1-12 and the emphasis in John 5 on Jesus as judge of his accusers.

18 Kolenlow (1976) suggests that in a proto-gospel a healing by Jesus led to the consequence of persecution and execution.

In the Acts of Pilate VI-VIII testimony from those healed by Jesus is given in the context of a trial setting; and the "good work" of healing on the Sabbath is named by Jesus’ accusers as the reason for seeking the death penalty within the setting of a trial before Pilate (see Acts of Pilate II.5 which is found within the Gospel of Nicodemus).

Martyn (1978:55-89) investigates the possibility that John, the Ascents of James, Acts, and the Synoptic tradition may draw on a pool of tradition and motifs produced in the situation of Jewish-Christians being tried before a Jewish court as theological seducers.
Similarities noted between John 5.17-23, Mark 11.15-18;11.27-12.12, and Acts 3.1-4.30

The literary arrangement of the argument in John 5 is similar to Acts 3.1-4.30 and Mark 11.15-20;11.27-12.12 in significant ways. 19

As in Acts 3.1-12 and Mark 11.27-12.12 the occasion for the argument in John 5.17,19-27 is a notable sign. John 5 is presented as a defense of the honor of Jesus against the background of opponents associated with bringing about his death. (Compare Acts 3.13-15 and Mark 11.) The Acts and Markan texts also portray agonistic public encounters and are thus appropriate for study in reference to a challenge/riposte form. 20

These texts display some notable points of similarity, as I have noted above. Thus it seems reasonable to explore the possibility that the argument defending Jesus in John 5 might also be similar, even though the common elements at the point of the riposte in John 5 are not immediately apparent. For this reason I will compare the arguments in defense of Jesus in Acts 3-4 and in Mark 11.29-12.11.

John 5 foreshadows Jesus' death (5.18) and enthronement (5.19-23). Though set in a literary framework that is pre-crucifixion, it is composed from a resurrection perspective. 21 As well as displaying formal similarity to other pronouncement stories, such as Mark 11.15-18, 11.27-12.12, John 5.17-23 may double as a type of speech concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus that is comparable to some parts of the sermons in Acts 3-4.

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19 I read Mark 11.27-12.12 as a development from the expulsion of merchants from the temple in Mark 11.15-17. Hultgren (1979:68-75) connects the Markan expulsion from the temple with the question concerning authority, in line with the general consensus of scholarship. See his note 14 on p.90 for a distinction within this consensus between scholars who think the connection existed from the beginning of the tradition, those who think it is a connection made in the process of transmission but prior to Mark, and those who see the connection as a Markan development.

20 The challenge/riposte is so widespread and typical that it can in no way be limited to early Christian accounts related to the death of Jesus.

21 Malina and Neyrey (1988) identify the whole process of relabeling the slanders against Jesus, as a process undertaken in retrospective, from a resurrection point of view. The exalted language concerning the son in John 5.22-27 suggests that it is expressed from a perspective informed by resurrection.
A provisional reconstruction of social values reflected in excerpts from the Acts speeches

A threat foreshadowing execution is answered with speech concerning the divine power vested in the son in John 5.18-23. Social perception of the crucifixion must have had an influence upon the formulation of the speech pattern which I have been considering. If the conventional assumption that crucifixion brings shame was in conflict with the conviction that Jesus is exalted in status, this tension may be apparent in the structure of speech generated in response to this problem. Based on this working hypothesis, it is reasonable to attempt to reconstruct social values reflected through speech which is routinely formulated in this characteristic way. 22

I will first of all present a reconstruction which I now consider to be flawed. I employ it, nevertheless, as one provisional step in the process of reading the social values reflected by the killing/entronement pattern. I presuppose that tensions over the conventional association of the crucifixion with shame generated this distinctive pattern of speech. The reconstruction is designed to highlight social values. Speech that links the death-and-exaltation together, as if in one breath, may reflect the need to quickly answer the potential problem of that kind of death, with the answer of victorious exaltation.

The reconstruction does not use historical criteria, nor does it pretend to be a reconstruction of events; and it is fundamentally flawed, as I shall show. However, I present it with the sole aim of highlighting social conventions which would have been assumed in association with the public spectacle of a forensic execution.

I base the reconstruction upon the excerpts from Acts 3.1-4.30 for the following reason. A formal sequence common to summaries of the kerygma in the New Testament follows this basic type or pattern: Jesus died but God raised him from the dead. (See 1 Corinthians 15.3.) The excerpts from Acts 3.1-4.30 noted above, reflecting this pattern are given in declarative form. The formal pattern of these summaries suggests that the core statement relates in some way to a commonplace pattern of response to accusations against

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22 Subsequently I shall revise this initial assumption in light of the significance of a mythic sequence. Social tensions express themselves through culturally learned patterns of meaning. To express tensions at the limit of conventional mores concerning crucifixion, only a myth that provides an explanation transcending the conventional mores is adequate to counter the commonplace identifying crucifixion with shame. The myth must support the conviction that Jesus is exalted with highest honors and his work on earth is not finished.
the honor of Jesus associated with his crucifixion. Below it is rearranged as if it were a
classical challenge and riposte.

**Challenge**  You killed Jesus.
**Riposte**   God raised him from the dead.

The form is truncated and the challenge does not work, because the same speaker
issues both challenge and riposte.

But if we reconstruct it as part of an agonistic public confrontation, then the charac-
teristic killing/exaltation sequence addresses social conventions; the resurrection rebuts the
shame of condemnation to public execution, and thus defends the honor of Jesus.

The first claim is really only a reflection of social assumptions and mores.

**Claim**  Jesus is finished.
**Challenge**  You killed him because you did not recognize the truth of his words
and actions.
**Riposte**  He deserved to die. He was a Sabbath-breaker, a temple destroyer, a
blasphemer.

The second claim answers these conventional assumptions.

**Claim**  Jesus is still at work (John 5.17), God attested that he is the mes-
siah.
**Challenge**  Jesus is shamed. He was condemned and crucified as a criminal.
**Riposte**  He is vindicated. God raised him from the dead. He is exalted,
enthroned as judge.

**Verdict**  The audience must decide whether to accept the Christian claim that
Jesus is exalted as messiah. To do so, in relation to this riposte, is to
accept that the exaltation of Jesus in resurrection overturns the con-
ventional social assumptions which would normally attend his
crucifixion.

The resurrection is the Christian riposte. If the audience denies a grant of honor to
Jesus, they do not accept that his claim as messiah holds in spite of the challenge of
crucifixion. To refuse to give a grant of honor by refusing to believe that exaltation in
resurrection has vindicated Jesus from shame associated with crucifixion incurs risk to the
audience. According to this social dynamic, if this is the work of God, then not to believe
the testimony is to incur judgment.
Thus the argument has the potential to turn from defense of Jesus to a form of prophetic forensic prosecution. To deny the messianic claim made for Jesus, even in light of evidence that he has been vindicated and is not finally shamed by crucifixion, puts the hearer of this argument in danger of judgment by God. God, whose authority, it is claimed, underwrites the argument, is understood to be powerful enough to force every hearer to give a grant of honor proper to Jesus.

Those who accept that this riposte successfully defends the honor of Jesus are persuaded, or in other words, they accept the terms of the argument. They believe the riposte. This confirms the claim of Christians, that Jesus was appointed by God as messiah.

The killing/exaltation pattern reverses the conventional association of Jesus' rejection and death with public shame. (Compare the Synoptic accounts of the question concerning sonship.) This pattern of speech militates against a conventional view that Jesus was crucified in shame. However, the content of the Christian riposte appears to exceed the bounds of an agonistic public encounter between parties in a dispute. Herein lies the flaw of the reconstruction. The setting formative of this pattern must be sought in another place.

Social description can account for the neutralization of the label of deviant. Such labels can be neutralized by strong argumentation, after the fact. It can be proved that the so-called deviant was in fact an innocent victim of public abuse. The accused can even be vindicated publicly and restored to a position of esteem as a prominent, a martyr for a cause, a prophetic voice ahead of her or his time. See Mack (1985:153) who argues that this was the earliest characterization of the death of Jesus.

Lindars (1975:366-368) discusses Jesus death for others in the spirit of the Maccabean martyrs, but concludes that it is the wrong starting point for investigation of the earliest Christian proclamation. Rather Lindars (1961:75) thinks that resurrection is the "original kernel" of passion apologetic, noting that one cannot speak of resurrection without attaching a positive content to death.

Bornkamm (1960:180) outlines a model of interpretation of the claims of early Christianity in which Jesus followers who "did not succumb to the fateful persecution and propaganda directed against their master...bravely set to work to claim the abandoned inheritance of their Lord." Within such a frame of reference, one could read the language of vindication of Jesus simply within an agonistic setting as an apology for the cross. Bornkamm, however, considers such an interpretation is inadequate to account for the positive claims made for Jesus. I agree that these have their own motive force.

A public agonistic social dynamic, in which insults are answered with counter-claims, helps to clarify values at stake in the underlying conflict. But it does not give ade-
quate account of the specific content of the claims: identification of the rejection of Jesus with a scenario associated with exaltation, which characterizes the riposte.

Horsley (1989:110-131) reads the early Christian movement within a model of structural conflict between rulers and ruled in which Jesus was champion of the oppressed. Within this social context he observes that the political implications of the resurrection could not be clearer: ‘The one you have just crucified as a criminal has been vindicated as our king!’ (Horsley, 1989:133). And yet he is careful to note another distinctive factor. The speeches proclaiming Jesus resurrection as vindication do not simply reflect an acute social dynamic of structural conflict; the role of Jesus in relation to the sacred traditions of Israel is another crucial factor that must not be overlooked in the speeches concerning his vindication. 23

Gager’s (1975:22-48) social analysis of the problem of crucifixion does not take significant account of this crucial element. Rather he relies upon the twentieth century model of Melanesian cargo cults who lose a charismatic leader and go on to proclaim his cause yet more vociferously. The comparison is valuable as far as particular social factors are concerned. But I consider the analysis to be flawed because Gager presents the social factors that characterize early Christianity as a millenarian movement as if they are the motive force. I suggest that the social conflict expressed through the myth of kingly exaltation, is finally controlled by the content of the myth itself.

Social description helps to clarify the relationship of early Christian speech to conventional values in the culture at large. However, it is inadequate to account for specific content of speech which places Jesus in a position of absolute superiority. The tour de force that underlies the absolute case that is made for Jesus in John 5.17-23 is a case in point.

To note that a social reversal that is effected through the dynamic of the argument is not enough. I have already argued that the mythic sequence in Psalm 2 helps to explain the content of this reversal. Jesus’ words, "my father...," are legitimated with reference to speech proper to the coronation of the son as king.

The issue is not that the language of kingly exaltation exceeds the bounds of forensic conflict; because the king as lawgiver and judge was the most prominent arm of legal administration in ancient oriental judicial practice (See Boecker, 1980:25.) Rather, I suggest that the pattern of killing/exaltation speech is incongruent with a public agonistic encounter

23 Horsley (1985: 461-462) interprets the recognition of Jesus as ‘king’ in the context of a revival of ancient Israelite traditions of popular kingship; events in the life of Jesus were interpreted typologically as an acting out of the memory of past deliverance and an anticipation of a new deliverance.
between rival contenders, because the exalted character of Jesus' reply indicates that those who appear to be challengers have no power at all. The riposte is delivered from a setting of kingly exaltation, though the challenge is issued as if he and his opponents were both subject to a common adjudicating authority.

Thus, though it is conceivable that a challenge-riposte pattern of killing and exaltation speech may have sometimes served to counter gibes, it could hardly have been formulated in the context of a pedestrian tug of war between rivals. It belongs within a setting in which the absolute kingly power of the one designated as 'son' as the king has already been acknowledged.

A comparable pattern of challenge answered by a riposte framed with quotation from scripture

More is at work here than forensic narrative which re-labels Jesus as a prominent. Malina and Neyrey (1988:129) see status elevation rituals, of which the resurrection is the premier example, as agents of the reversal. But I would go further than that. It seems to me that though a forensic form of speech is followed in John 5, and is notable also in the Synoptic trial setting, it is incongruent with the form and setting proper to the riposte. The use of the language of the empowered son does not simply reverse the case for Jesus. It moves the conflict out into a cultic setting in which Jesus' accusers stand as if before the judgment throne of God.

Thus it is inadequate to conceive the conflict as if it remained within a forensic setting which merely makes use of cultic ritual imagery. Within the killing/exaltation pattern, threats of death are overpowered in the context of cultic speech. The exaltation of the son belongs to a setting in which it was understood that the king was enthroned and thereby empowered to judge insubordinate challengers who dared to make vain threats against him.

Lindars (1961:169-174) interprets the connection between Psalm 118.22, quoted in Acts 4.11, in terms of an enthronement scenario. However, he does not adequately address the likelihood that this early Christian speech pattern was formed within a cultic setting. Rather, without ever explaining very well what he means by the term, he argues that the earliest use of this testimony was in an "apologetic" response. Apologetic "refute[s] the objection that Jesus cannot have been the Messiah, because he was not accepted as such by those best qualified to judge" (Lindars, 1961:173). Lindars characterizes the use of apologetic in Mark 12.1-12 as similar in function.
The setting of the trial is, in this pattern, controlled from the perspective of the riposte; use of this testimony as refutation of conventional challenges was secondary to its cultic application. The public agonistic setting acts as a literary device. It demonstrates the irony of challenges to the authority of Jesus, but the cultic setting proper to the riposte controls the agenda of what ostensibly is presented as a forensic challenge to the authority of Jesus.

Something more than an agonistic tug of war between rivals is at work. What this 'something' begins to become visible when John 5 is set alongside the comparable statements in the Acts speeches and Mark 11.15-18;11.27-12.12. In each of these texts, as I have shown earlier, a challenge/riposte pattern can be perceived in reference to the mention of Jesus' death. The speech dynamic focuses around the tension between rejection (related to the death of Jesus) and his empowerment in exaltation and vindication (related to his resurrection).

For this reason I shall place my reconstruction of the form of the Acts statement first because in it killing and exaltation are concisely linked.

Claim

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acts</th>
<th>(action - healing a lame man) Acts 3.1-10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>action - temple expulsion Mk.11.15-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>action - healing a lame man Jn 5.1-9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Challenge

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acts</th>
<th>Jesus whom you crucified (Psalm 118) Acts 4.10b-11a</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>authority questioned, son killed, stone rejected (Ps.118) Mk.12.7-8,10a (11.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>authority challenged, seek to kill Jn 5.18 (also verses 10,16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Riposte   quoting or alluding to scripture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acts</th>
<th>God raised him from the dead (quotes from the Psalms) Acts 4.11-12,(see also Acts 2.31-35)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>rejected stone exalted to become cornerstone (quote from Psalm 118) Mk.12.10b,11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>&quot;my father&quot; loves the son, just as the father gives life and judges, so the son, that they might honor the son just as they honor the father John 5.20-23 (allusion to Daniel 7.13-14, Psalm 2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Acts proclamation of killing and resurrection and Mark 11.15-18;11.27-12.12 both display a similar challenge-riposte pattern to that found in John 5. The Acts and Mark challenge-riposte is placed within a frame provided by quotation from Psalm 118.

This suggests to me that the John 5 challenge-riposte, which does not explicitly cite a scriptural frame of interpretation, may nevertheless rely upon a similar, though unstated interpretative framework. It is widely noted that John prefers allusion and typology of scriptural motifs to explicit quotation from scripture. 24

The summary statement from the speeches in Acts--Jesus whom you killed, God raised--is similar in the underlying social dynamic it reveals and in the agonistic mood it communicates to the movement of the comparable texts in John and Mark.

The Acts material that is related to the "killing" of Jesus is routinely presented within a scriptural framework in which Jesus is identified with a divinely appointed royal figure, challenged by the plots of malicious rulers, but triumphantly vindicated by God. (See Acts 4.25.)

Similarly, Mark assumes a scriptural frame of interpretation when the riposte of Jesus concludes by quoting the Psalm 118. Though the scriptural riposte is not explicitly said to be royal, as in the Acts speeches, the quotation appears to belong to a kingly cultic ritual within the wider context of Psalm 118.26-27. In the final form of Mark 12.10-12, the Psalm 118 quotation may be read as the frame of interpretation for the parable: the only son of the father is rejected by the evil stewards of the vineyard, he is beaten and killed, not honored as the son who represents the owner of the vineyard. However if we extend to the interpretive context of Psalm 118, as a whole, God effects a reversal, the threat is routed. God exalts the rejected stone (the son) to a position of prominence.

The Mark and Acts texts allow that a reversal in status has occurred for the one who has become exalted. In stark contrast, in John 5.17-23, the superior status of the son does not so much as admit that the enemy poses a threat. John never allows that the son has ever experienced reversal. No reversal is acknowledged in the reply to the threat of execution.

I have already traced the juxtaposition of conflict and exaltation in John 5 with reference to Psalm 2, in chapter 3. The Acts and Mark texts above explicitly identify the pattern of killing/exaltation as a reversal with a quotation from Psalm 118.22-23. In con-

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24 See C.K. Barrett's (1947:157-162) discussion of "Synoptic Testimonia which have disappeared as Testimonia but which have been worked into the thematic structure of the Gospel." Under this heading Barrett cites the Mark 12.10-12 quotation of Psalm 118.22 as a theme that appears in the context of speech attributed to Jesus within John 5.
trast no reversal of status is acknowledged in John 5.17-23. I have suggested that the form and content of Psalm 2 provides a coherent frame of significance for the speech in John 5.17-23; John presents the son as inviolable, just like the king in Psalm 2, who in spite of threats, replies as if he is not threatened. Jesus in John 5.19-23 does not hint that the son has ever experienced either threat or reversal. He does not reply to his foes as a former victim who after a reversal has been exalted. The form of Psalm 2 is better suited to the Johannine account of this pattern than Psalm 118, in which the theme of reversal is clear.

However, the similarities between comparable texts reflecting this pattern, suggest to me that the answer to the pattern of conflict and exaltation does not lie in one paradigmatic text but in a similar pattern which is reflected in more than one text.

Development of an intertextual approach appropriate to the pattern framing John 5.17-23

The ripostes indicate the need for an intertextual reading of scripture

Despite the important distinctions between the ripostes noted here, the killing/enthronement combination appears to follow a pattern. Themes congenial to the lethal threat and victorious enthronement pattern can be found in several texts from Israel’s scriptures that scholars have associated with John 5. The ‘rejected/exalted cornerstone’ testimony of Psalm 118.22 which framed the ripsotes in Mark 12.10-11 and Acts 4.11-12 above is, according to C.K. Barrett, relevant to interpretation of John 5. Barrett (1947:161-162) maintains that though not explicitly quoted, Psalm 118.22 is nevertheless formative of the theology of John, particularly in reference to the contest over the honor of Jesus; he compares the cornerstone imagery in Mark 12.10 with the development of the Johannine theme of "human rejection and divine approval" in John.25 Barrett argues that though Psalm 118.22 is not explicitly quoted, its substance is a thoroughgoing theme throughout the Fourth Gospel, but specifically in John 5.43-44. He maintains that this theme is

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25 It should be noted that another verse from Psalm 118 "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord" (118.26) does appear to be quoted in John 12.13.
developed from the evangelist's understanding of the sequence of rejection and vindication which is the message of the popular cornerstone testimony (Psalm 118.22).

Others have noted the significance of Daniel 7.13-14, most specifically in John 5.27, and also as background to John's use of ὁ υἱός ὁ θεοῦ ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν σωτήρ in John 3.13-14. 26 I have already related the quotation from Daniel 7.13-14 in the Synoptic trial tradition with John 5.17-27. Dodd (1963:31-35) considers that the quotation in the trial tradition of Mark 14.62 and Matthew 24.62 is a conflation of Daniel 7.13 with the enthronement scene in Psalm 110.1.

Other scholars argue concerning the influence of other enthronement texts in relation to early Christian speech concerning Jesus rejection, crucifixion and resurrection. Crossan (1988:111) sees Psalm 2 as the foundation for the earliest strata of the trial and passion narrative in the Gospel of Peter. 27 Weren (1989:189) presents an outline of the structure of the kerygma that shows marked similarities to early Christian interpretation of Psalm 2. 28 Further he notes the extensive influence both of explicit and implicit quotes from Psalm 2 in reference to sermons in Acts 4.23-31 and Acts 13.27-37 (Weren, 1989:196-203).

Of these various First Testament texts, Psalm 2 has the advantage of providing a concise formal structure, its form is clearly comparable to that of the form of speeches that make an appeal on the grounds of the death and resurrection of Jesus. But this does not mean that Psalm 2 is the source of the trial-like threat and enthronement sequence; the sequence does not appear to be derived solely from the influence of one single text from Israel's scriptures. A common plot line, or pattern, is expressed in Psalm 2, and in other texts as well. This persistent pattern is reflected in various texts which interpret the killing of Jesus from an enthroned perspective, through reference to scripture.

Crucifixion conventionally connotes shame. The pattern of argument in John 5.17-23, Psalms 118, 110, Daniel 7 and Psalm 2 all appear to reflect a common pattern of response to the shame of crucifixion.


27 Crossan (1988) argues that the earliest strata of the Gospel of Peter influenced the trial narratives of all the canonical gospels.

28 Weren follows the outline proposed by van Iersel who sees Psalm 2 as the basis for the kerygmatic form of 1 Corinthians 15.3-5. B.M.F. Van Iersel's outline is found in a chapter on 'Die Gottessohnschaft Jesus und Ps 2.7' in his book, 'Der Sohn' in den synoptischen Jesusworten. Christusbezeichnung der Gemeinde oder Selbstbezeichnung Jesus?, 2nd revised ed., Leiden, 1964, 66-89, cited by Weren p.189. Weren(1989:189) also notes the work of K.H. Rengstorff, Old and New Testament Traces of a Formula of the Judaean Royal Ritual NT 5, 1962, 229-44. Neither of these books were obtainable by the author.
Bultmann (1925:101) argued that the myth of kingly exaltation was not significant for John and proposed that another myth was adequate to explain the Johannine conception of Jesus. Lindars (1975) suggests that the apocalyptic myth may provide a framework for understanding the early references to resurrection as exaltation. I will suggest in chapters 6 and 7 that the pattern of YHWH's enthronement as the victorious divine warrior king is at the root of the mythic sequence which can be detected within the imagery of enthronement of a heavenly judge in Daniel 7.13-14. However, before beginning to develop this proposal by focusing upon the use of scriptural quotation and allusion specifically in John, it is necessary to identify a method which allows me to read John 5.17-23 with reference to an intertextual pattern which is understood more broadly, not simply in reference to John alone, or in reference to quotation from one text, such as Psalm 2 alone.

Intertextual reading focuses, less on one or two particular texts as 'the sources', and more upon a common pattern which provides a socially understood frame of significance. The speech pattern that sets mention of the killing of Jesus alongside mention of his victorious enthronement is part of the kerygma which according to C.H. Dodd (1952:12) is a summary statement that announces "historic events in a setting which displays the significance of those events." The significance of these events is indicated by reference to scripture in both 1 Cor. 15.3-5 and in the sermon outlines in Acts (Dodd, 1952:12). In the Acts 3-4 speeches the retrospective account of the crucifixion of Jesus (3.13b-15) is explained according to scripture (3.17-18), and the riposte is testimony to the resurrection of Jesus (3.15) which is publicly argued according to scripture (4.11).

In response to the labelling of Jesus as a deviant killed in a shameful death, Christians transform the label. The rejected stone becomes the corner stone. But legal language alone is not adequate to effect this transformation.

To give adequate grounds for the proposal that John relies upon an unstated royal scriptural frame of interpretation, an intertextual study is required. Intertextual analysis of a text assumes that the understanding of the writer is dependent upon other frames of reference. In theory, intertextuality means that no text exists as a closed or self-sufficient system (Still and Worton, 1990: 1). Thus every writer builds upon influences of every kind, whether or not one quotes from the fields of discourse that frame one's own writing. In this sense the text is under the jurisdiction of other frames of meaning (Still and Worton,

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1990:2-9) as the product of various cultural discourses (Robbins, 1992c:1161). Intertextuality is, by definition, complex.

**Intertextuality foregrounded: Dodd’s scriptural "substructure" of New Testament theology**

C.H. Dodd's (1952) study of the "substructure" of New Testament theology is a classic argument that New Testament speech responds to a network of meaning that was already understood by its authors and audiences. Israel's scriptures quoted in the New Testament, are, in technical terminology, called 'testimonies'. Dodd argues that testimonies form the framework for early Christian theology.

The actual term, "intertextuality" is never used by Dodd and he was not aware of it as a method as such. It was coined quite apart from Dodd's work by Julia Kristeva in *Séméiotiké* (1969). Her use of the concept evolved from dialogue with the work of the Russian formalist Milhail Bakhtin who was until that time unknown to Western audiences (Moi, 1986:58).

Dodd's (1952) work precedes the development of the theory of intertextuality so-called, but in practice it is an exemplary example of the art. New Testament arguments that follow the death and resurrection pattern, Dodd argues, appear to be framed in relation to established patterns of scriptural discourse.

Dodd maintains that early Christian exegesis tended toward selection of quotation or "testimonies" from portions of Israel's scriptures which represent the common "story lines"; the substructure that was assumed in Christian quotation of scripture related to the wider context from which testimonies are extracted.

Dodd groups scriptures that are quoted in the New Testament according to "common plots," representing scriptural traditions. One distinct "plot," for example "the hero suffers and is vindicated," is attested by a particular group of testimonies from the Psalms. It is brought together with another group of comparable prophetic testimonies concerning "the

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30 See the collection of articles edited by Draisma (1989) for further reading in the theory and practice of specifically biblical intertextuality.

eschatological day of judgment" in Dodd’s analysis of the exposition of the basic outline of early Christian faith.

In the bringing together of distinct traditions, in which each represent a scriptural plot-line, Dodd observes that individual and collective identities are merged in the single focus of one "plot" that focuses around the death and resurrection of Jesus (Dodd, 1952:108). This complex common plot, argues Dodd, constitutes the basis for the pattern of scriptural exegesis which came to be handed down as, in his terms, the "central tradition" of the death and resurrection of Christ. Demonstrably earlier than Paul, he concludes, we find the rudiments of "an original, coherent, and flexible method of biblical exegesis" (1952:108). In his view it provided the framework, underlying New Testament argumentation, which was already accepted as a given.

It is Dodd’s attempt to understand the scriptural "substructure" of New Testament theology, rather than his conclusions concerning an actual set framework of exegesis, that serves as a model for my development of an intertextual method appropriate to analysis of the pattern of killing/enthronement that frames the speech in John 5.17-23. Below I shall reinterpret Dodd’s search for the "scriptural substructure of New Testament theology" through a lens that is consciously intertextual. Some of the detail of Dodd’s explanation has been modified by more recent scholarship; but none of Dodd’s critics have been successful in undermining the validity of his methodological approach. 32

In his preliminary (1936) comparison between the speeches in Acts and 1 Cor.15.1-4 and other similar Pauline testimony, Dodd had established on historical-critical grounds that the New Testament authors already assume an existing framework of scriptural interpretation. In According to the Scriptures (1952) Dodd moves beyond historical investigation to a method which could properly be called intertextual. He looks for themes that are repeated in the argumentation of the New Testament authors, in the larger context of the First Testament scriptures from which the testimonies are drawn. He argues that the wider

32 The subsequent discovery of lists of testimonies at Qumran in cave Q4, similar to those used in early Christian exegesis, required a reassessment of some of Dodd’s arguments. Dodd had maintained that testimonies were not "proof texts" but referred to a broadly understood wider context of scriptural meaning. The testimony lists challenge this assumption in that they indicate that quotation of particular texts referred to a particular exegetical configuration, not simply the broader meaning of the scripture from which the testimony was derived. See Lindars (1964). The testimony lists represent one particular stage in the formation of exegetical patterns. However, this does not undermine the validity concerning the patterns of significance which form the "substructure" of early Christian theology more generally (Marshall, 1988:8).

See Marshall (1988:5) for a brief introduction to scholarship in the field since Dodd and the modifications which the work of other scholars in this field represent.
First Testament context, from which the Christian testimonies are derived, reflect the narrative plots that reoccur within New Testament speech.

Critical to Dodd's study is the presupposition that existing patterns of discourse and of exegesis formed the assumed cultural framework for argumentation in the New Testament. By attending to early Christian interpretation of the events of crucifixion and resurrection according to a pattern already understood from scripture, Dodd assumes that the New Testament authors operated within a received tradition of exegesis which functioned as a given framework of meaning. In relation to this frame of reference, further elaboration of scriptural meanings could be developed. The methodological assumption, that Christian discourse has already been given its bearings by an existing discourse which provides a framework of meaning, prefigures later developments in the theory of intertextuality.

Dodd assumed that the "starting point" of New Testament theology was to be found in common patterns that underlie the diverse development of New Testament theology. He began by isolating the elements of the New Testament books "so widely common to them that they must be regarded as forming part of a central tradition, by which they were all more or less controlled" (Dodd, 1952:11). The consensus amongst scholars of his day was that there is a core of Christian interpretation concerning the death and resurrection of Jesus. He identified this core as the "central tradition" concerning events of Jesus' appearance, ministry, suffering, death, risen manifestation invested with glory, and the emergence of the church, distinguished by the power of the Holy Spirit, looking toward the return of their Lord as Savior and Judge (Dodd, 1952:11-12). In his assessment the central tradition includes early Christian statements which give evidence of the pattern of the rejection and vindication of Jesus according to scripture, and is not simply limited to παράδοσης or forms of speech designed primarily for transmission of this pattern of argument. (See McDonald, 1980:4-9).

More recent scholarship rightly emphasizes the diversity of early Christian thought and would call into question the argument that one "central tradition" could be said to control the development of New Testament theology. Nevertheless, this insight does not undermine the fact that patterns Dodd identified within the "central tradition" were important in early Christian interpretation of the events of the life of Jesus.

Putting aside the question of 'control' of interpretation, the method of intertextuality might be seen as a parallel approach to that articulated by Dodd. He recognized that texts cannot have meaning unless they are understood within a framework of significance(s) that is already understood by the audience; it is a hallmark of intertextuality that a text is understood as "a set or complex of signs, which is to be interpreted against the background
of other signs or sets/ complexes of signs" (Voelz, 1989:28). For example, Dodd would see 1 Cor.15.1-5 as a text that is significant by reference to a pattern of interpretation which has already been set in place.

**Key assumptions: shared scenario, wider context, and common plots**

When Dodd traces the significance of early Christian summaries that quote scripture, he attends, not just to the quote alone, but to the common patterns in the wider context in Israel's scriptures from which the quotes are taken. Dodd does not automatically assume that quotations from scripture are "proof texts." Rather he argues that the whole unit of scripture from which the testimony is extracted should be seen as the frame of reference for New Testament speech. The literary context of the scriptural source of the testimony quoted from scripture provides background for understanding the meaning of the testimony quoted to attach significance to an event in the life of Jesus.

For example, based upon his analysis of the conflation of Hosea 2.23 and 1.10, which are cited together in Rom.9.25-26, Dodd thinks that the message from Hosea did not function as an isolated "proof text," but rather as a whole episode, in which those who were reckoned outside of God's care became God's people. The scriptural quotation points to the whole process which is developed in Hosea 1 and 2. The testimony from Hosea in Christian writing then stood for a whole description of the way God adopted a people. Thus reference to a key verse from Hosea recalls the "already recognized classical description of God's deliverance of people out of utter destruction," (Dodd, 1952: 76).

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33 The critique of Sundberg (1959), and the subsequent work of Lindars (1964) also (1961) on books of testimonies modify the detail of Dodd's argument. However, their critique deals with technical detail within an already accepted framework of meaning associated with messianic proof texts. In no way does it undermine Dodd's concern with the substance of widely understood and attested patterns of God's action derived from scripture.

34 Dodd identified scriptural passages such as Psalm 2 in which extracts from different parts of the passage were cited by at least two New Testament writers in apparent literary independence of one another (see Dodd, 1952:104-107). For example he noted that different parts of Psalm 69 are quoted by different New Testament writers. John 2.17 quotes, "Zeal for they house will devour me." Romans 15.3 quotes the second part of the same verse 9, "The reproaches of those who reproach thee fell upon me." Based upon the observation that discrete parts of the passages that serve as a primary sources of testimonies appear to be known, rather than one "proof text" extracted from the passage, Dodd reasons that the larger context of many independently attested quotes can be assumed to have been familiar to the followers of Jesus (1952: 28-29).
Testimonies that are already understood to provide the frame of significance for these events in the life of Jesus are presumably accepted by the audience without further argument. Thus, Dodd reasons, they "belong to a group of prophecies which directly illumine the situation" concerning Christ (Dodd, 1952: 24).

Three significant insights from Dodd's (1952) work will inform my analysis of the pattern that frames John 5.17-23. The first has already been discussed: the Christian speech of the New Testament is not generated *ex nihilo*. It is framed by an understanding of the shared social world of the author and audience, which relies in part upon what they already knew of scripture.

The second is that the wider context of the scripture from which testimonies are derived is a reasonable place to begin to look for a framework of scriptural interpretation which may already have been taken for granted by the audience. For example, to imaginatively reconstruct what the audience might have understood when Psalm 2.1 was quoted in Acts 4.25, it is reasonable to look at the whole of Psalm 2. Because the rage of those who plot against the son is associated, in Acts, with those who brought Jesus to trial, it is reasonable to assume that the rest of the Psalm also might be associated with the testing and vindication of Jesus. Clearly this is the view taken by Crossan (1988:61) and Weren (1989:196-197).

If the audience knows the Psalm, they can fill in the gaps. Because Psalm 2.1-3 has just been quoted in that context, we can assume that "your holy servant" mentioned in Acts 4.27, and the entreaty to the bold empowerment of the Lord, may rely, at least in part, upon the pattern which is known to follow the threat of rebels in Ps.2.1-3. YHWH proclaims the authority of "my son" unruffled by foolish challengers (Ps. 2.4-11). Assum-

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35 Another scholarly approach to early Christian interpretation of scripture compares early Christian use of scripture with models of Rabbinic exegesis. See Ellis (1991:68-71) for an overview of recent scholarship upon 'pesher' midrash in reference to early Christian identification of scripture with events associated with Jesus. Ellis (1991:117, 66-97) discusses how exposition of scripture attributed to Jesus reflected exegetical methods current in Judaism, yet it is a veiled, "charismatic" revelation to disciples and not to outsiders, a rabbinic style of teaching in which interpretation is handed down from master to student. He identifies three patterns of transmission in New Testament use of scripture; 1) explicit midrash, biblical quotation plus commentary; 2) implicit midrash, an interpretive paraphrase of the scriptural text; 3) *yelammedenu rabbeu*, "let our master teach us."

Quite different from Ellis, and more akin to Dodd, is Richard Horsley's emphasis on popularly understood patterns of meaning that were widely accessible to those who shared Israel's sacred traditions. This approach is developed in embryo within Horsley's (1985:34-35,94) and (1989:133-137) sociological description of the early Christian movement.

These two emphases are not necessary contradictory: Frank Kermode (1988:162) suggests that "secret knowledge of an esoteric gospel" is superseded when its message is publicly made known within the frame of a genre that is already authoritative to the general public.
ing that the audience already understands this, the author of Acts need only mention that the believers prayed for boldness. The divine response to empower the believers in Acts 4.29-31 is consistent with the strong defense of the threatened son in the remainder of Psalm 2 (which is unstated).

The point is that the pattern of the Psalm can be discerned in the plot of the corresponding early Christian speech. The explicit identification of Jesus’ opponents with the king’s enemies may evoke in the audience an anticipation of the next step in the pattern that is already known. They need not fear these threats, because by the empowerment of YHWH, the son is inviolable. As those who honor and proclaim him as the messianic son, they too come under the protection of the divine King. This interpretation does not deny the possibility that Acts develops a midrash upon Psalm 2.

Dodd (1952:78-82) concludes that early testimonies generally make more sense when they are interpreted with reference to the whole unit of prophecy from which they are derived; the citations from scripture, bear "a far more intelligible and constructive significance" when related to the context that they derive from than if isolated as separate proof texts. 36

On the basis of this reasoning, a third key insight emerges. Dodd thinks that the plot-line, or pattern of narrative is the key, even more than the particular text from which it derives.

For example, Dodd identifies one distinct plot line in reference to his analysis of the wider scriptural context of testimonies from the prophets such as Joel 2-3 and Zechariah 9-14 and part of Daniel. The plot that they relate, observes Dodd, describes the supreme crisis of history, the day of the Lord in which God intervenes in judgment and in the establishment of a people over whom God will reign (Dodd, 1952:72). The group, identified by

36 The proposal of Dodd which I have summarized above has not escaped criticism. Albert C. Sundberg (1959:277-278) questions whether citations actually do often refer to a larger context in scripture. He maintains that only a minority of Old Testament citations in the New Testament imply a larger context. Further Sundberg argues that the divergent exegesis of the same scriptural quotation is a problem which suggests to him that there was no established tradition of scriptural exegesis in the early church (1959:279).

Marshall (1988:5-8) counters these challenges; by testing Sundberg’s statistical list of scriptural citations against Dodd’s proposals, Marshall finds that Dodd’s approach is not successfully refuted. The main question posed by Sundberg concerned Dodd’s claim that an understood pattern of scriptural meaning formed the underlying presuppositions, or the substructure, of New Testament theology. Sundberg’s attempt to refute Dodd’s claim concerning the wider reference of scripture fails according to Marshall, because Sundberg’s statistics on testimonies related to wider reference of scripture actually support this general principle of Dodd. However, Dodd is corrected by Sundberg in some matters of detail (Marshall, 1988:3-5). See Marshall, for a general review of scholarly assessments of Dodd’s hypothesis (1988:1-21).
Dodd as apocalyptic-eschatological scriptures, expresses manifold variations of the same general theme (Dodd, 1952:72).

Of particular interest for my interpretation of John 5.17-23 is Dodd's identification of a "common plot" shared by a group of Psalms quoted in the New Testament: 'the hero suffers and is vindicated' (Dodd, 1952:96-97,102). Within this group of Psalms Dodd includes Psalms 69 and 118 among others. Though Dodd identifies no explicitly kingly Psalm within the 'hero suffers and is vindicated' group. Early Christians interpreted the sufferings of and vindication of Jesus through the frame of Psalm 2 as well, as Acts 4.24-25 attests. For this reason I suggest that Psalm 2 might have been interpreted as a narrative that shares a similar plot line with Psalm 69 and Psalm 118, which also serve as testimonies to both the suffering and vindication of Jesus.

I consider that the plot line identified by Dodd, ("The hero suffers shame, ignominy, torment, disaster and... is vindicated" (Dodd, 1952:102).) has an affinity with the challenge/riposte dynamic in John 5, even though in 5.17-23 the son answers the threat of death from a position of superiority and experiences no reversal. The possibility of a connection, with Psalms clearly bearing this plot, like 69 and 118, is stronger if the problem of shame associated with the crucifixion is the topos to which the speech in John 5 responds.

The significance of Dodd’s insights for my method

Though Dodd identifies "common plots," he fails to ask form-critical questions concerning the possible connections between the "plot" within units from Israel’s scripture and the Gattung or genre of early Christian speech that typically makes use of a common plot. For this reason, my interest in Dodd's exploration of the common plots which undergird the "substructure" of early Christian theology relates to his stated methodological assumptions, more than to his actual conclusions.

Below I summarize aspects of his method that will guide my exploration of a possible scriptural frame of reference for the killing/exaltation pattern in John 5.17-23:

1) Dodd assumes that the audiences of early Christian speech already had a broad understanding of the patterns of God’s action. The significance which early Christians attached to Jesus was worked out in relation to a framework of meaning which was already familiar to them. The audience’s understanding of the pattern of God’s action is the already existing framework of meaning which undergirds the argumentation in the text.
2) Testimonies are not just proof texts. They evoke the whole scenario from which they are drawn. The "wider reference" or wider context of First Testament scripture provided the framework within which early Christian exegesis occurred.

3) The quotations from scripture are but examples representative of a whole field of understanding derived from sacred tradition. The action of God was understood within narrative sequences. This understanding or framework, within which New Testament interpretation operated, relied upon the well known plots found in scripture.

In light of these insights, it is possible to approach the rejection/exaltation sequence as part of a plot-line; the pattern of the story line may be attested in the wider context of a variety of texts. Christian argumentation presumes this broader, culturally-acquired understanding of Israel's tradition. Arguments that Jesus' followers relied upon, represent the shared discourse concerning scripture which was already understood within their social world.

Concluding reflections: an enthronement setting understood "according to scripture" controls the challenge/riposte dynamic in John 5 and the Synoptic trial

In my comparative analysis earlier in this chapter the Synoptic trial sequence most closely paralleled John 5. Following this comparison my analysis of social values reflected in John 5, the extracts for the Acts 3-4 speeches, and Mark 12.1-12 indicated that a plot-line joining the experience of threat with exaltation appears to have been common to these texts. The speech in John 5 is presented within a forensic form, Jesus answers accusations against him in the concrete setting of a trial. But as I have already argued, the superior position of the exalted son simply cannot be read as speech belonging to a trial in which the parties in a dispute stand on an equal footing. The speech is finally incongruent when interpretation is attempted on this low level of abstraction.
The chart below aims to highlight the scriptural content of the ripostes:

John 5

**Challenge** 'It is not lawful', they seek to kill him 5.11,16,18a.

**Riposte** The father loves the son, gives him power 5.17,19-23,27 to judge because he is the son of man, *(allusion to Daniel 7.13-14)*.

Synoptic trial question

**Challenge** Are you the son of God?

**Riposte** I am [or you say that I am]. You shall see the son of man sitting at the right hand of God and coming on the clouds of heaven, *(quotation from Daniel 7.14, allusion to Psalm 110)*.

Mark 11.15-18;11.27-12.12


**Riposte** The rejected stone has become the cornerstone 12.11, *(quotation from Psalm 118.22)*.

Acts 3.10-11

**Challenge** You crucified Jesus. He is the rejected stone.

**Riposte** God raised him from the dead. Jesus has become the cornerstone 4.11, *(quotation from Psalm 118.22)*.

The killing/exaltation or enthronement pattern is a common element in all of the texts above. The ripostes routinely rely upon a scriptural frame of significance. Though the ripostes are placed within forensic-like narratives, the challenge to Jesus' authority is answered from a perspective of superiority.

The question is not, 'Which scriptural text sets the pattern?' Rather, the point is that all of these ripostes attest to a similar pattern. I will argue that all of them were understood within a common plot line which can be detected in more than one text. The plot line which attached scriptural significance to Jesus' death, is what is of interest. It is this plot line, which cannot be exhausted with reference to one single text, that carried the frame of significance adequate to reverse conventional associations with crucifixion.

Challenges to Jesus' authority, are displayed in the actions of Sabbath action (John 5.18) and temple expulsion (Mark 11.15-18) for example. If the display of these challenges were designed to give opportunity for defense of the honor of Jesus, then we could expect
that the rhetorical strategy would have been fulfilled by presenting Jesus’ actions in a favorable light; and conversely undermining the opposition portrays his enemies in a negative light.

But the vindication of the son, in reference to the threat posed by his crucifixion, does not belong within a tug of war between rivals of comparable status. Rather the riposte appears to belong within a royal setting; it is delivered from the perspective of the throne. The superior position of the one who belongs on the throne makes the scenario of challenge to the authority of Jesus an ironic device. The ‘trial’ is the tool of the cultic response to the threat of crucifixion, not the other way around.

If we try to reconstruct the speech simply in reference to the forensic setting, the exalted riposte does not belong within that frame. The kingly frame of reference is crucial to the juxtaposition of threats with images of the exalted son. It is this exalted framework within which the trial motif has been made to fit, not vice-versa. For the more powerful social authority is the throne. Its occupant represents the judgment of God. The controlling influence of the scriptural setting of the riposte suggests that the speech pattern is epideictic in its purpose. It does not aim to prove Jesus’ status, but rather to display it to full effect. As my analysis of the internal features of John 5 determined in chapter 1, the pervasive aim of the speech is epideictic, though it makes use of a judicial format. The display of the honor and exaltation of Jesus is given priority rhetorically, and determines the aim of the speech.

The concrete pronouncement-story setting of accusation of Jesus does not account for the speech concerning the son. Harvey’s view that John can be read as a re-trial which mends the reputation of Jesus within a forensic setting fails to notice, or to do justice to this incongruence in formal setting.

To approach John 5 as judicial speech is instructive, but inadequate. Thus I suggest another option. The forensic device of the trial aims to highlight values conventionally associated with crucifixion; but it is controlled by social conventions that belong to a quite different setting. Speech which juxtaposes death-and-exaltation belongs within a setting of worship of YHWH in the temple, a cultic setting, which celebrates the supremacy of YHWH over every foe. A cultic scenario associated with the divine throne of God sets the agenda.

37 See the note earlier in this chapter from Boecker (1980:24-25) on the superior importance of kingly administration of justice in ancient oriental law.
Thus this speech must have been given its distinctive form in worship, not, as my social reconstruction earlier suggests, in agonistic public confrontations with those who consider the work of Jesus to be over.

In chapters 6 and 7 I will argue that the pattern was shaped in the context of celebration of YHWH’s enthronement. Yet the pattern—killing/exaltation—still is designed to answer the conventional problem of the cross. The crucifixion undeniably must have been automatically associated with shame in the minds of everyone who understood the mores of that society including followers of Jesus.

Further, the killing/exaltation pattern of speech may in fact have been made to fit the form of public agonistic confrontations, after the fact of the identification of the cross with the exaltation of the king. The cultic setting within which Jesus’ death and resurrection was interpreted appears to have provided a structure adequate to public confrontations. But in the mission of proclamation of the cross, the church, in a sense, is on the offensive. The pattern of killing/exaltation in a public agonistic setting thrusts upon audiences a choice. Either give a grant of honor to the claim that Jesus is exalted as messiah or face divine prosecution. Below I suggest a progression which the killing/exaltation pattern of speech might have followed: 38

1) struggle to interpret the death and resurrection of Jesus in a way that avoids the conventional association of crucifixion with shame;

2) understanding of these events according to scripture within a cultic frame of reference; there, as king enthroned at the right hand of YHWH, Jesus is seen as superior to conventional charges associated with condemnation and execution;

3) this scriptural understanding of the meaning of the cross is projected outward for agonistic public confrontation in support of the Christian claim that Jesus the crucified is enthroned as king. If the argument is persuasive it fulfills its aim by bringing the audience to enter the scenario proper to worship. Worship in this context is submission to the word 38

This reading does not attempt any historical reconstruction of the actual social situation which generated the killing/exaltation pattern of speech. Such a task would be difficult because in John 5, events of Jesus’ death and resurrection have already been signified within a mythic setting according to scripture; and they are retrospectively presented in a context of conflict between Jesus and historical opponents. The task of historical reconstruction from statements of kingly trial and exaltation is rendered complex, for the tradition has already been filtered through the prism of the pattern of divine enthronement.

I aim only to propose that these typical social values appear to be reflected in the formulation of epideictic and judicial speech patterns in John 5. However, even this assessment cannot be made with certainty.
of the divine king. In worship it is commanded that Jesus, as the exalted son of God, is to be given the honor proper to one seated at God’s right hand.

The challenge/riposte structure of John 5 does relate to conventional values that interpret Jesus’ execution as his demise in shame. But Jesus’ honor is not defended simply on the level of forensic narration. Ultimately, the honor of God is brought into question. The value of God’s honor cannot be tried adequately within the bounds of a customary forensic setting. As I will argue in chapters 6 and 7 it is defended by recalling the pattern of YHWH’s enthronement.

The controlling influence of a scriptural setting of exaltation does not completely obscure the social dynamic belonging to this speech. In John 5.17-23, the fact that speech concerning the enthronement of the son (5.22-23) was employed in reference to the topos of crucifixion (5.18) does say something about Jesus’ honor. How else might such a motif have come to be employed? What other answer would possibly be adequate to reverse the shame of crucifixion?
Chapter 6

The divine warrior pattern in selected texts as background to interpretation of John 5.17-23

Patterns of significance associated with the divine warrior myth

The value of exploring this pattern as a frame of interpretation for John 5.17-23

John’s distinctive claim of equality with God in John 5.17-23 is attached rhetorically to a challenge to Jesus’ honor and life. Thus, attention must be given, not just to the heavenly dimensions of the claim, but to the structure that juxtaposes the conflict alongside of the response concerning sonship.

One advantage of reading John 5.17-23 in reference to Psalm 2, is that there also we find a comparable dynamic. Raging threats and a claim to be the son of God are juxtaposed. Psalm 2 reflects the pattern of the divine warrior myth, as I will show.

Socio-rhetorical criticism presupposes that speech follows certain patterns which are generated in response to programed social perceptions and situations. ¹ I have assumed that the pattern of speech juxtaposing lethal conflict with enthronement of the son must have already been meaningful within the culture shared by the audience and author/editors of the Fourth Gospel; like all speech patterns it is a socially coded sequence. (See Malina, 1991:3-24.) I see the juxtaposition of lethal threat with exalted speech in John 5 as evidence that the author and audience both understood that events in the life of Jesus had already been interpreted within a socially meaningful code to which both were privy. Interpreters who do not share that social world cannot presume that they already understand the meaning that its patterns held for those for whom it was written.

In chapter 1 I suggested that the claim of the son’s equality with God does not make sense without the support of a mythic frame of reference. Other scholars, notably Bultmann (1925; 1971) and more recently Meeks (1986:143) and Ashton (1991:355) also affirm that

¹ See Robbins (1992b:xix-xxi) and Malina (1991:3-8).
understanding of the Johannine conception requires the background of a myth. In this project also, the search for coherence motivates the proposal that the myth of the divine warrior king makes sense of the pattern of speech in John 5.17-23.

The significance of one piece of a puzzle becomes clear when it is placed in relation to the overall frame within which it belongs. The mythic conception that YHWH is king is reflected in monarchic images of the king as God’s son. The image, in Psalms 2 and 89 of the son who having overpowered threats from enemies is exalted to reign over all, belongs within the larger sequence of the divine warrior myth, an ancient pattern associated with the enthronement of YHWH following his victory over all hostile powers in a primal battle with chaos.

In the context of exploring the root metaphors which underlie Israelite expressions of God, Mettinger (1988:97) remarks that in the light of the ancient myth from which expressions that YHWH is king derives, "We are on the trail of a conceptual deep structure that endows certain Old Testament texts with a surprising internal coherence." In proposing that John 5.17-23 reflects this particular mythic pattern I am guided by the method which John J. Collins (1977) sets out in his interpretation of portions of Daniel in relation to the divine warrior pattern. J. J. Collins (1977:111,115) argues that the ancient traditions shaped by the Canaanite myth act as paradigms to interpret the new situation in terms of another level of meaning that is related to a myth. Often the relationship is apparent "only in its outline and a few key details" (Collins, 1977:113). The relationship between the situation depicted in the text and the pattern of an ancient myth is, in words Collins borrows from Edwin Honig, speech that is allegorical in "quality," like a twice-told tale written in rhetorical, or figurative, language and expressing a vital belief.... The twice-told aspect of the tale indicates that some venerated or proverbial antecedent (old) story has become a pattern for another (the new) story.

As Collins (1977:113-114) observes, "the word pattern is of crucial importance in this definition; for at issue is not" a set of isolated correspondences, but telling a story in a

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2 Their research has focused upon the distinctive ascent/descent schema in John, whereas I seek to understand how the extraordinary claims concerning the son in 5.17-23 can be understood mythically in relation to the threat of execution to which they respond. See the more detailed discussion of Bultmann's thesis in chapter 1 under the major heading "Engagement with Bultmann...."

3 I will establish this assertion in my discussion of Psalm 89 in this chapter.

4 Von Rad (1991:70) says that to look at YHWH and his way of ruling is the method proper to reconstruction of the conceptual world associated with the cult in Israel.

5 J.J. Collins is not to be confused with Adela Yarbro Collins (1976) who, using a similar approach, has interpreted Revelation in reference to the divine warrior myth.

way that "reflects the pattern of a venerated older story," a form of expression that is a typical characteristic of myth. 7

In this chapter I discuss selected texts that reflect the pattern of the divine warrior myth as it was adapted in Israelite expression. These examples are offered simply as background; I do not here argue for their relevance to early Christian speech. It is in chapter 7 that I propose that some of these examples of the divine warrior myth are relevant to interpretation of John 5.17-23, John 11 and 12, and John 1.

In chapter 3 I argued that the exalted speech in 5.17-23 draws upon imagery of divine kingship, based on a comparison with Psalm 2. Nevertheless, I think that a reading which focuses solely upon the royal expression of this speech pattern is superficial. A royal emphasis upon the element of enthronement gives the impression that the status of the enthroned one can be understood in isolation. Rather it is the sequence—first of threat, then victory, and finally as a result of the superiority of the victor in battle, enthronement—that lends a frame of coherence to interpretation of this mythic pattern. Attention only to the superior status of the king fails to give adequate weight to the constitutive role of conflict within the sequence of the pattern. Only as an answer to conflict is enthronement crucial. 8

Only in this context does it express the primary power of this myth.

If the pattern of speech in John 5.17-23 answers the threat of Jesus' public execution by relying upon a fundamental plot of conflict/exaltation, then it taps into a mythic structure that engages the problem of struggle with an enemy. The kingly trappings of the institution of Israelite monarchy, which came to be associated with the divine warrior myth, only reflect one characterization of the myth. I consider the myth’s dynamic of conflict answered by superior power to be the primary meaning that lends coherence to the pattern of speech in John 5.17-23. Thus I do not limit my selection of examples to expressions of the myth which derive from a monarchic setting.

I do not claim that this pattern would have been consciously identified as such by the audience of John. Nor do I attempt to trace historical links between texts attesting YHWH as the divine warrior and texts that were widely known within the diverse culture of first century C.E. Jewish life. 9 My aim is, more simply, to propose a mythic sequence that

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8 The divine warrior myth is alternately called the "conflict myth." See Adela Yarbro Collins (1976).

9 J.J. Collins (1977:102), who argues that Daniel 7 uses imagery from the Ugaritic myth of Baal and Yam, admits that he has "no solid evidence as to how or in what form the traditions represented by the Ugaritic texts were available in the second century B.C." He suggests that the influence may be derived from traditions associated with the royal cult and with old traditions copied by scribes throughout the Hellenistic world.
lends coherence to the speech in John 5.17-23. To establish on historical grounds that this is the link is a further task that lies beyond the scope of this project. 10

I suggest that the divine warrior sequence is adequate to answer the problem of Jesus’ shame in crucifixion. The experience of threat is an integral part of the divine warrior myth. However when the myth applies to YHWH as King in Israelite expression, the element of threat from enemies is domesticated or obscured; but it is still apparent, submerged, in the repeated assertion of YHWH’s power and reign over all forces in creation. (See my discussion of Psalms 29 and 89 below.) The problem posed by conventional association of the crucifixion of Jesus with shame may be the commonplace generating the need for speech of mythic dimensions to express the power of God over all forces that threaten his honor and life.

Early Christian speech uses a pattern of threat/enthronement to express the status of Jesus from the resurrection perspective of his exalted status. Due to this perspective in the early Christian pattern the emphasis is upon enthronement, after the fact of the conflict, not on the conflict itself. Thus the killing/enthronement pattern in early Christian speech is most compatible with the aspect of the myth that associates YHWH’s victory over the adversarial deep with enthronement and kingship. Mettinger (1988:75-154) and P.D.Hanson (1979) both allow for such a use of myth. This emphasis is slightly different from discussions of the myth which emphasize YHWH as a battling deity, or YHWH as warrior, such as those of Hiebert (1992), Von Rad (1991), and A.Y. Collins (1976).

In this chapter I touch briefly upon diverse expressions of the divine warrior myth. Among texts that I discuss Psalms 2 and 69, Zechariah 9-14, and Daniel 7 provide primary sources of early Christian testimony to the rejection and vindication of Jesus. Thus my emphasis upon the mythic structure of these texts serves as a background to analysis of John’s use of testimony “according to scripture” in chapter 7. My selective overview begins with the earliest extant source of the divine warrior myth in the Ugaritic account of the battle between Baal and Yam, and traces the persistence of the myth in texts which will be relevant for my interpretation of John in chapter 7.

Patterns derived from the ancient Baal/Yam myth are inscribed within the league and the enthronement traditions of Israel. Dating back to a time when Canaan and Ugarit shared one culture, the mythic account was deep within Hebrew consciousness. 11 Clay tablets, 10 I do not assume that the Baal and Yam myth as such was known to the authors or audiences of John. The aspects of the divine warrior pattern that I will emphasize are pervasive in Israel’s scriptures quoted in the New Testament. Thus the claim that I am making does not require that I establish a direct connection with the Ugaritic myth.

11 The mythic narrative reflects the language and thought forms of a “cultural continuum” which, during the middle and late Bronze Age, extended between Ugarit in the north through Canaan, which for much of the period of the Patriarchs was dependent on Egypt, through the area of the western delta (Goshen), (Cross, 1973:8-9). Links with the ancient pattern of Canaanite myth are apparent in Hebrew scripture as early as the tradition of the Patriarchal blessing in Genesis 49.24-25 (Mettinger, 1988:50-68). (Similarly Freedman...
uncovered at the ancient Canaanite city of Ugarit, give evidence of a culture which stands in continuum with early Israelite religion. They attest the earliest known source for the divine warrior myth. 12 With the rise of YHWH, the myth was transformed in Israelite religion into an expression of the kingship of YHWH over the forces of chaos and of the enemies of Israel.

Thus I will begin by tracing briefly the background of the divine warrior genre, in these early Canaanite myths, noting particularly the formal elements which appear to have persisted in the structure of Israelite transformation of the myth.

The divine warrior genre derived from Canaanite myth

The pattern associated with the kingship of YHWH relies upon a mythic sequence that is attested in certain of the ancient Canaanite stories concerning Baal, the storm god who was the rising star in the Canaanite pantheon Day (1985:1-18); Otzen (1980:20); Craigie (1983b:67-91); Mettinger (1988:96).13

Though Israelite culture stands in continuity with that of Canaan, only certain elements of the Canaanite myths were appropriated to YHWH; 14 and they were transformed in the process. (See McCurley, 1983.) Similarities with the Egyptian and Babylonian literatures which had been thought to be a source of Hebrew borrowing were, in the light of scholarship following Ras Shamra, seen to be less a direct source for the earliest creation accounts, than evidence of a common intellectual tradition (Day, 1985:12). The links between the religion of Ugarit and that of ancient Israel, its cousin, are much closer. 15

(1987:324-331.)

12 See Mark S. Smith (1990:1-25) on historical aspects of the continuity between the culture and religion of Israel and Canaan.

13 The Baal/Yam accounts and other cycles of Canaanite myth were discovered in 1928 C.E. at Ras Shamra, a mound in northern Syria which concealed the ancient city of Ugarit. The clay tablets, probably used in a cultic setting, include cycles of myths which appear to be the earliest extant source behind the pattern of divine victory and reign which had become inscribed within the Israelite scenario of God as King.

The myths were copied during 1375-1340 B.C.E., but record myths and legends of the Baal cycle which reach back to the third millennium B.C.E.(Dahood, 1965:xviii-xix).

14 The linguistic, cultural and geographical links between the discoveries from Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible has led Michael Coogan (1987:115) to argue that biblical religion is a subset of Israelite religion which in turn is a subset of Canaanite religion.

15 Before the discovery of the Ugaritic texts scholars generally associated the background of the biblical image of creation with Marduk's slaying of the sea dragon Tiamat. In the Babylonian Creation Epic Enuma Elish (Tablet VI), Marduk, having battled the primal sea, Tiamat, creates the universe out of her carcass; this done he receives from the gods a newly constructed temple in which the gods sit at a banquet which celebrates Marduk as king (Cross, 1973:93).

Day maintains that the Babylonian account is a later development. Common elements between the Mar-
The Baal/Yam pattern is clearly seen in the root metaphor of YHWH as the king who sits enthroned upon the waters, but with a significant difference. Cyclical vicissitudes of death and new life are reflected in the Baal myths. These provided the ritual expression of a society oriented around agricultural seasons. In keeping with the seasons of the agricultural year, Baal emerges from deathly battle in the spring to bring fertility to the land, until overwhelmed again, for a time, by the forces of drought and chaos. He is yet to rise again in the proper season. See Kapelrud (1965:65-68); Craigie (1983b:64).

The elements of the Canaanite myth were employed to express the power of YHWH; in this transformation the direction of influence in the cult of Israel was upon the permanence of YHWH's throne. He is the deity who never dies (M.S. Smith, 1990: 163). In its Israelite form, the cyclical reign of Baal was superseded by the established reign of YHWH. Yahweh's throne is secure, his reign supreme over all other powers in the cosmos.

However, three elements of the Canaanite mythic structure appear to have been carried over into the Israelite metaphor of YHWH as King. Mettinger (1988: 96) lists these as:

1) the victory over the forces of chaos;
2) the acclamation of the victor as king;
3) the building of a temple or palace for the king.

I will give a brief account of parts of the myth which appear particularly significant for the pattern of threat--victory--reign, that is of interest in this study. My summary below follows Day's account of the myth and, except where otherwise noted, the material quoted is from his translation (1985:7-9). The account is from the Ugaritic text concerning Baal's defeat of the sea god in CT A 2.I and 2.IV (= KTU 1.2.1 and IV):

Yam the god of the sea is threatened by Kothar-and-Hasis (the craftsperson god) that he will be overcome by magic weapons. In response Yam sends emissaries to El [the high god] and all the assembly of the gods on Mount Ll to demand that Baal be surrendered so that Yam (who is also known as Judge River) might take his gold. When the envoys arrive the gods are sitting at a banquet table. Baal is beside El. The gods are fearful. They lower their heads on their knees, terrified into submission to the demands of Yam's envoys. But they are rebuked by Baal for lowering their heads. After the envoys deliver their message, El is prepared to deliver Baal over to them. Baal is furious at this. He moves as if he will attack the envoys and has to be restrained by the goddesses Anat and Astarte. 16 Though he

duk/Tiamat story and the more ancient account of Anat's vindication of the enemies of Baal, reflect, according to Day, "a common intellectual background" but not direct influence (1985:12).

16 The conclusion of this tablet is too fragmentary to be deciphered (Day, 1985:8).
is restrained at this point he shouts to the council (Gordon, *UH* 137.39ff, cited in Gray, 1957:23):

Lift up, o gods, your heads!
From the top of your princely knees.
Take your ease on your princely thrones.
And I will answer the messengers of the Sea,
Even the witnesses of Judge River...

In the next discernible scene *CTA2.IV (= KTU 1.2.IV)*, Baal and Yam are at war. The battle is in "full flight" and, according to Day's description, "Yam is clearly in the ascendant, for we read that Baal sank under the throne of Prince Yam" (Day, 1985:8; so also Craigie, 1983b:62). But Kothar-and-Hasis intervenes exhorting Baal as follows:

Truly I say to you, O Prince Baal,
I repeat (to you), O Rider of the Clouds:
Now your enemy, Baal,
now your enemy you will smite,
now you will smite your foe.
You will take your everlasting kingdom,
your dominion for ever and ever.

Kothar-and-Hasis fetches two clubs over which incantations have been spoken. The first club is not successful. But the second one is:

The club swooped from Baal's hand,
[like] an eagle from his fingers.
It struck the crown of Prince Yam,
between the eyes of Judge River.
Yam collapsed, he fell to the earth;
his joints quivered
and his form crumpled.
Baal dragged out Yam and put him down,
he made an end of Judge Nahar.

Baal is told to scatter Yam, by Astarte. He does as instructed. Then the declaration: "Yam is indeed dead! Baal shall be king!" The next account which follows concerns the construction of Baal's palace. The building of the palace appears to be a consequence of Baal's having defeated Yam and gained kingship (Day, 1985:9).

In the Canaanite myth, Baal's victory over Yam is the key to his kingship, and the construction of his palace symbolizes the consolidation and ordering of his reign (Craigie, 1983b:88). While Baal is constructing his palace, conflict breaks out again. This time the enemy is Mot (Death). Baal is eventually victorious in this conflict as well. He re-establishes his rule. These motifs underlie the cosmology of the Canaanite religion. The myths provide the pattern to explain the developing origins and permanent establishment of order in the world (Craigie, 1983b:88).
Cross (1973:162-163) treats different descriptions of Baal, from various Northwest Semitic descriptions as a single Gattung, which is summarized by M.S. Smith (1990:49) as:

a) the march of the divine warrior;
b) the convulsing of nature as the divine warrior manifests his power;
c) the return of the divine warrior to his holy mountain to assume divine kingship;
d) the utterance of the divine warrior's voice (thunder) from his palace, which provides the rains to fertilize the earth.

Hanson (1979:302), sets out the most common reconstruction of the elements of the divine warrior "genre" [in his language] from the Baal/Yam conflict as follows:

- Threat (CTA 2.1)
- Combat-victory (CTA 2.4)
- Temple built (CTA 4)
- Manifestation of Baal's universal reign (anticipated: CTA 2.49-10; manifested: CTA 4.7.9-12)
- Theophany of the Divine Warrior (CTA 4.7.27-39)
- Fertility of restored order (anticipated: CTA 4.5.68-71; effected: CTA 4.7.18-30; c.f. CTA 6.3.6-7,12-13).

The formal simplicity of Hanson's analysis of key elements of the myth lends itself to analysis of comparable elements in early Christian patterns of crucifixion/enthronement speech. For this reason I will use the pattern as interpreted by Hanson in my analysis of Israelite and early Christian texts. 17 P.D. Hanson traces the pattern of the ancient myth as it persisted in the conquest tradition of the league and the enthronement tradition associated with the royal cult. He finds that basic elements of the ancient Canaanite myth survived in a recognizable form in various settings in Israel's history, in spite of modifications related to diverse social circumstances and influences.

Exodus 15.13 is a prime example. The event of liberation from slavery which made possible the foundation of a covenant between Israel and God, continues, even in Judaism's worship today to reflect the central theme of God's power over the forces of nature and history in the work of redemption (Craigie, 1983b:88). Yet the forceful theme of the 'Song of the Sea' (Ex.15.1-18) gains its power, by a subtle adaption of Israelite themes to Canaanite mythology (Craigie, 1983b:88). The Hebrew hymn is structured around motifs from the central mythology of Baal: conflict/order/kingship/palace construction. The cosmic dimen-

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17 In the analysis of texts which follows I will identify aspects of the divine warrior myth. The pattern is variously called genre (Hanson, 1979:302), and Gattung (Cross 1973:162-163). I consider Gattung the more accurate term. However, I will use Hanson's term "genre" since my description of texts generally follows his formal analysis. (I also use the terms "pattern," and in less precise contexts, "myth" and "imagery" to refer to elements of the formal structure above, which Hanson identifies in association with the myth.)
sion of conflict is present in the battle between the divine warrior and the sea; but within an
historical context the sea is passive and Pharaoh is cast in the role of enemy of YHWH.

In spite of the transformation of the myth into a focal event of Israel's holy history,
Hanson (1979:301) detects the structural elements of the ritual pattern of the conflict myth,
as follows:

- Combat-victory (Ex.15.1-2)
- Theophany of the Divine Warrior (8)
- Salvation of the Israelites (13-16a)
- Building of the temple and procession (16b-17)
- Manifestation of Yahweh's universal reign (18)

By comparing the Babylonian and Canaanite myths with the use of the pattern in
Hebrew speech, he observes important differences: when Israel adopted the ancient conflict
myth to celebrate faith in YHWH, this injected an historical perspective; though the essen­tial elements of its form remain, the thrust of the genre was adapted to the changing circum­stances related to the situation of Israel (Hanson, 1979:300).

In another early tradition, the skeleton of the Divine Warrior genre, the pattern taken
from the Baal myth is observable within the ancient Song of Deborah (Judges 5.1-31) in
disparate verses, as follows:

- Combat of the Divine Warrior (4a,20)
- Theophany (4b-5)
- Victory (21)
- Salvation of Israel (31) 18

The pattern was influential on Israel's confession of YHWH during the league period,
but as Hanson observes, though the skeleton of the pattern remains, "the flesh of the poem"
is supplied by the historical conflict in which the
drama of the Divine Warrior...pales in significance before the deeds of a daring
woman [Jael] whose heroism is described in realistic detail. Yahweh recedes into the
background; he relies upon human agents (v.23), and the ritual pattern of the conflict
myth seems to be retained as a stylistic device and as a gentle reminder that somehow
Yahweh is active in Israel's historical adventures (Hanson, 1979:303).

Hanson argues weakly that the application of the myth to an historical setting within
the league, as in the example above, has strained the myth to "breaking point" (1979:303).
However, in the discussion of correspondence between mythic and inspired earthly action in
a subsequent section on monarchical Psalms, I will suggest another possibility. If we read the
experience of Israel here recorded in reference to the pattern of the myth, then it is possible

18 From Hanson's analysis (1979:303).
to see that the myth was understood as a paradigm for divinely inspired action in Israel. In speech attesting the victory of those who are inspired by YHWH the myth can be seen to underlie a narrative development of the pattern of YHWH’s victory over the hostile forces of chaos reflected in a particular account of Israel victorious over her enemies.

Enthronement an expression of superior power: Psalm 29 as an example

In this section I will describe a perspective that distinguishes Israelite use of the myth to describe YHWH from the Baal-Yam conflict. Though the Canaanite pattern is employed in Israelite expressions of the power of YHWH, Israelite use of the pattern reflects a significant difference. YHWH is the deity who never dies. He is inviolable. His power to assert superiority over all foes is assured. His throne is secure.

Use of the myth in Israelite religion reflects faith in the enduring power of YHWH. When YHWH becomes the high God, the pattern of Baal’s victory over Yam is transformed. In reference to YHWH the myth effects a display of sovereignty by declaring that the raging sea is no threat to the One who is mightier even than death itself. For example, in Psalm 93 the declaration of the kingship and throne of YHWH, more mighty than the roaring of the waters (95.3-4), contains an echo of the myth, but here the victory over the waters is ascribed to YHWH. (See McCurley, 1983.)

The kingship of Baal, now ascribed to Yahweh, reflects, in part, a polemic against the cult of Baal which was in competition with Yahweh (Curtis, 1978:251,256; Day, 1985:27). But more than that, the Psalms concerning the enthronement of YHWH above the waters relate the enduring expression of the faith of the Israelites. YHWH is in control, not bound by natural phenomena. The divine warrior myth states this conviction in the conventional language and imagery of cosmic reality in that culture (Zevit, 1986:61).

Psalm 29 dramatizes elements of the divine warrior pattern by describing a thunderstorm to evoke praise for God who shakes creation to its foundations (Craigie, 1983b:69).

19 As well as the factor of polemic against the worship of Baal, the Psalmists and prophets were culturally indebted to the literary tradition which had long been resident in Canaan (Dahood, 1965, xxix). Dahood’s study of the Psalms in light of the Ugaritic texts finds that words, images and parallelism in, for example Psalms 110 and 2, are reported in the Bronze-Age Canaanite texts (Dahood, 1965:xxix). In the Canaanite myth the role of the ‘foe’ in the guise of Mot (Death) deals with the preoccupation with death. The Canaanite name (a’lyn b ‘f) Baal the victor, is reflected in the biblical participle from this root, which is YHWH’s title in Pss.22.30; 27.13; 75.7; 87.7 (Dahood,1965:xxxi). Dahood also identifies a Ugaritic name for Baal with the appellative ‘Most High’ in Pss.7.11; 18.42; 62.8 and elsewhere (1965:xxxvi). The figures of Mot Leviathan were, for the biblical poets the mythic figures which peopled their world. In Hebrew mot means “death.” Yam translates “sea.” By presenting these powerful mythic associations under the power of the throne of the divine warrior, the biblical writers transformed the myths in a way that set off the omnipotence of YHWH. (See Dahood, 1965:xxxv.)
Images of creation by the divine word resonate with this Psalm. "The voice of the Lord" in creation causes worshipers in his temple to say "Glory!" YHWH sits enthroned over the flood, enthroned as king forever, from whence he blesses his people with peace (Psalm 29.7-11). The Psalm is so close to Canaanite speech that it has variously been identified as a Canaanite hymn which somehow found its way into the Psalter, or which was transformed or used in polemic against Baal by worshipers of YHWH (Craigie, 1983b:70).  

In Psalm 29 Israelite use of the divine warrior pattern emphasizes the enthroned status of YHWH and the security of his reign over all things. Despite this emphasis, it should not be forgotten that within the structure of the myth, enthronement is understood as a result of YHWH’s victorious power over the deep and over all things. On the basis of this victory (which implies conflict) his throne is secure.

The italics below indicate Hanson’s (1979:305) identification of the elements of the divine warrior myth that are found in Psalm 29:

1 Give to Yahweh children of El.
Give to Yahweh a mark of honour and power.
2 Give to Yahweh the honour of his name:
Bow down to Yahweh at (his) holy appearance.

_Combat versus the waters-victory 3-9a_

3 The voice of Yahweh is over the waters:
The glory of El thunders:
Yahweh over the vast waters.
4 The voice of Yahweh is in strength:
The voice of Yahweh is in grandeur....
8 The voice of Yahweh makes fields tremble:
Yahweh makes the wilderness of Kadesh tremble.
9 The voice of Yahweh brings to labour the does of fallow deer:
And he brings kids to premature birth.

_Victory shout 9b_

In his temple everyone is saying
"Glory."

_Manifestation of YHWH’s universal reign 10_

10 Yahweh sat enthroned before the flood:
Yahweh has been king for ages.

_Shalom (abundance) of the restored order 11_

11 Yahweh will give his people strength:

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20 The translation of the Masoretic text of Psalm 29 by Margaret Eaton, tutor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Otago, preserves the references to El. The NRSV translates "God" for "El" in verse three, and "heavenly being," a reference to the divine council, instead of "children of El" in verse 1.
Yahweh will bless his people in peace.

In the Israelite account of creation the enthronement of YHWH signals victory over a primal foe. Perhaps due to Israelite emphasis upon the sovereignty of YHWH as supreme, unrivaled by other gods, the account begins with a statement responding to YHWH's acknowledged superiority (29.1-2). Thus the superior status of YHWH is never in question from the start. The account of an actual battle in which YHWH engages forces that pose a threat is submerged in imagery depicting the power of YHWH's voice over the sea and forests and creatures of the earth. This pattern in the Hebrew transformation of the myth suggests that nothing poses a threat to the Divine King.

The motif of creation presupposes the enthronement of YHWH. The job of the monarch to maintain order by force of arms was legitimated after the pattern of the Great King: God maintains the order he has won by setting a boundary to the sea, creating the great lights, the sun and moon, dividing day from night (Genesis 1). All are actions which reinforce the primal victory over the deep. (See Day, 1985:23.) The work of creation demonstrates the reign of God in the earth. The victory over chaos, expressed in the power of God's voice in creation, is the event establishing YHWH's superiority upon which the supreme throne of God rests.

In the transformation of the myths associated with victory over the deep within the Psalms, the enthronement of YHWH occurs prior to the creation of the world. Day points out that creation is nowhere mentioned in the extant cycle of Baal myths. He suggests that it is a theme which derives from an earlier battle of Anat and Baal against various other gods associated with the sea. In some of the Psalms the pattern of the Ugaritic myths is set alongside the later influence of the similar Babylonian myth in which Marduk slays Tiamat and the world is created from her carcass.

21 The speech acknowledging the honor due to YHWH which introduces Psalm 29 above appears to allude to his enthroned status which is explicitly acknowledged in verse 10.

22 The most ancient allusion to this battle occurs in the Ugaritic texts which refer, though not in detail, to a conflict between Baal and his sister, the goddess Anat, against Leviathan, Yam, Ars (El's calf) and others who are alluded to but unnamed. (See Day, 1985:13-14.) Reference to a battle in which Baal defeated a dragon named Leviathan occurs in CTA 5.I.1-3 (= KTU 1.5.I.1-3).

23 Day argues that the allusion to Leviathan as the "crooked serpent" identifies him as the monster in the Ugaritic myths. Anat, sister of Baal, claims to have destroyed him in a battle that precedes Baal's battle with Yam. Though in the extant text Anat only alludes to this primordial battle as she recites the tale of her conquests (CTA 3.IID. 34-IV.47 = KTU 1.3.III.37-IV.3). Day thinks that this earlier battle may be connected with the Canaanite explanation of the creation of the world (1985:13-14). He makes a convincing case that these Canaanite texts allude to a primordial story of the creation of the world which is the source of the biblical image in which creation is associated with YHWH's defeat of the great monsters of the deep.

24 The Babylonian cultic liturgy the Enuma Elish had a clear influence upon Israel no later than the Exile, and both Babylonian and Egyptian texts are still important for comparative studies. However, the Canaanite texts from Ugarit are far more closely related to the language, culture and geography of the traditions of Hebrew scripture. See M.S. Smith (1990:xix-xxvii); Coogan (1987:115); Craigie (1983b:45,88-89);
The threat of the waters minimized in Israelite transformation of the myth

Typically biblical transformations of the Baal/Yam battle are used to show the superior power and firm supremacy of YHWH over the adversarial force of the deep. The Psalms concerning the enthronement of YHWH above the waters express the faith of the Israelites that YHWH is in control. See Day (1985:24); Johnson (1955:58). In the Israelite conception of the cosmos as a place that is generally orderly due to the supremacy of YHWH as king, the victory of YHWH in the battle with the waters is not in question. In Psalms 93.1-2 and 29.10 Yahweh is in no way threatened. His throne has been established from of old.

YHWH is exalted above any real threat. Humans who inevitably experience insecurity, vulnerability, and the prospect of death, are unlikely to be able to identify with this image of YHWH, at least not directly. The human experience of threat can more easily resonate with the role of Baal in the Canaanite myth. Baal’s enemy has the upper hand. Thus the Canaanite myth communicates the sense of profound threat that the waters hold. The image of drowning echoes the terrifying scene in which Baal is overcome in battle and sinks under the throne of Prince Yam (CTA2.IV = KTU 1.2.IV). When Baal and Yam are at war, at one point (in CTA2.IV) Yam appears to be winning because Baal sinks under the throne of Prince Yam (Day, 1985:8).

Not so YHWH. In the scriptural echoes of the myth, the throne of YHWH is inviolable. The battle is alluded to as a victory which has already been accomplished. YHWH is stronger than all forces of the deep.25

But in Psalm 69 we see a human being sinking. Is the human being who is so vulnerable also reminiscent of Baal’s vulnerability in one part of the mythic battle?

A challenge/riposte dynamic can be seen in the Ugaritic myth.

**Claim**
Kothar-and-Hasis threaten Yam that he will be destroyed by magic weapons.

**Challenge**
Yam intrudes on the divine council’s banquet and demands that Baal be handed over.

**Public verdict**
Of the gods at the banquet, with the exception of Baal: the gods lower their heads in fear and submission. El is prepared to hand Baal over. (This spells a defeat and loss of honor for El’s pantheon.)


25 Unlike deities known to the Ugaritic pantheon, YHWH never dies; the roles of death and sex were absent from the biblical record of YHWH’s actions as well as from extrabiblical Jewish literature according to M.S. Smith (1990:164-165).
Counter challenge  Of Baal: Defiance. He initiates hostilities against Yam. And rebukes the council of gods, "Lift up your heads!" 26

In the next round the struggle continues:

Challenge  Yam gains the ascendancy over Baal as Baal sinks under his throne.

Riposte  Baal, with the aid of a magic club lethally strikes Yam in the head.

Public verdict  "Yam is indeed dead! Baal shall be king!"

The Hebrew version of the myth contrasts with the scene above. YHWH is never pictured under the throne of Yam. By definition, YHWH is supreme. As Divine Warrior he is not threatened in battle. The divine kingship of YHWH is unshakable. His ascendancy is assured. The throne of Yahweh has already been established (from of old in Ps.93.2). Thus in Hebrew transformation allusions to the sea routinely reflect the superior power and firm supremacy of YHWH over the adversarial force of the deep.

Because YHWH is enthroned, inviolable, it would not fit within Israelite theology to picture God actually threatened in struggle with the forces of the deep. Unlike the reversible Baal who can sink under the throne of Yam and yet come out victorious, the fact that YHWH is already enthroned precludes such instability.

But, as I will show in the discussion of Psalm 69 below, which incidentally was a primary source of testimony concerning the crucifixion of Jesus, Israelite use of imagery from the pattern does allow a place for a human being to be pictured, metaphorically, almost under the throne of Yam—yet with a difference—because YHWH is stronger than the waters, the threat of death can be endured in hope.

Images of human suffering in Psalm 69 in light of the divine warrior pattern

Psalm 69 is not an example of the divine warrior genre. However it clearly makes use of imagery from the part of the myth concerning the threat of the waters. (See Dahood, 1968:160.) The waters are identified with enemies. 27

26 Cross sees an echo of the defiant response of Baal in the exhortation to welcome the true king: "Lift up your heads O ye gates"; arguing that the gate towers of the city of Jerusalem have been personified as the divine council after the pattern of the myth (1973:98).

27 Similarly, in the divine warrior pattern in Judges 5, Exodus 15 and Psalm 89, YHWH's victory over the waters is likened to his victory over enemies.
Psalm 69 begins with the image of a person who is drowning in deep and troubled waters (69.1-3). The waters stand for enemies and the shame they bring, as can be seen when the images are combined in verses 13b-15.

In spite of the most demoralizing rejection and ridicule, the sufferer anticipates deliverance (69.16-18, 29-33) from the judgment of the enemies who are the agents of his trial (69:19-28).

The image of drowning in the Psalm comes from a pattern that was widely understood in Hebrew tradition. In it the lethal threat of the chaotic sea is overcome by the power of YHWH. It is a recurring pattern in Israelite tradition which belongs to the victory of God over all the powers of the deep, and the enthronement of YHWH as ruler of all creation. Thus the suffering in Psalm 69 borrows imagery from the battle of YHWH with the waters. In spite of the intense anguish which is prominent in the imagery of this Psalm, it ends on a note of hope in 69.30-36. I suggest that the imagery of the threatening waters evokes the tacit significance of the whole divine warrior pattern. Victory over the adversarial deep is the subtext that is taken for granted. Thus the one who is drowning can rely upon YHWH, One who has already asserted superiority over all enemies, whose victory over chaos is already sure. Against the already understood pattern of the myth one can hope to be delivered.

The one who suffers shame and dishonor because of zeal for YHWH is, from the outset of Psalm 69, presented as one who is drowning in the clutches of the deep. The waters are explicitly identified with enemies who bring shame upon the one who suffers (69.13-15).

A single image from a sequence of images in a familiar pattern can set off a whole sequence of associations. The phrase "alarm clock" has a place in an early morning part of

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28 The threat of the waters is a threat to the Psalmist's life nepēṣ (69.2). Dahood identifies the enemy as Death based on parallelism with mire, bottomless waters, the vortex of the sea, the depth, the pit (69.14.15). He notes that all of these are poetic terms for the underworld (Dahood, 1968:160).

29 Dahood likens 69.16 "Let not the vortex of the sea engulf me, or the abyss swallow me, or the Pit close its mouth over me" with "the jaws of the deep" in Ps. 68.23 where the Lord says "I stifled the Serpent, muzzled the Deep Sea" in its wider context, 68.22 "God smote the heads of his foes, split their skulls as he marched forth from his heavens" (Dahood, 1968:131).

30 Based on style and syntactic traits, Dahood (1968) sees no reason to attribute verse 36-37 to a later hand. He identifies the Psalmist as a member of the Jewish community in exile.
the pattern associated with my daily routine. Similarly the mention of "waters"; people who knew the pattern of YHWH's victory and reign would be able to read the image of "waters up to my neck" as the scene of threat that precedes deliverance. In the midst of threat, the pattern of YHWH's assured victory over the deep provided a pattern for trust in the one stronger than the waters. YHWH has already been proven to be more powerful than the chaotic sea. This does not need to be stated for the pattern to be understood.

Knowing this, the one who is drowning calls upon YHWH for deliverance. YHWH is in a position of security, enthroned, having already defeated the forces of the deep from of old. This knowledge is the source of the Psalmist's confidence. Assuming that the mythic pattern was already understood within that culture, the imagery in Psalm 69 provides a way of dealing with the problem of suffering because the experience of shame and rejection is undergirded by the meaning of the myth that within that culture was already understood as an explanation of primal conflict.

YHWH is not threatened. In the before and after sequence of the myth it is already understood that the chaotic threat of enemies has been overcome, for God's victory and throne is secure. The part of the pattern concerning the threat unto death is played out by the vulnerable human who trusts in YHWH for deliverance.

Interpretation of human action through sequences of significance

The programmatic role of patterns in a cultural scenario

Temporal sequence within a speech pattern generally relates to the social environment from which it springs; it is possible to think programmatically about the beginning, middle and end of a social environment, analysis of community rituals is a natural place to begin thinking programmatically about the temporal sequence of speech belonging to a particular social environment (Robbins, 1992b:xix).

Take a normal weekday routine, for example. On Tuesday I wake up, eat breakfast, go to work, return home, relax, retire and then after a good night's sleep am ready to face another week day, which follows a pattern basically similar to my routine the day before; it is also typical and therefore familiar to most people in my culture who either follow such a routine themselves or recognize it as a very predictable pattern to which they can relate. They know that within this type of day, work comes first, relaxing in front of the T.V. only
fits as a reward at the end of the day. Just like a narrative, the pattern has a beginning, middle and end. Everyone knows that lunch is near the middle and bedtime is at the end. In Spring, waking to birdsong is an added attraction. Not necessary to the pattern, it is, nevertheless, easily understandable within it, where it is naturally placed at the beginning.

Malina (1991:14-15) characterizes what happens in hearing or reading in terms of, what he calls, a "scenario" model. The focus is not upon the words themselves but upon the meanings they evoke. The scenario model considers that "the text sets forth a succession of explicit and implicit representations of scenes or schemes" (Malina, 1991;15). In the mind of the reader, these evoke corresponding scenes. For example when I mention "alarm clock," you may recall a whole sequence of culturally acquired associations.

Associations evoked by the text stimulate the reader/hearer to call to mind an appropriate "scenario." It is this already understood frame of meanings, such as my cultural association with "alarm clock" that provides the larger frame of reference for the text. The text gives specific cues, for example "the alarm clock is broken," that direct or redirect the meanings already associated with the cultural scenario with which it is associated.31 Were I reading a text about someone else's daily routine, I would be able to anticipate the temporal sequence and mood associated with events such as "coffee break" or "traffic jam" or "setting the alarm clock" by analogy with what was typical in the patterns that developed from the work-day routine which was part of my cultural experience.

My cultural patterning of reality creates the "script" which allows me to "read between the lines" of what is actually written down in the text. I already understand the script--industrialized capitalist economy in which people are expected to have a job (if lucky), the work ethic, the pressing need to pay the mortgage, the pressure of accountability to boss, spouse, children--all are cultural expectations. Conventional social messages are encoded in reference to the pattern, like the fact that the male is expected to "have a job," and that women with children must put being a "good mother" first. Such conventional expectations associated with scenes relating to daily routine, may be culturally understood without needing to be explicitly stated in a text about a daily routine.

I understand these cultural cues already. Thus when I read about someone else's day, it makes sense according to the pattern I know by heart. In fact, what I know about the pat-

31 Malina supports this model of reading from experimental psychology, quoting the remark of Meyer and Rice (1984:327) that the linguist Dijik (1977)

suggests appealing to the topic of discourse as organized in a "frame" to describe certain macrostructural attributes. For example, a text about war will derive some of its organization from a war "frame," in which is represented component states and the necessary or probable conditions and consequences of wars in general.

tern fills in the gaps in the text and provides a framework of meaning within which its words already have a place.

The root metaphor of YHWH as king is framed within a mythic conception. It has a beginning, a middle and an end.

An example of correspondence: mythic action reflected in a battle in Israel

To see human experience in line with a divine pattern is a feature of some very ancient examples of Hebrew thought, as I will show below. It is also a way of picturing reality that underlies apocalyptic imagery. Human action corresponds to heavenly reality; divine cosmic action is linked to earthly reality by a rationale of "correspondence" (Ashton, 1991:401).

In the context of a discussion of the relation of the "above/below" schema of the Fourth Gospel to apocalyptic perspectives, John Ashton summarizes this way of viewing reality with the following rationale: the natural world corresponds to the spiritual, both in general and in particular; anything that comes into existence from the spiritual world remains in correspondence with it (Ashton, 1991:401). The likeness between the reality above and that on earth is characterized as a correspondence of connection between levels of reality: "As it is on high, so also is it on earth; what happens in the vault of heaven happens similarly here on earth" (Ashton, 1991:402).

Ashton takes issue with the term "dualism," arguing that in perceiving reality in this way, there is but one world, or rather the whole of reality is split into matching pairs (rather like the biology theory of DNA) in which one half, the lower, is the mirror-image (albeit in this case a distorting mirror) of the higher. That is why a revelation of what is above is not just relevant.... Rather what happens on earth is a re-enactment in earthly terms of what has happened in heaven: a correspondence! (Ashton, 1991:403).

Judges 5 is an account of the rival kings who battle Deborah and Barak, the leaders of the forces of YHWH the King of Israel. Judges 5.19-20 depicts a link between the cosmic order and the outcome of the battle:

The kings came, they fought


33 The quotation is from the translation of Enoch 7.10 by J.M.T. Barton.
they fought the kings of Canaan,  
at Taanach, by the waters of Megiddo;  
they got no spoils of silver.  
From heaven fought the stars,  
from their courses they fought against Sisera.  

Within this early example of Hebrew poetry, Ashton (1991:403,n.34) sees evidence  
that correspondence between cosmic action and Israel's battle was assumed.  

The victory secured by Jael with tent peg in hand could also be interpreted in light of  
correspondence with the mythic pattern of Baal’s club aimed at the temple of Yam, alias  
Judge River. Compare Baal’s fight with Jael’s death blow.  

The club swooped from Baal’s hand,  
[like] an eagle from his fingers.  
It struck the crown of Prince Yam,  
between the eyes of Judge River,  
Yam collapsed, he fell to the earth;  
his joints quivered  
and his form crumpled.  
Baal dragged out Yam and put him down,  
he made an end of Judge Nahar.  
(From CTA2.IV = KTU 1.2.IV, quoted from the translation of Day, 1985:8-9.)  

She struck Sisera a blow.  
She crushed his head.  
She shattered and pierced his temple.  
He sank, he fell.  
He lay still at her feet;  
at her feet he sank, he fell  
where he sank, there he fell dead.  
....  
So perish all your enemies, O Lord!  
(Judges 5.26-27, 31)  

M.S. Smith (1990:61-64) observes divine warrior imagery in this text. Jael’s actions  
are expressed in a way that evokes the pattern of the myth. The similar pattern suggests to  
me that in speech reflecting the divine warrior pattern, human action may be portrayed in a  
way that represents a corresponding pattern. When this occurs a human action is inter­  
preted through tacit association with the mythic pattern of divine action.
Evidence of correspondence between the divine warrior pattern and YHWH's king in selected Psalms

Correspondence between earthly and heavenly enthronement in Psalm 2

The presence of the divine warrior pattern in the monarchical Psalms gives evidence of the phenomenon described by form critics as the persistence of a literary type by transition into a new setting in life (Koch, 1969:35). Adaptation to the monarchic setting allowed the myth to be preserved within the framework of the Davidic royal ideology (Hanson, 1979:304). The conflict myth, a synonym for the divine warrior genre, can be seen to take on institutional trappings when it appears within the ritual associated with the Jerusalem cult (Hanson, 1979:303). Zion became the sacred mountain, the Davidic king the son of the high god, and "both were established parts of the static order of myth" (Hanson, 1979:304). Within the institutional framework of the monarchy, the ritual pattern became the vehicle of the ideology of the Jerusalem cult.

For example, observe Hanson's assessment of the divine warrior pattern inscribed within Psalm 2:

1-3 Threat: Conspiring of the nations
4-5 Combat--victory over enemy
8-11b Manifestation of universal reign of Messiah
11c Victory shout

Hanson (1979:305-307) identifies the pattern of the conflict myth associated with the divine warrior in the following seventeen Psalms, many of which concern the exaltation of YHWH as King: Pss.9;24;29;46;47;48;65;68; 76;77.17-21;89b;97;98;104;106.9-13;110.35 The "ubiquity and regularity" of the pattern within the Psalms is sufficient evidence, he argues, that the ritual pattern associated with the divine warrior, that had served the Mesopotamian and Canaanite royal cults for over a millennium, became a useful vehicle for the royal ideology of the Jerusalem cult as well (Hanson, 1979:308). It is clear that the divine warrior pattern was significant within the liturgy of the Psalms used during the monarchy. 36

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34 The chart above reproduces Hanson's (1979:305) analysis.

35 Elements of the pattern may appear in various literary sequences, while yet remaining within the identifiable pattern of the Divine Warrior genre. A.Y. Collins (1976:207-209) states this as a methodological principle appropriate to analysis of the divine warrior pattern. It is borne out in Hanson's analyses of the Psalms above; these reflect diverse configurations of the divine warrior pattern.

36 This fact is clear, quite apart from debate concerning the extent to which the liturgical pattern related to dramatic reenactment of the myth. Some consider that Israel acted out YHWH's victory over enemies in an annual festival ritual that in some ways paralleled the Babylonian New Year festival, but the
As I will show it is possible to discern in several of these Psalms a regular pattern of correspondence between the divine warrior pattern and the action of the earthly king. In Psalms 2 and 89 the image of enthronement over the waters is reflected in the image of the victory of the earthly king over enemies.

Psalms 2 appears to be designed for ritual legitimation of Israel's monarch. Within this institutional context the divine warrior pattern effects a kind of correspondence which declares the earthly king and his reign to be an extension of the divine throne. See Hanson (1979:304-309); McCurley (1974); Dahood (1965:8); Mettinger (1988:98,99).

The mythic pattern shapes the underlying structure of the royal response to threats against YHWH's anointed king (Hanson, 1979:305). "In this royal drama," notes Weren, "we are dealing with a conflict between the earth (Ps.2.2,10) and heaven (Ps.2.4); each part of the Psalm contains verbs expressing the destruction of the adversary (Weren, 1989:193). Psalm 2 reflects the pattern of two parties in conflict, God and his son the king versus the peoples rulers and kings who conspire against them. Dahood notes the similarity between Psalm 2.1-4 and the speech of the Baal myth: "What foe has risen up against Baal, what adversary against the Mounter of the Clouds?" (UT, 'nt:iv:48; cited in Dahood, 1965:8; = CTA 3.IIID. 34 = KTU 1.3.III.37).

According to the script already provided by the myth, the king answers the threats of enemies by declaration of the superior power and status of YHWH, the Enthroned One. The victorious, superior power already established in YHWH's enthronement has been ascribed to the human king as the legally adopted "son" of God. (See Dahood, 1965:8-11.) The divine warrior genre underlies the formula of coronation. Thus the structure of the extent of influence or ritual similarity is disputed. For a general overview of this debate see Eaton (1986:1-26), and much more briefly, Whitelam (1992:43-44) and Gerstenberger (1988:7).

In the Psalms the enemy was the gentile, the foreigner, who allied against Israel to inflict harm, to invade, to oppress, and kill (Hobbs and Jackson, 1991:23). "Enmity laces" the Psalms, comment T.R. Hobbs and P.K. Jackson (1991:21-23). They cite the work of Birkeland, who by studying the recurrence of these patterns, found that a stylized description of the enemy transcended individual Psalm forms and the specific circumstances of the poet and relied upon a "structure of meaning" which was widespread in Mideastern society (H. Birkeland, The Evildoers in the Book of Psalms (Oslo:Dybwad) 1955). Building upon the thought of Birkeland, Hobbs and Jackson (1991:23) maintain that social patterning is what gives rise to "the stereotyped monotony" of the descriptions of the enemy. The enemy image, according to Hobbs and Jackson (1991:26-27), represents the language of propaganda; having a narrow group orientation, it seeks to enhance a sense of belonging in the target group and to strengthen symbolic limits.

Its function, in the Psalms, is to raise conflict between groups to a cosmic level, as absolute moral opposites, to increase politically the sense of threat to the group thus mobilizing its resources to meet the threat, and to dehumanize the enemy as deserving of death and destruction (Hobbs and Jackson, 1991:27). The characterization of the aggressor who conspires and plots is part of the enemy image which, Hobbs and Jackson (1991:24-27) find, is transferred from the Psalms to become part of the foundational structure of the literature which delineates the boundaries of Christian community and identity. The Psalmic image is carried over into the New Testament where it is employed as the symbol of the alien aggressor, the desecrator, characteristically symbolized with the stereotype of a predatory animal and deviant imagery.
myth provides an acknowledged place within the royal liturgy for dealing with the reality of
the threat of enemies.

The divine warrior pattern was reflected by the role of the king in the cult. Thus
through the king, acting in the role of YHWH, the mythic pattern provided a way to deal
cultically with the experience of threats posed by flesh and blood enemies. In the frame of
reference of the myth, the adversaries of YHWH are doomed for YHWH is victorious,
enthroned over all. In reference to the monarchy this pattern is played out by dramatizing
the conflict between the earthly king and his enemies. Enemies of the one who has been
enthroned as the son of YHWH are forced to submit to the judgment of the reigning king.

Dahood (1965:6) translates Psalm 2.4, "The Enthroned laughs down from heaven." Those who threaten the son of YHWH, are set up to experience the same derision as the
bested adversaries of YHWH.

If the whole mythic sequence is already tacitly understood, then the "enemy" of the
king is associated with the enemy of YHWH the Divine King. The worshiper relates the
earthly pattern to the mythic one. Thus the sequence of the myth spans two levels: the
earthly is a type of the heavenly king. The hearers' understanding of the mythic sequence
recalls the enthronement of the Divine King. It provides a frame of meaning that signifies
the king's superiority over all foes.

In reference to the myth, the "enemy of the king" is read in tacit association with the
primal threat of chaos. The raging sea was overcome to assert that YHWH exercises
dominion over all things. His throne is secure. From a position of superiority he enforces a
rule of order over all things. The divine warrior pattern bequeathed to the monarchy, in
the language of throne and judgment, a literary expression adequate to deal with the reality
of conflict (Hanson, 1979:304). The status and role of the king is to be understood thus,
according to the pattern of the conflict myth.

Eaton (1986:108) notes that the triumph underlying YHWH's exaltation as cosmic
king assumes various forms: he masters the waters in Pss.29;93;and 89; he destroys
Pharaoh (Ex.15; Ps.114); he conquers Canaan and makes Jerusalem his sanctuary in Ex.15
and Pss.47;132;76;78. The ritual pattern of world domination by virtue of kingly sonship to
YHWH the Divine Warrior King, derives from the prototype of YHWH's reign. Thus the
mythic action of YHWH is the basis for the cultic role which the king is bound to fulfill.

Some scholars interpret evidence of the cultic use of the pattern of YHWH's
enthronement as indication that Israel acted out the divine warrior myth in ceremonies
related to kingship. In the Babylonian rite the king acted the part of the god and in ritual
battle overpowered the forces of chaos. In these cultic dramas the Babylonian king, who
was also the high priest, ritually performed the symbolic defeat of the evil powers. This was
followed by the sacred marriage rite which secured fertility and well being for the coming
year (Gerstenberger, 1988:6). Some scholars interpret ritual action in the Psalms as a
reflection of New Year's rites, comparable to the Babylonian cultic practices; others deny that the royal ideology of the Ancient Near Eastern neighbors of Israel had any all-pervading influence.  

Eaton argues that even if nothing from the foreign worship is read into Israelite worship, the Psalms are illumined by reference to the extant literary evidence of the royal ritual employed by Israel's ancient Near Eastern neighbors (1986:105). The background of other ritual does, says Eaton, "help us to see how a god's kingship and epiphany, his triumph over waters and other foes, his creating, judging, saving and providing could form a pattern and supply content to the principal annual festival of a kingdom" (1986:105-106). The wealth of textual and iconographic documentation on the cultic dimension of kingship which has survived from ancient Near Eastern culture reveals many formal similarities with the use of the divine warrior genre in the Psalms.  

Johnson's (1955) work is notable for the attempt at reconstruction of a possible relationship between liturgies within the Psalms that express the divine warrior pattern and their cultic functions. The pattern of the primal battle, in ritual and in real life, was represented in the person of the king; Johnson presents his enthronement after a type of YHWH's victory over the forces of the deep. From the speech of enthronement Psalms, Johnson reconstructs a festival that dramatizes the mythic pattern by celebrating YHWH's triumph over chaos and enthronement (see Johnson, 1955:85-87). In the festival drama the enemies of YHWH, darkness and death, are represented as the kings of the earth who launch an attack upon Jerusalem (Johnson, 1955:81; see also Eaton's summary, 1986:109). One way that YHWH's supremacy was dramatized in the festival may have been in a ritual demonstration of the routing of all of the kings of the earth as they are imagined to converge against Jerusalem, as in Psalms 48;46;78 (Eaton, 1986:108-109). Psalm 2.1-2 can be read in reference to a similar scenario.  

Because this drama was projected on an earthly plane, Johnson reasoned that it would involve the Davidic king in Jerusalem; thus he expounded Psalms 89;18;118;2 and 110 as belonging to a ritual drama in which the king is seen as leader of YHWH's forces against hostile kings; he at first succumbs (representing a trial of his faith in YHWH) but is rescued by YHWH and reinstalled in glory (Eaton, 1986:110). Johnson's work is built on the generalization of Mowinckel (1962:60-1) that the king was a representative of YHWH to the people; and that he is also the "corporate representative" through whom the people approach to partake of blessing from YHWH; he stands at the dramatic heart of the festival "the power and blessing he there obtains" radiates as vital force and blessing to the people.

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38 For an overview of this scholarly debate see Ollenburger (1987:24-28); Gerstenberger (1988:7) and Whitelam (1992:44).

39 See Gerstenberger (1988:2-22) and Whitelam (1992:43) for a brief overview of this literature.
The divine warrior pattern interpreted in relation to the royal cult

Based on his sociological approach to the Psalms, Gerstenberger (1988:19) disagrees with singling out Royal Psalms as a unique genre which focus upon the king as a special person. To do this, he says, assumes, as did Mowinckel, that the state cult is of primary importance and that popular worship derives from royal ritual. Rather, he thinks that the reverse is the case: the ritual of kings is an adaptation of the prayer ritual of commoners and small groups.

In line with Gerstenberger, it seems reasonable to me that the kingly appropriation of the cultic pattern may have been built upon an understanding of YHWH’s triumph over chaos that was a part of the experience and explanation of ordinary people.

My interpretation of Psalm 69 earlier in this chapter concluded on a similar note; it suggested that the pattern of the divine warrior myth provided a way of facing conflict with enemies even for persons with no royal status. Though the divine warrior pattern is not explicit in Psalm 69, reliance upon the victory of YHWH as the next step in the sequence of the myth, makes it possible to endure suffering and to resist the slander of enemies in hope. Because the Psalmist hopes in YHWH he anticipates deliverance (Psalm 69.13-15,18,35) by the One who is more powerful than many waters (69.34). The hope only makes sense in reference to the pattern of threat-conflict-victory. Anticipation of the pattern of God’s action gives one who suffers the understanding that a riposte by YHWH will gain the upper hand.

Psalm 69 is not overtly a representation of a suffering king. The sufferer could be any rejected person who can identify with the expectation that YHWH is more powerful than the waters, able to deliver from any enemy. Thus the threat of the waters (enemies) can be resisted by the superior power of the One able to deliver all whose well-being is under threat. YHWH’s victory over the deep represents a pervasive pattern within the Psalms. But, as my discussion of Psalm 89 will argue the ideal of kingship had a representative and symbolic role in relation to this mythic pattern; the cultic action of the king was a focus for earthly correspondence with the victory already accomplished by YHWH. 40

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Ollenburger (1987:64-65) emphasizes the distance between Psalms of Zion, which emphasize the kingship of God alone and the inability of enemies to threaten YHWH in contrast to Psalms of the Davidic covenant that focus on issues of succession and legitimation and allow that the earthly king does experience threats from his foes. He argues that Davidic royal ideology used the unassailability of YHWH to service the interests of succession and legitimation of the Davidic king.
The king portrayed after the pattern of the divine warrior in Psalm 89

I have argued, earlier in this chapter, that expectation of God's victory over the deep provided the basis for hope in Psalm 69, in relation to this "before and after" pattern. Myth does not control the extremities of suffering, but it provides a pattern which makes it possible that they can be endured without despair. A function of myth is to interpret events at the limit of human experience. The one who is overcome by the waters is pictured drowning, metaphorically, sinking under the throne of Yam. Shame (69.7,19) and distress (69.17) are experienced by the victim of abuse. The Psalm is widely quoted in reference to Jesus' crucifixion. The waters represent the power of chaos to destroy one's honor. From the midst of power of the waters the one who is threatened trusts in YHWH for rescue (69.13-14). In prayer the Psalmist asks that YHWH will lash back at those agents of destruction (69.19-21,22-29) in a vindictive prayer for destruction of the enemies.

Though Psalm 69 is not properly an example of the divine warrior pattern, nevertheless it draws on imagery associated with the myth. The image of the waters is associated with shame and suffering. Indirectly the plea for deliverance invokes YHWH's superior power in the battle with the waters. The myth provides a "before and after" pattern that aids in the endurance of suffering even though in the text of Psalm 69 the one who was drowning is not overtly associated with royalty. In comparison, in Psalm 89, the complete sequence associated with the divine warrior pattern is explicitly expressed. The divine warrior imagery, first in reference to YHWH, and next in the account of the king, is designed to link the king, quite overtly in Psalm 89, to the pattern already associated with YHWH. The imagery is explicitly modeled on the ancient Canaanite and Babylonian myth of the battle with the adversarial deep (Day, 1985:22-28). In Psalm 89 the waters are mentioned first in the context of YHWH's rule over them (89.9-10) and secondly, in imagery which presents the king after the type of Yahweh (89.19-27).

The Baal/Yam myth is presented as a contest between royal deities. The victor is declared king. (See CTA 2.I and 2.IV (= KTU 1.2.I and IV.) Perhaps as an extension of the royal bearing of the Canaanite deities, long ago the Israelite transformations of the myth

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41 Campbell (1975:325) states that myths provide a framework which allow people to endure extremity, not to control it.

42 Quotation from distinct portions of Psalm 69 by different New Testament writers in a wide variety of contexts related to the rejection of Jesus suggests that the entire Psalm provided an interpretive scenario associated with Jesus' rejection, and death. In preparing his disciples to be hated and persecuted, "they hated me without a cause," Psalm 69.4 appears to be cited in John 15.25 with a slight verbal change (see Dodd, 1952: 58). Psalm 69.21a is recalled in Matthew 27.34: "they offered him wine to drink mingled with gall." Psalm 69.21b is recalled in Mark 15.36 (and John 19.28). Psalm 69.25 designates the destination of Jesus' betrayer: "let his homestead become desolate" in Acts 1.20. See Dodd (1952:58).
came to be associated with the kingship of YHWH; the pervasive metaphor of YHWH as King echoes in Israel's use of the myth.

In Psalm 89 the echo extends to the ideal picture of the king. The declaration of YHWH's steadfast love signified by the covenant with David (89.1-4) is set alongside an account of YHWH amongst the assembly of the holy ones. Psalm 89.5-8 is comparable with the setting of the Baal/Yam conflict in the assembly of the gods. The rhetorical question, "Who is as mighty as you?" (89.8), immediately leads the Psalmist to recall the mythic victory over the raging sea (89.8-9). Within the context of the victory and enthronement of the Divine Warrior, the people give the festal shout exalting YHWH as the Warrior King (89.13-18). Recall the shout in the Canaanite myth, 'Yam is dead. Baal is king!' (CTA 2.1 and 2.1 IV = KTU 1.2.1 and IV.)

The crowning (89.19) of the one chosen from the people (89.19) but anointed by YHWH (89.20) follows immediately upon the depiction of YHWH as the enthroned victorious Warrior King. Though the temple of YHWH is not mentioned in Ps.89, the setting of enthronement follows the mythic pattern. In the Baal myth the declaration of Baal as king is associated with the establishment of his temple (CTA 4; Hanson, 1979:302).

In Psalm 89 the mythic pattern which precedes the lament first presents the primal battle from which YHWH emerged as victor, enthroned. The mythic pattern is followed in the ritual of coronation in which the king calls upon YHWH as "my Father." (Compare John 5.17,20a.) The son addresses YHWH as "my father" only after YHWH has given him power to place his right hand upon the waters (Psalm 89.25,26). In the Psalm the type of YHWH's primal enthronement is re-presented in the ritual establishing the throne of the king. His reign is a type of YHWH's victory over the forces of the deep. As YHWH is enthroned above the waters, so the king is exalted to rule over the chaotic raging of his enemies.

A correspondence between the cosmic and the earthly action comes into play in the ritual framework portrayed in Psalm 89: just as we have heard of YHWH's victory over all challengers in 89.7-11, so now the king whom the divine King has appointed will follow the same pattern. By the help of the hand of YHWH his shield, no enemy shall outwit him or humble him (89.21-22). After the manner of the sea monster Rahab's demise YHWH will crush his foes and strike all who hate him (89.23-24). As YHWH's throne was established in the wake of victory over the raging sea, the king's right hand, the hand of power, will be on the waters.

Part of the ritual in the coronation ceremony during the Monarchy was the adoption of the king as God's son; the king was literally elevated to the status of heir of YHWH. As

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43 The Babylonian myth concerning the destruction of the great sea monster is also mentioned here in the context of YHWH's victory over the sea in relation to the foundation of the world. (See Day, 1985: 25-27). An exilic setting for Psalm 89, as suggested by Veijola (1982:176-172), would support the influence of Babylonian myth and ritual upon this Psalm. (See Eaton, 1986: 106).
the earthly representative of YHWH, the king as 'son' of God was regarded as inviolable. Due to his position seated as representative of YHWH upon his throne, the king's rule of the state was absolute, like that of God. (Compare John 5.23.)

A part of the ritual was the request of the king for his inheritance. In response YHWH legally gives to the king "my son" the land over which he has dominion (See Psalm 2 and Kraus, 1988:132.) However in Psalm 89, the emphasis is not only upon the functional sonship of the king. The king himself cries out to God as "my father" (89.26).

The enthronement and consequent adoption of the king as the 'son' of YHWH is only complete following the king's demonstration of his supremacy over the waters (after the type of YHWH's reign over all the earth).

Rejection of the king in the larger context of Psalm 89

The images of the enthronement of YHWH patterned upon the ancient myth, are followed by the account of the crowning of the earthly king. The king is pictured after the type of the mythic sequence of YHWH's enthronement.

By comparing Psalm 89 with the account of David's election in 2 Sam.7, the Deuteronomic literature, and the laments from the Exile, Timo Veijola argues that the form of Psalm 89 is the folk lament. He maintains that it is written from a situation in exile, from which it speaks in topological terms of the collective pattern associated with the life of the kings who reigned in Palestine in the generations before the exile (Veijola, 1982: 177). If Psalm 89 is an expression of the royal pattern of the faith of Israel in exile, as Veijola argues, then even this explicitly kingly Psalm represents Israel's relationship to God. The king is pictured after a mythic pattern which represents the experience of the whole people through the portrait of the ideal of the king.

The conclusion of Psalm 89 is understood by Hans Gottlieb (1980:87-88) to express the cultic suffering of the king within a ritual enactment which dramatizes YHWH's rejection of the king for a time. Gottlieb's interpretation is drawn from a reconstruction

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44 In the context of an intertextual reading of Mark's account of the crucifixion of Jesus, Robbins (1992c:1172-1175) records two incidents related to Babylonian festival ritual which are similarly suggestive of a theme of dramatic reversal in royal fortunes. Robbins notes that a dramatic role-reversal between slaves and masters was part of the five-day Sacian festival in Babylonian History (5-4 B.C.E.) in which the slave was clothed in a robe like that of a king.

In a further reference to a cultic reversal Robbins points to Dio's (after 112 C.E.) discussion of the action of Persians at the Sacian festival: A prisoner who has been condemned to death is taken, set on the king's throne, given royal apparel, allowed to give orders, and do as he pleases. Then he is stripped, scourged and hung. (Summarized from the Fourth Oration of Dio Chrysostom 4.67 as cited in Robbins, 1992c:1172-1173.)
of the liturgy of the Babylonian New Year Festival, which he speculates may be compared with part of the Israelite ritual relating to the king. 45 In extant records of Babylonian \textit{akitu} rites belonging to observances of the new year, on the fifth day, the king takes part in a ritual humiliation in which the high priest takes away his royal regalia, sceptre, crown, weapon and ring. The priest strikes the king on the face, pulls his ears and forces him to kneel before a statue of the god Marduk. In this state of humiliation the king has to declare to the god Marduk that he has not ruled wickedly nor neglected divine commands. 46 The priest responds to the ‘confession’ with words of comfort, upon which the king is allowed to reassume the trappings of royalty.

Whether Israel’s Psalms were influenced by Babylonian ritual and if so at what point in Israel’s history, remains a matter of dispute amongst scholars. See Whitelam (1992:43-46); and Eaton (1986:102-111). Gottlieb argues that certain Psalms can best be understood as liturgy corresponding to a comparable phase in Israelite royal ritual, which dramatically enacts YHWH’s rejection of the king for a time. He cites Psalm 89:38-45 as an example. Following the account of the king’s victory over enemies above and promises of the covenant with the king "forever" (89.28,36,37), a lament, which seems to contradict every word said before, concludes the Psalm. The lament below, without explanation, follows the ideal and joyful images of the father and son relationship between YHWH and the king:

But now you have spurned and rejected him;
you are full of wrath against your anointed...you have defiled his crown in the dust.
You have broken through all his walls....
All who pass by plunder him....
You have exalted the right hand of his foes....
You have removed the sceptre from his hand,
and hurled his throne to the ground.
You have cut short the days of his youth;
you have covered him with shame (Psalm 89.38-45).

45 He cites the reconstruction of the Babylonian \textit{akitu} rites given by C.J. Gadd, "Babylonian Myth and Ritual" in Hooke (ed.), \textit{Myth and Ritual} pp. 53ff. Below I follow Eaton’s (1986:87-96) more recent and more detailed reconstruction of \textit{the akitu} rite. Eaton’s chief sources for this reconstruction in \textit{ANET} are the remains of a massive record of rites copied from Seleucid times but descending from texts as old as the Neo-Babylonian empire. (See Eaton, 1986:89.)

46 Eaton’s reconstruction of this portion of the \textit{akitu} rite quotes the following declaration of the king at this point:

I did not sin, lord of the countries
I was not neglectful of the requirements of your godship.
I did not destroy Babylon, I did not command its overthrow.
I did not ... the temple Esagil, I did not forget its rites.
I did not rain blows on the cheek of a subordinate...
I did not humiliate them.
I watched out for Babylon; I did not smash its walls. (\textit{ANET}, p.334, quoted in Eaton, 1986:92.)
If the Psalm is a lament set in the time of Exile which looks back to the divine ideal of kingship in times gone by, then it paints a collective portrait of the people after the type of the rejected king who is no more. Such an interpretation is consistent with the setting proposed by Veijola (1982:177). From this perspective, 89.38-45 communicates an image of the pain of Israel.

I suggest, because the lament in 89.38-45 belongs within the larger context of Psalm 89.5-29, it is set within the frame of the mythic pattern of Yahweh’s victory over the deep and enthronement. Thus even the king’s experience of shame at the hands of YHWH is not without hope. Like Psalm 69, Psalm 89.38-45 portrays an experience of profound threat. The pain is made worse by the fact that YHWH is understood to be the agent of the king’s rejection. The setting of exile coheres with a reading which sees the king’s rejection after the pattern of the Babylonian akītu ritual in which the standing of the king is temporarily undermined.

**Polarization reinforced through use of the divine warrior myth**

In the examples that I have given of the divine warrior myth the enemies of YHWH are identified with those outside the nation of Israel. The pattern serves a different function when it applies to situations of conflict between competing groups within Israel. The prophets conceived YHWH as a universal deity who went to war against any nation bent on injustice or political aggrandizement, and Israel was no exception (Hiebert, 1992:878). Prophetic vision of the universality of YHWH’s kingship meant that Israel, as well as the nations, faced the consequence of judgment. Developments in the use of the divine warrior genre as a form of judgment against offending groups within Israel stands within this prophetic tradition.

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47 The use of imagery from the divine warrior motif found in fragmentary form within Psalm 69 is an exception. However in Psalm 69 only images from the myth, not the whole divine warrior pattern, appear to be adapted to judgment of the Psalmist’s enemies within the community situation.

48 In this context Hiebert (1992:878) cites Amos 2.4-9.10; Hosea 9; Micah 1; Isaiah 5 and Jeremiah 9. The point is significant. However, Hiebert’s emphasis is upon the general concept of YHWH as warrior. He fails to provide any formal analysis of the genre associated with the conflict myth in relation to these texts.

49 Hanson (1979:124-130) discusses this development fully in his analysis of Isaiah 56-66.
The divine warrior pattern in Zechariah 9 and Daniel 7

Before discussing how the myth is used to express and reinforce polarization between groups, I will briefly identify examples of the persistence of the myth in Zechariah 9 and Daniel 13.

Hanson (1979) identifies Zechariah 9.1-17 as a pure example of the genre of a hymn concerning the divine warrior, which, as he shows in reference to Isaiah and Zechariah, had become highly significant within the visionary tradition of the exile and the post-exilic period. According to Hanson the myth allows for a recapitulation of the ancient "combats, victories, processions and banquets of the past as prototypes" of the future (Hanson, 1979:311).

Zechariah 9 is a "paradigm example" of prophetic adaptation of what Hanson calls the "league-royal cult ritual pattern" (1979:315). Verse 9 belongs to the part of the pattern that, according to Hanson's formal analysis, recounts the victory procession associated with the demonstration of YHWH's universal reign:

- Conflict-victory (1-7)
- Temple secured (8)
- Victory shout and procession (9)
- Manifestation of Yahweh's universal reign (10)
- Salvation: Captives released (11-13)
- Theophany of the Divine Warrior (14)
- Sacrifice and Banquet (15)
- Fertility of restored order (16-17) 51

Within this formal framework, Hanson sees Zechariah 9 as the procession that marks the completion of YHWH's conquest of the land. The procession brings YHWH to encamp in his temple from whence he will protect the people from the enemy (Zech.9.8).

The sign that the conquest has been completed is the glorious return of the Divine Warrior to the temple; that return is greeted by an exultant victory shout, in Zech.9.9, which Hanson believes derives from an old hymn of the royal cult (1979:320).

Daniel, composed in response to the Seleucid persecution of Jewish faith in the mid second century B.C.E., uses imagery reminiscent of the conflict of the divine warrior with the sea (Dan. 7-12). The battle belongs to the heavenly forces of YHWH so exclusively that there appears to be no human participation in the conflict (Heibert, 1992:879). J.J. Collins (1977:105) argues that the pattern in Daniel 7 derives more than fragmentary motifs from

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50 See Hanson, (1979:300) and his discussion of Isaiah 26.16-27.6; 59.15b-20; 63.1-6; Zechariah 9.1-17; 14.1-21. Heibert (1992:878) notes that during the post-exilic period, the divine warrior motif flourished in a relatively pure form in apocalyptic writings which drew upon its earliest roots in Canaanite myth.

51 From Hanson, (1979:315-316).
the Ugaritic myth, though the sea and the beasts could be accounted for with reference to Israel's scriptures:

Imagery of 'Ancient of Days' and 'one like a son of man' finds its closest parallels in the Ugaritic references to Baal, rider of the clouds, and El, father of years. The conferral of kingship on the 'one like a son of man' most probably derives from a Canaanite myth of the enthronement of Baal (J.J. Collins, 1977:105).

Collins finds the pattern of the Baal/Yam myth repeated in Daniel 7. The revolt of the sea as the beasts rise from it, and the final kingship of a Baal-like figure, are points of similarity with the Ugaritic myth that leave him in no doubt that "Daniel 7 is modeled on the same mythic pattern as the conflict of Baal and Yam" (Collins, 1977:105-106).

The ribh attached to the divine warrior genre in polarized settings

Hanson (1979:79-203) finds that, in certain deeply polarized exilic and post exilic situations, the divine warrior genre was modified; it was turned against one group or position within the community. In his discussion of Isaiah 56-66 Hanson argues that this social phenomenon occurred because the ideal of YHWH's special relation to the community, which is based upon earlier eschatological themes in Isaiah, is used as the basis for polemic against a rival position; the group who claim to express the ideal of Israel (the visionary group) see little hope for the restoration of the whole people of Israel (Hanson, 1979:42).

Subsequently in reference to a narrative expansion upon the divine warrior genre in Zechariah 12 and 14, Hanson (1979: 350-373) argues that a similar social dynamic is at work. The polarized social situation generates expression of a "hybrid" form of the divine warrior genre. In the polarization of competing groups within Israel, the visionary group identifies the rival group with the enemies of YHWH. In this hybrid form the myth of the divine warrior serves to polarize conflict. The rival group is seen as the enemy; the visionary groups identify their position with the reception of divine rule and the benefits of salvation (Hanson, 1979:314-315).

Hanson explains this phenomenon in reference to compositions like Zechariah 10 as follows: "... the ritual pattern was fused to the prophetic ribh to indicate that the saving activity of the Divine Warrior had been redirected and limited so as to benefit only a minority group within Israel" (1979:314). The divine warrior hymn is fused to a ribh against adversaries in Israel who along with alien nations are to be objects of the wrath of

52 See also Day's (1985:151-176) more detailed analysis of recent scholarship relating to evidence of imagery related to the Canaanite myth in Daniel 7.
YHWH, leading to a division between the faithful who will be saved and the wicked who will be punished (Hanson, 1979:328). Apart from the affixation of the prophetic ribh, Hanson observes that the ritual pattern of the conflict myth is intact:

Zechariah 10  
1-3 ribh versus leaders  
4-6a Combat-victory  
4 YHWH equips himself with Israel as his host  
5-6a Ritual conquest  
6b-10 Salvation: restoration of the scattered people  
11 Procession reenacting victory of divine warrior over Yam  
12 Victory shout

In his analysis of Zechariah 14, Hanson (1979:372) finds that a hybrid form of the conflict myth emerges because the salvation theme associated with the royal divine warrior myth, and the judgment theme, proper to the prophetic ribh, are joined. As a result of the rift within the community the conflict myth in Zechariah 14 gives expression to deep polarization. It is, says Hanson, a situation in which

no longer could the whole community of Israel be addressed in divine speech cast in one of the classical oracle forms, for the community was no longer viewed by the visionary group as a unified entity. Rather a bitter conflict had torn a deep rift between hierocratic and visionary factions, implying for the latter that there were henceforth two Israels.... The ritual pattern of the royal hymn is adopted to promise salvation to the faithful, but to it is fused the threat of the prophetic judgment oracle to account for the fate of the rest of the nation. (Hanson, 1979:373-374.)

Thus the conflict myth, which had set Israel apart from her enemies is turned into a form which metes out judgment within the community. The division between belonging to YHWH versus an outsider, alien, enemy, is drawn along the lines of polarization within Israel.

In early Christian proclamation the pattern of crucifixion/enthronement divides between those who acknowledge Jesus as the king exalted following the threat of crucifixion and those who refuse to acknowledge his status. Those who acknowledge Jesus within this pattern are recipients of salvation. They are marked off, by virtue of their position in relation to claims of the visionary group. Those within Israel who hold to a rival position are consequently identified as adversaries of YHWH.

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53 The formal analysis is from Hanson (1979:329).

54 A comparison could be made between this use of the divine warrior pattern and the stories of division within the camp of Israel; for example, the rebellion of Korah leads YHWH to destroy a group within the camp in Numbers 16.
Concluding proposal: the divine warrior pattern is adequate to interpret the threat of crucifixion

In the short space of this chapter, I have not tried to prove that the divine warrior pattern shaped the structure of Christian speech concerning the rejection of Jesus and his vindication by God, particularly as this theme is expressed in John 5.17-23. However, based on the examples I have surveyed, it seems reasonable to pursue the possibility that interpretation of the rejection death and enthronement of Jesus relied upon a way of thinking about God's action associated with the divine warrior myth. The threat and exaltation of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection make sense in reference to this mythic structure. The ancient pattern of victory by the divine warrior is a frame of reference adequate to interpretation of the threat posed by the public execution of Jesus. The threat to the life of the king is mostly submerged in Johannine speech. Within the Johannine framework of the myth even Jesus' death is conceived from the perspective of victory, as departure, exaltation, glorification. Jesus is portrayed as the One who like YHWH is inviolable, who cannot slide under the throne of the enemy.

The divine warrior myth has the power to resist the conventions that identify rejection and public execution with devastation of one's reputation, honor and esteem. These conventional mores were associated with Jesus' rejection and violent death. Unless the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus are set within a frame of interpretation that is already meaningful, uninterpreted, they are not events that clearly proclaim that this is a victory. Even the response, 'he is risen', uninterpreted, fails to address the problem of shame inflicted by crucifixion.

John 5.17-23 is but one of many examples of early Christian patterns of speech which declare the unique sonship and superior power of Jesus even in the face of accusation and condemnation. Threat/enthrone ment speech took hold as a paradigmatic statement of the significance of Jesus. This fact suggests to me that it relies upon a structure of meaning which was already familiar. The meaning already associated with the exaltation of YHWH as the victorious warrior King may relate to interpretation of the experience of Jesus after his death. He is presented as one who has emerged from death victorious. Within the context of the myth even the shame of crucifixion is understood as a constitutive element in this victory.

The structure of conflict leading to enthronement of the divine king is a pattern of thought which was deeply rooted in Israelite consciousness of God. The deep shame of
crucifixion can be interpreted as one part within the larger context of that dramatic sequence, the next step celebrates victory over all forces that oppose God's power.

In the divine warrior myth a narrative plot holds the threat of the challenge together with the victory of the riposte. I suggest that the structure of speech concerning Jesus' death and resurrection shares this "common plot." In chapter 7 I attempt to show this specifically in reference to the perspective on the myth expressed in John 5.17-23.
Chapter 7

The divine warrior king pattern in, John 5.17-23: based on an intertextual reading of John chapters 11-12 and 1 with reference to testimonies from kingly settings

In this chapter I will argue that John develops the argument concerning the son in 5.17-23 by relying upon a frame of meaning already associated with the divine warrior myth. However it is difficult to conclusively establish this proposal by referring only to John's development of the theme of sonship in 5.17-23. For this reason, I will also attempt to show that the theme of sonship is developed in a complementary way in John 11 and 12, where the narrative concerning Jesus as the messiah the son of God, relies upon the divine warrior pattern even more explicitly than in John 5. In developing this complementary argument I assume that the more explicit use of the pattern in John 11 and 12 lends support to the more tacit and partial appearance of the pattern in John 5.17-23. I identify John 11-12 as a yet more explicit example of the divine warrior pattern within the wider narrative context of the triumphal display of Jesus as king and son of God in John 11 and 12. My proposal that John 5.17-23, is an image of enthronement that relies upon the divine warrior pattern, is indirectly given support from this complementary example.

Further, in order to address the question of John's distinctive use of the myth of the divine warrior to support the claim of the son's equality with God, I include a more tentative intertextual interpretation of the Prologue with reference to the divine warrior pattern. It is designed to highlight the distinctive stance taken by John in interpretive use of the myth.

1 The scope of this project limits my investigation only to selected texts in John. I explore the possibility that John 1; John 5.17-23; and John 11 and 12 all make sense when read in reference to the framework provided by the divine warrior pattern. I suggest that early Christian use of this pattern is not limited to these texts, nor to Johannine use; however it would exceed the limits of this project to attempt to establish this suggestion conclusively. See Ricoeur (1967:255-278, 309-330), A.Y. Collins (1976), and McCurley (1983), who have related other specific early Christian texts to the divine warrior myth.
By this strategy of following several lines of supporting argument, I do not expect to prove the proposal above. Rather I only aim to show that the divine warrior myth provides a frame of interpretation that lends coherence to the extraordinary speech in John 5.17-23.

Most of the arguments have already been intimated previously, thus I frequently refer back to earlier chapters in order to avoid restating ground that has been covered before. I have already argued that the juxtaposition of threat with exalted speech concerning the son gains coherence when it is understood in reference to a patterned sequence of events in Psalm 2. I have shown that Psalm 2 reflects the divine warrior pattern. I presuppose that the intent to kill Jesus in 5.18 foreshadows the crucifixion which conventionally associated Jesus with shame. I assume that John 5 reflects a pattern of early Christian speech, most clearly parallel to the synoptic trial question on sonship, in which a threat to the life of Jesus is one element. The threat relates rhetorically to an answer concerning exalted sonship. In the Synoptic trial sequence it relies upon a quote from Daniel 7.13-14. The comparable element in the pattern in John 5.22-23,27 also alludes to Daniel 7.13.

Two distinct strategies build my argument that John 5.17-23 gains coherence with reference to the divine warrior myth. Neither, on its own, is conclusive; but together they are designed to argue a case for reading the exaltation of the son in John 5.17-23 within the framework of the divine warrior myth.

First, I shall review recent scholarship on the motif of kingship in the Fourth Gospel; this confirms the prominence of the motif of kingship in John; already I have argued in relation to Psalms 2 and 89 in chapter 6, that in some texts kingly sonship reflects the divine warrior pattern.

Secondly, I shall briefly discuss John’s use of scripture at crucial points which appear to rely upon the pattern of threat/enthronement. I shall develop this part of my argument through intertextual interpretations of John 5, John 11 and 12, and John 1 in the light of the divine warrior pattern.
Selected recent interpretation of kingship in John

The presumption of a majority of Johannine scholars, following Bultmann, has been that patterns of thinking associated with king and cult are not central to the Johannine theology. As I argued in chapter 1, Bultmann dismissed the centrality, for John, of a cultic or kingly scenario in favor of the framework of a Gnostic redeemer myth.

On the one hand the prominence of the kingship motif in John has never been denied by recent scholarship. But on the other hand, the Johannine position is presented as a departure from the traditions associating Jesus with the legacy of Davidic kingship.

In commenting upon the development of the motif, Dodd describes the "unexpected prominence" that the title "king" is given in John: it is used only in mockery in Matthew and Mark; but in John it is accepted as a legitimate title, on the lips of Nathaniel and in the triumphal entry (Dodd, 1953a:228). Anyone who attends to John’s relatively extensive use of the motif must recognize that the Fourth Gospel employs a kingship scenario to set out the significance of Jesus. (See Berger, 1974-75:41-43; Freed, 1965:75-81; Dodd, 1953a: 228-229; Meeks,1967:17;32-98.) In light of this fact, the bias behind Dodd’s (1953a:228) reference to the "unexpected" prominence of kingship in John is clearly exposed by Meeks (1967:17-18): ‘King’ in John has not been the subject of special investigation because of the assumption that it refers to the Davidic Messiah, a concept which, as Meeks explains, is thought to be of no special significance in John, and one which recedes in comparison with the title ‘Son of God’ (1967: 17-18).

Meeks corrects this bias, by setting forth the centrality of the "constitutive position" of kingship in John’s Passion narrative (1967:18). Acknowledging that Jesus’ kingship is also significant in the Synoptic trial scenes, he argues that John has both "taken over the traditional imagery" and has "vastly expanded and emphasized" the motif (1967:18).

Nevertheless, I will suggest that Meeks’ evaluation of Johannine kingship fails to do justice to the significance for John of a shared assumption about the kingship of Jesus that is shared with the Synoptics. Meeks points out that in John the prominence of Jesus as "king" and the clear polemic against expectations concerning the Davidic messiah appear contradictory. He (1967:21) reacts to this tension by allowing the importance of the designation "king" without assuming that in John "‘king’ = ‘messiah’ = ‘son of David’" (1967:21). Accordingly, he argues convincingly that this equation would not have been equally valid or
meaningful for all groups for whom Israel's scriptures were sacred in the first century C.E. (Meeks, 1967:21).

In one sense Meeks' observation is very valuable because it recognizes the diverse meanings associated with the one term of kingship. Historically the use of melek in the ancient Near East was not a monolithic concept. Kingship was a deeply ingrained cultural concept which was fed by the diverse imagery associated with different models of kingship. 2

In his extensive research into the usage of the title "king" in sources other than those associated with the Davidic monarchy, Meeks traces significant usage of the term in association with Moses. Noting that Johannine traditions were partly shaped by hostile interaction between Johannine Christians and a Jewish group which upheld the ascension and enthronement of Moses, Meeks (1967:318-319) maintains that John's portrait of Jesus as king is informed by these Mosaic traditions.

In another example, Meeks' (1967:35) observation that the Johannine emphasis upon the origin of Jesus in Nazareth, not Bethlehem, is employed to make a case for the distinctive prophet-king tradition associated with Jesus in John, a conclusion that is valid also; but in the process, the methodological emphasis upon what is distinctive creates the impression that the pattern of kingship which is more broadly associated with early Christian testimony has little positive influence in John. Consequently, the social, cultural and rhetorical links between Johannine patterns of kingship and those attested elsewhere in early Christian speech tend to be overlooked.

In Meeks' (1967:67) discussion of the repeated theme of enthronement in the trial before Pilate this tendency is particularly pronounced. While noting "traditional" elements in the Johannine presentation of the scene, Meeks, nevertheless, develops the use of the enthronement motif as if it were peculiar to the theology of John, though clearly it is a

2 Three types of monarchies were represented in the ancient Near East and they overlapped somewhat in Israelite cultural and historical use of the term in diverse settings:

1) petty Palestinian kings who were often of foreign origin and ruled with the support of a military aristocracy;

2) the more centralized government of the Egyptian and Mesopotamian emperors whose reign was regarded as the divine expression of political order;

3) the kingship of Transjordan peoples, who were ethnically related to the Hebrews, had its roots in the military leadership of the native army and was therefore national in its orientation (Szikszai, 1962:11). The monarchy in Ugarit stretches back to about the second millennium in the city's history (Craigie, 1983b: 31). The ideal Canaanite king was a man of responsibility, who looked out for the rights of the oppressed, and had oversight of the judicial system (Craigie, 1983b:34).
theme that is implicit within the entire tradition of the exaltation of Jesus the messiah as king in resurrection.

Meeks (1967:20-21) and Dodd (1953a:228) are correct in acknowledging the independence of the Johannine presentation of Jesus as king. However, the decision to focus primarily upon explanation of distinctiveness has a profound effect upon interpretation of the data. It means that John is described in terms of 'difference from' others, without acknowledging that the comparison relies upon a very conscribed frame of reference. Another approach is to look from a wider frame of reference, within which aspects of Johannine testimony can be seen as 'common with'. This takes seriously the constitutive role of the elements which John shares with other texts, before it focuses upon elements in John that can be seen as polemic against a shared tradition.

Though it is outside the field of Johannine studies as such, an important background work that provides an antidote to an overly narrow focus upon the independence of the theme of kingship in the Fourth Gospel is Margaret Barker's (1987) general study, The Older Testament: The Survival of Themes from the Ancient Royal Cult in Sectarian Judaism and Early Christianity. It broadly conceives the motif of the kingship of YHWH as a culturally understood pattern of significance that was shared within the diverse Judaism of first century C.E.

Barker maintains that mythology associated with the royal throne of God provided the conception of the cosmos shared by most Jewish traditions in the intertestamental period. The reign of God was conceptualized within a mythological heavenly scenario in which the throne of God was the epicenter of the universe. I suggest that within this larger cultural scenario, Christian faith, and within it Johannine testimony, stands in continuity with this broad cultural conception of God.

Early Christian speech assumes so much of the religious universe in which it is immersed, Barker argues, that the followers of Jesus only need to express what is different in their interpretation. The common elements are taken for granted. Christians assumed the already understood scenario of a divine heavenly throne (Barker, 1987:3). The different part, which is the point Christians were at pains to make plain, is that Jesus is the human heir who stands as representative of the divine throne on earth. (See Barker, 1987:2-4.) Within the mythic pattern provided by traditions associated with the divine throne, Barker argues that Christian arguments made sense because they identified Jesus with divine personages (such as Melchizedek, Enoch and Metatron, the lesser YHWH) who in this mythology were already associated with the throne of YHWH. (See also Böld (1993:81).)
Awareness of the links between Jesus and these heavenly figures clearly did not begin with Barker. Research focusing on the distinctive high Christology of John has noted the influence of these traditions. Other scholars, like Maier (1979:350,353) and Charlesworth (1979:198,199,212), draw conclusions similar to Barker's, but within a more narrowly defined scope. My interest in Barker's work, however, concerns her willingness to propose tentative connections, which cannot yet be proved, but which lend coherence to fragmentary facts which are not understood within a coherent picture. Though others have documented the significance of divine kingship for first century Jewish culture in more detail, Barker proposes that the royal imagery in the New Testament belongs within the frame of a coherent widely understood mythology that centered around the throne of God.

An approach that is holistic rather than atomistic, is something of a novelty in contemporary biblical scholarship. Commentators upon John have tended to emphasize the distinctive at the expense of the typical. For example, Dodd begins his discussion of the "messiah" in John by contrasting what is the case in primitive Christian usage with John's distinctive and polemical opposition to accepted usage of the term. (See Dodd, 1953a:228.) In contrast Barker treats early Christian faith within the wider context of the cultural mythology nurtured by Jewish sacred traditions of the royal cult. She is willing to speculate that these images formed a frame within which early Christian experience was understood. Barker's hypothesis provides an alternative approach that counters a too narrow focus on the peculiarity of the Johannine tradition. As I will suggest the presupposition that the image of YHWH as king was taken for granted in Palestinian Judaism in the first century,

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3 See for example the overview of research within Ashton (1991:350-361); Borgen (1977) and (1986:72-75); Reim (1984) and (1974); Meeks (1967:206-209) and (1976).

4 See Frizzell's (1991) review of Barker.

Barker's speculation that the ancient cultic tradition was intermittently suppressed by factions within Israel needs to be subjected to more thorough historical inspection.


6 Early Christian ideas relied upon their cultural and mythological context Barker argues, she draws an analogy with G. Steiner's The Death of Tragedy, who says in another context:

When the artist must be the architect of his own mythology, time is against him [sic]. He cannot live long enough to impose his special vision and the symbols he has devised for it on the habits of language and the feelings of his society...without an orthodox or public frame to support it...it does not take root in the common soil.... A mythology crystallizes sediment accumulated over great stretches of time, and gathers into conventional form the primal memories and the historical experiences of the race.

provides an area of common conceptual ground between the Johannine portrait of Jesus as king not of this world and other Christian claims about Jesus as messiah, not to mention other more general cultural assumptions about YHWH as divine King.

Meeks (1967:81) recognizes that Jesus' kingship in John is presented in a way that represents God's kingship. I agree, entirely. However, a comparable threat/enthronement pattern underlies both the John, and the Synoptic, and the Acts texts, with which I compared John 5 in chapters 3 and 4. On the assumption that the pattern itself has theological significance, any attempt to understand John's use of the motif of kingship, needs, first to attend to the significance that is common more generally to texts ascribed meaning within that shared pattern.7

By beginning from a cultural perspective that assumes that God is King, it is possible to see that, though John's tradition of kingship is undeniably distinctive in significant ways, the prominence of the kingship motif in John's conception is suggestive of a perspective on Jesus that was in some sense shared with other Christian testimony concerning the messiah. The shared tradition identifies Jesus' death and resurrection with an enthronement scenario.

Meeks has accurately shown that John does critique "earthly" expectations of a messiah in the pattern of the Davidic monarch (Meeks, 1967:32-99). Nevertheless, as I pointed out in chapter 3, the royal pattern associated with divine kingship in Psalm 2 is congruent with the pattern of testimony to Jesus as the son in John 5.17-23. It is also a pattern that is followed in early Christian testimony to Jesus. (See Acts 4.25 and my analysis of John 5 on the pattern of Psalm 2 in chapter 3.)

Though specific messianic expectations associated with a Davidic king are critiqued in the Fourth Gospel the divine warrior motif may offer a less narrow frame of interpretation of expressions related to kingship. A link between Johannine and other early Christian expressions of Jesus' kingship that is not limited to a peculiar line of expectation concerning the Davidic king may be found in the divine warrior pattern. 8 It is reflected in Psalm 2 and Daniel 7; a description of the enthronement of YHWH as well as the anointing and exaltation of his son as the king both fall within its orbit.

I will approach the possibility that a broadly common pattern of significance was attached to Jesus as king, by attending to John's use of scripture in selected texts. I work on

7 Pelland (1988:627) describes the ancient traditions of exegesis as not atomizing, but looking for areas of coherence.

8 It is reasonable to allow that John, in a clear critique of an earthly conception of Jesus as messiah, might well have employed patterns that do derive from a setting initially associated with Davidic monarchy.
the methodological assumption, developed by Dodd, that John knew, not only the tradition of exegesis associated with Jesus' death and resurrection, but also the wider scriptural context from which testimonies were drawn.  

Following the approach which Dodd (1952) applied to the New Testament writings in general, I presume that John was acquainted not only with "proof texts," but also with the wider scriptural traditions that frame the significance of the Fourth Gospel's testimonies concerning Jesus. I consider that not only the quotation, but also the royal context in which it is found in Israel's scriptures, informed John's understanding of the pattern of divine kingship.  

I assume that the traditioners and redactors responsible for the composition of the Fourth Gospel had a deep knowledge of the scriptures which they employed in testimony to Jesus. Such an assumption provides the most coherent explanation of allusion from Israel's scriptures which is characteristic of John's portrayal of Christ.

**Scriptural quotation in John and the topos of crucifixion**

Explicit quotation of scripture in the Fourth Gospel is limited to fifteen passages, including testimonies which are quoted both with and without introductory formulae, according to Carson (1988). The number of citations in John continues to be a matter of scholarly debate. Hengel (1990:31) following the Nestle-Aland 26th edition of the Greek

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9 Schuchard's (1992:xii) study of quotation of Scripture in John sets out his method by affirming the findings of Dodd (1952) that John like the other New Testament authors: 1) understood the earliest kerygma in light of Israel's scriptures; 2) "held specific 'textual fields' in the Old Testament to be of particular theological significance for his kerygma"; 3) recognized in them the existence of shared themes; and, 4) adapted and elaborated them with respect for their original context.

10 Freed (1967) limits himself to investigation of the Johannine setting of each testimony. He agrees with Bent Noack Zur Johanneischen Tradition, 1954, that John may not have known the scriptural context of particular testimonies, but was acquainted with the sayings which are quoted from tradition or as a word of the Lord (1967:x).


12 The total, including allusions to scripture not followed by explicit quotation, comes to nineteen according to Braun (1964). Schuchard (1992:xiii) limits the number to thirteen identified by means of a formula; he excludes John 7.38 and 42; 17.12 and 19.28 because, though they direct the reader to scripture, no discrete text is actually cited.
New Testament cites nineteen, eight from the Psalms, six from Isaiah, three from the Pentateuch, and two from the Minor Prophets.

Hengel argues that the problem posed for followers of Jesus by the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus, is apparent in the focus of the second half of these testimonies. He distinguishes between the citation introductions in the first part of the Gospel, John 1-12, concerning Jesus’ public ministry, and the second part in which movement toward the Passion is the context. There, the introductory formulas are given in connection with the explanation for Jesus’ "lack of success": though he did these signs yet they did not believe (12.37). Hengel (1990:32) characterizes the "double fulfillment" citation in John 12.38-40 (Is.53.1; 6.9-10) as "clarification of the problematic failure of Jesus among his people" as a fulfillment of the prophetic word of God which prepares the reader for the Passion.

Edwin D. Freed (1965) sets out in the order of appearance the Johannine cues to fifteen explicit quotes.  

| Jesus and John the Baptist | 1.23 |
| The cleansing of the Temple | 2.17 |
| Bread from heaven | 6.31 |
| Taught by God | 6.45 |
| Rivers of living water | 7.37,38 |
| The seed of David | 7.42 |
| You are gods | 10.34 |
| Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem | 12.13-15 |
| The unbelief of the multitude | 12.38-40 |
| The traitor | 13.18 |
| Hated without a cause | 15.25 |
| The son of perdition | 17.12 |
| The parting of Jesus’ garments | 19.24 |
| Jesus’ thirst | 19.28 |
| Breaking the criminals’ legs and piercing Jesus’ side | 19.36,37 |

Freed’s characterization of the quotations above dramatizes the striking progression towards the passion from Jesus’ entry as king into Jerusalem onwards.

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13 On the need for an answer to the shame of crucifixion, see my discussion in chapter 4, and Hengel (1977:22-32).

14 The format is used in Freed’s table of contents.
Retrospect on scripture in post-resurrection views of Jesus as king

John tends toward relatively sparse use of explicit quotation from scripture. In comparison with the profuse scriptural documentation of Matthew, for example, John's use of scripture shows an inclination toward allusion and metaphor, preferring "the bare terse clue" to the full citation (Hengel, 1990:32).

The testimony of scripture is evoked at crucial moments in the Fourth Gospel's presentation of Jesus (Morgan, 1957:164). For example, the destruction and raising up of Jesus' bodily temple is a veiled reference to the crucifixion (John 2.17-22); on another level, the judgment upon the Jerusalem temple establishment (associated with Jesus' expulsion of the merchants in 2.16-18) was at that time also widely regarded as an action requiring divine authority. See Brown (1986:121-124); Juel (1977).

The evangelist explains that the disciples interpreted scripture retrospectively in relation to the resurrection; the connection made by the disciples is attributed to the use of scripture they remembered from Jesus (2.22).

The triumphal entry of Jesus as king likewise presents an interpretation of Jesus which, as the text informs the reader, only later was understood by his disciples (John 12.12-16). Similarly the first Johannine resurrection narrative indicates that the disciples' experience of the empty tomb was not yet accompanied by understanding. The understanding of the event came after the fact, imparted by a particular explanation provided by scripture: it was necessary that Jesus must rise from the dead (In. 20.8-9).

These Johannine references to 'scripture' are attached to the motif of 'remembering' through the perspective given by resurrection. It is probable that the audience already associated the resurrection with an understood interpretation according to scripture, since this perspective is not explicitly explained. And clearly it is a perspective that makes a decisive difference to the way disciples frame key events associated in Jesus' life. Within a framework of scriptural 'remembering' the significance of his kingship (12.12-16), and his death and resurrection (2.17-22; 20.8-9) are interpreted in retrospect. (See Morgan, 1957:164.)

The Johannine motif of post-resurrection remembering associated with the critical events in John's presentation of Jesus indicates a framework of messianic testimony (Hengel, 1990:30-31). The fact that scriptural interpretation is recalled in relation to a Messianic procession into Jerusalem in John 12.12-16, and to Jesus' death and resurrection (20.9), may point to a scriptural interpretation of Jesus such as is represented in Acts 3.18. The unstated tradition that is 'remembered' in John may recall a central focus upon the exaltation of Jesus as king. Psalm 110 is employed as testimony to his death and resur-
rection in Acts 2.33-35. Resurrection is identified with scriptural images of enthronement to reign and judge. (See also Acts 4.11-12 and 4.24-29.) The reference to ‘remembering’ may refer the audience to a pattern of significance which they already attached to Jesus’ death and resurrection, a pattern similar to the messianic explanation of the resurrection in the Acts speeches. The resurrection ‘memory’ of scripture noted in John specifically in relation to the kingship, death and resurrection of Jesus may conform to a pattern consistent with the common tradition of Jesus as the anointed one who in resurrection is exalted as Yahweh’s king.

Elements of the divine warrior pattern in John 5.17-27 with reference to Psalm 2, Daniel 7.13-4 and 12.2

I shall propose an interpretation of John 5, 11-12 within a kingly frame of reference that relies upon the pattern of the Kingship of YHWH as the divine warrior.  

I argued that because the myth is structured in response to the primal threat of chaos it has the capacity to deal with a contemporary threat of the magnitude of the crucifixion.

My focus upon the divine warrior pattern is designed to serve two aims. First it suggests a frame of reference broad enough to encompass the elements which John holds in common with the pattern of killing/exaltation in the Synoptic trial tradition and in the speeches in Acts 3-4. Secondly, John’s stance in reference to the use of this common pattern is distinctive. Attention to the elements that are shared should highlight the point at which John’s use is distinctive. The exercise is designed to clarify the Fourth Gospel’s distinctive perspective on Jesus, without minimizing the constitutive function of the common pattern.

It is possible to read the pattern of killing/exaltation in 5.17-23 within the framework of the divine warrior pattern, though only part of the pattern can be identified in this text.

15 Bock (1987:197), and Horsley (1989:133) note that it is generally accepted that the material behind the speeches in Acts 2-5 is from very early church tradition.

16 I have already shown that the coronation pattern associated with the Davidic monarch followed the pattern of YHWH’s primal victory over the deep in my discussion of Psalm 89 in chapter 6 under the major heading “Evidence of correspondence...” and the subheading “The king portrayed....”
I have already shown that 5.17-23 displays a formal similarity to Psalm 2, \(^{17}\) and that the divine warrior pattern is inscribed within Psalm 2. \(^{18}\) In the chart below I suggest that John 5.17-23 also expresses some elements of the divine warrior pattern. \(^{19}\) However the element of victory is implicit rather than explicit in Jesus' reply. The images evoking an enthronement scenario (5.22-23, also 27) allude to texts in Israel's scriptures that display clear evidence of the divine warrior pattern.

By placing elements of the divine warrior pattern like a template over 5.17-23, it is possible to see that the plot line associated with the pattern helps to fill in the gaps between the threat to Jesus' honor and life and the superior position from which he makes his reply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>threat</th>
<th>They sought to kill him (5.18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>victory</td>
<td>(Unstated)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YHWH's reign manifest</td>
<td>The father has given the son the power to create life and to judge that they may honor the son as they honor the father.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evidence of the pattern is fragmentary. Therefore I shall attempt to show that elsewhere in John the pattern occurs more fully in a complementary passage. Formal similarity exists between John 5.17-23 and Psalm 2. It consists of a tacit reliance upon a common pattern of expression. John 5 does not explicitly quote from Psalm 2 or Daniel 7.14. \(^{20}\) If it can be shown that elsewhere John gives even stronger evidence that the divine warrior pattern shapes the portrait of the son, this would support the proposal that John 5.17-23 implicitly relies upon the significance associated with the absolute supremacy of the divine warrior. \(^{21}\)

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\(^{17}\) See chapter 3.

\(^{18}\) See my discussion of Psalm 2 in chapter 6.

\(^{19}\) As I have already shown in chapter 6 the typical elements of the pattern are: conflict--victory--temple secured--victory shout and procession--manifestation of YHWH's universal reign--salvation--sacrifice and banquet--fertility of restored order. Though the elements listed above are typical, not every text has all of the elements and the order varies. (See A.Y. Collins, 1976:207-209.)

\(^{20}\) Daniel 7.14 also bears some formal similarity to Psalm 2.

\(^{21}\) Perrin (1972:16) considers it a methodological principle of interpretation (of the Synoptic Gospels and Acts), that any part of a work must be examined in terms of its function within the structure of the work as a whole.
Patterns of trial and sonship speech as clues to a link between John 5.17-27 and 11-12

Intimations of a complementary sequence: twin trials in John 5 and 10

Below I will show links between John 5.17-23 and 10.30-39 which suggest that these texts are complementary. I will argue that this complementary sequence justifies the expectation that the theme of sonship elaborated in John 5.17-23 might also be elaborated in a complementary way following John 10.33. In the subsequent subheading I use a comparison with the forensic scene in Papyrus Egerton 2 as grounds for considering that the pattern relating to sonship in John 5.17-23 represents a late redaction of John 5. I will suggest that an earlier Egerton-like trial scene was later redacted into a trial that introduced the issue of Jesus' as 'the son'. Further I will argue that the schematic declaration concerning the son in John 5.17-23 is complemented by the Martha, Lazarus and triumphal entry narratives in John 11 and 12. I will suggest that in John the divine warrior pattern is employed to elaborate the theme of sonship in John 5.17-27 and John 11 and 12.

A trial-like sequence is apparent in John 5 extending intermittently through to John 10 as Harvey (1976:50-57) and Neyrey (1987) among others have noted. The chart below features parallel elements which provide an opening and closing to this trial-like unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning the unit John 5.lff.</th>
<th>Concluding the same unit 9.1ff.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>healing a lame man</td>
<td>healing a man born blind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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22 John 6 appears to have been added within this frame. Though John 6 includes no forensic confrontation, the sharp questioning of Jesus' words (6.41-42,52), and the falling away of those who cannot endure his hard saying (6.60-70), fits the mood of a 'trial' of the disciples' faith. Similarly, the account of the woman about to be stoned is clearly an interpolation (8.1-11), but interestingly it portrays a forensic scene, suggesting that later scribes may have judged that it should be placed within the extended, intermittent trial motif that is prominent in John 5 through 10.
"Now it was the Sabbath," 5.9  

_Sabbath_

"Now it was the Sabbath" 9.14  
Sheepfold discourse 10.1-29  
"I and the father are one" 10.33

_Accusation 1_

Undoes Sabbath, 5.16  

_Defense 1_

father is working  
...I am working 5.17  

_He has a demon 10.19_

_Dead Penalty_

They sought to execute 5.18  

_They took up stones 10.31_

_Accusation 2_

He calls God his father  
making himself equal with God  
5.18.

_He has a demon 10.19_

_for blasphemy: he being human  
makes himself God, 10.33._

_Defense 2_

Reply--parable of son and father:  
son does nothing without father  
5.19

_Reply--I am God's son  
father is in me and I in father  
10.38_

_Clearly John 10.29-39 displays notable parallels with the sequence and content of John 5.17-23._
In John 5 through 10 a trial tradition similar to the forensic confrontations in Papyrus Egerton 2 may represent an earlier layer of redaction

Papyrus Egerton 2 gives evidence of a tradition of conflict between Jesus and his opponents which is similar to John 5 in its format of implied accusation and counter-accusation, and the language of witness. The forensic mood of the trial-like tradition in Papyrus Egerton 2.f.,(1-20) is comparable with (if not an actually parallel to) John 5.39 (also John 9.29-30a). Its general setting is evocative of the informal forensic setting of 5.10, 16. The following texts invite more specific comparison, though it would go beyond the scope of this project to do more than mention them here.

Papyrus Egerton fragment 1.1-5 implies that Jesus has been accused of breaking the law and that he answers these (unstated) allegations in his own defense. Also, fragment 11.22-30 (and fragment 3 recto) depict an abortive attempt to arrest and stone Jesus, in a context markedly similar to the attempt to execute Jesus by stoning in John 10.31. In John 5-10 Jesus routinely refers to God as "my (or the) father." Compare Papyrus Egerton 2 f.1. ll.5-15 where Jesus refers to God as my father.

Aspects of the speech in Papyrus Egerton 2 appear to parallel John 5.39,45; 9.29-30a and 10.25,30-31 (Dodd, 1953b:22-33; Crossan, 1985:70; Koester, 1990:215). The fragments do indicate the existence of a tradition of conflict between Jesus and his opponents which is markedly similar to portions of John 5-10 whether or not a literary parallel is established. Though the question of literary parallels is disputed, even Dodd (1953b:23) allows that it is possible that John 5-10 made use of a tradition similar to Papyrus Egerton 2.

More generally the fragments resonate with the mood of John 5 in that both depict Jesus in a public forensic confrontation with opponents who have alleged illegality; in both he defends himself, answering with reference to the witness of scripture; in both he has been judged worthy of death, as some attempt to stone him. The forensic content of Papyrus Egerton 2 suggests that John may have drawn from a similar forensic tradition in elaboration of the informal, intermittent forensic confrontations in John 5-10.

In spite of these striking similarities between the two traditions, there is no hint in Papyrus Egerton 2 of the speech concerning the status of the son. Nor is the term νιος

23 It is beyond the scope of my dissertation to engage in the scholarly dispute over whether Papyrus Egerton 2 reflects literary dependence upon the Fourth Gospel, as Dodd (1953b:27,32) tentatively suggests, or whether the direction of influence proceeds in the opposite direction, as Koester (1990:205-213; also 1980) and Crossan (1985:65-90) hold.
mentioned at all. Rather Jesus answers allegations of illegality with reference to his innocence, and to the witness of scripture and Moses.

In Papyrus Egerton 2.1 verso Jesus answers allegations from hostile opponents with reference to my father [τὸν πατήρ μου]. 24 Compare John 5.17 ὃ πατήρ μου. But only in John 5 does he elaborate his reply by virtue of his relationship as the son (υἱός). Further, overt similarity between the exalted speech concerning the son in John and the Synoptic accounts only begins at the point of John 5.18. This fact suggests to me that an earlier saying reflecting Jesus' oneness with "my father" has been developed in John 5.17-27 to fit into an already familiar trial pattern associated with sonship, a pattern comparable to the synoptic trial question on sonship. The strand of argument in John 5 which concerns "the son" thus appears to derive from a distinct tradition.

The missing sonship question in John's passion trial and the rationale for pursuing a complementary narrative in John 11 and 12

Below I will argue that the theme of sonship developed in John 5.17-23 and in a complementary way in John 11 and 12 follows a threat-enthronement pattern comparable to the sequence of the Synoptic trial question on sonship. The highest point of the synoptic accounts of the trial is the high priest's question, 'are you the son?' In John the question concerning sonship is missing from the appearance before the high priest that precedes the Roman trial scene; in John 18.12-14, 19-24 Jesus appears before Annas. Again he appears separately before Caiaphas immediately prior to his trial before Pilate (18.24,28). In none of these encounters is the question of sonship, which anticipates the climax of the Synoptic trial, even raised. The sonship question is absent from the place where one would expect it to appear if John were assumed to follow the pattern of the Synoptic passion trial.

The aporia has spawned speculation. 25 How could a matter of such deep theological import be omitted by a theologian such as John? In the case of Meeks (1967:60-61) and Crossan (1988:54-59,108) the question has led to reasoning which presupposes that the ans-

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25 Meeks (1967:60) is puzzled by the "abbreviated Johannine version" of the trial before the High Priest. In John 18.19-24 he notes that the central synoptic question ἀν ἐὰν ὁ χριστός (Mk.14.61 and parallels) is missing. Observing the general similarity between the Johannine and Synoptic passion traditions, he suggests, "It is likely that his source had a reference at this point to ὁ χριστός" (Meeks, 1967:60).
wer must lie in the vicinity of the trial before Pilate. In contrast, Dodd (1963:89), thinking more laterally, suggests that the omission in John's passion trial of this significant element is like John's omission of the Lord's supper; the motif which is not found in its expected place emerges in parallels elsewhere. Dodd notes that the basic elements of the Markan trial sequence are found in John 10.22-38. (My chart comparing the Synoptic trial with John 5.17 and 10.29-39 in chapter 3 highlights this common sequence.) Dodd (1963:91) even suggests that John 10.22-38 may be an alternative formulation of traditional material found in the Markan trial scene.

In line with Dodd's insight that the missing trial question on sonship may emerge in another place in John, I suggest that a later redaction of a trial tradition (with similarities to Papyrus Egerton 2) may have developed John 5.17-27 into a particular kingly type of trial narrative. Later I will propose that this type of trial reflects the divine warrior pattern of threat/victory/enthronement. The question concerning sonship is elaborated throughout this complementary sequence in John 5.17-23 and 11 through 12. By using a familiar pattern of threat answered by kingly victory and enthronement, the significance of Jesus' relationship with "my father" is elaborated in an argument about "the son." The later redaction follows a trial-like pattern in which the threats of execution foreshadowing Jesus' death are answered from a resurrection perspective of Jesus' enthronement as the messiah who is God's son. In the context of this pattern, the meaning of sonship relates to his status as son seated (metaphorically) at the right hand of God.

Because 5.17-23 and 10.29-29 are complementary texts it is reasonable that the pattern of sonship set out in John 5.17-23 may be elaborated in some complementary way, in reference to 10.29-39. However, I have not found in 10.29-39 speech concerning sonship that can compare to the elaboration of the complete argument in John 5.17-27. Though the element of threat is apparent, the language of sonship is not elaborated upon in 10.29-39 in

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26 Crossan's trial hypothesis is based upon an analysis of the non-canonical, the fragmentary Gospel of Peter. It begins as Pilate delivers Jesus over to be crucified; presumably, it originally included a trial segment which has been lost. Crossan (1988:17) argues that its earliest strata formed a literary source for all the canonical narratives of the passion and resurrection. Crossan (1988:54-59,108) deals at length with the distinctives of the Johannine trial in John 19.28-40, arguing that the trial before Pilate in John is similar to (his hypothetical reconstruction of) the trial in the Gospel of Peter, in that John also contains only one formal trial (Crossan, 1988:46-47).

27 See the major heading "Comparative studies..." and the sub-heading "The Synoptic trial question..." in chapter 5.
a way that complements the elaboration of the sonship speech in 5.19-27. Whereas John 5.17-23 elaborates a programmatic reply concerning the sonship, in 10.30-39 the term ὃ νεός τοῦ θεοῦ is mentioned only once in 10.36 and the theme of sonship is not developed further within that context. 29

Nevertheless, John 5 and John 10 appear to be programmatically complementary, as my chart indicated. The theme of exaltation of the son was set out schematically in 5.19-23, and 10.29-39 stands in a patterned relationship to 5.17-23. Because a complementary relationship already exists between these two texts, I will look for a possible development of a comparable theme of exaltation of the son subsequent to John 10.36. 30

John 11 and 12 appear to have been added on to the larger unit of John 5 through John 10. John 5 through John 10 already may have formed a coherent unit in which intermittent forensic conflicts occur. The canonical form of the argument elaborated in 5.17-27

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28 The puzzling answer of Jesus in 10.34-36 is a quote from Psalm 82.6. It has generally been interpreted as a reference to Israel’s judges who have been called ‘gods’ by virtue of their appointment by God, or as an address to Israel at the giving of the law (see Beasley-Murray, 1987:176). However, in neither of the above interpretations would the statement ‘I am the son of God’ appear to be a high Christological claim, if it is said in the context of recognition of other human beings whose status has been acknowledged as divine by virtue of their function in relation to YHWH. Such an interpretation appears to relativize the divine status of Jesus as ‘the son’. However a third interpretation proposed by Emerton (1960) and (1966) identifies the ‘gods’ as angelic powers who had authority over the nations but misused it: probably the LXX rendering of Psalm 82, and certainly the Peshitta translation, rendered El in Psalm 82.1a and Elohim in 82.1b. Such a reading was adopted in the Qumran community with a modification. The opening sentence of Psalm 82 is spoken by Melchizedek. In this interpretation Melchizedek is an angel with the title “God” and he addresses as ‘god’ angelic beings of the heavenly council who act unjustly in the world. See Beasley-Murray (1987:176) on further research and discussion related to this interpretation.

29 The interpretation of Emerton (1960) and (1966) stated in my note 27 above would confirm that John 10.34-36 is a response concerning sonship that is complementary in content to the god-like claim in 5.17-23. However, the heavenly council scenario that Emerton’s interpretation evokes does not complement the pattern of threat answered by kingly enthronement that lends coherence to John 5.17-23. Thus, even if we follow Emerton’s reading of John 10.34-36, it does not provide a kingly elaboration of the theme of sonship, that could complement the careful elaboration of the argument in John 5.17-27.

30 Brown (1986:414,427) maintains that chapters 5-10 conclude part three of the Book of Signs, and signal the close of the public ministry of Jesus. He thinks that chapters 11 and 12 were added to the earlier conclusion at 10.40-42. His assessment coheres with my interpretation, as I will show in more detail in chapter 8.

As I noted earlier, the trial motif in John 5-10 begins and ends threatening the execution of Jesus; also 5.17-27 and 10.29-39 bear resemblance to the question of sonship before the Sanhedrin in the Synoptic trial tradition. The addition of the narrative in 11 and 12 develops the trial theme by the raising of Lazarus, a preeminent sign that evokes further threats to the life of Jesus. It creates a bridge from the close of the informal trial (10.29-29) to the session before the Sanhedrin (11.45-54) where the authorities make a decision to kill Jesus. In this way John 11 links the informal trial (5-10) to a Sanhedrin setting that is comparable to the setting of the Synoptic trial of Jesus.
develops a schematic argument about sonship. Below I will suggest that a complementary elaboration of the 5.17-23 theme of sonship, which I could not find in 10.29-39, may be developed through the narrative of John 11 through 12.

Others have noted thematic similarities between John 5.17-27 and John 11 and 12. Barrett (1978:388) characterizes the meaning of the Lazarus narrative thus: "Jesus in obedience and dependence on the father has the authority to give life to whom he will. The incident is a dramatic demonstration of the truth already declared in 5.21 (cf. 5.25,28), which is itself the best commentary on the incident." I shall suggest that not only does the account of the raising of Lazarus develop the theme of sonship set out in John 5.17-23, but that the divine warrior pattern provides a common mythic framework for both the schematic presentation of sonship in 5.17-23 and its narrative development in the events of the raising of Lazarus, the anointing of Jesus, the triumphal entry, and associated themes in John 11-12. 31

The divine warrior pattern in John 11 through 12 complements John 5.17-27

Scriptural quotation and the divine warrior pattern in John 11-12

John 12.14-15 quotes Zechariah 9.9. The quotation derives from a wider scriptural context which displays the divine warrior pattern. As I have indicated in chapter 6, Zechariah 9 is a "paradigm example" of prophetic adaption of what P.D. Hanson (1979:315) calls the "league-royal cult ritual pattern." Verse 9 belongs to the part of the pattern that, according to Hanson's formal analysis, recounts the victory procession associated with the demonstration of YHWH's universal reign:

Conflict--victory (1-7)
Temple secured (8)
Victory shout and procession (9)
Manifestation of Yahweh's universal reign (10)
Salvation: Captives released (11-13)
Theophany of the Divine Warrior (14)

31 Meeks (1986:144) in characterizing the function of myth, notes that communication of the basic message of the myth is accomplished by resorting to redundance, and repetition of the signal, often in different ways; from the repeated impact of varying signals the basic structure of the myth gets through.
Within this formal framework, Hanson sees Zechariah 9 as the procession that marks the completion of YHWH's conquest of the land. The procession brings YHWH to encamp in his temple from whence he will protect the people from the enemy (Zech. 9.8). 33

The sign that the conquest has been completed is the glorious return of the Divine Warrior to the temple; that return is greeted by an exultant victory shout in Zech. 9.9, which Hanson (1979:320) believes derives from an old hymn of the royal cult. 34 Compare the victory shout with the laudatory welcome of the "great crowd that had come to the festival" when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, they took palm branches and went out to meet him shouting "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord, The king of Israel" (Jn. 12.12).

Schuchard's (1992:152) analysis of the sources behind John's explicit quotations of scripture notes that the citations often use materials from the immediate context of the text he quotes: "the Gospel of John evinces a consistently high regard for such contexts." 35 Further he observes that John does not arbitrarily alter the form of his citations, but may supplement it with other materials that come from "analogous contexts," an exegetical procedure well established in first century Judaism (Schuchard, 1992:152). The comment lends support to the possibility that, not simply John's quote of Zechariah 9.9, but also the story of Jesus within which the quotation is set, reflects the wider context of the divine warrior

32 From Hanson (1979:315-316).

33 Similarly Petersen (1992:1066) observes that YHWH's role as military victor in Zechariah 9.1-9 enables him to be construed as King.

34 In the Synoptics, Brown (1986:461) notes that the triumphal entry is followed by the cleansing of the Temple; this, in addition to references to David in the scene in Matthew and Mark, gives the impression of "the triumphal entry of the messianic king who has come to claim his capital and temple." Brown emphasizes the differences in the Johannine account. I will suggest that, in the wider context of the Johannine narrative of 11 and 12, reference to the Temple in 11.56 and subsequent allusion to a temple scene from Isaiah 6 in John 12.41, as well as the festival chronology within which the narrative is set, all convey a royal cultic setting for the narrative, a setting typical of the use of the divine warrior pattern.

35 Moo (1983:224) expresses the same thought in respect to use of testimonies from Zechariah by the Gospel writers generally.
pattern in Zechariah 9. In the chart below I will impose the elements of the divine warrior pattern, derived from P.D. Hanson’s analysis of Zechariah 9, upon the plot of John 11 through 12. I suggest that John’s dramatization of the divine warrior pattern may serve to develop the significance of the statement, "I am God’s son" in John 10.36 and the confession of Martha in John 11.27, "I believe that you are the Messiah, the son of God, the one coming into the world."

The anointing of Jesus for burial and entry to Jerusalem as king are set within a chronology linked to the Passover festival. (See John 11.55,56; 12.1,12,20 also 13.1.) In my discussion of Zechariah 9-14 in chapter 6, I note that J.H. Eaton (1986), P.D. Hanson (1979) and Hiebert (1992), have documented the association of the divine warrior pattern with festival themes in post exilic Jewish Apocalyptic. If the festival narrative in John 12 expands Martha’s confession in 11.27, Ναϊ, κύριε, ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα δι’ σοῦ ἐὰν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος, then her statement may anticipate the coming of the son as king in the festival procession of the triumphal entry (12.12).

Below I give a brief summary of elements of the divine warrior pattern derived from Zechariah 9 that I have placed as a template over the events and imagery within the narrative of John 11 through 12:

| threat/victory | Death and resurrection of Lazarus 11.25 |
| theophany | The glory of God displayed 11.40 |
| sacrifice and salvation | One will die for the nation 11.45-53 |
| temple scene anticipated | Will he come to the festival? 11.55-56 |
| sacrifice and banquet | Sacrificial anointing at dinner 12.1,9 |
| victory shout and procession | Triumphant entry as king 12.1-16 |
| temple secured | The son lifted up 12.20-33 |
| theophany-reign manifest | [Enthronement], judgment 12.37-43,48 |

The summary chart is followed below by a more extended commentary upon each of these elements within the narrative.

**threat /victory**

11.4 Lazarus’ illness is an opportunity to display the glory of God, that the υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ may be glorified (seen to be exalted) through it. At issue in the display...
is the belief of the audience in the power of the son over death. For the one who is dead the son is the resurrection and the life (11.25). These claims are framed by the traditional confession of Martha: "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, νικός του θεοῦ, the one coming into the world" (11.27). 37

**theophany**

The event of the son’s victory over Lazarus’ death is a manifestation of the glory of God (11.40). 38

**salvation**

John 11.45-53 foreshadows the threat of Jesus’ death. The high priest prophesies that the threat represented by destruction of one person will secure salvation for the whole nation; compare the pattern associated with the divine warrior myth, threat-victory-salvation. See also 12.9-11. 39

**Temple scene anticipated**

The setting of the drama is the feast of Passover in the Temple (11.55-56). Some anticipate that Jesus will come to the festival. Their expectation seems more significant when viewed in retrospect from the scene in which Jesus seated on a donkey is welcomed as king by the crowd coming to festival (12.12-14). See also Martha’s confession 11.27, Ναι, κύριε, ἐγὼ πεπίστευκα ὅτι σὺ εἶ ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ νικὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος.

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37 Byrne (1990:21-23) connects the realized eschatology of John with a common resurrection theme in the Lazarus account and John 5.21,24,28,29.

38 Compare it with the quotation of Isaiah in 12.41, where the glory of the son is only recognized by those who believe. In its larger context the quote relates to the enthronement of YHWH as king in the temple. John refers to this wider context of Isaiah’s vision in 12.41-42 in a way that ambiguously makes reference to Jesus. See my discussion of 12.41-42 later in this chapter.

39 Boers’ (1989:91) commentary on this text considers that John’s may be the most historically accurate of the Gospel trial accounts, he suggests that Jesus may not have been tried before the Sanhedrin.
sacrifice and banquet

In advance of the festival (12.1) in a banquet setting, Mary offers a sacrifice of costly perfume. She anoints Jesus' feet and wipes them with her hair. The action is interpreted in anticipation of the day of Jesus' burial (12.9).  

victory shout and procession

The festival is the setting of the victory procession. The crowd who gather for the procession relate it to Jesus' victory over death in raising Lazarus (compare 11.4,40). Scriptures that clearly derive from contexts associated with the divine warrior pattern are quoted: both Zechariah 9.9 and Genesis 49.11 are cited in John 12.15 and both give clear evidence of the divine warrior pattern. Though it is cited in the Synoptics also, a distinctive feature of John's citation of Zechariah 9.9 is that it is combined with a reference to Jesus' mount which, according to Schuchard (1992:84) derives from an analogous context in Genesis 49.11. "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet.... Binding his foal to the vine and his donkey's colt to the choice vine, he washes his garments in wine and his robe in the blood of grapes." The imagery, of the battle-soaked garments associated with a kingly figure who will ride a colt, in Genesis 49.11 evokes pictures of conflict associated with the divine warrior. Hiebert (1992:877-878) includes Genesis 49 among the texts reflecting the ancient divine warrior imagery. The scriptural testimony in John 12.15 begins with: Ἄρνηθεν τὰ σπέρματά σου ἔκτοτε. The source

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40 Fiorenza (1984: xiv) argues that the gospel traditions of the woman who anoints Jesus are remembered not because the anointing was a "commonplace gesture" of anointing a guest's feet; rather she suggests that originally it was understood as a gesture proclaiming the gospel through the prophetic anointing of the head of the Jewish king. My analysis supports this interpretation.

41 This link, as well as the setting of the anointing at the home of Lazarus, seems to justify linking the raising of Lazarus, the anointing of Jesus, and the triumphal entry as one extended narrative development.


43 According to Schuchard (1992:84) Genesis 49.11 was interpreted messianically at Qumran.

44 M.S. Smith (1992:61-63) identifies the comparable imagery in Isaiah 63.1-6 with divine warrior imagery that parallels the savage battle of Anat in the Ugaritic Baal cycle (CTA 3.2 [KTU 1.3 II].3-30).
from which it is quoted is disputed. Freed (1965:67) and Brown (1986:458) identify it with Zephaniah 3.14-16. The wider context of Zephaniah 3.8-13 anticipates a time when YHWH will gather and transform all the peoples of the earth. "Fear not" introduces imagery of YHWH as the king in your midst (Zephaniah 3.15), a warrior who gives victory (3.17). 46

On the basis of this context in Zephaniah 3, Brown (1986:462-463) points out that the saying in John 12.15 evokes imagery of the presence of YHWH as King in Jerusalem who has come to bring deliverance to all who are outcast. Comparing Zechariah 9.9 with 9.11 and Revelation 7.9, Brown (1986:463) compares the exultant joy of the crowd who welcome the king in John 12.12 with the great crowd assembled before the throne of God with palm branches in hand to give honor to the Lamb who was slain in Revelation 7.9. 47 I will suggest that a festival of enthronement of the divine warrior is a setting that lends coherence to these images.

The shout of the crowd, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord" may derive from Psalm 118.26. 48

*Temple secured*

Through his glorification in death all people are drawn to the son 12.20-33. The raising up of the temple of Jesus' body (John 2.19-21) is in John the exaltation of the king. The celebration of Jesus as king (12.13, 15) anticipates his

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45 Schuchard (1992:78) links it to Isaiah 44.

46 Ollenburger (1987:64-67) notes that the symbol of Zion in the Psalms is associated with the Kingship of YHWH which can never be overwhelmed by enemies. This tradition of YHWH's kingship, he argues, is unrelated to concerns with any earthly monarch.

47 Souza (1968:55, 169) relates the divine warrior tradition of the conquering king with the title, the Lamb of God. He favors the view that άγιος in John 1.29-36 refers to apocalyptic imagery of a young ram as the symbol of the victorious messianic king.

48 In chapter 5 I relate scriptural quotation from Psalm 118.22-23 to the pattern of killing/exaltation that attaches significance to Jesus' vindication in Acts 3.11 and Mark 12.1-12. Assuming that John understood the wider reference of the quotation from Psalm 118, quotation from it in John 12.12 indicates that the author of the Fourth Gospel did understand the pattern of threat/exaltation in Psalm 118 in relation to the significance of Jesus as king.
enthronement, which ironically in John is identified with his crucifixion (see 12.23,32-33; 3.14). 49

Theophany and manifestation of YHWH’s universal reign 50

The quotation from Isaiah 53.1 and 6.10 in John 12.37-41 mentions a vision of the glory of God enthroned above the cherubim in the temple (12.41) which evokes Isaiah 6.1-11.

As those who fail to give honor to the son in 5.23, those who fail to recognize and acknowledge (12.41-43) the status of the king incur judgment (12.48).

I have presented both the schematic characterization of sonship in John 5.17-23 and the narrative development of John 11-12 above within a plot line associated with the divine warrior motif. Scripture is not quoted in 5.17-23, but quotations deriving from settings associated with scriptural expressions of the divine warrior pattern abound in John’s account of the triumphal entry. The wider context of many of the testimonies quoted in this scene reflects the pattern associated with the divine warrior king. To see the pattern threat/victory-procession/victory-shout/enthronement as a frame of reference for the events and imagery in John 11 and 12 lends a coherence to the narrative that is not otherwise apparent.

The principle, argued by Meeks (1986:143), that the mythic signal is repeated in order to get the message across seems to be at work here. The pattern of threat answered by the superior status of the son John 5.17-23 resonates with a pattern of kingship associated with the victory of YHWH. John 11 and 12 develops a narrative that dramatizes the divine warrior motif, in support of the claim that Jesus is the messiah, the 

49 De la Potterie’s (1960:238) study of Jesus’ appearance before Pilate shows that the motif of judgment is linked to John’s presentation of Jesus as king. A decisive moment in the theme of Johannine judgment is his elevation on the cross which signals the judgment of the world (12.31;16.11). As I have argued, this also signals his enthronement. See also Borgen (1977) who identifies the imagery surrounding the lifting up of the son of man in John 3.13-14 with the sequence associated with enthronement.

50 A more detailed discussion follows later in this chapter.
about hearing the voice of the son of God (5.25). Compare Lazarus' resurrection and the division relating to the son which results in life or judgment (5.23,27) in 12.37-48. The relationship of the son to life (11.11-44) and to judgment (12.31,47-48) are elaborated in a narrative form in John 11 and 12. At the center of the narrative royal-like imagery of anointing, and the triumphal procession of Jesus as a victorious king is framed. The picture of the triumphant king is circled round with imagery related to his death. The meeting of the chief priests is to decide that his fate must be to die (11.4-53), the anointing is for his burial (12.7); he speaks of agony in the face of death (12.27-33). The narrative relies upon explicit quotation from Zechariah 9.9, and other texts which clearly derive from a divine warrior context. The sequence of events and images in 11 and 12, including Lazarus, the anointing, and triumphal entry, evokes most of the elements belonging to the divine warrior pattern.

**Divine warrior imagery from Psalm 89 in John 12 and 5.17-23**

The divine warrior pattern is found in Psalm 89.\(^{51}\) Below I will briefly highlight aspects of the text of Psalm 89 that resonate with the images John associates with Jesus' sonship in John 5.17-23 and 12.31,35.

Van Unnik argues that Psalm 89.21 is cited in John 12.34.\(^{52}\) But even if explicit citation of Psalm 89 within the Fourth gospel cannot be proved, it is still legitimate to show that imagery from another example of the divine warrior pattern, as derived from the text of

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\(^{51}\) As I have shown in my discussion of Psalm 89 in chapter 6 under the major heading "Evidence of correspondence..." and the subheading "The king portrayed...."

\(^{52}\) Van Unnik (1959:176-177) gives evidence that would support the argument that John's use of scripture is informed by a concept of divine kingship which is not alien to the images and patterns associated with the Jerusalem cult. In the context of the crowd's objection to Jesus' statement "when I am lifted up from the earth I will draw all people to myself" (Jn.12.32), Van Unnik (1959:177) argues that Ps.89.37 provides the most suitable source for the objection of the Jews in John 12.34 that, "We have heard from the Law that the Messiah remains forever."

However, as Van Unnik notes, Psalm 89.37 is not a source that has been considered in previous exegetical history. The usual candidates, such as Ps. 110.4; Is.9.6; Ez.37.25; all have a messianic content and speak of an eternal reign. But the main verb of Jn.12.34, \textit{μενεῖ}, does not occur in any of these. Though Bultmann says that \textit{μενεῖ} is used only in Psalms without messianic connotations, Van Unnik holds that he has found an exception in Ps. 89.37, in which the Psalmist referring to David says, \textit{το στέρμα ἄνων εἰς τος ζωήν τος αἰωνικός μενεῖ} (1959:177).

In a more general sense Van Unnik's insistence on the importance of this verb for John is affirmed by the repeated use of \textit{μενεῖ} in the John 15 discourse on "remaining" in the vine.
Psalm 89, may highlight distinctive aspects of John's version of the triumphal entry of Jesus. For at issue in this investigation is not the question, 'Which text was the source?' but 'Does this scriptural pattern throw light on the plot and sequence of this narrative?'

Psalm 89.19-29 gives an ideal picture of the coronation ritual of adoption of the king as God's son. In this ceremony the king was literally elevated to the status of heir of YHWH. Thus as the earthly representative of YHWH, the king as 'son' of God was regarded as inviolable, due to his position seated on the throne as representative of YHWH upon his throne, in this idealized picture the king's rule of the state was absolute, like that of God.

In one particular respect the similarity in sequence between Psalm 89.19-29 and John 5.17-23 is notable. A ritual part of the ceremony was the request of the king for his inheritance. In response God legally gives to the king whom he has adopted, as 'my son', the land over which he has dominion (See Ps. 2 and Kraus, 1988:132). However in Psalm 89, the emphasis is not only upon the functional sonship of the king. The king himself cries out to God as "my father" (89.26). The sequence of the account of the father/son relationship in Ps.89.21-26 can be compared with the movement of John 5:

Ps.89.20.21 I have anointed him, my hand shall always remain with him.

John 5.1-9 Jesus heals a man.
[The sign evokes the special (anointed as in Luke 4.18) role of the son, to do works of the father.]

Ps.89.22 The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him.

Jn.5.11,16,18 "It is not lawful...." They persecuted him because he did these things on the Sabbath day. [Due to his role, as kingly son, enemies' charges are answered from a stance of superiority.]

Ps.89.26 He shall cry to me, "You are my father."

Jn.5.17 Jesus replied, "My father...." (He calls God his own father making himself equal with God, 5.18b.)

Ps.89.27 I will make him the firstborn. Forever I will keep my steadfast love for him.
In chapter 6 I noted that Psalm 89 provides a particularly lucid outline of the divine warrior pattern. Below I draw attention to imagery in Psalm 89 that is similar to aspects of the narrative in John 12.3-27:

John 12.3,7,10 Mary anoints Jesus, foreshadowing his death.
Ps.89.20 YHWH anoints the king.

Jn.12.12-16,35 The festival procession and victory shout proclaiming Jesus as king. "Walk while you have the light of day" (John 12.35).  
Ps.89.15-17 Happy are the people who know the festal shout, who walk O Lord in the light of your countenance.

Jn.12.27 The cry of Jesus facing his hour of death.  
Ps.89.38-45 The lament concerning the shame of the king. The anointed king is rejected, his days cut short.

53 Compare Zechariah 12.10:
they shall mourn for him
as one mourns for an only child
they shall weep bitterly over him
as one weeps over a first born.

In the synonymous parallelism, "first born" and "only child" become synonymous, as Margaret Eaton has pointed out to me. Both refer to Jesus as son in John 1.14,18. Hanson (1979) identifies Zechariah 12.10 as another text belonging to a divine warrior pattern.

54 A.T. Hanson (1991:150) suggests that John 12.35 may allude to Jeremiah 13.16.

55 Though John does not describe an organized scene depicting the agony at Gethsemane, Brown (1986:470-471) notes that scattered throughout the Gospel are Gethsemane-like elements, such as the cry of Jesus in 12.27, which he thinks parallels the Synoptic agony scene. In commenting on 12.20-36, Brown (1986:467) observes that a setting associated with the feast binds these events to the context of the Passover, though the minimum of factual setting suggests that the material may refer to another level of meaning associated with the festival.

56 The agony of the king in Psalm 89.38-45 is linked with a New Year festival ritual by Gottlieb (1980) as I noted in chapter 6 under the major heading "Evidence of correspondence..." and the subheading "Rejection of the king...."
The comparable imagery suggests that the narrative in John 11 and 12 may rely upon a narrative pattern associated with Davidic kingship, even though it distinguishes Jesus as ὁ κυρίος τοῦ Θεοῦ from Davidic kingship.

Meeks (1967:21,41) correctly observed that a Davidic notion of kingship is critiqued in John. He argued that a Mosaic conception of the divine prophet king is the distinctive vehicle of Johannine concepts. However the fact that the Johannine critique appears aimed at earthly kingship, (as in John 18.36) should not minimize the significance for John of a scriptural pattern associated with ideal sonship of YHWH the King. To say that John shares an understanding of Jesus within a royal scenario with other early Christian speech does not deny that the kingship portrayed in John contains an implicit critique or a counsel of further disclosure in reference to other current conceptions of kingship. (See John 18.33-19.21.)

Meeks failed to note the powerful theological significance of the received tradition, associated with the close relationship between father and son in (Davidic models of) coronation, in the Johannine conception of Jesus. The divine warrior pattern that is constitutive for expressions proper to Davidic kingship such as Psalm 2 and Psalm 89 may also be constitutive of John’s expression of Jesus as king in John 5.17-23. (See my discussion of the relation of these texts to the ideal of Davidic monarchy in chapter 5.)

John’s distinctive perspective on the divine warrior pattern

In this section I will suggest that the distinctive use of the threat/enthronement pattern in John 5.17-23 is consistent with a cultic perspective in which Jesus as the son is identified with the enthronement of Yahweh.

The triumphal entry is one scene which is shared by John and the Synoptics. Within this scene, John quotes from Zechariah 9. The same is true of the Synoptic versions of the event. The divine warrior pattern is prominent in Zechariah 9. John’s quotation from Zechariah 9.9 is distinctive from Synoptic quotations of the same verse as others have already shown in considerable detail. 57 The distinctive elements include: 1) the reference

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57 Extensive scholarly discussion attends the distinctive aspects of John’s quotation from Zechariah 9.9 in light of comparable Synoptic quotation. A concise review of the issue is provided by Schuchard (1992:71-84) who maintains that John’s use of the text is as distinctive as it can be while still following the same text. See also Freed (1965:66-81). Meeks maintains that John’s emphasis is upon the centrality of Jesus’ kingship and that this theme is connected with the earlier discourse in John 10 on Jesus as the Good Shepherd. The kingly title of shepherd is also part of the wider context of Zechariah 9-14.
to Genesis 49.11; 2) the static image of Jesus seated on his mount 58 which Schuchard has associated with enthronement imagery; 59 and 3) the fact that Jesus himself finds the colt, a task given to disciples in the Synoptics. 60

These differences show that the procession of Jesus as king in John undeniably is distinctive. But in themselves the differences between the Synoptics versions and the Johannine version of the triumphal entry scene are inadequate to account for John's distinctive picture of Jesus as the son.

Comparison between the use of Zechariah 9.9 in John and the Synoptics does not explain the high Christological perspective that is uniquely Johannine. John claims that Jesus as the son is equal to God, that the son is one with the father. Further he is also identified with the one unique to the father (1.14,18) who is in the beginning with God and was God (1.1). John makes a claim that is distinctive from, for example, the claim in Acts 4.10-12 that though you crucified him God has raised him. The Acts statement is neither an explicit statement of the Son’s oneness with God nor of his equality with God. (See my discussion of the sermons in Acts 3-5 in chapter 5.)

In order to do justice to this crucial difference, I suggest two solutions. First the pattern of killing/exaltation was imposed, as a kind of organizing structure upon Johannine sayings and traditions that already reflected a perspective affirming the oneness of Jesus with the father. I will discuss this more fully in chapter 8. Secondly, in view of a Johannine commitment to emphasis on Jesus’ oneness with the father, John uses the divine warrior pattern in a distinctive way. The tradition of kingly exaltation is seen from the perspective of YHWH as the enthroned king with whom Jesus is inseparably identified.

58 The language of the Synoptic accounts (Mk.11.9; Mt. 21.9; Lk. 19.38) features the movement of the procession, the crowd before and after as he rode, in contrast to John, in which the prophecy is fulfilled by the act of Jesus who "sat" καθίσματι on the colt (Freed, 1965: 80).

59 Schuchard (1992:81) compares John's distinctive use of καθίσματι in 12.15 with the imagery in 1 Kings 1 in which David charges his leaders to place Solomon on his own mule and bring him to Gihon where they are to anoint him as king and then herald him as he returns to Jerusalem to assume his throne.

60 John's distinctive use of scriptural quotation in this scene, leads some scholars to regard it as an independent tradition. See Meeks (1967:85-87) and Schuchard (1992:71-76). Schuchard provides a concise discussion of the aspects in which John's quotation of scripture related to this event differs from that of the Synoptics (1992:71-73).

Barrett (1978:415) maintains that there is no more difference between John and Mark's respective versions of the scene than there is between that of Matthew and Luke.
**Sayings and stories adapted to fit the pattern in a late edition**

The complexity of speech in John due to the tradition-history of the Fourth Gospel, is contingent upon my discussion here. Engagement in the corresponding complexity of scholarly debate on the matter lies beyond the scope of this dissertation. For this see D.M. Smith (1992). Nevertheless, I feel obliged to give some indication of the position that I take with reference to John’s use of the Synoptics and Acts, because it affects my interpretation of John’s presentation of Jesus within a pattern of kingly exaltation.

Within the Fourth Gospel, material deriving from diverse settings appears to be arranged in combination. For example, the ‘remembering’ passages that may allude to an already understood pattern of messianic death and exaltation are distinctive from emphasis on the line of argument that Jesus is *equal to God* in John 5.17-23. The incongruity between the claim of oneness with the father, and a ‘remembered’ pattern of scripture that apparently evokes the messianic victory in the event of enthronement, requires some explanation.

As I will argue in more detail in chapter 8, I consider that John employed the killing/enthronement pattern in order to impose a later super-structure upon earlier gospel materials such as stories of signs performed by Jesus, and discourses developed from sayings. This earlier version of John did not include a Synoptic style passion narrative. Sayings such as "The father is working... and I am working" and "I and the father are one" reflect a Johannine emphasis on Jesus’ oneness with the father. When, at a later stage, these materials were shaped into the framework for an extended narrative centering around the events of crucifixion and resurrection, the Johannine testimony was shaped to fit the form and perform the function conventionally associated with the Synoptic-style of gospel genre.

The position I have arrived at is compatible with Brown’s (1986:414,427) characterization of much of the material in John 5-10 as an earlier stage of the Gospel, to which John 11 and 12 were later added, and with them an explicit emphasis upon resurrection, kingship and crucifixion as exaltation. D.M. Smith (1992:69) characterizes this as a general position held by Brown and Bultmann, further developed by Boismard. It holds that sayings and discourse material was at a late stage of redaction revised in light of the Synoptic style of gospel presentation.

Though I consider that the arrangement of John into a gospel genre represented a late redaction, I do not think that the pattern of kingly exaltation was unknown within the ear-
liest Johannine tradition, nor do I think that stories such as the triumphal entry of Jesus were not familiar to the Johannine church at an earlier stage. The sayings reflecting a distinctive Johannine emphasis on Jesus' oneness with the father do not contradict a kingly interpretation of Jesus, nor do they necessarily indicate ignorance of it.

**Distinctive perspectives on the pattern of killing juxtaposed with exaltation in selected texts in Acts 2 and John 5**

In chapter 6 I described various examples of Israelite use of the divine warrior genre. In all, YHWH is the divine warrior. But in some, such as Psalms 2 and 89.19-25 and Judges 5.26-27, it is possible to see that a human action, decreed or inspired by YHWH, is presented through a person in Israel who acts after the pattern of YHWH's victory and superior reign over chaos and enemies.

I consider that the presentation of Jesus as the exalted son in the speeches in Acts 3-4 could be said to follow such a pattern. Though Jesus was rejected and killed God effected a reversal, the threat posed by his enemies was overcome when God raised him from death, to be enthroned above all at the right hand of God. As the son Jesus is the agent of God's salvation.

A detailed study that interprets the speeches in Acts within the framework of the divine warrior pattern is beyond the scope of this project. However, based upon my comparison between John 5.17-23, Mark 12.1-12 and excerpts from the Acts speeches in chapter 5, I have noted that the image of sonship in John 5 is distinctive. In John 5.17-23 no reversal or threat to the honor and life of Jesus is acknowledged. In contrast the quotation of Psalm 118.22-24 in Mark 12.12.10-11 and Acts 4.11-12 appears to allow for a reversal of the status of Jesus.

Psalm 118.10-25 depicts one whose very life is threatened; but who nevertheless trusts in YHWH. In the context of this trust the threat of violence and shame is interpreted in reference to the final victory of YHWH over chaos and enemies. The one who trusts in YHWH is threatened, but empowered by God the deliverer, who is already inviolable from any foe. Thus the threat is reversed as the person who was threatened and rejected is exalted.

John 5.17-23 is distinctive in that it allows for no reversal. Nevertheless it appears to share the pattern (of the threat followed by imagery of the enthroned, exalted son) with the Synoptic trial tradition and Acts 4.11-12.
I have proposed that the distinctive Johannine argument in John 5.17-28, that ‘Jesus is equal to God’ makes sense when it is read in reference to the kingly pattern of threat/enthronement. Psalm 2 also reflects the divine warrior pattern within the royal ideology. If John 5 shares this “royal” killing/enthronement pattern with speech on the exaltation of the messiah (such as Acts 4.10-11; 2.32-36), then the father/son relationship (as it is framed within the pattern of John 5.17-23), is not expressed in a way that is totally unique. Nor is it alien to the royal sonship tradition that attaches royal significance to Jesus’ death and resurrection. The heavenly exaltation of Jesus as the king evokes images of resurrection. (Note the emphasis on the theme of resurrection of the dead in response to the son’s word in John 5.21,25,28-29.)

The distinctive element in John’s portrayal of enthronement imagery is the heavenly origin and destination of Jesus as the son of the Father. John makes it plain that Jesus belongs, not on earth as earthly representative of the divine throne, but in the bosom of his father as the one who stands in a unique relationship of sonship.

This "heavenly" perspective is characteristic of John more generally. (See Trumbower, 1992:113.) Ashton (1991:401-404) argues that the Fourth Gospel assumes a two-level correspondence between heaven and that which is spiritually generated on earth. John uses irony to speak from a heavenly perspective in earthly situations, thus the heavenly perspective is reinforced when the speech of Jesus is routinely misunderstood. However the element of irony cannot be claimed as a Johannine distinctive. John 5.17-27 and the Synoptic trial accounts both reflect a deeply ironic pattern of presentation of Jesus as the heavenly enthroned son in answer to a challenge from his accusers. Daniel 7.13-14 figures in both as well. Also the empowerment of the son as judge in John 5.23 resonates with the giving

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61 For more extensive background into the literary device of irony in John see Wead (1974) and Duke (1985).

62 Expression of the divine warrior motif is clearly found in Daniel. See J.J. Collins (1979); Day (1985: 151-176); and Hiebert (1992:878). The pattern is explicit in Daniel 7. Though Daniel 10-12 is not expressed in mythological terms, J.J Collins maintains that it also follows a common pattern with Daniel 7:

In each, the kingship over heaven and earth is at stake. First, there is a threat posed by a rebellious king or kings. Then that threat is removed by some supernatural power. Finally, there follows a state of salvation expressed as a kingdom in Daniel 7, as resurrection in Daniel 12... (J.J. Collins, 1977:109).

However, traditional scholarship relating Daniel 7.13-14 to early Christian testimonies has focused upon the heavenly bearing of the one ‘like a son of man’. Exegetes generally do not highlight the other element, that of lethal threat that shapes the wider context setting of these texts. Images of destruction by threatening beasts precedes the image of kingly exaltation which destroys the dominion of the beasts in Daniel 7. A battle with rebellious kings is the wider context of Daniel 11.1-12.2., and a time of anguish immediately precedes the images of resurrection for the dead (in Daniel 12.1-2).
of dominion to the ἐνθρωπία in Daniel 7.14. Daniel 7.13-14 is quoted by Jesus in response to the Synoptic trial question on sonship; the testimony from Daniel is echoed in with the content and sequence and allusions to Daniel 7 in John 5.17-27 and 10.31-39, as I noted in chapter 3. Reference to the ἐνθρωπία in John 5.27 literally reproduces the LXX term as expressed in Daniel 7.13. Resurrection is a key theme in Daniel 12.2. John 5.26-30 evokes a resurrection scene. The relation between John 5.26-30 and Daniel 12.2 is widely noted.

Similarly the quotation of Zechariah 9.9 by John and the Synoptics, a text that in its wider context clearly employs the divine warrior pattern, provides support from another quarter for the possibility that reliance on this pattern was in no way exclusive to John’s interpretation of Jesus, but related more broadly to early Christian assumptions concerning the significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

John presents the son as inviolable. He suffers no reversal; he is inseparably one with his father. Though John’s presentation is distinctive it does not appear to derive from a different mythic framework. Both John and the Synoptics interpret Jesus within a common scriptural frame of significance in the triumphal entry. However, John understood the rel-

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63 If the exalted speech concerning the son in 5.17-23 reflects early Christian understanding of the resurrected Christ the traditional images of resurrection in 5.26-30 may be seen in a new light. According to Borchert (1988:502) the “hinge point” of the Fourth Gospel is the resurrection which functions as an organizing theme; he maintains that in the paralytic story in John 5 the resurrection perspective “moves to center stage.”

Guiding (1960:205-206) suggests that in much of John the words of Jesus are presented from a resurrection perspective. Similarly Wead (1970:29) comments that while written from a post-resurrection perspective, John shows signs to authenticate Jesus and presents these so as to place people in a position of deciding for or against him.

64 See for example Ashton (1991:357-363) Brown (1986:220) and Hamerton-Kelly (1973:235). They emphasize the relationship between the final judgment depicted in Daniel and the scene of the dead coming out of their tombs to face a resurrection of life or condemnation in John 5.26-30; it echoes the resurrection scene in Daniel 12.2.

65 The limits of this project make it impossible for me to undertake the extensive comparative work which would be required to establish this assertion. For this reason I cannot here claim that the divine warrior pattern as such was central to early Christian interpretation of Jesus. Rather it is enough to note that the pattern of killing/exaltation is not inconsistent with the divine warrior pattern of threat/victory as identified by P.D. Hanson, see chapter 6. In chapters 3, 4, and 5 I have already shown the significance of the killing/exaltation pattern in relation to selected New Testament texts.

66 I limit this statement to my analysis of John 5 and John 11 through 12 above in reference to the pattern of the divine warrior myth. This does not deny that other mythic patterns, such as the ascent/descent schema noted by Bultmann (1925) and (1971) have a distinctive role in other contexts within the Fourth Gospel.
tionship between the son and YHWH as king in a distinctive way, while relying upon the same pattern of expression. John identifies the son with YHWH the King from the beginning. Thus other early Christian testimony to Jesus can be seen to share a common pattern of kingship, and yet John takes a distinctive stance with reference to this pattern. The son is inseparable from God.

For example, the Acts 2-4 sermons present Jesus from the point of view of the one chosen by God to suffer and be exalted in resurrection according to a foreordained plan or pattern: in his death and resurrection the pattern of YHWH's victory and superior power is displayed. (See Acts 2.23-24; 3.13,17.) The messiah is quite distinct from YHWH but acts after the type of YHWH. This perspective is somewhat analogous to the Israelite view that the king was adopted as son in the event of enthronement, as in Psalm 2.7. It is a view that is not contradicted by John's portrait of Jesus as king. (Note the comparison with Psalm 89.26 above.) John made use of the same mythic pattern but from a different point of view. John 5.17-23 is a programmatic statement of Jesus' oneness with God; but the emphasis in John's use of kingly sonship imagery is upon the inseparable identity of the son with the father.

I shall attend to this distinctive focus in reference to quotations from Zechariah 12 and Isaiah 6 within the narrative of John 12.

**Events in John 12 evoking the mood of Zechariah 12 through 14**

John makes use of material from Zechariah 9 through 14 in several places: John 12.14-15 quotes Zechariah 9.9; John 19.37 quotes Zechariah 12.10; John 16.32 may allude to Zechariah 13.7; John 19.34 evokes the context of Zechariah 13.1 and 14.8; John 10.11,15,17 seems to develop the shepherd theme in Zechariah 11.12, 12.10 and 13.7. See Moo (1983:222). The quotation from Zechariah 12.10 in John 19.37 has no parallels in the New Testament. See Freed (1965:109) and Moo (1983:221,222). The relatively intensive use of material from Zechariah 12-14 in the Fourth Gospel leads me to conclude that John was familiar with the larger context of the prophetic material in Zechariah 9-14.

In Zechariah 12 through 14 the genre of the Divine Warrior is employed in a narrative form. The wider context of Zechariah 12 is a cryptic apocalyptic account. In it,

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68 Petersen (1992:1066) dates Zechariah 12 through 14 within the Hellenistic period. He considers Zechariah 9 through 11 to be a separate booklet which may include material deriving from before the exile, but which was given final form within the Persian period.
according to P.D. Hanson, the part of the divine warrior pattern associated with a victory celebration, which had featured prominently earlier in Zechariah, is transformed into a gigantic rite of mourning of the peoples over the "one whom they have pierced." 69

The divine warrior sequence in Zechariah 12.7-11 effects a transformation, victory brings glory in which the feeblest becomes like David, and a spirit of compassion is poured out as people look upon the one whom they have pierced, whom they mourn as an only son. In response to the event a fountain is opened for cleansing (13.1), the sacrifice brings purification of Israel from idols (13.1-9), the transformation is effected by God who turns the sword "against my shepherd" to refine and test whether the people are the people of God.

The wider context of the quotation anticipates the day of YHWH as a time when YHWH will become king over all the earth (14.9). 70 YHWH will be one and his name one, there will be continuous day (14.6) and living waters will flow (14.8). 71 It is required that those of the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up to worship the King.

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69 The shepherd sayings which Moo identifies with a term for YHWH, and for the Davidic messiah in the late Psalms, culminate in the intimation that the shepherd suffers death and by his death brings about a decisive turn (Moo, 1983:175-178). Zechariah 12.10 refers to a king who is represented through images of death (Moo, 1983:212). John uses an exegetical tradition in which the Hebrew of Zechariah 12.10 is applied to Jesus' death: This one is the beloved, the first born. (Compare John 19.34.)

70 Petersen (1992:1067) characterizes Zechariah 14.12-21, in terms of a "cosmic celebration of the feast of booths."

According to Barker (1987:53-61), the mythology associated with the ancient royal cult, was suppressed when the festival of Passover replaced the New Year festival in the calendar instituted by Josiah. On the same theme Mettinger (1982:67) notes that the enthronement of YHWH was replaced, during the era of Deuteronomy, by the Name; and the Autumn festival was replaced by the Passover in the era of Josiah.

Historical reconstruction of the persistence of the enthronement tradition into New Testament times is beyond the scope of this study. But it is proper to ask whether the pattern of meaning associated with the ritual of enthronement of the king might have survived in association with the theme of the Passover sacrifice and deliverance.

In Revelation imagery of the lamb who was slain overlaps with a setting (in 22.1,5) that evokes the festival of exalting God as king in Zechariah 14.7,8. Revelation 22.1,5 is analyzed on the pattern of Zechariah 14 in The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation by A.Y. Collins (1976), who uses the divine warrior pattern as the interpretive key to organizing schema of the Revelation.

the Lord of Hosts, in a festival setting (14.16); those who do not honor him with worship at the festival shall be judged (14.17-19).  

The festival setting of Zechariah 14 evokes an existential transformation of the most ordinary events in life. On the bells of the horses, in that day, it shall be inscribed "Holy to the Lord" (14.20), and the cooking pots shall be transformed as bowls before the altar (14.21). Its mood evokes a convergence of present and future comparable to the apocalyptic-like transformation of experience in John 5.24-25 and 12.27-33.  

Preiss notes a similar temporal perception in the Johannine expression of the future interpenetrated with the present: "the hour is coming and now is" (5.25) reflects a collapsing of time as in worship. He maintains that the early Christian cult is the social context, which most closely corresponds to this temporal dimension that he describes as judicial mysticism: past events, present reality and future expectation converge in the celebration of the Eucharist; this "interpenetration of seasons," he suggests, is like the event of revelation in John (Preiss, 1954:25). In cultic observance, divine reality is present and contemporary while the ritual account of distinctive events nevertheless are understood to have "their place in real time" (Preiss, 1954:28,25, especially note 1).  

John 12.27-33 evokes a comparable conflation of time and events. A dramatic narrative sequence leading up to this speech concerning the hour of Jesus death/glorification, crucifixion/exaltation begins with reference back to the resurrection of Lazarus (12.1), the

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72 I have noted that the use of the divine warrior pattern in the Psalms frequently appears to have been attached to worship in the context of cultic festival ritual in chapter 6 under the major heading "Evidence of correspondence...." J. Eaton (1986:106-109) and P.D. Hanson (1979:300, 310) both comment upon the prominence of the divine warrior genre within the literature of the post exilic period. The scenario of divine kingship and epiphany, the triumph over waters and other foes as the prelude to salvation, is the pattern which is connected clearly with the Autumn festival in Zechariah 14.16 (Eaton, 1986:106); so also Hanson, (1979:364,315-400). Eaton (1986:106) argues, based on evidence from the prophets, that in traditions emerging out of exile Israel made prominent use of the festival pattern. He observes that the dramatic ritual enactment used in festivals of Mesopotamia and Egypt and in processions of Israel suggests that similar rites may be behind Psalms 24;47;68;132. In chapter 6 I refer to the scholarly debate over this matter in the major heading "Evidence of correspondence...."

73 Ashton (1991:401-404) notes the significance of apocalyptic features in John's distinctive portrait of Jesus. Malina (1985:9,16) characterizes Johannine speech as anti-language when it uses hyperbole pointing beyond reality within the known social system. Thus he develops an insight comparable to Ashton's, but from a sociological perspective.

74 Eliade (1959:68-70) distinguishes between ordinary temporality and sacred time, the time of festivals; "primordial mythic time [is] made present" he says when by means of rites ordinary duration passes into sacred time.
anointing of Jesus by Mary of Bethany (12.3), the acclaim of Jesus as King of Israel by the crowd (12.9-12). Among those who have come to the festival are Greeks who wish to see Jesus (12.20-21). (Compare Zechariah 14.16.) Jesus conveys an answer to the Greeks, pilgrims who have come to the festival to see him. The message concerns the hour of his glorification (12.23). The solemn proclamation is set beside the analogy of the dying/fruitful grain of wheat. Those who will serve by this pattern will be honored by the father. The intensity of the diverse and yet related movement of John 12 builds up to the confusing and troubled, though resolute climax of 12.24.

It is as if Jesus feels troubled by threats of impending death and yet he calls upon his father. The voice from heaven seems to signal that the hour of judgment is now (12.31). Or is it to come? (Compare the anticipation of judgment in 5.25-29.) As in Zechariah 13.10 the death of one is the catalyst for the transformation of many. In the wider context of Zechariah 9-14, we find the kingly title of shepherd, whom YHWH strikes (Zechariah 13.7), and the theme of the death of a shepherd figure which effects the transformation of many.

In Zechariah 13.7, it is God who strikes the shepherd. In John the lifting up of Jesus in crucifixion is the event that signals the transformation of all things. For John it is the

75 Brown (1986:470-471) relates this text to the tradition of Christ's agony at Gethsemane.

76 Woll (1981:123) argues that John's retrospective point of view is the hermeneutical key to the Fourth Gospel's distinctive presentation of Jesus; from a resurrection perspective all temporal boundaries are relativised by the author who has introduced a hierarchical division to time associated with events.

77 Preiss' characterization of the peculiar Johannine perception of events as "juridical mysticism" is founded on his observation that the Johannine formulae which are suggestive of mystical immanence are regularly mixed with juridical formulae, as in 1 John 5.7 (Preiss, 1954:24-25). Preiss exemplifies his definition of "juridical mysticism" with reference to texts, such as 5.17, 19 and their fraternal twins 10.30, 37, 38 which deal with the inseparable relationship between the son and the father: the ontological unity in such expressions, he observes, "coincides with the bond formed by the obedience of a witness--a bond which has the character of something severely juridical and almost military"--Jesus is in the father and the father is in him because he does the works of the father (Preiss, 1954:25).

It is a temporal perception which fits a setting of worship in which witness is not historical but juridical and time is not dissolved but conquered (1954:25). See my more general discussion of Preiss under the discussion of the cosmic trial tradition in chapter 1.

78 In John 10.50 the high priest's prophetic insight, that it is expedient for one to die for the many, follows the discourse on the good shepherd who lays down his life for the sheep (John 10.11). Moo (1983:222) connects the portrayal of the shepherd in John 10.11, 15, 17 with the shepherd in Zechariah 11.12; 12.10; 13.7.

hour of Jesus' glorification. "Now the ruler of this world will be driven out." Of the sig­
nificance of the hour of his death, Jesus says, "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will
draw all people to myself" (12.23,27,31,32). In 12.32 to lift up (ὑψώθω) literally translates
'exalt' though it refers to crucifixion. (See Ashton, 1991:493.)

It is in this context that the crowd (who had met him shouting Hosanna, v.12) now
ask about what they had heard in the law, "that the Messiah remains forever" (12.34).
They ask how the son of man could be said to remain when he is said to be lifted up from
the earth. They do not yet recognize the meaning of his lifting up; it signified he is the one
enthroned at the festival.

John 5 through 12 is set within scenes chronologically related to festivals. (See John
5.1; 7.2; 12.1,12; 13.1.) Others have already dealt in considerable detail with the festival
setting of this portion of John. 80

The emphasis in Zechariah 14.6 upon the worship of the King, the Lord of Hosts, in
the festival is evocative of John's emphasis upon honoring the son just as they honor the
Father. In that day YHWH will become king over all the earth (Zech. 14.9), YHWH will
be one and his name one (Zech. 14.6). The son is given the powers of life and judgment,
that they might honor, or one could say, worship, the son as they worship the father (John
5.22-23). In John's version of the question concerning sonship, Jesus declares that the
Father is in me and I am in the Father (John 10.38; the Father and I are one, 10.30).

80 Guilding (1960) interprets the Fourth Gospel according to the pattern of the Jewish lectionary.
Morris (1964) attempts to discredit this interpretation based upon the dating of the lectionaries. In support
of the validity of Guilding's insight in relation to interpretation of John 5 Moreton (1968) affirms common
themes in John 5 and the tractate on the new year feast of Rosh ha-Shanah in the Mishnah. Braun (1966:105)
affirms Guilding's identification of John 5 with the themes of judgment and resurrection associated in Rosh
ha-Shanah and Tishri. Bowman (1975) proposes a rather disjointed reading of John 5 and 11 in relation to
the feast of Purim, the plot line of the book of Esther, and the thought world of R. Akiba.
Michaels (1974) characterizes John 5-12 as the "temple discourse"; he notes that the trial-like material
in this section of John creates a complex interaction with the symbolic background provided by the setting of
the feasts. Brown (1986:CXL1) and Mlakuzhyil (1987) employ the festival setting as a key to the schematic
outline of the Gospel. Songer (1988:459) attempts to focus the "steady insistence that Jesus is God's Son" in
John 5-12 by attention to festivals, though his documentation of the significance of festivals in first century
Jewish practice is inadequate. In a similar vein see Yee (1990). Bernard (1976:32-34) gives a more detailed
analysis of texts in Ta' anit Za.b. that relate to the Zechariah 14.17 feast which was associated with judgment
and blessing.
Allusion to the glory of YHWH in the temple in John 12.41

In Zechariah 14, to acknowledge that YHWH is enthroned as King evokes a distinctive transformation of life. Compare John 12.40 which quotes Is.6.10. The wider scriptural context of Isaiah 6 is the prophet’s vision in the year the earthly king Uzziah died. The prophet sees YHWH sitting on a throne high and lofty, the hem of his robe fills the temple.

In commenting on the glorious vision of the Divine Throne, in John 12.41-43 the pronoun οὗτος is ambiguous. In 12.40 it refers to the Lord enthroned upon the cherubim whose glory Isaiah gazes upon in the temple. In 12.41 it appears to refer to the one enthroned in the temple, but, in the context it is clearly speaking of Jesus. If John 12.40 is a citation of Isaiah 6.10, Brown (1986:486) observes, then John 12.41 recalls Isaiah’s 6.1-5 vision of YHWH on the throne. Brown notes that John seems to presuppose a text where Isaiah sees God’s glory, but in both the Masoretic text and the LXX, "Isaiah sees the Lord himself [sic]." This leads Brown to suggest two possible solutions: 1) that John may follow the targum of Isaiah in which the prophet sees "the glory of the Lord" in Isaiah 6.1 and the shekinah in 6.5; or, 2) that John supposes that it was the glory of Jesus that Isaiah saw. The ambiguity is reflected in 12.45: "The one who sees me sees the one who sent me." 81

81 The comments of Günter Reim (1984) on early Christian use of Psalm 45.7 may be pertinent as background to this text. Though Psalm 45 is not directly quoted in John, it is quoted in Hebrews 1.8 in the context of an elaboration on the Prologue which presents the Son as the heir of all things, the creator, the reflection of God’s glory, and the imprint of God’s being (Heb.1.2). In the subsequent elaboration on the superiority of the Son to the angels, the author asks rhetorically:

For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son: today I have begotten you?’ [Ps.2.7] Or again, I will be his Father and he will be my Son?’[2 Sam.7.14].... Of the son he says, ‘Your throne O God is forever and ever [Ps.45.6].... To which of the angels has he ever said ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?’ [Ps.110.1] (Heb.1.5,6,8,13).

This kingly portrait of Jesus as a heavenly figure on the pattern of the Davidic monarchy has much in common with the kingly presentation of Jesus in the Fourth gospel. Günter Reim’s (1984:158) exploration of the designation of Jesus as οὗτος in the Fourth Gospel, notes the similar prominence with which this title is given to Jesus in Hebrews, and argues that Psalm 45 provided a common background to Hebrews and also to John. Reim bases his argument upon Pilate’s questioning of Jesus in John 18.33-37: "Are you the king of the Jews?"; and Jesus’ reply, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my soldiers fight.... To this end I was born....that I should bear witness to the truth...."

Reim argues that Ps.45.1-7 provides background for the expectation of a kingdom without war. According to the Targum 45.3 translation of Ps.45 [see H.L. Strack and P. Billerbeck. 1952-54. Vol. 3.2 on Hebrews 1.8 f.p.680], Ps.45.7 reads: "Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows"; LXX: ἔχρισεν σε ὁ θεὸς δῆσως σου. Reim (1984:159) cites Ps.45.7 as the "only OT passage where—as it seems—God speaks to God, God speaks to the Messiah, the Messiah as God." Some Jewish interlocutors of the author of Hebrews interpreted ‘elohim’ of Ps.45.8 as a reference to angels (Reim, 1984:159). In response the author of Hebrews highlighted his Christology by reinforcing the messianic understanding of Ps.45, by translating ‘elohim’ with θεὸς (as was the practice of some pre-Christian Jewish interpreters). Thus Reim concludes that the confession of Jesus as God in the Fourth Gospel stems from a messianic understanding of Ps.45 in Johannine circles which goes back...
By referring back to the wider context of Isaiah 6 we stand in the presence of the Seraphs who attend the throne in the temple by giving honor to YHWH. The voice of the Lord is heard to say, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" The prophet is commissioned to take the speech of the enthroned One, to the people. Assuming the quotation in John 12.40 is from Isaiah 6.9-10, the words attributed to Isaiah in John 12.39 relate to the voice of judgment from the throne concerning the fear and obduracy of the people who can neither hear nor see. In the context of John 12.42-43 the speech from Isaiah's throne-vision judges those who fail to confess the glory manifest in Jesus. (Compare John 5.41,43,44.)

The divine warrior pattern in John 5 and 12

The whole story presenting Jesus as the ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ εἰς τὸν κόσμον ἐρχόμενος (John 11.27), the king who is coming to be enthroned in glory, culminates in reference to the vision of the one enthroned in the temple. In response to the vision of the throne, lines are drawn between those who acknowledge the glory and those who do not (John 12.41-43). Enthronement imagery is one element of the divine warrior pattern. The anointing and triumphal procession of the king amid shouts of victory is linked to the image of the enthronement in a way that effects division between those who will honor the son as the one enthroned and those who refuse him the honor due to God. (Compare John 12.37-44 and John 5.23.) In this narrative framework the divine warrior pattern generates a division between those who will give honor to the king and those who refuse. 82

The division that the pattern of divine kingship creates evokes a further comparison with the use of the pattern in Zechariah 13.8 and 14.17. I noted in chapter 5 that in a pre-Christian messianic interpretation of this Psalm. In accordance with their distinctive perspective, Reim (1984:159-160) maintains that in Johanne circles 'elohim/elohecha' of Ps.45.7f. was interpreted as God to whom God speaks.

A similar exegesis of Psalm 45 is apparent in Justin, who without knowledge of John, has many parallels to John in his presentation of Jesus. Reim speculates that the background to the Johannine title "king of the Jews" may be a Jewish/Christian debate in which some Jews were prepared to accept Jesus as God's messenger, but not as God. Thus the title "king of the Jews" provided a distinction from the angels, who must serve the son of man (Reim, 1984:160).

82 Nickelsburg (1985:82-83) argues that in early Christianity salvation was bound up with revelation, persons who reject revelation are excluded from the community of the saved. He cites the Fourth Gospel's soteriology as a clear example of revelation that exclusively reveals God, invoking the authority of Jesus to support challenges from the authority of Torah. A positive or negative response to Jesus involves eternal life or damnation; those who reject the revelation are damned (Nickelsburg, 1985:83).
tions of polarization a *ribh* was attached to the divine warrior imagery. P. D. Hanson (1979:314-315,350-353) holds that in this modified form the divine warrior effects a division between the visionary group who see the work of YHWH in that contemporary situation, and their rivals who do not acknowledge it.

In John 5.23; (12.45) the claims to the identity of Jesus with the exalted status of the Father effects this division. Those who do not recognize him stand to be judged. By placing this speech within the cultic pattern associated with the divine warrior, John divides the world between those who will give this honor to Jesus and those who will not. The larger context of the speech is a narrative account of the kingship of Jesus after the type of the Divine Warrior, as I have argued above. In the resurrection of Lazarus he overcomes Death. In the festival procession he comes as king amid joyous shouts of victory. His "lifting up" in crucifixion and burial is foreshadowed as a sign of the fruitful dying grain which will bring a harvest of salvation and peace. Threat/victory procession/enthronement/salvation: the narrative elaborates the sequence of the divine warrior pattern.

In John 5.17-23 the divine warrior motif creates the frame for a programmatic line of reasoning. The argument demands honor to the son or else judgment. It is developed within the pattern of the divine warrior myth. If John 11 and 12 is also interpreted within the frame of the divine warrior motif, then the image of the enthronement of the son (to which John alludes in 11.41 in the context of 11.38-40) appears to effect a similar division. John's use of the ancient image of the victory over enemies, the greatest of all being Death (11.40-44) and the subsequent victorious entrance to reign as king (12.12-15), effects division. In John 12.41-46 the belief that Jesus is the enthroned one divides the faithful from

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83 Beasley-Murray (1991:28) sees the Gethsemane-like agony of the son in John 12.27-28,31-34 as a reverse of 5.27 where judgment is the prerogative of the son because he is the exalted *οἶς ἐκθρόνων*.

84 The claim concerning the exaltation of the son draws lines between those who are saved by believing, or judged for their refusal to honor Jesus as messiah. However the divisive function of the threat/enthronement pattern is not limited to John; though it is stated more explicitly in John 5.23 than for example in Acts 2.34-38.

85 J. J. Collins observes at least three distinct myths at work in Daniel 7, 8, and 10-12 respectively. Similarly Bultmann (1925: 101-103) and (1961:8) distinguishes between the characteristic types of early Christianity with reference to the mythic conception that shapes their expression: he distinguishes between Jewish eschatology and the Gnostic myth. In presenting John 5 and 11 and 12 within the framework of the divine warrior myth I do not mean to suggest that the pattern exhausts the mythic significance of, for instance, the Lazarus story which also evokes distinctive mythic images of death versus life. I am suggesting that the divine warrior pattern may well be imposed upon other mythic patterns. The Lazarus story has been made to fit within the overall sequence of the divine warrior pattern. The divine warrior pattern structures other traditions into a warrior-like division of those for or against YHWH. But the meaning of other traditions arranged within that pattern is not exhausted by the divine warrior myth and cannot simply be reduced to it.
those outside of the cult surrounding the king. Those who will accept the claim that Jesus enthroned as son of God in crucifixion is one with God are the faithful. Those who would rather face judgment than ascribe to any human such honor stand to be judged by the words of the son (12.48).

Jesus is lifted up as the innocent victim who willingly gives his life for the salvation of the many. But the underside of this display is the fact that he is glorified at the expense of those who opposed him. 86 In the polemic that underlies the rhetoric in John 5 the case of those branded as opponents of Jesus is never heard. The conflict myth stereotypes them as enemies of the king; they cannot be heard as opponents on an equal footing with a rival, for the structure of the myth has already judged them according to the divine dictate of the son.

Though John draws the lines sharply, the polarization between those who will and those who will not give proper honor to Jesus as king is by no means unique to the Fourth Gospel. The early Christian understanding of Jesus as king appears to have already placed the violence suffered by Jesus on center stage, reinterpreting it within a mythic and cultic frame which I have associated with the pattern of the divine warrior. The problem of the violence that the crucifixion represents is answered in terms of a mythic pattern that is sacred. The Fourth Gospel does not depict a helpless victim. Rather the account of Jesus' death as sacrifice that brings the victory of universal salvation is designed to function as the cultic center of Christian celebration. The Johannine presentation of the crucifixion as exaltation upholds the victim as the victor (10.32-33). 87

86 Mack (1985:149-160) sees the establishment of the identity of the Christian community at the expense of Jews who did not accept Jesus as messiah as an ironic reversal of the surrogate victim mechanism. The surrogate victim mechanism is a social phenomenon described by René Girard. A group controls their own endemic violence by destruction of a victim at the margins of the group in an act of violence. The group justifies the act by interpreting the violence as a ritual which ends conflict and secures peace within the group. For an introduction to the literature on Girard's surrogate victim mechanism which critiques such a characterization of the narratives which foreshadow the crucifixion, see Mack (1985). See J.G. Williams (1991:6 note 8) for reference to general introductions to Girard's theory.

87 Feminist Second Testament criticism, says Schneiders (1989:4), asks whether appeal to revelation can justify oppression that is perpetuated by the text. I suggest that a critical stance to the constructive and divisive power of the divine warrior myth must be fostered; questions must be asked. What does the centering of Jesus' death as exaltation do to those judged to be insiders, and to those judged to be outsiders, by those within the circle of Christian faith? The myth that presents Jesus as king must be critically assessed. If it is uncritically embraced as revelation, it perpetuates a coercive and divisive image of divine power.
**Throne mysticism?**

The divine warrior pattern woven within the Johannine narrative in John 12 concludes, evoking Jesus as the one who belongs to the Throne of God, through allusion to Isaiah's vision in the temple. From the perspective of the Fourth Gospel the son who has been lifted up in crucifixion is enthroned in the holy of hollies. The temple is his body, destroyed but exalted in resurrection (John 2.19-22). The pattern of kingship remains; but the cultic center is not the earthly building, but the body of the King of the universe whose glory is seen when one believes in Jesus, the one sent from the Father.

Peder Borgen (1977:179), commenting upon Jewish exegetical traditions behind the Son of Man sayings in the Fourth Gospel, suggests that the Jewish background of John may have been influenced by Merkabah mysticism. According to Gershom G. Scholem (1941:43), whose observations are affirmed by the subsequent work of Barker (1987:14-15), the central theme of Merkabah, a movement which was cradled in Palestine around the turn of the common era, gravitated around the oldest of Judaism's mystical doctrines: the seers see the great majesty of the hidden glory of God in its throne palace. The earliest Jewish mysticism is "throne mysticism," argues Scholem (1941:43-44) who maintains that the first century development of Merkabah derives from this ancient tradition. Its essence is absorbed in perception of God's appearance on the throne (as in Ezekiel). God's pre-existing throne embodies and exemplifies all forms of creation (as in Ethiopic Enoch 14) (Scholem, 1941:44).

In John 12.41-43 belief in Jesus is associated with an ecstatic vision of the glory of the divine presence enthroned. But in one important respect the Johannine presentation of Jesus as the son is not mystical. Scholem (1941:7) distinguishes between a mystic perception of reality in which the world of the gods is accessible to human experience, and religion, which destroys the dream of unmediated harmony with divine reality. Religion creates an abyss that is conceived as absolute, between God and humanity, only the voice of God and of the law giving revelation is able to bridge between them (Scholem, 1941:7-8).

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88 Hengel (1989:104) finds that John brings together Qumran, Jewish apocalyptic and Wisdom from Jewish hekhalot mysticism to Philo.

89 Meeks (1990:317-318) explains the worship of Jesus as God by Johannine Christians in terms of analysis of the stream of Jewish exegetical literature apparent in the Hebrew book of Enoch and related literature: scripture's visionaries did not really see God but an intermediary representative of God. Meeks argues that Johannine Christians argued through scripture thus, that to see Jesus was to see the father. The meaning of the extraordinary claim becomes clearer in light of connections with the visionary appearance of a human image affixed to the Throne in targums and some rabbinic midrash on Genesis 28.12 (Meeks, 1990:318).
According to this definition John would undermine a mystical perception because access to God is identified solely with the son. In an important article, Kelber (1987a:109-113) engages with the Johannine tendency toward singular focus upon Jesus as the sole revealer of God. He, (1987a:114), notes the prophetic, charismatic form of the "I am" sayings, alongside the restrictive form of statements such as, "Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the one who is from God...." (6.46), which appears designed to "elevate the authority of Jesus" (1987a:115). Kelber (1987a:115) suggests, that the Fourth Gospel's presentation of Jesus as the sole communicator with the heavenly world, perhaps in response to an ecstatic element in the community, is designed "more to curb than to promote" mystic ascent to the throne of God. 90

The divine throne as the setting for the speech in John's Prologue

By reading the Prologue in relation to a version of the divine warrior myth, I will offer an interpretation of the distinctive Johannine perspective upon the problem of the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus. I will tentatively interpret the Prologue as speech proper to a setting associated with the throne of God. Within this setting I suggest that the distinctive stance taken by John with reference to the use of the divine warrior pattern becomes apparent.

Lars Hartman (1987:90) suggests that the glory spoken of in the Prologue (1.14) may have been pictured in the way that the glory seen by Isaiah 6, recalled in John 12.41, is pictured in scripture, as an enthronement scene in the temple. Recalling the Jewish anathema, "there are not two powers in heaven," against some Jews within the Merkabah tradition who meditated on the throne imagery of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Isaiah, Hartman (1987:86-87) suggests that Johannine Christians may well have been assailed by similar accusations for their exalted vision of the vò δûς ἀνθρωποἰου ascending where he was before (6.62) or their faith that Jesus and the father are one (10.30). 91 John 10.30, he argues, may reflect the heavenly enthronement language of Psalm 110 (Hartman, 1987:86).

90 Carter, (1990) argues a similar position.

In reaching for a frame that would connect the one who is uniquely in the presence of the father (John 1.14, 18) with the enthronement vision in John 12.41, it is reasonable to propose a tentative interpretation of the exalted speech in the Prologue within a context associated with enthronement of the son.

Mettinger (1976:14, 254-274) traces a concept of deus incarnatus associated with kingship by virtue of divine descent in the imagery of the kingly Psalms 2, 110, and 89. In a coronation setting the king is exalted to the throne and the intimacy of his relationship to God as son is publicly declared. A coronation setting is not entirely alien to the strong declaration of the relationship between God and Ωοε; of John 1.1-5. In Israelite usage of the term 'son' only the king is individually singled out as occupying a unique relationship to God (Byrne, 1992:156). Compare John 1.18. The μονογενὴς θεός is uniquely the intimate of the father (John 1.18).

Of course there is more as well; a kingly frame of meaning cannot contain the multivalence of this speech. The opening words of John evoke a creation motif. They allude to the opening words of Genesis, and to the Psalmic theme of creation by the word of God, images that are elsewhere associated with Wisdom who was present with YHWH before the creation of the world. Distinct mythic plots overlap and converge in the tissue of this primordial speech.

The term Ωοε;, suggestive of many meanings in ancient culture, has also significantly been associated with a common tradition behind Philo’s exegesis of the traditions

92 John 1.14 reads μονογενῶς παρὰ πατρός, 1.18 is μονογενὴς θεός, (or μονογενὴς θεός) though some manuscripts read Ωοε; μονογενὴς θεός. I accept that μονογενὴς θεός, the more difficult reading is to be preferred. However the attestation of manuscripts which read Ωοε; μονογενὴς θεός indicates that a concept of sonship was closely associated with the meaning of this exalted speech of the Prologue in some quarters. In light of the enthronement speech in Psalm 110.1, even μονογενὴς θεός in the context of an enthronement setting is comprehensible as another designation for θεός.

93 Bultmann characterized the Johannine conception as cultic liturgical poetry comparable to an overture, though he argued that the hymn to the logos reflected a cultic setting associated with the Gnostic redeemer (1971:13,14; see also D.E. Smith, 1990:4).

94 I do not attempt to reconstruct whether, or how, speech which the Psalms associate with a coronation setting would have been understood or construed when this speech had no concrete institutional referent in monarchy in the first century of the C.E. I aim only to propose a frame of interpretation that helps to ‘make sense’ of the speech. To explain the phenomenon of the persistence of concepts associated with the ancient rite of coronation lies beyond the scope of this dissertation.

95 See Psalm 33.6.

96 See Proverbs 8.22-31.
concerning the two powers of God. Philo’s interpretation derives from a Jewish tradition associated with middle Platonism. Though no literary dependence between John and Philo can be discerned, they both make use of a common Middle Platonic cosmological tradition. (See Tobin 1990:256-266; Dillon, 1977:182.)

It is not my purpose to discuss the complex background of these and other mythic traditions which appear to underlie the lofty words of the Prologue. All of these provide meanings significant for understanding the cosmogenic implications of this speech. (See Carter, 1990.)

Though the setting of enthronement cannot claim to do justice to every dimension of this speech, I suggest that the language of the Prologue is not inconsistent with the image of sonship in which identity between YHWH the Divine King, and the anointed king, his son, is established by virtue of a divine father and son relationship. (See Psalm 2, 89, and 2 Samuel 7.) The assertions of the Prologue are not out of keeping with the Psalmic speech expressing a relationship of sonship that creates a correspondence between the father (God) and the son (the king). (See Psalms 110, 2, 89.)

The differences between John and these Psalms is not to be overlooked: the Psalms never present the son as an equal with God; and the emphasis in John 1.1 is on the pre-existence of the relationship, not upon the adoption of the king as son, as appears to be implied in the Davidic king’s role after the type of the divine warrior pattern in Psalms 2.7 and 89.26-27. 97

And yet there is another version of the divine warrior pattern which may lend clarity to John’s presentation of Jesus as the son, the image of the security of YHWH’s throne prior to and in control of all creation.

**Threat minimized in Israel’s perspective on YHWH’s enthronement: a perspective comparable to the topos of crucifixion in John**

Images of creation associated with the enthronement of YHWH rely upon the Ugaritic myths of a battle between Baal and Yam and an even more primordial battle in which Baal and his sister Anat engage a variety of monsters. 98 The Ugaritic myths are

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97 See my more detailed attention to scholarly discussion of these issues in the concept of kingship in chapter 6 under the major heading “Evidence of correspondence....”

reinterpreted in Israel, when the supremacy of YHWH over all foes is acclaimed from the outset.

The enthronement of YHWH signals victory over the primal foe. Perhaps due to Israelite emphasis upon the sovereignty of YHWH as supreme, unrivaled by other gods, creation accounts often commence with a statement ascribing honor to YHWH. This beginning signals recognition that YHWH's victory and enthronement is sure. From a position securely enthroned YHWH's reign is displayed in the order that he enforces. Creation is his act of ordering life.

For example, Psalm 29 begins by ascribing glory to YHWH. Next an account of the voice of God (associated with thunder in the Baal myth) evokes images of striking the waters, the cedars, the wilderness. But there is never any question that God has the upper hand. Though the battle with the forces of the deep is evoked, clearly all the earth and sea is under the power of the voice of the Lord. Thus the victory of YHWH is signaled, but the account of the threat of actual battle in which YHWH engaged with threatening forces is minimized. Nothing that is mentioned is not already seen to be under the power of YHWH. In the Hebrew transformation of the divine warrior myth nothing can truly threaten the supremacy of the Divine King, especially not at the beginning of speech exalting his enthroned presence.

**Enthronement in Psalm 29 compared to the Prologue**

Psalm 29 describes a thunderstorm to evoke praise for God shaking creation to its foundations (Craigie, 1983a:69). Creation by the divine word can be compared to "the voice of the Lord" in creation which causes worshipers in his temple to say "Glory!" YHWH sits enthroned over the flood, enthroned as king forever, from whence he blesses his people with peace (Psalm 29.7-11).

I do not claim that this particular Psalm provided direct background for John 1.1-3. I cite it simply because I wish to compare the sequence of the divine warrior genre in this Psalm with elements of the divine warrior myth that I discern in John 1. Psalm 29 demands that worshipers in his temple give honor to YHWH by acknowledging the glory of the one who is enthroned above the waters:

Below portions of the text of Psalm 29 are divided into elements of the divine warrior pattern as identified by Hanson (1979:305).
Give to Yahweh, children of El.
Give to Yahweh a mark of honor and power.
Give to Yahweh the honor of his name;
Bow down to Yahweh at his holy appearance.

*combat versus waters-victory* 3-9a
The voice of Yahweh is over the waters;
The glory of El thunders:
Yahweh over the vast waters.
The voice of Yahweh is in strength:
The voice of Yahweh is in grandeur.

*...* 

*victory shout* 9b
In his temple everyone is saying
"Glory."

*manifestation of YHWH's universal reign* 10
Yahweh sat enthroned
before the Flood.
Yahweh has been king for ages....

*shalom (abundance) of the restored order* 11
Yahweh will give his people victory.
Yahweh will bless his people with peace.
(Psalm 29.1-3, 9c,10-11.)

I detect similarities between the exalted setting of John’s Prologue and this example of the divine warrior myth. Though for our purposes the essential point is not to identify one specific text in Near Eastern myth or in Israel’s scriptures, as a source for explanation of the speech in the Prologue; it is rather to allow the mythic pattern of significance, that associates an enthronement setting with YHWH’s power in creation, to become the context for reading John’s Prologue. I suggest that elements of the divine warrior pattern fit the dramatic sequence of the Prologue, as follows:

*manifestation of reign*
The word (ὁ Λόγος) was God 1.1,2 [Compare 5.23]
All things came into being through him, life, light

*threat*
Darkness does not master the light

[The witness of John interrupts, anticipating correspondence in the κόσμος, the realm of earth, outside the primordial time of the festival.]

59 The translation of Psalm 29 is by Margaret Eaton, tutor in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Otago, 1993.
He came to his own. They did not receive him.

Those who received him became children, born of God.

The word (ὁ Δόγος) became flesh, pitched a tent (ἐσκήνωσεν) among us.

\[
\text{We gazed on (ἐθεασάμεθα) his glory, glory as one uniquely in the presence of the father (μονογενὸς παρὰ πατρός) full of grace and truth.}
\]

No one has seen God. It is the one uniquely God μονογενὴς θεὸς who belongs in the bosom of the father, who manifests his reign (ἐξηγήσατο). 100 [Compare 5.23b.]

In Psalm 29, YHWH belongs in a superior position. He has been enthroned from before the flood. His reign is secure. Likewise, this element in the perspective of John is crucial. Just as Psalm 29 presents the sea in submission to the voice of YHWH, so the element of darkness, which ordinarily would be perceived as a threat in opposition to light, is no threat in John.

Commentators have noted a progression in the structure of the Prologue. It first presents a timeless picture of the role of ὁ Δόγος in creation. The witness of John interrupts this (1.6-9); probably it represents a layer originating from another source. But after John's witness the elaboration of the opening stanzas in 1.1-5 addresses the career of ὁ Δόγος in the world. (See Beasley-Murray, 1987:12.)

If the Divine Warrior pattern informs interpretation of the narrative, then, the first part provides a mythic cosmogenic explanation. In the manner of heavenly actions generating corresponding patterns on earth, 101 the description of ὁ Δόγος in the world corresponds to the opening event: the scene ἐν ἀρχῇ in the heavenly temple, in which ὁ Δόγος is enthroned alongside God, provides the pattern which corresponds to the earthly event: ὁ Δόγος became flesh and pitched a tent among us (1.14). The root of ἐσκήνωσεν evokes the language of Exodus 25.8-9 where Israel is told to make a tabernacle that God might dwell among the people; and Sirach 24 where Wisdom is commanded by the creator to pitch a

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100 My free translation of John 1.18c aims to bring out a specific meaning which I feel is justified both by the enthronement context of this interpretation and by a root meaning of ἐξηγήσατο. It is the aorist of ἔγγραμαι which can mean relate, explain, report or reveal. It comes from the root γράμμα which can mean lead or rule. (See Acts 14.12.)

101 See John Ashton’s discussion of correspondence between heaven and earth under the subheading “Correspondence between earthly and heavenly...” in chapter 6.
tent κάτωκήνον in Israel; the radicals skr represent the Hebrew root from which shekinah is derived (Brown, 1986:32-33). Ο Λόγος who pitches a tent ἐσκήνωσεν whose shekinah-like glory we behold recalls the enthronement tradition associated with the tabernacle. But the possible extensions of this pattern do not end there. The enthronement imagery which is first associated with the ark in the tabernacle in the wilderness is the same pattern which came to be associated with the enthronement of the king in the temple after the type of YHWH in the Psalms tradition of the monarchy. 102

In the ideology associated with kingship in the Ancient Near East the temple was "a symbolic statement of the king’s relationship with the god and his divine right to rule"; it represented heaven on earth (Psalm 1.4; Whitelam, 1992:46-47). In the enthronement of the son in resurrection, yet more is signified. In the progression from the Word to the Flesh the earthly temple (John 1.1,14), the body of the son (In.2.19-22), is an extension of YHWH, just as the shekinah displays his glory on earth.

The description of the earthly presence of ὁ Λόγος as μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός (1.14) yet more clearly connects the cosmogenic with the monarchic tradition of divine kingship. The king as uniquely son of God was identified with the power to order and judge in the absolute manner of the reign of YHWH. (See Ps. 110 especially, also Ps.2 and 89.) The monarchic associations are extended in the mention of χάρις καὶ ἀληθεία (1.14,17) which probably allude to the covenant hesed and emet, the faithful love which is YHWH’s covenant with Israel, a covenant which is represented in his promise to undergird the Davidic monarchy with this bond of faithfulness. (See Brown, 1986:14.)

Creation presupposes the enthronement of YHWH whose rule imposes order over the deep. In ancient agrarian societies the justification of the king’s rule was of paramount importance, and royal or official state religion was crucial to the legitimization and reinforcement of a social structure which vested power and privilege in the person of the king (Whitelam, 1992:42). The ordering function of the earthly monarch was justified by appeal to the inexorable, prior, divine order. The job of the monarch to maintain social order was legitimated after the pattern of the Great King.

The Israelite tradition of divine kingship, in which the king is declared son of YHWH by virtue of a relationship of divine descent (as in Ps.89,110,2), was framed within the Divine Warrior pattern. In John 1.1-18, the declaration of oneness between the

102 Ollenburger (1987:64-65) argues that the enthronement tradition was exploited within the Davidic monarchy in order to serve monarchic concerns for succession and legitimation of the king, concerns originally alien to the Zion tradition of enthronement. It is possible that the Prologue makes a comparable use of the tradition to legitimate the authority of Jesus.
son and God, may be interpreted within the scenario of the enthronement of the Divine King before creation.

In Psalm 89, for example, the king is presented as an earthly figure whose reign is to be understood as a type of YHWH's primal victory and reign in creation. In John 1.1,14,18 we see a yet more astonishing development. The one who in verse 14 is characterized as μονογενούς παρὰ πατρός (echoing the status of YHWH's anointed "son") is also the figure (μονογενής θεὸς 1.18) who is explicitly presented in tandem with God before creation.

In Psalms 89.9-14,20-29 and Psalm 2 the king is presented as an earthly type of YHWH's primal enthronement. In John 1.1, 1.14,18 the "son" μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός is not a type of YHWH; rather he is identified with God from the time before creation. If we read the Prologue in the light of the divine warrior pattern of YHWH as King, then we can see John 1.1-5 as a coronation-like declaration that the identity of the son with the Divine Warrior precedes all earthly conflict. By this analogy ὁ λόγος as "son" μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός was already enthroned above the waters, beside God, metaphorically at his right hand, inseparably one with YHWH before creation (John 1.1): 'Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος.

Topos of crucifixion and John's use of the divine warrior pattern

I have suggested that in John 1.1, as in John 5.23, grounds for giving ὁ λόγος or ὁ νῦν honor equal to that due to the father can be read within an enthronement scenario. The son is the one who is enthroned in the presence of the father. As the narrative of the Gospel develops, it becomes clear that the μονογενής θεὸς (1.18) is identified with Jesus as the son, as in 5.17-23; 10.36. To read these texts as references to his enthronement alongside God, as God, from the beginning in the presence of YHWH, clarifies John's distinctive justification for ascribing to him the honor due to God the father (5.23;12.44 [12.37-43]).

I argued in chapters 4 and 5, that John 5.17-23 is framed also within a pattern that answers the problem that Jesus' crucifixion represents. John portrays Jesus as one who is superior to those who claim to have the authority to condemn him according to customary justice. In social conventions of the day crucifixion was irrevocably identified with shame. Thus Jesus, as the crucified had been shamed, unless the conventions associated with crucifixion were utterly transformed in his unique case.

Understanding of the death and resurrection of Jesus according to the scriptural plot derived from the myth of YHWH's enthronement can properly be interpreted as an answer...
to the topos: if crucifixion, then shame. From this perspective, speech exalting the son is not primarily a forensic answer. It is not designed simply to justify or defend the honor of Jesus. Rather, it is a cultic answer which interprets the cross.

No longer is the crucifixion a public execution authorized by the law. In the setting of the cult which celebrates the enthronement of YHWH over all the forces of chaos and all nations of the earth, it belongs to a pattern of enthronement. Thus this pattern of speech does not simply defend Jesus' honor; it utterly reverses the conventional meaning of his public execution.

No longer is it an event in which others have power over him. It is a cultic act of vindication and absolute victory. The scenario in which Jesus is on trial and his honor questioned is constructed from the perspective of the throne. From the perspective of the son's exaltation, any challenger is cast in a stereotypical role of rebel against YHWH and his king.

The pattern associated with YHWH the divine King whose throne is established above the threatening deep provides a mythic structure congruent with the direction that is given by this pattern of speech; the key to the absolute quality of the speech in John 5.17-23 is to be found in epideictic display of the honor of God and the king who is his son.

In John 5 the forensic motif is transposed on top of this cultic setting. 103 (I speak now in terms of the rhetorical aim of the speech, for in terms of formal analysis the forensic elements are the more concrete.) The "trial" motif displays irony because the opponents of the son merely play a part within the structure already set in place by the myth. 104 They are given the mask of enemy and introduced in the role of accusers who fool-like, attempt to put the king on trial.

It is not just the exalted speech, but also the element of threat, which has been subjected to this traditioning process. For both threat and enthronement are elements within the pattern delineated by the myth. The accusers are drawn so as to conform to the adversarial role that is prepared for them in the myth. They are fed the lines which characterize them as enemies of the king. The opponents of Jesus never are given the space that customary justice would allow, a chance to put their side of the case.

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103 Compare the Synoptic trial accounts where the riposte concerning sonship also reflects images of enthronement.

104 Neyrey observes that the Johannine trial of Jesus before Pilate is "fraught with irony" [forthcoming]. Malina and Neyrey's account of the Passion in Matthew notes that the principle of irony is operative throughout the process which redefines the ritual of status degradation as a ritual of status elevation (1988:131).
But this is not simply because the text is a forensic narrative designed to put a favorable case for Jesus at the expense of his opponents. It is because they are acting a part which belongs to the scenario associated with the pattern of YHWH's enthronement; they are not actual challengers in a legal sense; they belong to the role of enemy as set by the mythic drama.

I assume that John's exalted speech concerning the son, in some way answers the problem posed by the shame of crucifixion and that John's distinctive perspective on the problem of crucifixion is clarified in speech that identifies Jesus with God before creation. By reading the Prologue in light of the divine warrior pattern, the threat of the shame of rejection (darkness that does receive the light) is minimized. Darkness does not overpower the light. A conventional assessment of the shame and rejection linked to crucifixion is canceled out by the more powerful vision of enthronement before anything came into being. It overwhelms the threat lurking under the imagery of darkness.

A response proper to a setting of enthronement introduces the divine warrior pattern in Psalm 29:

Give to Yahweh, children of El.  
Give to Yahweh a mark of honor and power.  
Give to Yahweh the honor of his name;  
Bow down to Yahweh at his holy appearance (Psalm 29.1-2).  

By beginning with the imperative to give honor to YHWH, Psalm 29 implies that YHWH is already enthroned. Thus in images of his thundering voice over the sea and the power of his lightning shattering the timbers that follows in 29.3-9a, there is no question but that YHWH retains the upper hand. There is never even a question of his being overpowered by the sea or the wilderness, for the one who has been enthroned from before the flood remains in control (29.10).

To allude to a setting of enthronement at the start has the effect of submerging the element of threat that is intrinsic to the myth behind YHWH’s establishment of his power over the sea. It transforms the pattern associated with the Baal myth in order to make the point that YHWH is secure and will never be threatened by any foe.

Similarly, the element of threat is marginalized in John's Prologue. The conflict between darkness and light refers to it obliquely; in the career of ὁ λόγος in the κόσμος it is

105 Translated by Margaret Eaton.

106 See my comparison between the Baal myth, Psalm 29 and Psalm 69 in chapter 6 under the major heading "Patterns of significance...."
characterized as failure to receive the light who has been identified with God from the beginning. But in a setting where honor is ascribed to the one who has already been enthroned beside YHWH from the beginning (1.1) in a cultic setting, John maintains a superior stance; worshipers do not so much as acknowledge that this rejection is a threat to the honor of the son. (The tenor of Psalm 2 is comparable.)

The superiority of ὁ Λόγος, μονογενὸς παρὰ πατρὸς, who later is to be identified as ὁ υἱός, is resolutely maintained in the Prologue; this makes sense when we read the speech from a perspective of enthronement with God (μονογενὸς παρὰ πατρὸς 1.14), as God (μονογενὴς θεὸς 1.18). Similarly in John 5, though the accusations of opponents shape the riposte-like structure of Jesus' reply (5.18-23) they are never acknowledged as threats to the superior status of the son. 107

In my opinion the stance of superiority puts a brave, defiant face on a sense of lethal threat to the honor of Jesus. The social shame associated with the event of crucifixion poses the magnitude of this threat most forcefully. Within John the crucifixion is spoken of in terms of exaltation, glorification, enthronement. See Ashton (1991:363-368); Hengel (1990:21-22,32-34); Nicholson (1983); Neyrey (1982:594-605); Borgen (1977:252). There is dissonance between the conventional mores surrounding crucifixion and the mythic setting in which it is displayed by John. In John's expression the myth of the exaltation and enthronement of the divine warrior represses the conventional understanding of the threat that crucifixion represents in ordinary human terms.

107 Kieffer (1986:77) reads John 5.1-47 as an illustration of transformation from death to life: "the sick man is healed [5.1-9,15] but Jesus is threatened by imminent death. Nevertheless, this threat is ineffective, because the Father raises the dead and the Son can give life to those he wants to, v.21."
Chapter 8

The ideological impact of the argument on an audience, concluding with a summary of the finding of the dissertation

An ideology is a position which is taken with respect to information, events and experience, a controlling perspective which aims to elicit a particular interpretation. At least two related perspectives need to be taken into account in the arena of ideological criticism of a text. One concerns a dominant point of view set forth through the argumentation of the text; the other concerns the impact of the text upon a given community of readers. My rhetorical approach has focused upon John 5 as if it were one speech. I aim to identify a point of view that is expressed in the final form of John 5. I will interpret 5.17-23 within the context of the whole of John as if it were an appeal made by a speaker in order to persuade the audience to make a particular response.

Inevitably the question of what the text does to an audience is filtered through one's own experience of reading. The point of view of the interpreter influences the meaning attached to the signals received from the text. I began this project by reacting against what, on a surface reading, I perceived as a 'controlling' line of reasoning within the Fourth Gospel. Having surveyed the appeals to this type of authority in the whole Fourth Gospel, I observed that the ultimate claims which are asserted in the Prologue are fully

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1 Scott (1990:83-84); Parsons (1990:14) and Penchansky (1992:37) address ideology in terms of the impact that the text is designed to have on its readers. Clines (1993) and Robbins (1992b:xxi, xxii) attend to the interests that a particular interpreter brings to the text.

2 An historical aspect of ideology criticism noted by Clines (1993:68) concerns the groups and interests that were served through the preservation of the text.
elaborated for the first time in John 5. See Kennedy(1984:112); Neyrey (1988:9). 3 This led me to isolate a specific argument in John 5 for more detailed study, as a prime example of what I initially perceived as 'dominating deductive reasoning from divine authority'. Because it is set out in the form of a demonstrative argument, I have focused upon John 5.17-23 as a key to the controlling line of reasoning, which occurs in many places in John.

The distinctive ideological aim of John 5.17-23

A preliminary review comparing John 5.17-23 with Mark 14.61-62

I have argued that John 5.17-23 uses the already understood pattern of killing juxtaposed with enthronement in order to elaborate the claim that Jesus is equal to God. Likewise the Synoptic accounts of the trial question on sonship evoke the status or position of the enthroned son of man in answer to a threat of execution, as I showed in chapter 5. A similar pattern is employed in John 5.17-23: the threat to execute Jesus (5.17) is answered with speech concerning the empowerment of the son to judge because he is the son of man. The speech in John 5.17-27 resonates with the sequence in the Synoptic trial question. In John 5 the threat of execution is presented in a way that echoes the significance already associated with the exaltation of the son after the pattern of God as enthroned king. The pattern of 'killing answered by enthronement or exaltation' is employed in other early Christian texts as well.

However, in John 5 the pattern serves as the backdrop for development of an argument designed to make a specific point. The argument takes a particular position and promotes, as I will argue, a controlling ideology or point of view. 4

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3 To test my initial reaction to reading John by more thorough analysis, I attempted to isolate one prime example of what can broadly be described as an argument from divine authority in John. There are many, including all reasoning that depends upon 'the one who is above', 'the father', 'the one who sent me' and other terms that come to be identified with God within the linguistic associations constructed by the Johannine narrative. I chose John 5 both because it is elaborated in full and because of its apparent centrality for the argumentation in John 5-10.

4 J.A. du Rand (1985:20) discusses John’s point of view as a perspective ‘from above’; following Uspensky (1973:61) he notes that the ideological level of point of view relates to evaluative norms.
Unlike the Markan trial account which quotes Daniel 7.13-14 (and Psalm 110) as an answer to the charge of blasphemy as grounds for putting Jesus to death, John 5.17-23,27 only alludes to the mythic sequence and victorious enthronement imagery that is found in the texts quoted in Mark 14.62. John 5.17-23 quotes no scripture. Rather, I suggest that the already understood rhetorical structure and significance associated with that pattern serves as a rhetorical device. It supports the construction of a line of reasoning that was not already taken for granted. John effects persuasion by constructing a complete argument (5.17-27) designed to support the proposition that Jesus is equal to God, which ironically is attributed to his opponents (5.18), as my rhetorical analysis of John 5 showed in chapter 2. From 5.19b-29, though it is clear that Jesus is the speaker: he refers to 'the son'. (Similarly in Mark 14.61-62 the question attributed to opponents, 'Are you the son?...' ironically is clarified via citation of scripture evoking imagery of heavenly enthronement.) However, scriptural imagery referring to the son as eschatological judge in John 5.24-29 proceeds by allusion.

Though the similarities are notable, John 5.17-23 is distinctive. Instead of simply reiterating the significance which presumably the audience already attached to scriptural references to enthroned and eschatological sonship, John uses imagery evoking scriptural associations in order to make a particular point. The argument in John 5.17-23 is laid out in full. Thus the speaker must have felt that it needed to be stated explicitly. If the speaker designed John 5.17-23 to convince an audience, then the hearers did not already accept the argument that Jesus is equal to God. But for reasons which I will explain below, it appears more likely that the argument is designed to give logical shape to an

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5 In reference to the rhetorical form of the sermons in Acts 2 and 3, among other texts, Clifton Black (1988:13) notes that Christian authors by classical standards "exhibit highly nuanced, sophisticated forms of proof." Citing Quintilian’s Institutes 5.10-11, Black argues that their concern is "confirmation of positions that may be at doubt by reference to evidence that would be admitted by their audiences as certain."

6 Leonard Doohan (1990:41) observed that John "makes explicit what is only implicit elsewhere, and takes to logical and theological conclusions ideas simply suggested by other writers."

7 Argumentation is not always designed to persuade the unconvinced. Arguments can be rehearsed to intensify or clarify opinions that are already held or to demonstrably state points of view that are already assumed. This is particularly the case in epideictic rhetoric. (See Kennedy, 1984:19,73-77.)
already understood form of expression concerning the unity of Jesus with the father. 8

On the question of the audience, socio-rhetorical criticism does not focus primarily on the historical question, 'who was the audience?', but rather, 'how is the text designed in order to affect an audience?'

A particular interpretation of the saying, "The father is working... and I am working" (5.17), is argued in 5.18-23 by building upon the already understood (killing/exaltation of the son) pattern. This suggests to me that the claim of equality with God is not presented as another claim, or another gospel, alongside the one that was already familiar. Rather, it is argued as a logical extension of the already understood pattern; it builds upon the accepted pattern in order to express, in more demonstrative form, an agreed upon pattern of significance: that the son though threatened by enemies had been declared victorious by his enthronement.

However, the pattern of killing/exaltation in the Synoptic trial question and the Acts speeches, though they evoke images of Jesus’ exalted status, do not appear to be expressions of Jesus’ equality with God in this way. They associate Jesus with God, but stop short of establishing identity between son and father, as is effectively done in John 5.17-23.

**How the point of view of the text is communicated**

I have argued that the mythic pattern of killing/enthronement is the vehicle of the logical demonstration in John 5.17-23. However, I suggest that a perspective on Jesus’ unity with God that was already understood within the Johannine community may be

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8 The question, 'Who is the audience?', as it relates to distinct parts of the Fourth Gospel, and the apparent and sometimes conflicting aims of various layers of redaction within these, demands a complexity of approach beyond the socio-rhetorical aims of this interpretation. A widely held view in recent scholarship is that the Fourth Gospel in its final form is addressed to believers within a Johannine community. See Brown (1979) and (1977), Hengel (1989), Rensberger (1988), Neyrey (1988), Malina (1985), Ashton (1991), on the various rationales for this general position. Minear (1977) presents a particularly plausible argument that the late redaction of the Gospel was designed to transmit in writing the core of the community’s faith to a later generation of disciples whose experience of Jesus was received second hand, after the death of the eyewitnesses to Jesus.

Though some scholars appear to reflect a consensus, the question is not beyond dispute. Carson (1991: 87-94), J.A.T. Robinson (1970 and 1985), and Van Unnik (1960) think that the Fourth Gospel is a mission tract to Hellenistic Jews.

The view that John is addressed to believers within or on the margins of a Johannine community appears most convincing to me because of John’s complex use of biblical allusion. The meaning of scriptural reference to Jesus is neither argued nor explained but is generally assumed to be understood already. See, for example, the use of enthronement images in John 5.17-23, as I have argued earlier.
responsible for the distinctive ideological perspective that is developed in the use of the myth.

The saying in John 5.17 expresses the claim of Jesus' unity with God. (Compare the complementary saying in John 10.30.) These sayings express the oneness of Jesus and God in a way that does not follow the pattern of reversal from death to life, execution to exaltation, shame to vindication, the pattern that is structured into accounts of the resurrection. The ‘I and the father are one’ saying does, however, affirm Jesus’ oneness with God and his continuing presence, in a way that is not perturbed by the specter of the cross. (Since they do not mention Jesus’ death we cannot simply assume that they are an answer to it.) However, to say that they do affirm his continuing presence, does make a statement that stands in tensive relation to the conventional understanding that he was crucified and was no more.

Statements such as "the father is working and I am working," and "I and the Father are one," already evoke a sense of unity between Jesus and God. However they effect this in a way that is tacit, metaphorical, even mystical. The already understood notion that Jesus was in unity with the father, implicit in the Johannine sayings mentioned above, might have provided the basis for the more programmatic declaration of a "high Christology" which is demonstrably argued in John 5 by using the familiar vehicle of the killing/enthronement pattern.

The elaboration of the argument in John 5 builds upon the metaphor of father and son in relation. But unlike the sayings, it expresses the relationship of Jesus to God in the form of a demonstrative argument. It makes a fundamental, final, absolute case, which establishes the relationship between son and father as foundational, in regard to the honor due to God.

The enigmatic statement, ‘The father is working and I am working’ (5.17), is already a saying evocative of Jesus' unity with the father. The proposition (5.17-23) is restated in the rationale (5.18-23) in order to explicitly demonstrate the meaning of 5.17. It effects the demonstration by using a pattern that is not routinely associated with identity of Jesus with God. The pattern of killing/enthronement, in Mark 14.61-62 or the Acts speeches for example, did not convey an overt claim of identity with God.

The already understood sayings of Jesus' oneness with the father may have been made to fit into the pattern of killing/enthronement (a pattern associated with trial, division for or

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9 See the subheading "Elaboration into a complete argument ..." under the major heading "Rhetorical analysis..." in chapter 2.
against the king, and judgment of those who fail to honor him) in order to communicate yet
more authoritatively the oneness of Jesus and the father already understood from the com-
plementary sayings, 5.17 and 10.30.

The point of view that Jesus is equal to God is made explicit through the agonistic
challenge/riposte format of the killing/enthronement pattern. Thus the claim of Jesus'
equality with God is put into a kerygmatic form. It is presented within a kill-
ing/enthronement pattern that already signaled the central claim of early Christian
proclamation. This may say something about the status that the claim of Jesus' oneness with
God had within the community. The claim is argued within a pattern of threat/enthronement
that is already laden with significance. Further, the trial-like form of killing/enthronement
was adequate to defend against challengers to this claim, and to hold up the spectacle of
judgment to all who do not honor the son as God.

Yet the agonistic form of the speech is controlled by a perspective of enthronement
that only makes sense within a cultic setting. In John 5.17-23, as in the Synoptic trial set-
ting, to believe, to understand, and to acknowledge the supremacy of the son is to enter the
sacred space before the divine throne.

What does the argument do to its audience?

The argument in John 5.17-23 relies upon appeal to divine authority. The declaration
of the authority of the son is supported entirely by virtue of his status as son in relationship
to the father (5.19-22), who is understood to hold the power of life and judgment in his
hands (5.21). For this reason, I suggest that the argument is designed to affect an audience
who revere the authority of God and, who accordingly, wish to affirm and to be conformed
to social expectations associated with the honor of God. 10

10 Aristotle reasoned that the audience is inclined to an act by its pathos. Pathos includes the motiva-
tion to stay in equilibrium, in terms of behavior accepted as appropriate to one's role within one's social
system (Murphy, 1972: 45-46). Pathe for Aristotle is not emotion, but a state of being acted upon which
causes one to experience or to suffer (Murphy, 1972: 45).

Thus, to be persuasive, a speaker must understand the make-up of the audience and appeal to what
moves them. For example, Aristotle suggests that a speaker can argue a person into a state of fear by reasoning
on the basis of the assumption that he or she is the right kind of person who in this situation ought to feel fear
(Murphy, 1972: 46); see also Malina (1992).

Aristotle's idea of invention (or in his term, heuresis) emphasizes finding places, or socially-acquired
"premises" upon which to build arguments, which are already embedded within the audience's social percep-
tions.

These "premises" are social assumptions that are characteristic of the unwritten code of what is
expected in society according to one's role and status. By his analysis of patterns of behavior such as these,
Aristotle provided a pool of social assumptions from which rhetors could draw. An argument can be based
Appeal to these values is made both positively and negatively. Positively, the son is empowered, "that all may honor the son just as they honor the father" (5.23). Negatively, whoever does not honor the son does not honor the father.

Indirectly another negative appeal is made: if you reject the claim of equality with God, you act the part of Jesus' opponents who seek to kill him. To fail to give this grant of honor is to respond in the same way as those cast in the role of "the Jews" by the argument. (See John 5.38,40,43,47.) Hearers who both honor God and are sympathetic to, or even believe in Jesus would naturally wish to comply. 12

If the term "the Jews" was already understood to refer to a faction that early Christian tradition associated with the killing of Jesus, then use of this term may have served as negative reinforcement: 'If you do not accept the terms of this argument, then you react to Jesus as did "the Jews" who sought to kill him. Do you want to put yourself in that position?' 13

The premises usually articulate a value within the social order. For example, in a theistic society honor of God is one such social good. Thus an argument that appeals to the value of honor of God would be designed to move hearers to conform to the ideas and behavior that the speech upholds as evidence that the hearer does in fact honor God.

Thus *inventio* is not the creation of argument *ex nihilo*. Rather it is the discovery of how best to persuade a particular audience by constructing arguments which rely upon the unstated assumptions which motivate them (Murphy, 1972:57).

11 Daniel Patte (1990:13,25-35) working from examples in John 3.1-21 and John 4-42, uses structuralist exegesis to show how opposition between characters creates a pattern of meaning designed to have an effect upon readers.

12 Elsewhere those "who believed in him" (as in 8.31) are in the next breath presented as those who seek to kill him, following mention of the son and the father (8.36-47). The chilling and abusive presentation of "the Jews" in this passage reflects polarization endemic within Johannine explanation of the spiritual origins of Jesus in opposition to "the Jews." See Trumbower (1992) for an approach to this passage based on the ancient ideology of fixed origins. To enter the background to this discussion goes beyond the limits of this project. However, to suggest that the polarization of honor/not honor may have been aimed at a type of 'believer' on the margins of the community is congruent with Brown's description of the Johannine community (1979). Ashton (1991:140) considers the strong response attributed to Jesus in John 5 to be symptomatic of a "family row." The polarized climate, he says, evokes images of entrenched positions within a theological dispute.

13 It is beyond the scope of this project to address the question of the dating and possible relation of *The Gospel of Peter* to John. On this see the views represented by Christian Maurer and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, (1990:216-222). Nevertheless this gospel fragment does give an interesting perspective on the way that associations with "the Jews" were made in an early Christian writing.

The opening fragment of *The Gospel of Peter* reeks of innuendo against the "Jews": "But of the Jews none washed their hands, neither Herod nor anyone of his judges. And as they would not wash, Pilate arose..." (1.1). Curiously the Jews reappear elsewhere in the fragmentary, non-canonical *Gospel of Peter*, sometimes in a positive light; though in places they are mentioned in clear association with those who are identified as guilty of complicity in Jesus' death. For example, in 6.21 "the Jews" appear as sympathetic figures who draw the nails from his hands and lay him in the earth and recognize the good that Jesus had done (6.21-24). But in 7.25 the Jews reappear among elders and priests who pursue Peter and the others as evil-
Thus to believe in Jesus is in effect to dissociate one’s response from the failure to honor the son as God that is characteristic of those accused of plotting his death. (See John 5.38,40,43.)

The argument is designed to make an unequivocal point: if the audience honors God then they will accept that Jesus is to be honored as God; for they will fear lest by not honoring the son they will be seen not to honor the father (5.23). In hearing this argument the audience who fears God is faced with the choice of either honoring Jesus in the terms set up by the argument, or failing to honor God, or else rejecting the speech altogether. 14

Let us assume that the hearer identifies her or his reverence of God with that presumed of the audience in the appeal made within the text. The reverence and honor which the reader already attributes to God acts as a powerful value internal to her. It pressures her to conform to the explicit terms of the argument. In this way the argument is empowered to effect a kind of heavy-handed ‘persuasion’ because it leans upon values that she already embraces.

Thus the argument, as it is elaborated in John 5.17-23, may pressure a reader to conform to what is already known of Jesus to the explicit terms set in place by the Johannine argument: to honor God is to honor Jesus equally as God. To fail to do this is to fail to honor God.15 This line of reasoning relies upon the audience’s assumption of reverence for God as the cue the reader must act on in order to follow through on an expected pattern of doers. In 11.48 an unnamed "they" who are presented as plotters against Jesus request that news of the resurrection be falsified saying, "It is better for us to make ourselves guilty of the greatest sin before God than to fall into the hands of the people of the Jews and be stoned." In 12.50 Mary Magdalene "for fear of the Jews" delays going to the sepulcher until the morning of the Lord’s day. This scene is followed by the post-trial mocking of Jesus by an unnamed "they" who say, "With such honour let us honour the Son of God" (3.9).

Crossan’s (1988:16,28,112) analysis of the Gospel of Peter suggests that at an earlier stage the plot against Jesus was identified with "elders" who were distinguished from the Jewish people at large. At a secondary stage of redaction it makes a separation between the innocence of Pilate and the guilty "Jews."

14 Meeks (1986:141-142) describes an initial reaction of reading John with anger and frustration at its circular, incomprehensible, in-group language.

15 In reference to John 5.31-40, Von Walde (1981:394) argues that because the witness of the Father dominates the testimony in 5.31-40, those who refuse to accept Jesus refuse to accept God.
behavior. The authority of God pressures readers who reverence God to conform by giving the son the same honor due to the father and thereby acting out the desirable social behavior of honor to God.

The argument exerts pressure on the audience from both sides. It grips the audience with the desire to honor God on the one side, and the fear of failure to do so associated with the ‘role’ attributed to "the Jews" on the other.

A dominant point of view designed to evoke a particular response

The Prologue as an example

The argument in John 5.17-23 is developed from already understood patterns of speech, such as, a miracle story in 5.1-9, and the pattern of threat answered by the son’s enthronement in 5.17-27. Building upon familiar patterns that have already been accepted, John 5.17-23 constructs an argument that channels the audience’s response to Jesus into one clear choice: either the audience grants the claim that Jesus is equal to God, or, by not conforming effectively to the desired behavior, dishonors God and stands in danger of judgment.

The Prologue likewise states a clear ideological position. I use the Prologue as an example for two reasons. First because the ideological position of the speaker is routinely

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16 Aristotle sees the hierarchy of what is perceived as good in one’s society, and the values flowing from this perception, as the heart of his Rhetoric (1.5-7 &9). His method assumes that persuasion is empowered by relying upon the socially constructed assumptions and values which constitute the vision of the world that is taken for granted by all who participate in that social system.

Aristotle’s catalog of typical unstated social "premises" for arguments derives from the patterns of behavior in his social world (see Rhetoric 2.22-23). These assumptions about behavior that is socially desirable serve as a kind of inventory or checklist for potential arguments. For example, the premises for establishing fear in auditors are grouped according to the social patterns which are operative for the hearers: persons likely to suffer fear, persons to be feared, circumstances in which one fears. The speaker selects premises appropriate to the particular pathos of the audience and builds a line of reasoning upon these. The discussion of pathos above relies upon Murphy (1972:45-46). The speaker could choose which one would generate the audience’s desire to find the appropriate social response (see Murphy, 1972:57).

17 The strategy is comparable to the positive and negative appeals to the audience in Acts 3.19,23 (also 2.36-40). Though there, the audience is only asked to acknowledge Jesus’ exaltation and empowerment. No explicit claim is made for his equality with God.
set out at the beginning of a literary work (Parsons, 1990; Scott, 1990). Secondly, because its appeal to the pathos of the audience is comparable to that in John 5.

The beginning of the Fourth Gospel creates a literary frame of reference that provides clues as to how the story is to be viewed. "The initial narrative unit provides the first instance of point of view" (Scott, 1990:83). This focus which is provided for the reader is primarily ideological; it sets out the "norms of the text" which are supported by the narrator (Scott, 1990: 83-84). It is a system for viewing the world conceptually (Scott, 1990:84). The phenomenon of the reader's transition from the world external to the text to stand framed within the text occurs both psychologically and ideologically (Parsons, 1990:14).

The Fourth Gospel begins with, "In the beginning...the Logos was God" and concludes with the confession of Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (20.28).

Brown (1986:5) remarks that this inclusio represents the Johannine answer to the charge made against Jesus that he was "wrongly making himself God." 18 In answer, the confession that Jesus is rightly said to be "equal to God" focuses the principle point of the Gospel for its hearers. Neyrey argues (1988:15) that John's high Christology can be summarized by the term, "equal to God."

In John's Prologue the ideological focus which the narrator intends to impress on the audience makes it clear to the reader that to avoid the negative consequences suggested by allusions to those who did not receive the light (Jn.1.12), the reader must "embrace the ethos" endorsed by the narrator (see Malbon, 1990:177). Thus the ideology of the narrator (which sets the norms of the text) interacts with the boundaries on affiliation with characters which are set up in the beginning. If the Gospel succeeds, the reader enters the ideological frame of the text which has been set out and responds appropriately, by identifying with those who receive and believe.

The ideology which provides the frame that readers of the Fourth Gospel are ushered into is set initially in the Prologue. The primordial beginning is stated first as an original point which no reader has the seniority to dispute. If the speech claims to see a scenario that precedes the creation of all things then who could be old enough to dispute this account of the beginnings. This inaccessible beginning lays the foundation for establishing the authority

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18 "In the Gospel as it now stands," says Brown (1986:5), "The affirmation of 1.1 is almost certainly meant to form an inclusion with 20.28."
of the Logos in relation to God; the authority of God rests on a basis which surpasses, because it pre-empts, the possibility of human knowing.\textsuperscript{19}

\textit{The line of reasoning communicated by the internal logic of the argument}

Ideology is a controlling perspective which aims to elicit a particular interpretation of events and experience.

I have already argued that John takes a distinctive position in respect to the threat posed by Jesus’ crucifixion. Rather than admit that, as the son of God, he ever experiences reversal, John presents Jesus as inviolable by virtue of identification of the son with the father. The point of view that the son is inviolable is introduced in the Prologue by setting the son in intimate relation with the father from the beginning, in a position of primal superiority before and over all. In John, as in the image of YHWH’s victory over the deep, the experience of threat or battle is almost entirely submerged in the overwhelming focus upon the supremacy of the divine warrior king, as I argued in chapter 7. This ideological position has a controlling influence upon John’s use of the pattern of the killing and enthronement of Jesus in John 5.17-23.

My argument thus far in Part II has aimed to open an imaginative space for understanding this speech by reading the exaltation of the son alongside the pattern of the divine warrior myth. Against this background, the exalted speech concerning the son begins to make sense in relation to concrete characters and a narrative sequence, and scenario that are given diverse expression in Psalms such as 2 and 89. The story-like significance of the speech is opened up by the reading of the text with reference to the divine warrior myth, the myth puts flesh on the words. However the argument is logically structured in such a way that, even in the absence of understanding the background of the divine warrior myth, it creates a logic all its own; this reasoning presents the son as if his significance is interchangeable or equal to that of the father. I put the meaning of ‘the son’ into the same category as the meaning of ‘the father’. Given that the father is God the argument actually creates the need for an understanding of the son that is by definition mythic.

When I first began to read John, I was not cognizant of the divine warrior myth as such, nor of any relation between that pattern of narrative and the speech of John 5.

\textsuperscript{19} This line of thought is pursued by Carter (1990) in respect to John’s use of concepts associated with Wisdom, and by Kelber (1987a:119-127) in relation to "logocentrism" within the framework of recent trends in literary critical theory.
However, it is salutary to remember that even without the framework of the myth, the speech of the Prologue and John 5 communicated a clear message to me. I suggest that this occurred because the speech is designed in such a way that it creates a line of argument which demands that the audience identify the son with God. Unless this is done the speech makes little sense. To do this is to create a mythic image, a god-like meaning for Jesus, who the argument identifies with the son. Now I think the exalted speech in these texts is structured on the pattern of a particular mythic interpretation of Jesus according to scripture. However, the argument in the Prologue and John 5 appears to be designed in such a way that it puts forth an explicit argument which demands to be interpreted within the frame of some kind of myth in order for the words to make sense. For example, a reader who is not aware of the divine warrior myth or of any concept of royal sonship is virtually forced by the design of the argument to use or create some mythic frame of meaning for Jesus. For example, one can translate the equation of son to father God into an abstract theo-logic. Because the argument is stated in full, it communicates an internally coherent configuration of son in relation to father even when it is received in independence of a scriptural background, such as associations with the divine warrior myth.

The logical structure of the argument in John 5, reflects a mythic understanding of God as the absolute center of authority. Below I will suggest that this explicit line of reasoning presupposes an understanding that God is absolute authority which derives from the mythic assumption that God is King over all. The images of threat and enthronement in John 5.17-23 appears to be patterned upon the sequence of the divine warrior myth. I suggest that John elaborates upon that sequence in a way that establishes a kind of algebraic formula of theo-logic. The son is put for the identity, value, and significance of the father.

**Explicit argumentation in development of concepts that are not assumed**

In social theory of reading, texts are described as either 'high context' or 'low context'. The former assumes that the audience already understands the context from which the speech emerges. Thus the frame of significance is not explicitly stated in high context speech (Malina, 1991:19-20). Generally speaking, John is high context speech, as are all the gospel writings. They were written on the presumption that the audience they address
already understands the culture and values shared between author and audience. John fits into this category generally. The understanding shared between author and audience is apparent in the use John makes of biblical allusion, which presumably would have evoked unstated associations in the mind of hearers who already knew the frame of reference to which the author alluded.

Both the Prologue and John 5 are high context speech in the sense that they make use of allusions. These refer to sacred narratives that are full of associations which the audience already understands. The tabernacle in the wilderness (1.14) or the day of judgment (5.28-29) are examples. But in respect to the position which is taken concerning the relation of the son to the father, in this particular respect, John makes use of low context speech.

C.H. Dodd (1952:19-23) observes that in early Christian theology, widely understood traditional formulations, such as the identification of Jesus with the cornerstone, needed only to be mentioned, not argued for or explained. The audience already understood the connection. In contrast, Dodd notes other instances in which scripture is quoted, and then the meaning of it has to be argued for. The presence of such argumentation indicates, he suggests, that it is necessary to convince the audience by using reason to "prove" or demonstrate a new meaning for the scripture which has not widely been accepted (Dodd, 1952:19-23). His observation describes an aspect of what is called "artistic proof" in rhetorical invention.

The argument in John 5.17-23 is laid out formally and logically, as if it were intended to serve as a precedent for further reasoning. If John's audience understood the argument with reference to the pattern of God's victory over chaos and enthronement secure from every foe and the victory of his son after this pattern, then the association is tacit, unstated. However, a line of reasoning coherent with a narrative sequence of divine empowerment of the occupant of the throne is explicitly stated: the father loves the son and gives him power to create life and to judge (5.20,22). Thus to honor the father is to honor the son as the father; not honoring the son implies not honoring the father (5.23). Because it is explicitly

20 Malina (1991:5-8) and Neyrey (1991:xi) argue that interpreters must respect the distance between social worlds. Thus the enterprise of translation of meaning from one social world to another in the process of reading a high context work like Luke-Acts, is one requiring skill and acknowledgement of social distance.

21 Comparison of the careful "artistic" proof by argumentation in John 5.19-23 with the reference to "inartistic" proof or external proofs of scriptural testimony that already would have been accepted by the audience in Acts 3.13b-15 and 4.10-12, shows that the reasoning in John is distinctive. In John 5.17-23 the rationale is established in reasoning internal to the thesis (5.17-23). Though external witnesses are brought in to supplement the hypothesis (5.30-38), they are supplementary, not necessary to the case which has already been demonstrated.
stated, the progression of the argument is visible, making its internal logic accessible, even to hearers who do not share its social world. 22

Communication through translation into comparable hierarchies of value

The argument in John 5.17-23 is sufficiently explicit (low context) for the connections that it makes to translate into comparable concepts in another social world. In a culture very different from that of its early audience, it continues to construct a powerful form of demonstrative reasoning in my hearing of John 5.17-23. 23

Differences in social perception can have a compelling impact upon interpretation. The claims of the son can make a persuasive case even in a twentieth-century social world if the absolute case for his equality with God is translated into an appeal to social norms that are highly valued in the social world where the speech is heard. For example, within a theological community which gives highest priority to statements whose truth value is established by syllogistic reasoning, the argument in John 5 may have strong appeal because of its demonstrative logic. Before coming to understand that it made much more sense in reference to the divine warrior myth, I attempted to 'understand' the authoritative claims made in John 5 with reference to that theological social world.

22 See Minear's (1977:340-347) plausible thesis that John aims to communicate the presence of Jesus to a second generation of disciples as if they were those who experienced the events. Farrell (1987) maintains that use of abstract argumentation reflects a form of transmission not generally found in oral tradition. In a similar vein see Kelber (1983).

23 A culture code is the unstated grammar of social meanings and values proper to a given culture. When the words of an ancient text are translated into an alien culture they nevertheless appear to have meaning. This is because they are assigned or associated with the comparable language and social code which gives them social meaning in translation. (See Malina, 1991:3-24.)

The scenario of social meaning associated with the supremacy of the divine king as the universal judge is changed when the argument that Jesus is equal to God is transmitted into a democratic Western twentieth century culture code in which the experience of the absolute power associated with kingship is not assumed. Some of its cultural sense is lost in the process of cultural translation. However, when a reader identifies a point of contact between her own values and those upheld in a speech, communication is established. Persuasion occurs when, having accommodated oneself to the values of a speech, the hearer is moved to accept as her own the point of view advocated by the speaker.

When persuasion takes place the cultural code transmitted by the text is assumed by a compliant reader to be representative of 'shared values'. (See Taylor (1990); Scott (1990); Kelber (1990); and Moore (1989a and 1989b) on the distinction between resistant and compliant readers.)
Implicit in that frame of reference is a Western inclination of thought. The initial decision motivating this project was to approach John 5.17-23 as a controlling argument, stated in the form of a deductive line of reasoning from divine authority. I have not escaped a Western, and Aristotelian bias. Aristotle emphasized dialectic at the expense of aesthetic persuasion. His monumental influence has biased rhetoricians toward emphasis on the role of the enthymeme or rhetorical syllogism in persuasion (Conley, 1984:180-182). When reading from within a churchly social world in which the premise of the authority of God is assumed to be irrefutable, the line of reasoning expressed in John 5.17-23 fits into a theological foundation of the equality of status between son and father, most clearly set out in the reasoning concerning the Trinity. The authority of such theological reasoning reflects a bias toward demonstrative argument. In this context an argument such as John 5.17-23 can stand as an unquestionable foundation for Christological reasoning. For those who have been trained to think within such an epistemological scenario the truth statements of deductive reasoning are valued more highly than those of metaphor or narrative. For example, an argument formally based on agreed upon irrefutable premises is considered more convincing than a story of healing. To value theo-logic so highly is to take but one, and one potentially problematic, approach to the question of how these words generate power to persuade. Nevertheless it is an approach worth considering in relation to the question, ‘What does the argument do to the audience?’

24 Kinneavy (1987:188-195) maintains that Aristotle made a conscious choice to exclude emotional and stylistic exuberance. He also documents the influence of Aristotle’s definition of rhetoric on the Roman empire through the influence of Hermogenes.

25 If my cultural code resonates with that embedded in John because my culture was socially constructed, in part, by the very Johannine reasoning under investigation, then naturally John speaks demonstrably. Values not only appear to be shared. They are derivative one from the other. For example:

- if a) is Johannine testimony,
- and b) is dogmatic theology in which reasoning is based on a particular interpretation of the logos of Johannine theology
- then a) and b) represent distinct social worlds.

But for one who has learned the social meaning of God from b), the impact of a) would be understood in terms of b). And a) would tend to be perceived as a discourse reinforcing the existing order, a view of the social order based on Christ as Logos which was taken for granted.

Exploration of this hermeneutical possibility would require vast historical research which lies outside the range of this dissertation. I mention it here only to indicate that though b) is derived from a), they still belong to distinct social worlds, and readers cannot assume that a reading from John by a reader whose world is constructed by dogmatic assumptions is one in which the social perspective reflected in the text corresponds to the perspective of the reader.
A coherent sequence of controlling argument in John 1.1-3,18 and 5.17-23

For some readers the value of God's revelation as the absolute truth value and therefore the absolute authority provides the mythic frame of reference within which the words in John 5.17-23 are given space to make their point. Because meaning is filtered through this picture of the world in a way that makes some logical sense not everyone finds this speech difficult to understand, particularly when to identify with the son of God is already accepted as the norm of one's picture of God. Many such readers are unconscious of any potential relationship between the absolute divine authority by which the argument moves upon receptive audiences and the myth of YHWH's victory over chaos establishing his throne forever as the ruler of all creation. Yet even readers who know nothing of the specific mythic frame of significance associated with divine kingship, are affected by this argument. John 1.1-3,18 and 5.17-23 impose a line of reasoning that draws upon a receptive audience's existing understanding of God in order to create a logical and intrinsically mythic presentation of the son as equal to the father.

By holding the Prologue and John 5 together as if they constituted one coherent thought process, it is possible to see the argument take one, and then another, step forward in a way that produces a sequence of reasoning. For example, assertions are put forward in John 1.1-3,18. This is one step of the argument. Another step in the argumentation is taken in 5.17-23.

In this way, a coherent line of reasoning becomes apparent as one reads through the narrative sequence of the Fourth Gospel, as follows. Presentation of the logos as the unique son of the father in 1.1,18 introduces a clear line of thought. The logos who is the unique son of the father is identified with God. As one reads through the Gospel, John 5.17-23 picks up the same line of thought but develops upon the sequence of the argument put forward in the Prologue.

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26 I am indebted to Vernon K. Robbins for advice in correspondence (1993) for this way of explaining my understanding of the progression between the Prologue and John 5.
Jesus' words, "my father" (John 5.17), may be explained by the statements of the Prologue. The statement, "my father ...," introduces a line of reasoning which, though central to 5.17-19, is not mentioned within the immediate context of the Sabbath healing (5.1-16). However the subsequent reaction of Jesus' accusers ("he calls God his own father making himself equal with God") focuses upon "my father" as the crucial term. If the foundation for this line of reasoning can be found in the Prologue then a person who hears John 1 through 5 read in narrative sequence within the Fourth Gospel already understands the assumptions which lie behind Jesus' address of God as father:

'The Logos' (the son 1.14,18) did the work of the father (made all things) and 'was God'. If the reader makes connections between the one who is related to the father in a unique way in John 1.14,18 and John 5.17-19, then a line of reasoning from the Prologue provides the unstated general premise which undergirds Jesus' defense of his Sabbath healing: 'the father is working ... and I am working' 5.17.

The defense uses a deductive type of reasoning which can be stated formally as a syllogism. The assertion of the Prologue,--the Logos, the son (1.18) who created all things, is God (John 1.1,3)--is reformulated into the unstated major premise as follows. 28

| Unstated major premise       | (The son who does the work of the father is equal to God). |
| Minor term                   | Jesus is the son who does the work of the father God (5.17). |
| Conclusion                   | Therefore Jesus is equal to God (5.18). 29 |

Likewise, the assertions of the Prologue, '...The Logos was God', 'the only begotten in the bosom of the father', also serve as an unstated premise for the syllogism that follows.

27 "My father" also occurs in John 2.16. "The Father" occurs in 3.35; 4.12-23, in reference to God in a way that is consistent with 5.17. However, the use of "father" in the Prologue explains the sense of 5.17 more clearly than any of the texts above.

28 The terms of the argument which are unstated are placed within parenthesis.

29 The accusations that threaten to implicate Jesus in breaking the law are overcome by linking Jesus with God thus. The link is made on the grounds that Jesus called God 'father'. This relationship is defined in terms of the equality ascribed by God the father (5.20).

If one reads 5.17 as, "My father works and I imitate him," this is different from, "He works and I am equal to him as I do the same works." The word "equal" changes the impact on the hearer from an evocative unspecified link with God to categorical definition.
**Major**
(Anyone who has God as their own father is equal to God.)

**Minor**
Jesus calls God his own father.

**Conclusion**
Therefore Jesus is equal to God.  

For a believer in God, reading within a culture which values divine revelation through Christ and scripture as high in the hierarchy of social good, the controlling aspects of the argument come through. If the mythic frame of reference attached to the first audience’s understanding of sonship is no longer understood this does not diminish the logical power of the argument for audiences already committed to honor of God. If the argument is styled on the model of the divine warrior myth, though this mythic frame of reference may be lost to a twentieth century reader, the effect is comparable: the reasoning within the argument shows the father and son to be in a position of inviolable superiority. Thus the son, far from being threatened by opposition, is superior in power to his opponents. Accordingly the son is in a position to demand submission of all, as in the kingly structure of Psalm 2.

In Psalm 2 the king is empowered for world domination. His coronation provides the social setting for the display of his status. A coronation scene makes pictorial sense of the absolutist style of reasoning which is fully elaborated in John 5.17-23. It brings abstract identity between the son and God into a concrete social setting. Even though the king is not explicitly mentioned, the controlling logic communicates the same absolute message. The result is that hearers are required to submit to the son as to God.

A centralizing, controlling, legitimating, ordering function was the expected social role of the monarch in ancient times (Whitelam, 1992:44). The controlling, legitimating, ordering impact of the authority of this argumentation in John 5 seems to serve the same social function. Thus I suggest a controlling conception derived from a kingly pattern of absolute power shapes the final form of John 5.

The argument, that the son is equal to the father, is speech that asserts absolute authority comparable to speech from the throne. I suggest that it reflects the absolute decree proper to a kingly setting; such speech serves a judicial function while it demonstrably dis-

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30 Together this compound argument serves as what Aristotle calls a ‘legal defense of fact’. It contradicts the accusation that Jesus’ wrongly calls God father, in justification of his Sabbath work. Dr. Elizabeth Duke, a scholar of Aristotelian and Roman law, helped me to formulate and label these syllogisms, University of Otago, July, 1992.

31 I discuss this under the major heading “Reading Psalm 2 ...” in chapter 3.
plays the absolute power of the king. In chapter 3 I noted that John 5.22-23 evokes the style of cultic speech that legitimated the institution of monarchy in Psalms such as 2 and 110. 32

By highlighting the syllogistic structure of the argument I have tried to show that the sequential combination of the reasoning in John 1.1-3,18 and John 5.17-23 generates a controlling line of reasoning. Such a line of reasoning would be compelling for hearers who reverence God as King. By asserting that Jesus is the reigning, inviolable son of the King, the argument builds a case that the honor proper to God is the due of the "son" who is enthroned from the beginning alongside God. It justifies a particular action (granting honor to Jesus equal to the honor granted God). The desired action flows from the statement proper to a coronation setting: God has given the son power to order and judge on earth (5.21,28). Therefore the son as the extension of the power of God on earth is to be given honor due to God. Whatever the one does, the other does likewise (5.18b, 19b).

In translation into an alien culture code it loses the associations of coronation-like speech. Nevertheless the deductive argument that is logically elaborated still creates the same kind of effect. The absolute case that the son must be honored as God, is comparable in terms of its potential for social control, to the edict of the divine-like king.

Because this absolute type of speech lends itself to analysis as a deductive argument which makes a claim upon the action of those who accept its terms, it is deontic: it formulates a rule concerning behavior which is posited upon a fact or ontological statement (Perelman, 1963:40).

A deontic syllogism follows this pattern: 33

a) The major premise is the rule to be applied.

**Major** (Whoever has God as their own father is equal to God, Jn.1.1,18.)

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32 According to Mettinger (1976:254-293) these reflect a strand of the Israelite conception of divine monarchy which was influenced by the form of Egyptian expression.

b) The minor premise is the quality of the person in question; the fact of regarding him or her as a member of a given category provides the minor term of the syllogism.

\[ \text{Minor} \]

[Jesus] says God is his own father, making himself equal with God. Whatever the father does, the son does likewise.

c) The conclusion is the just act which must be consistent with the conclusion of the syllogism.

\[ \text{Conclusion} \]

In order that all may honor the son just as they honor the father.

Anyone who does not honor the son does not honor the father.

The classical statement of a syllogism, ‘All humans are mortal, Socrates is human, therefore Socrates is mortal’, makes an ontological statement by simply explaining the basis in social reality for application of this rule in a particular case.

In contrast, formal justice (as in the deontic syllogism above) follows the same logical pattern with one distinction. It employs a logically formal explanation of reality, not simply to explain but to establish the grounds that justify a particular action. In deontic, as opposed to strictly formal logic, the final term generates a just act which is consistent with the conclusion of the syllogism (Perelman, 1963:41). In the case of John 5.23 the just act is that hearers should give to the son the honor that is due to God the father. Those who do not honor the son thus do not honor the father.  

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34 Aqvist (1984:608), in discussion of the philosophical aspect of deontic logic, makes the following observation: the study of normative concepts undertaken by deontic logic is profitably understood within the context of a normative system in reference to the role played by sanctions or penalties.

35 Odeburg (1929) in commenting on John 5 observes that Jesus speaks in tautologies.
precedent or authority is not implicitly reliant on God the Monarch and Ruler of all, the statement of equality to God logically stands on the self-evident premise it presupposes.

The event of Sabbath healing leads up to the argument (5,1-9). Traditional images of eschatological resurrection and judgment follow it (5.28-29). It is constructed from everyday imagery, the reliance of a son upon a father to learn what his father does (5.17,19-20). Authorities are brought in as witnesses in support of the argument (5.31-37). All of the above rhetorically support the argument. But logically it stands upon its own internal reasoning. Thus witnesses from tradition, and signs in support of it, are supplementary, not necessary evidence.

Kenneth Burke (1955:187) notes the difference between dialectical treatment of conflict in "parliamentary" argument style and an "ultimate" treatment. The dialectical leaves the competing voices jangling with one another. But the "ultimate" order would place these competing voices themselves in a "Hierarchy, or Sequence, or evaluative series so that, in some way, we went by a fixed and reasoned progression from one of these to another, the members of the entire group being arranged developmentally in relation to one another" (Burke, 1957:187).

The deductive line of reasoning forms the conceptual framework within which various layers of traditional material in John 5 are framed. For example the elaboration of the argument includes a traditional saying which provides an image of the dead coming from their graves, the good for life, the evil for condemnation (5.28-29). Because the argument that God has given the son the power of creation and judgment (5.21-23,25) is the defining concept, the image of standing before the throne to be judged by one's deeds is subordinated to the claim which the argument makes that the son must be honored as the father. A "guiding idea" or "unitary principle" creates the impression of successive "moments in a single process" (Burke,1957:187). In this sense the argument in John 5.17-23 can be said to promote a controlling ideology.

Observe the word of Jesus, "Rise, take up your mat and walk." The narrative of the healing (5.1-9) shows that the command of Jesus, "Rise,...walk" is authoritative, perform-

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36 In *An Ideology of Revolt*, Neyrey (1988:209) characterizes the "high Christology" of the equality of Jesus with God as a code for social control, and revolt against "all things past and all previous controls, structures and classifications." He considers that the Christology which emerged as an aggressive claim against the synagogue became a code for revolt against all formal structures including Christians considered to have inadequate faith.

37 Watt, (1985:79) makes an interesting and complex attempt at explaining the dominance of Christ over traditional eschatology, in this text, as a logical imperative relating to the incarnate identity that traces logically back even to the period before incarnation.
ative speech. Thus the narrative of speech and resulting act says something about the authority of Jesus. But if left to stand alone interpretation of the saying is open ended. 38

If the testimony of the miracle had ended when the man took up his mat and walked, hearers would have been required to reflect on the meaning of the authority of Jesus. The healing (5.1-9) and the saying attributed to Jesus in 5.17, apart from the line of reasoning in 5.17-23, could be interpreted in various ways. However, the equal relationship that 5.17-23 establishes between Jesus the son and God the father sets in place a conceptual superstructure. Within the unitary structured system, or synecdoche, that is set in place in 5.17-23, 'the son' has become a transferable term that can be 'put for' the term 'God'. 39 Thus speech that otherwise could be open to disparate shades of meaning is channeled into one primary conception. 40 The son is identified with God. Therefore he must be honored as God.

Of course the argument that Jesus is equal to the father (5.17-23) develops from the healing. But it is the argument, and not the story of healing itself, that provides a conceptual system that determines the significance of Jesus' words and actions in retrospect to the healing. Thus, though the saying of Jesus, "Rise,...and walk," may be a basic building block of testimony to Jesus, it becomes subordinate to the point it is employed to make.

Northrope Frye maintains that biblical language, on the whole, is metaphoric, evoking comparison with another reality; it is rarely metonymic, designating that this person or name is 'put for' another, establishing an identity or equivalency between them. 41 Frye argues that the language of the New Testament was relatively free from the cultural ascendancy of the Platonic language of an intellectual elite: a perspective on language in which, as he describes it, formally stated primary truths conveyed a sense of superior order

38 Kelber (1983:92-97) proposes that within the oral tradition, an explicit framework for interpretation of traditional stories is not required. The Christology associated with the acts of Jesus is communicated by the presence of the speaker in conversation with the assumptions of the audience. In a situation of oral communication, he argues that Christological explanation would be redundant if stated explicitly.


40 Though following a different process, Kelber's (1987) discussion of the logocentrism of the incarnation of Jesus in John draws a similar conclusion.

41 Bredin (1984:55) gives a much more comprehensive description of the variety of uses of metonymy within the context of ordinary language use.
embodied in language. By virtue of this order, "properly constructed verbal sequences" demonstrate an "inherent power of compelling assent" (Frye, 1982:6-9). 42

I agree with Frye that much of the language in John, the word, the light, the son, the father, can be metaphoric, evocative speech. Yet the rationale embodied in the deductive line of reasoning in John 5.17-23 appears to be designed to create a controlling line of reasoning. It uses a metaphor of relationship between son and father in a way that creates a metonymic identity between son and father. Though evocative images constitute the separate elements of this speech, they are controlled by the systemic thought in which the son is 'put for' the work and honor of the father.

The controlling reasoning demands that the reader who believes in God and is sympathetic to Jesus will be influenced, not only to acquiesce to the terms of this argument, but to make use of its terms as a definitive frame of significance for all other action and speech associated with Jesus; because he is equal to God, his actions and words are, logically speaking, equal to the actions and words of God. If John identifies the son 'lifted up' with the enthronement of Yahweh before creation, by elaborating this perspective explicitly, logically, the mythic expression itself is subsumed under a kind of pseudo-mythic abstract theo-logic.

The 'absoluteness' of Jesus: a perspective that extends beyond John 5

In summary, I have proposed that John 5 explicitly elaborates an ideology that Jesus is equal to God through the argument in John 5.17-23. Further I have suggested that it is designed to appeal to an audience which values the honor of God. Because the reasoning it sets out is so explicitly stated, the priorities it claims can be translated into other hierarchies of value in distinct but comparable social worlds.

The fact that I react personally to specific arguments in John suggests that enough of its assumptions are rendered accessible for the code in which its message is written to translate meaningfully.

Within a social theory of reading this would suggest two possibilities:

a) We implicitly share an unstated (or assumed) social scenario; or,

42 Tobin (1990:256-269) maintains that the Prologue of John is indebted to the same stream of middle Platonism that was influential upon Philo. Further, Dillon (1977) describes aspects of Middle Platonism, such as dialogues in which the teacher already knows the truth as opposed to the non-dogmatic exploratory character of Socratic dialogue, which would bear closer comparison with the Johannine understanding of truth.
b) I experience the force of the argument in John because its internal thought process is explicitly spelled out. This allows me to translate it into distinct but comparable meanings in my social world. The structures of authority into which these claims translate are so strongly entrenched in my social world that they have the power to bring strong social pressure to bear upon me through this argument.

Clearly it is imprecise to assume that John 1.1-3; 5.17-23 are heard in the same way by audiences who are vastly different. More accurately, social models of reading assume that the text culturally translates into distinct, though not necessarily incompatible, culture codes or social scenarios. (See Malina, 1991.)

Ideology is not limited to the dominance of deductive logic. The Rabbinic scholar Jacob Neusner (1989:19-20) comments upon the narrative of Jesus' expulsion of merchants from the temple as an example of the "absoluteness" of Christianity. He describes it as an event which exemplifies the taxonomic enterprise of systemically viewing tradition from one absolute point of view. In this systemic sense, he maintains, Christianity began at Easter, and by virtue of the systemic centrality of this event it is absolute, wholly other, not to be confused with a reform of Judaism (Neusner, 1989:18-19).

Debate should be entertained over Neusner’s characterization of the temple incident within a tradition of Jewish prophets critical of the aspects of the Temple system. But this does not undermine the insight that can be gleaned from Neusner’s comment: he perceives Christianity as absolute, and he uses a narrative incident to make this point. I felt the pressure of the domination of divine authority in John 5, because it leaves nothing to be guessed. But Neusner (1989:19) finds the simple story of the temple expulsion "absolute in its reading of its circumstances and context." His perspective suggests to me that the ideology of Christian belief is not limited to the explicitly controlling logic, such as that spelled out in the Prologue and John 5.17-23. 45

43 "Jesus' overturning of the tables of the money changers is an 'incomprehensible act for Jews' to whom it represented a rejection of the provision for sacrifices of atonement for all Israel," says Neusner (1989:25), "only someone who explicitly rejected Torah could have done so," he says, or someone who intended to set up a different table (Neusner, 1989:25).

44 See for example, Juel (1977) who maintains that judgment of the temple establishment was expected within Jewish piety. According to the Jewish scholar David Flusser (1987:18), Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem was motivated by a desire to prevent the destruction of the Temple. He came to warn people and call them to repentance, though he clashed with Sadducean leadership due to his attacks on them and his prophecies of the destruction of the Temple.

45 Neusner maintains that the question attributed to Jesus, "Who do you think I am?" is indicative of the task undertaken in his name by Paul and all the New Testament writers, to "reframe everything people knew through encounter with what they did not know" (Neusner, 1989:29).
Neusner’s observation raises the possibility that a narrative or myth which structures reality may be centralizing of meaning, and programmatic of interpretation. A mythic conception of the son as the judge associated with the throne of God had already centered the significance of Jesus. Before John 5, perhaps due to a narrative pattern ‘systematically’ applied, Jesus already was systematically interpreted as the person at the very center of the early Christian concept of God.

One could infer, on these grounds, that the argument equating Jesus with God is but a logical development emerging out of a system for viewing Jesus that mythic narratives had already set in place. Neusner(1989:20) cites a principle borrowed from economic theory that appears to me to be relevant here: statements of fundamental facts generally only acquire importance in reference to the superstructure they are made to bear and are commonplace in the absence of such superstructures. The control set in place by John’s explicit deductive logic, appears to create a line of reasoning capable of standing on its own.

However it only really gives logical expression to a systemic centering of Jesus which had already occurred in Christian tradition. A myth had already effected a trial-like division between those who acknowledged the son enthroned, and those who questioned his authority. Jesus’ death and the experience of his life after crucifixion were explained according to scripture. Via this interpretation of these events Jesus’ significance had already been placed in a central position. His crucifixion and resurrection functioned as a demonstrative witness that concretely embodied a sacred narrative pattern: God, having overpowered threats from enemies, reigns triumphantly as King. The meaning of Jesus’ death and power over death was framed in reference to the pattern of threat/victory/enthronement within the plot-line at the heart of these stories. Jesus was understood to be the cornerstone, the exalted son, the victor over his accusers. His crucifixion and power over death were explained in the terms of the myth that signified YHWH’s absolute sovereignty.

Thus recognition of Jesus as enthroned in the midst of his rejection and crucifixion became a defining line. It divided those who identified Jesus enthroned beside God from those who refused to allow him this absolute centrality. To place an actual event, the crucifixion, at the core of the myth was to generate a system that was absolute in its orientation toward this particular event. The absolute character of this system derived, from the mythology of the enthronement of YHWH as supreme, inviolable from any foe. But what made the system absolute unto itself was the concrete identification of Jesus’ death with victory over chaos and his enemies, the heart of the enthronement myth. Those who
acknowledge him as the kingly son, maintain that he occupies a space at the absolute center of the already existing mythology, as the one who belongs on the seat of God's throne. Apart from that centering which preceded the construction of the speech in John 5.17-23 statements about Jesus and his relationship to his father would have been deemed unessential.46

A concluding summary of the findings of the dissertation

Three issues have guided my interpretation.

1) Can the speech concerning the son properly be understood in isolation from its context of conflict?: a trial issuing in the threat of execution.

2) What mythic sequence makes sense of the language of a god-like son, who functions as the equal of God, in response to a threat to his sonship?

3) Does John 5.17-23 reflect common patterns of speech and action, or because it contains distinctive speech can it adequately be interpreted only with reference to uniquely Johannine conceptions?

I do not claim to have positively answered all of the above. However my rhetorical analysis of the internal features of John 5 does provide at least a partial answer to question 3. By placing 5.17-23 alongside other typical speech, I have identified common patterns which suggest that John 5.1-23 cannot adequately be studied in isolation. First, the argument of the son's equality with God is placed alongside the type of judicial defense called, in Hellenistic history an absolute case. In such a defense, the charge 'it is wrong' is countered, 'no, it is right'. The accusation is countered by appealing to a yet more fundamental ground of authority. In John 5.17-23 the charge John wrongly makes himself equal to God is answered through deductive reasoning; the argument aims to demonstrably show that it is right to give the son the same honor due to God. This assumes of course that the first premise is already accepted by the audience. At issue is less the need to convince the audience than to display the son's functional equality of power and status as an issue

46 See Neusner (1989:20) on the distinction between a fact that is systematically vital and one that is inert.
related to the honor of God. I maintain that John 5.17-23 argues an absolute case within a fully elaborated, and explicitly stated, thesis argument.

The contribution that my use of Hellenistic judicial analysis makes to Johannine research is relatively straight-forward. It shows 'how' the argument is made in terms of judicial rhetoric. However it does little to explain the significance of the appeal to the authority of the father/son relationship when the father refers to God. In order to interpret the rhetoric of John 5.17-23 alongside other comparable patterns of speech which do help to explain the significance the absolute case, I have compared it with early Christian forensic speech, and in another context, with images of the divine warrior myth as well. The results of these comparative studies are less clear cut than my discussion of John 5.17-23 as an absolute case. I have placed my relatively strong evidence of the absolute case within the necessarily tentative frame of the 'divine warrior proposal'.

Following my rhetorical analysis of the internal features of John 5 it has been necessary to develop a more eclectic approach to the other arenas of interpretation which are the concern of socio-rhetorical analysis. In chapters 4 and 5 I attend to social values reflected in John 5.17-23. Chapters 3, 5, 6, and 7 develop intertextual analyses. Chapter 8 ventures into the realm of the ideology reflected in the text. In bringing social and intertextual questions to bear on interpretation of John 5.17-23, I touch upon many areas: death and resurrection, scripture within scripture, the divine warrior pattern, and so on. The highly complex literature related to each of these areas could not possibly be addressed in depth within one dissertation. I have not attempted to give more than a sample of scholarly opinion in reference to these concerns. To attempt to do so would exceed the limits and the purposes of this project.

Rather, my strategy has been to take a something of a 'tour', stopping only to discuss aspects of these issues that are germane to my thesis. By employing this strategy, I recognize that the frame of coherence that I have been able to outline as a result, is but a provisional sketch. I hope it may serve as a basis for future study for it is intentionally speculative in aim; its contours may need to be deepened or redrawn altogether, in light of more detailed research.

The proposal that I have put forward in chapter 3 and that I develop within social and intertextual arenas in chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 remains but a proposal that helps to 'make sense' of John 5. The death-threat/enthroned-sonship speech in John 5.17-23 becomes less abstract and more concrete, when translated into the setting of a coronation-like scene such as Psalm 2. The sequence and mood of the son's answer to challengers reflects a pattern that resonates with the forensic setting and the sequence, irony, and imagery of the Synoptic
trial. However, in the Synoptic accounts no claim of equality with God is to be found. Though this marks a difference between these comparable texts it is not a difference that exceeds the bounds within which various expressions of the divine warrior myth are found. Even the god-like presentation of the son, distinctively emphasized in John, is coherent in the wider context of the divine warrior myth. The enthronement of YHWH before creation may be the aspect of the myth within which John reads the significance of Jesus’ ‘lifting up’ in crucifixion. The accounts of the king as son in Psalm 2 and 89 are patterned after the myth of the enthronement of YHWH. Early Christian interpretation of Jesus as the cornerstone, seated on the right hand of the throne, re-orient an already existing mythology with reference to the centrality or ‘absoluteness’ of Jesus. The absolute case that the son must be honored just as the father, is but a more explicit expression of the location of Jesus as the son who is unique, enthroned beside God.

In summary the three questions, which have guided my interpretation, all do find answers of a kind.

1) ‘Can the speech concerning the son properly be understood in isolation from the trial-like threat of death within which it is framed?’

   In reference to interpretation of John 5.17-23 as an absolute case, the argument concerning the son is elaborated as a response to the challenge of opponents. It cannot properly be explained in isolation from this context. Similarly, if we read John 5.17-23 intertextually within the sequence of the divine warrior myth, the same argument holds: enthroned status is affirmed as the outcome of a victory over chaos and enemies. Likewise, in early Christian texts which I identified as rhetorically similar to John 5.17-23, the element of threat (death) routinely is linked with speech of the enthronement (resurrection).

   The answer to the first question is no.

   The answer to the second,

   2) ‘What mythic sequence makes sense of the language of a god-like son, who functions as the equal of God, in response to a threat to his sonship?’ is less certain. That the divine warrior myth is the appropriate frame of interpretation for the god-like speech of the son, is only a tentative proposal. But it may nevertheless stimulate discussion and yet more detailed comparative and intertextual research. I suggest that it makes at least as much sense of the god-like claim of the son, as did Bultmann’s application of his Gnostic redeemer myth to the text of John 5.17-23.
3) The third question ‘Because John 5.17-23 reflects distinctive Johannine expression can it adequately be interpreted in isolation?’ receives an unqualified ‘no’. The distinctive character of John 5.17-23 only becomes clear when it is placed alongside other rhetorically similar speech. For example alongside instances of lese majesty the distinctive combination of appeal to filial and divine honor becomes clear. Similarly the Psalm 2 sequence of threat/enthronement throws light on the distinctive line of argument that develops from a comparable sequence in John 5.17-23. By learning the grammar of the divine warrior myth I have begun to suspect that the absolute speech is not untypical, though it had been classified as ‘uniquely’ Johannine. It is but a symptom (a species) of the more deeply rooted controlling structure (which is the genus) of the conflict myth.


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