

Markan Christology according to Richard Hays: Some Addenda

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Abstract — Hays presents a convincing case for a “divine identity Christology” in Mark, based on the scriptural echoes. This article develops the case further, in particular by identifying a series of six “leading questions” about Jesus’s identity (1:27; 2:7; 4:41; 10:18; 12:37; 14:61). The first five invite the readers to recognize Jesus’s divine identity, and in the last case, Jesus answers all the questions with an explicit claim to divine identity. The article also discusses the role of the three cases where God the Father addresses Jesus in the words of scriptural texts (1:2; 9:7; 12:36). The last contains God’s answer to Jesus’s dying question to God (15:34).

Key Words — Richard B. Hays, *OT in the NT, Christology, divine identity, Gospel of Mark*

One of the most important aspects of Richard Hays’s new book is his demonstration, on the basis of the scriptural echoes in each Gospel, that all four canonical Gospels propound a “high” Christology or, it would be better to say, a Christology of divine identity. While this is in line with some recent trends, especially but not only in the study of Mark,¹ it represents a complete departure from the dominant view in 20th-century Gospels scholarship, according to which the Synoptics portray a merely human Jesus who speaks and acts on God’s behalf, while only in the case of John’s Gospel, with its doctrine of incarnation, can we say that Jesus is properly and personally divine. Readers who know my own work on NT Christology, in which I claim that what I call a “Christology of divine identity” is characteristic of all the NT writers,² will not be surprised to find that I am in, not only general, but also very often detailed agreement with Hays’s account of the Christology of all the Gospels in this book. His preferred way of characterizing the “divine” aspect of the Christology of

1. On Mark, see Daniel Johansson, “The Identity of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark: Past and Present Proposals,” *CBR* 9 (2010): 364–93.

2. Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel: God Crucified and Other Studies on the New Testament’s Christology of Divine Identity* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008).

the Gospels is to speak of Jesus as “the embodiment of Israel’s God,”³ but sometimes he also coincides with my own preference for speaking of the “divine identity” of Jesus.⁴

What he calls “the central thesis that surges to the surface when we seek to learn from the Evangelists how to read Scripture” is this: “The more deeply we probe the Jewish and Old Testament roots of the Gospel narratives, the more clearly we see that each of the four Evangelists, in their diverse portrayals, identifies Jesus as the embodiment of the God of Israel.”⁵ If “Jewish” here is intended to refer to postbiblical, that is, Second Temple period Judaism, then the one mildly critical remark I would make is that Hays in fact pays scant attention to the Jewish literature of the Second Temple period (as a glance at the index of other ancient sources will show). He does not, for example, point out that the Gospel writers employ *exegetical techniques* that were current among other interpreters of the Jewish Scriptures, while only rarely does he refer to the ways in which other Jews were reading the passages of Scripture that the Gospel writers quote and echo. He may have thought that, in a broad study of this kind, attending to these matters could distract from the central task of showing how the Gospel writers engaged with the Scriptures themselves. If so, I am inclined to think that this judgment was probably correct on the whole, but I think there are places where more attention to the context of Jewish reading of Scripture within which the Gospel writers worked could have assisted his explanations of how they read Scripture as they did and even extended the range of Gospel passages that can be seen to be significantly indebted to scriptural sources. I shall discuss a few examples in Mark’s Gospel below.

In the rest of this essay, I shall look in detail at some Markan echoes of Scripture that are especially important for understanding his narrative Christology. Though I do not expect Richard necessarily to agree with all of my suggestions, I hope they represent further thoughts along the lines he has developed in that part of his book.

MARK 1:2–3

Whether or not this passage should be connected syntactically with v. 1, it certainly occupies a key position as a scriptural quotation that introduces Mark’s whole narrative. It not only indicates that the ministry of John the Baptist fulfils scriptural prophecy but it also, thereby, positions John’s ministry in the story of Israel and identifies Mark’s whole narrative as the narrative of the climactic events of that story.⁶ The ascription of

3. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 7, 46, 62, 69, 73, 78, 102, etc.

4. E.g., *ibid.*, 62.

5. *Ibid.*, 363.

6. For a variety of interpretations of these verses, in addition to Hays, see Joel Marcus, *The Way of the Lord: Christological Exegesis of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Mark* (Louisville:

the whole conflated quotation to Isaiah probably serves, as Hays suggests,⁷ to weight the emphasis toward the Isaianic part of it. There is plentiful evidence that the section of Isaiah that begins at ch. 40 and extends at least to ch. 56 was interpreted by early Christians generally as a prophecy in which they could read the events of the story of Jesus and through which they could interpret the events of the story of Jesus. The application of Isa 40:3 to John the Baptist (with whom early Christian narrations of the story of Jesus commonly began) was a pivotal part of that interpretation and Mark's citation of that verse inevitably evokes the whole prophecy of Isaiah that follows it. This is a case where Hays's insistence on metalepsis as a methodological principle for reading echoes of Scripture in the Gospels is very obviously justified. (He defines metalepsis as a literary technique of citing or echoing a small bit of a precursor text in such a way that the reader can grasp the significance of the echo only by recalling or recovering the original context from which the fragmentary echo came and then reading the two texts in dialogical juxtaposition.⁸)

Mark's conflation of Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 is based, in part at least, on the verbal links between the two passages (*gezera šawa*, in the later terminology): the verb כָּרַח (in the Piel here: "to clear") and the noun דֶּרֶךְ ("way"). In Jewish exegetical practice (in this respect widely followed by NT writers), these verbal links serve to highlight a connection of meaning and to indicate that the two passages should be interpreted in relation to each other. In both the LXX and in Mark, only one of these verbal links (דֶּרֶךְ) is preserved in the Greek translation (ὁδός), which suggests that the linking of the two passages in Christian interpretation originated on the basis of the Hebrew text (whether Mark or a predecessor was first responsible for this). Divergences between Mark 1:2 and Mal 3:1 LXX also indicate that the former is an independent rendering of the Hebrew, though Mark 1:3 corresponds closely to Isa 40:3 LXX.

Hays follows most other scholars in claiming that Mark also conflates Mal 3:1 with Exod 23:20, but I think this is doubtful. There are indeed close verbal correspondences between Mal 3:1 and Exod 23:20, which certainly could justify the conflation of these passages for exegetical purposes. But (given that Mark 1:2 seems to be independent of the LXX), the only point at which Mark 1:2 corresponds to Exod 23:20 and *not* to Mal 3:1 is in the phrase πρὸ προσώπου σου ("before your face"), which Mark places after

Westminster John Knox, 1992), 12–47; Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997), 53–90; Thomas R. Hatina, *In Search of a Context: The Function of Scripture in Mark's Narrative*, JSNTSup 232 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 138–83; Paul Owen, "Jesus as God's Chief Agent in Mark's Christology," in *Mark, Manuscripts and Monotheism: Essays in Honor of Larry W. Hurtado*, ed. Chris Keith and Dieter T. Roth, LNTS 528 (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 40–57, here pp. 40–45.

7. Hays, *Echoes*, 20–21.

8. *Ibid.*, 11.

τὸν ἄγγελόν μου, whereas Mal 3:1 has “before my face” (לפני, πρὸ προσώπου μου) after “way” (דרך, ὁδόν). Mark or his source could well have made these changes to Mal 3:1 without reference to Exod 23:20. The alteration of a text to suit its interpretation is also a Jewish exegetical technique, easily paralleled in the NT.

If Mark’s text in 1:2 is influenced by Exod 23:20, then the context in Exod 23:20 has been ignored, for the “you” in Exod 23:20–22 is very clearly Israel. Hays does not seem to address this problem. It is possible that the text of Exod 23:20 has influenced the form in which Mark cites Mal 3:1, but it seems very implausible that an echo of Exod 23:20 here could constitute an example of metalepsis, evoking for the reader of Mark the context of that text. So I am not at all persuaded by Hays’s suggestion that, by echoing Exod 23:20 and its context, “Mark artfully hints that the Baptist is not only a voice of judgment (as the Malachi allusion would suggest) but also the forerunner of a new entry into the land of promise.”⁹ A “new exodus” theme is certainly implied by the citation of Isa 40:3 in Mark 1:3, but it seems to me unlikely that it is reinforced by a “first exodus” theme in Mark 1:2. This detracts somewhat from Hays’s claim that what Mark does is to “renarrate” the story of Israel “in a way prefigured in Scripture.”¹⁰ The new exodus was already prophesied for Israel’s future by the prophets. Mark narrates the fulfilment of these prophecies in the sometimes-surprising ways that he finds them fulfilled in the story of Jesus. But it does not seem to me that he can really be said to “renarrate” Israel’s story.

Hays does not in fact address the *Christological* content of Mark 1:2, focusing instead purely on the Christological significance of Mark 1:3.¹¹ But the two are closely connected. From the fact that Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 are linked, in Mark’s Greek, by the word “way,” it is clear that “your way” in v. 2 must be identical with “the way of the Lord” in v. 3. Hays, correctly in my opinion, argues that “the Lord” (κύριος) must stand for the divine name Ἰηwh in Mark 1:3, just as it does in Isa 40:3 LXX. He is also, I think, correct that Mark’s substitution of “his” for “our God” in the citation of Isa 40:3 does not contradict this interpretation.

However, I think that Mark is probably not just abbreviating the text, but deliberately avoiding the phrase “our God.” While NT writers (especially Paul, but also others) frequently identify the κύριος of OT texts, where it stands for the divine name, as Jesus, they only rarely take ὁ θεός (“God”) in OT texts to refer to Jesus.¹² When Paul paraphrases the Shema in such a way as to include Jesus in the definition of the one God, he speaks of “one God, the Father” and “one Lord, Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 8:6). If Mark

9. *Ibid.*, 23.

10. *Ibid.*, 19.

11. *Ibid.*, 63–64.

12. One example is Heb 1:8. For Paul’s usage, see Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 191 and n. 31.

deliberately avoided reproducing Isaiah's "our God" in Mark 1:3, it was not because he attributed less-than-full divinity to Jesus, but because he followed a common early Christian terminological practice, in which the *word* God was only rarely applied to Jesus. By calling Jesus κύριος in contexts where the word was recognized as a substitute for the divine name, early Christians indicated clearly that Jesus shared the divine identity of God his Father. But they did not want to say that Jesus was simply identical with God his Father. The *word* God could all-too-easily imply either that or that Jesus was a subordinate god.¹³ By substituting "his" for "our God" in his citation of Isa 40:3, Mark was actually ruling out a possible reading of that verse that would distinguish "the Lord" and "our God" as two divinities.

According to Hays, Mark both identifies Jesus as "the embodiment of Israel's God" and distinguishes between Jesus and God: "Mark's narrative does not posit a simple undifferentiated equivalence between Jesus and the God of Israel."¹⁴ In fact, this is quite clear already in the form in which Mark cites Mal 3:1 in 1:2:

Mal 3:1 MT: Behold, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before my face (לפני).

Mark 1:2: Behold, I am sending my messenger before your face (πρὸ προσώπου σου), who will prepare your way.¹⁵

In Malachi, ostensibly, the speaker, identified as "YHWH of hosts" at the end of the verse, addresses Israel about *his own* coming. In Mark, the speaker addresses someone else about *that person's* coming and *his* way. This second person must be the same as "the Lord" of Mark 1:3 (Isa 40:3). Mark's reading of Mal 3:1 thus identifies two divine persons, one of whom addresses the other.¹⁶ Hays's account of Jesus's distinction from God seems to miss this element of personal distinction *within* the divine identity. He says that Jesus "seems to be at the same time . . . both the God of Israel and a *human being* not simply identical with the God of Israel" (my emphasis).¹⁷

Matthew Bates has recently identified Mark 1:2 as an example of what he calls "prosopological exegesis," meaning a form of early Christian exegesis that found in OT texts a distinction between two divine persons and, especially, dialogue between them. While I think he tends to overinterpret this phenomenon, it is a real phenomenon, and Mark 1:2 is certainly

13. When John uses the word θεός, he does so very carefully (John 1:1, 18; 20:28).

14. Hays, *Echoes*, 76.

15. All biblical quotations in this essay are either from the NRSV or incorporate my own modifications of the NRSV.

16. In the whole passage, Mal 3:1–2, it is very difficult to be sure which figures are identical and which distinguished. So the passage could certainly be said to be open to the kind of interpretation Mark apparently gives it. For Second Temple period Jewish interpretation of the passage, see David M. Miller, "The Messenger, the Lord, and the Coming Judgement in the Reception History of Malachi 3," *NTS* 53 (2007): 1–16.

17. Hays, *Echoes*, 78.

an example of it. Bates reads the verse as an interpretation of Mal 3:1 in which the פְּנִים or προσώπον of God (in the phrase לִפְנֵי, which LXX renders as πρὸ προσώπου μου) is understood as God's "personal presence."¹⁸ So he paraphrases Mark's reading of Mal 3:1 thus: "Look, *I, the Father*, will send *John the Baptist, my messenger*, ahead of you, *my personal presence, my Son*, so that he will prepare the path before you."¹⁹ This may be correct, and might be supported by reference to the way in which "the face" (פְּנִים) of God is used in something like this sense elsewhere in the OT (e.g., Exod 33:14–15).²⁰ Perhaps Bates is also right to suppose that Mark thinks of God the Father addressing the Son in this way prior to the Son's incarnation.²¹ But I think it is fanciful to read the words as "a consoling announcement by God the Father *designed to reassure the Son*, because the Father hereby announces to the Son that the world will be appropriately prepared for the Son's arrival."²²

Mark is surely not concerned with the psychology of this divine dialogue, but it is worth noticing something that is rarely noticed by commentators. The whole of Mark's conflated quotation is *addressed to Jesus*. (Verse 3 refers to Jesus in the third person, as "the Lord," because it is quoting the words of the "voice crying," but it is, syntactically, still part of the address to the person who is addressed in v. 2.) There are only two other occasions in Mark's Gospel in which God addresses Jesus, both in scriptural quotations/allusions: the words of the heavenly voice at Jesus's baptism (1:11) and the words of Ps 110[109]:1, quoted by Jesus in 12:36.

MARK'S LEADING QUESTIONS

The way Mark conveys his Christological message in narrative form is quite complex. The "secret" of Jesus's identity has several layers. As everyone recognizes, Peter's confession (8:29) is a turning point. On the basis of the evidence in the first part of the Gospel narrative, as Peter understands it, he concludes that Jesus is the Messiah. This is a reasonable conclusion in the light of the power and authority Jesus demonstrates in the miracles in particular. But immediately Jesus begins to teach the disciples of the suf-

18. Matthew W. Bates, *The Birth of the Trinity: Jesus, God, and the Spirit in New Testament and Early Christian Interpretation of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 89–90.

19. *Ibid.*, 91 (emphasis original).

20. But this has nothing to do with an alleged "angel of the presence," as Owen argues ("Jesus as God's Chief Agent," 40–45). If Mark is alluding to Exod 23:20–21, he must be identifying the angel/messenger there, in whom is God's name, with John the Baptist, not Jesus. The messenger there would have to be the same messenger of whom Mal 3:1 speaks. There is no evidence in Mark of an identification of Jesus with a "chief agent of God" already to be found in Scripture or Jewish literature.

21. Cf. Simon J. Gathercole, *The Pre-Existent Son: Recovering the Christology of Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 249–52; he discusses such an interpretation and finds the evidence inconclusive.

22. Bates, *Birth*, 91 (emphasis original).

fering and death he must undergo, something that does not fit their idea of a Messiah. This has hitherto been only hinted at (2:20; 3:6), but from this point in the narrative it becomes very explicit. The culmination of this strand of Christological development in Mark's narrative comes as Jesus nears Jerusalem and, for the first time, is hailed as "Son of David" (10:47). Throwing secrecy aside, Jesus "comes out" publicly as the Messiah, Son of David, when he rides into Jerusalem, choosing (though Mark leaves this implicit) to fulfil a prophecy of a peaceable king, not a militant one (Zech 9:9). The meaning of messianic kingship is transformed through its prominence especially in the trial before Pilate, the mockery, and the crucifixion narrative itself. Hays shows in some detail how Zechariah and the Psalter contribute to this.²³

But there is a deeper level to the "secret" of Jesus's identity, one to which the disciples within the narrative apparently never penetrate. This is his *divine* identity, which Hays says Mark "never quite dares to articulate . . . explicitly; it is too scandalous for direct speech."²⁴ But Mark gives some rather big hints in the form, especially, of leading questions that he surely expected his readers to answer for themselves by inferring Jesus's divine identity. The reason Mark leaves them as questions is surely, primarily at least, because no one *within the narrative* answers them. Readers are expected to know better.

There are a series of five of these unanswered questions and a sixth question that *is* answered—by Jesus himself. Hays explores the scriptural background to three of the five unanswered questions and also discusses Jesus's answer to the last question,²⁵ but he does not identify them as a series, probably partly because the two he does not discuss do not have so obvious a scriptural background.²⁶ His treatment has the merit of putting these questions among the many other Markan indications of Jesus's divine identity that he finds in Mark's scriptural allusions, but I think, when we recognize them as a characteristic element in Mark's Christological exposition, the six questions as a series have a particular force.

These six questions of identity are as follows:

- (1) The first miracle: exorcizing an unclean spirit (1:21–27). The crowd asks, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him" (1:27).
- (2) The first controversy: forgiving sins (2:1–12). The scribes wonder, "Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" (2:7).

23. Hays, *Echoes*, 79–87.

24. *Ibid.*, 62.

25. *Ibid.*, 53–55, 64–69; *ibid.*, 60–61.

26. Thus, he deals with Mark 10:18 only in a footnote, 384 n. 99, where he does acknowledge its allusion to the Shema.

- (3) Stilling the storm (4:35–41). The disciples ask, “Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (4:41).
- (4) Conversation with the rich man (10:17–22). Jesus asks, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone” (10:18).
- (5) Question about the Messiah (12:35–37). Jesus says, “David himself calls him [the Messiah] lord; so how can he be his son?” (12:37).
- (6) Before the high priest (14:61–64). The high priest asks, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?” (14:61).

Between several of these questions (together with their contexts), there are significant parallels that help to confirm that they do constitute a deliberate series.

Rebuking, silencing and obeying (1 and 3): In (1), Jesus “rebuked” (ἐπετίμησεν) the unclean spirit, saying, “Be silent” (φιμώθητι), and the crowd comments that he “commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey (ὕπακούουσιν) him” (1:25, 27). In (3), Jesus “rebuked (ἐπετίμησεν) the wind and said to the sea, ‘Peace! Be still (πεφίμωσο)!’” and the disciples comment that “even the wind and the sea obey (ὕπακούει) him” (4:39, 41).

Allusions to the Shema (2 and 4): The phrase “but God alone” (εἰ μὴ εἶς ὁ θεός) is identical in 2:7 and 10:18. It alludes to the Shema in the form in which it was often summarized in Second Temple period Jewish literature: “God is one” (εἶς θεός ἐστιν).²⁷

Blasphemy (2 and 6): In (2) the scribes think Jesus’s words are blasphemy (2:7: βλασφημιεῖ), while in (6) the high priest pronounces Jesus’s reply to be blasphemy (14:64: βλασφημίας). These are the two occasions among these passages in which religious authorities pass judgment on Jesus’s claims (implicit in the first place, explicit in the second).

I will comment briefly on those Hays omits (1 and 4) and on the fifth and sixth questions, where I differ somewhat from Hays’s interpretation.²⁸

THE EXORCISM IN THE SYNAGOGUE

As befits the first of Mark’s leading questions, this one is less clearly focused on the identity of Jesus than the others. The crowd asks, “What is this?” not “Who is this?” But the identity of Jesus is obviously involved.

Since Jesus was not the only exorcist in first-century Jewish Palestine (as is clear even from this Gospel: 9:38; cf. Luke 11:19), why is the crowd so impressed?²⁹ That they were suggests that there was something differ-

27. E.g., *Sib. Or.* 3:11; *Sib. Or. frag.* 1:7, 32; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.201; Pseudo-Sophocles; Philo, *Opif.* 171; *Spec.* 1.30; Jas 2:19.

28. One might have expected 6:47–52 similarly to end with a leading question. The reason it does not may be that the words of Jesus, especially ἐγώ εἰμι, in 6:50 are already a sufficiently strong hint.

29. The words “a new teaching—with authority!” (1:27) indicate that the crowd associates the authority with which Jesus taught (1:22) with his demonstration of that authority in the exorcism.

ent about Jesus's exorcism from others they might have witnessed and that the difference had to do with Jesus's authority. I shall make a suggestion here as to what the difference was. The issue for any exorcist was how to exert power over the demons who held people in their possession. There seem to have been two methods.³⁰ One was to use special techniques, often thought to have been handed down from ancient practitioners such as Solomon. Special substances were burned, rings used, and incantations chanted. The power to exorcize belonged to the techniques, not to the exorcist. The other approach to mustering sufficient power to expel a demon was to pray to or to invoke the name of God. This is what, according to the Genesis Apocryphon, Abraham did when he secured the expulsion of a demon from Pharaoh and his household (1QapGen 20:28–29). It is also what the exorcistic or apotropaic texts from Qumran (4Q560; 11Q11) indicate should be done.³¹

Jesus evidently adopted neither of these methods. In Mark's Gospel, beginning on this occasion, he simply commands the spirit and it obeys (cf. 5:8–13; 9:25–26). He does not invoke God's power, acting as merely an instrument of God, as angels or human exorcists might do. He acts with intrinsic authority. This is what the crowd recognizes as unprecedented. (Note also that in 9:14–29 Jesus exorcises “without prayer a spirit that the disciples could have exorcised only with prayer.”³²)

This interpretation is supported by Mark's use of the verb ἐπιτιμάω (“to rebuke”; 1:25; 9:25), which is also used in the story of the stilling of the storm (4:39). It is the equivalent of the Hebrew גָּעַר, which is often used in the Hebrew Bible of God's power to rebuke and to subdue the cosmic elements, especially the sea imagined as a hostile force of chaos. Used in that sense, only God appears as the subject of this verb.³³ Hays notes this point in connection with the stilling of the storm, citing Job 26:10–11; Pss 104:7; 106:9.³⁴ Two examples from later Jewish literature are also instructive. In Jude 9, an apocryphal work is cited, in which the archangel Michael “did not dare to bring a condemnation for slander against” the devil “but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’” The point is that even the archangel does not have the intrinsic authority to condemn the devil and must invoke God's authority.³⁵

30. Probably the fullest discussion of exorcism in Second Temple period Judaism is Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 88–114. He distinguishes “exorcism by substances” and “exorcism by incantations, implements and rituals.” I include both in my first category.

31. On 4Q560, see Douglas L. Penney and Michael O. Wise, “By the Power of Beelzebub: An Aramaic Incantation Formula from Qumran (4Q560),” *JBL* 113 (1994): 627–50.

32. M. Eugene Boring, “Markan Christology: God-Language for Jesus?” *NTS* 45 (1999): 451–71, here p. 466, quoting Robert H. Gundry.

33. Howard Clark Kee, “The Terminology of Mark's Exorcism Stories,” *NTS* 14 (1968): 232–46.

34. Hays, *Echoes*, 67–68.

35. Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC 50 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 62. The passage

The second example, already mentioned, is in the Genesis Apocryphon, where גער is used in an Aramaic text. This is of special interest because it concerns an exorcism. When Pharaoh and his household are afflicted by a demon, Pharaoh asks Abraham to “pray for me and for my household so that this evil spirit will be banished from us.” Abraham relates that he prayed that he might be “cured and laid my hands upon his [hea]d. The plague was removed from him; the evil [spirit] was banished (ואתגערת) [from him] and he recovered” (1QapGen 20:28–29).³⁶ Here, גער seems to be almost a technical term for exorcism, meaning “to command to depart.” But it is not Abraham who commanded the spirit. Rather “it was banished.” Presumably this is a divine passive and indicates that, in response to Abraham’s prayer, God himself rebuked the spirit. In Mark 1:23–27, on the other hand, Jesus does not pray, but he does rebuke. He assumes the specifically divine role.

Thus, the same point about the exorcism can be made as Hays makes about the stilling of the storm, with which the exorcism story shares key vocabulary. The scriptural echoes, in this case, are less obvious, because there is no scriptural precedent for an exorcism. But the vocabulary, here as in 4:39, evokes a background in God’s primordial and eschatological victory over hostile cosmic forces.

ONLY GOD IS GOOD

In Jesus’s conversation with the rich man (10:17–22), a character who is presented sympathetically by Mark, despite his regrettable failure to become a disciple, Jesus’s first words to him (10:18) are surprising and initially puzzling. They seem to have no relevance to what follows. Is the point, as most commentators think, that Jesus “shows his modesty and piety by not claiming for himself qualities or prerogatives that belong to God alone”?³⁷ This may be what we should assume the rich man would understand, in the context of the narrative, but, in the light of the other leading questions in Mark, it seems very likely that readers are meant to infer something quite different. The rich man’s innocent description of Jesus as “good” is, unknown to him, a recognition that Jesus shares the unique identity of the God who alone is good.

is based on Zech 3:2, where the original text probably read: “The angel of יהוה said to Satan, ‘יהוה rebuke you, O Satan!’”

36. Translation from Florentino Garcia Martinez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, ed., *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 43.

37. Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 477. Not even Boring, “Markan Christology,” recognizes 10:18 as one of the texts that suggest the deity of Mark’s Jesus. Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16*, AB 27A (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 726, who recognizes the allusion to the Shema, comes close: “the merciful Jesus [referring to 10:21] cannot be radically separated from the One God to whom he refers.”

The statement that God alone is “good” must mean that he alone is completely good and the source of all other goodness. That “YHWH is good” is, of course, affirmed in the Hebrew Bible, where it is a standard form of praise and thanksgiving (Pss 100:5; 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 136:1; 1 Chr 16:34; 2 Chr 5:13; Ezra 3:11).³⁸ Jesus’s words doubtless allude to this formula well-known from the Psalms. The Hebrew Bible does not say that he alone is good, but in the self-consciously monotheistic rhetoric of Second Temple period Jewish literature (echoing the Shema as Jesus does here) we find a number of instances where divine qualities are said to belong exclusively to God: “there is but one who is wise” (Sir 1:8); God is “the only wise one” (Philo, *Ebr.* 10.6); and he “alone is just” (Sir 18:2; Philo, *Somn.* 2.194). In address to God we find: “no one besides you is just” (1QH 8:19); and “you alone are king and are kind; you alone are bountiful, you alone are just” (2 Macc 1:24–25).³⁹ In Mark 10:18 “good” probably serves to sum up the attributes of God as described in Exod 34:6–7, the classic text on the subject.

I remarked earlier that early Christian discourse rarely uses the word *God* of Jesus and that Mark may have intentionally refrained from doing so in his quotation from Isaiah in 1:3. It should therefore be noted that the riddling form of Jesus’s question in 10:18 does not imply that Jesus simply *is* God, but rather that he participates in the unique divine identity, characterized here as “the only good One.”

THE MESSIAH AS DAVID’S LORD

Hays is right to see that in Mark 12:35–37 Jesus is not denying that the Messiah is the Son of David, but implying that he is much more than that. But I think he is overinterpreting the passage when he claims that what is implied is a redefinition of messiahship in the light of the cross.⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, Mark’s broader narrative does redefine messiahship as entailing suffering and rejection, but that is not the point Jesus is making when he quotes Ps 110:1. No such implication can be found in that verse or in the rest of Ps 110 (LXX 109). Other NT allusions to Ps 110:1 (to which there are more references in the NT than to any other scriptural text) do not find reference to the cross in it. The point in Mark 12:35–37 is simply that, if David calls the Messiah his lord, then the Messiah must be much more than a human king in the line and tradition of David. But how can he be greater than great David? The second occurrence of κύριος in the quotation from

38. LXX does not use ἄγαθός in all of these cases, but note that in Ps 117(118):1–4 it actually repeats the term, which the MT has only in v. 1, three more times in vv. 2–4.

39. *Corpus Hermeticum* 2.14–16 claims that only the one God is good, as does the early Christian *Ep. Diogn.* 8:8. The latter is probably not dependent on Mark and seems to associate the claim with the description of the character of God in Exod 34:6–7.

40. Hays, *Echoes*, 55

Ps 110:1 cannot be a substitute for the divine name. But when Jesus quotes this verse again, in response to the high priest, identifying himself with the one David calls his lord, the high priest judges it blasphemy (14:62–64). What makes it blasphemous we shall consider in the next section.

An important implication is that we have here another instance, like Mark 1:2, in which Scripture is understood to contain a dialogue between two divine persons. Unlike Mark 1:2, where the dialogue precedes Jesus's ministry, in this case the dialogue follows Jesus's earthly ministry. God's words are presumably understood to be spoken to Jesus at the time of his exaltation to sit on God's heavenly throne.⁴¹

THE ANSWER TO THE HIGH PRIEST

The last of the series of questions, asked in this case by the high priest, is the only one to which an explicit answer is given. This answer is the first and only time in the Gospel when Jesus states clearly and explicitly who he is. To the question of whether he is the Messiah, Jesus replies directly "I am," but goes on to explain, in line with the hint in 12:35–37, that he is not merely the human Messiah the high priest envisages, but the figure to whom Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13–14 refer (14:61–62). As has often been noted, a claim to be the Messiah would not be blasphemous. Even a claim to the messianic title "the son of the Blessed One" as the high priest understands it would not be blasphemous. It is not Jesus's "I am" that the high priest here perceives as blasphemous, but his prophecy that he will be seen "sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven" (14:62).⁴²

Of the two allusions, Hays focuses exclusively on the Danielic one,⁴³ but it seems to me that the allusion to the psalm is the more decisive. As I have argued at length elsewhere, a claim to share the divine throne of the universe was necessarily, in the Jewish theology of this time, a claim to share the identity of the one God of Israel, who alone rules the whole cosmos from his heavenly throne.⁴⁴ The language of Dan 7:13–14 does not so clearly require this meaning, since the figure "like a human being" does not share the heavenly throne of God and is merely said to be given rule over all people on earth. It is the combination of this text with Ps 110:1 that makes this "Son of man" an unambiguously divine figure.

41. Cf. Bates, *Birth*, 47–52.

42. I have discussed the use of the term "the Power" here in Richard Bauckham, "The Power and the Glory: The Rendering of Psalm 110:1 in Mark 14:62," in *From Creation to New Creation: Biblical Theology and Exegesis: Essays in Honor of G. K. Beale*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner and Benjamin L. Gladd (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2013), 83–101.

43. Hays, *Echoes*, 60–61.

44. Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 152–81.

In Mark's passion narrative, two strands of revelation of Jesus's hitherto hidden identity are interwoven. One is that the royal Messiah turns out to be a king who suffers and dies on a cross. The other is that the human Messiah turns out to be the human embodiment of the God of Israel. It is not accidental that the revelation of Jesus's divine identity, finally made explicit in his answer to the high priest, appears when he is already a humiliated prisoner and *itself leads to* his condemnation to death on a cross. The two strands are already coming together here and they do so in a definitive and extraordinary way in Mark's narrative of the death of Jesus (15:53–59). Here there is another question: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Perhaps we should count this as the climactic seventh of the series.

GOD'S ANSWER TO JESUS

Mark's narrative Christology comes to this very strange climax: Jesus, dying, cries out to his God who has forsaken him, and, in consequence, a character within the narrative for the first time recognizes his divine identity. Of course, the centurion, thinking in non-Jewish categories, may intend only to say that Jesus was "a son of god" in some rather weak sense, though this would still be a remarkable response to what he has witnessed. But Mark surely intends his readers to perceive a fuller meaning: that the divine sonship of Jesus—announced by God to Jesus himself at the beginning of the narrative (1:11) and to the disciples at the midpoint of the narrative (9:7; though there is no indication that they perceive its meaning)—is finally recognized when he dies a Godforsaken death.

I think Hays is right that this seventh leading question (as I have called it) evokes not just the beginning but the whole of Ps 22.⁴⁵ This should not draw the sting from the fact that God lets Jesus die with his question unanswered. But it does lead us to expect that there will be an answer (22:21–31). I doubt that the rest of Mark's narrative is itself God's answer to Jesus. It proclaims that Jesus has been raised (16:6) but disappoints most readers by its failure to narrate the appearance of the risen Jesus that it promises (16:7). I suggest that God's answer to Jesus can actually be found—in the rather literal sense of words spoken to him—in Jesus's quotation of Ps 110:1: "The Lord said to my lord, 'Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet'" (12:36). The answer is more than the resurrection; it is the exaltation of Jesus to share the divine throne in heaven. Perhaps this is why Mark's narrative ends surprisingly soon. He could not *narrate* Jesus's exaltation to the heavenly throne⁴⁶ and so he leaves Jesus, beyond his death and burial, unseen by his readers. He wishes them to think of him, not merely as the risen one, but as the exalted one.

45. Hays, *Echoes*, 85.

46. Even Acts 1:9–11 narrates only his disappearance into the sky.

Table 1. *Parallels*

<i>Mark 1:1–11</i>	<i>Mark 9:2–8</i>	<i>Mark 15:34–39</i>
<i>Baptism</i>	<i>Transfiguration</i>	<i>Death</i>
by John	with Moses and Elijah	Elijah does not come
		cry of desolation
		Jesus expires (ἐξέπνευσεν)
heavens rent (σχιζομένωνς)	overshadowing cloud	temple veil rent (ἐσχίσθη)
Spirit (τὸ πνεῦμα) descends on Jesus		
voice from heaven: “You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased”	voice from the cloud: “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”	centurion: “Truly this man was the Son of God”

G rard Genette’s distinction between narrative and story is helpful.⁴⁷ A narrative may differ in many ways from the story it tells. It may not, for example, narrate the events in the same order as they happen in the story. It need not *narrate* the whole story, but may refer to the story in other ways that are sufficient to construct the whole story in the reader’s mind. In Mark’s case, it is clear that the story continues beyond what he narrates (13:4–37; 14:9, 28, 62; 16:7), even into his readers’ future.

SCRIPTURAL QUOTATIONS/ALLUSIONS AS STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS OF MARK’S NARRATIVE CHRISTOLOGY

There are three scriptural texts in which, according to Mark’s reading of them, God the Father addresses Jesus his Son. We have discussed two of them: Mal 3:1 and Ps 110:1. The third is Ps 2:7. I would like to give more attention than I can here to Mark’s use of that text. It belongs to the way Mark finds in the title “Son of God,” which could designate a merely human Messiah son of David (as in the high priest’s usage: 14:61), a deeper level of meaning. For Mark, it points to the intimate Father-Son relationship within the divine identity (cf. 1:11; 3:11; 5:7; 8:38; 9:7; 12:6; 13:32; 14:36; 15:39). But here I want to focus on the structural role it plays in framing Mark’s narrative.⁴⁸

The citation of Ps 2:7 (conflated with Isa 42:1) in the words of the heavenly voice at Jesus’s baptism is one of several parallels with two other

47. Gerald Loughlin, *Telling God’s Story* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 52–62, summarizing the account in G rard Genette, *Narrative and Discourse* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).

48. I have previously discussed this in *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 263–64.

Table 2. *Psalm 2:7 as a Structuring Event*

N1	Ps 2:7/Isa 42:1 Jesus as the powerful Messiah	three leading questions arising from miracles
N2	Ps 2:7/Isa 42:1/Deut 18:15 Jesus as the suffering Messiah	three leading questions in passion week
N3	Ps 2:7/Ps 22:1	"Why have you forsaken me?"

passages in Mark that combine with it to frame most of Mark's narrative (table 1). These passages mark, respectively, the beginning of Jesus's ministry, the turning point in the middle of the narrative of his ministry, and the point at which his ministry ends in death. The parallels between the first and third of the passages are the closest, but the most significant of the parallels is the announcement, at the end of each, that Jesus is God's Son. At his baptism, God, in the words of Ps 2:7, tells Jesus himself that he is his Son. At the transfiguration, God tells the disciples this. At the death of Jesus, the centurion announces it publicly, as it were, to the world. This is clearly a designed progression. With regard to scriptural allusions, also notable is the use of the same verb ($\sigma\chi\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$: in Mark used only in these two passages) for the rending of the heavens at Jesus's baptism and the rending of the temple veil at his death. Hays is probably right to see in this verb in Mark 1:10 an allusion to Isa 64:1 (MT, not LXX). In view of the other parallels with the narrative of Jesus's death, Mark 15:38 probably picks up the allusion from 1:10. If the allusion in 1:10 means, as Hays says, that "God is coming to rule over Israel once again,"⁴⁹ then the further allusion in 15:38 connects the same message with Jesus's death, only this time it is not to rule over Israel alone, but also over the nations (represented by the centurion). The three passages in this series are all dependent on the allusion to Ps 2:7 in the first of them. We could therefore represent the structural role of that text in Mark as in table 2.

We can now return to the role of the other two texts in which Mark finds words spoken by God the Father to Jesus his Son. One of these (Mal 3:1) precedes the beginning of Mark's narrative; the other is only cited within the narrative. But together they can be understood as the beginning and end of Mark's *story* (distinguished from the narrative) as in table 3. The conflation of the words of Dan 7:13 with those of Ps 110:1 in Mark 14:62 makes them, in effect, the continuation of God's promise to his Son in Ps 110:1. They refer to the Son's coming to receive dominion over all nations

49. Hays, *Echoes*, 18.

Table 3. *Story and Narrative*

S1	Mal 3:1/Isa 40:3 John the Baptist	
N1	Ps 2:7/Isa 42:1 (Baptism) Jesus as the powerful Messiah	three leading questions arising from miracles
N2	Ps 2:7/Isa 42:1/Deut 18:15 (Transfiguration) Jesus as the suffering Messiah	three leading questions in passion week
N3	Ps 2:7/Ps 22:1 (Death) Empty tomb	"Why have you forsaken me?"
S2	Ps 110:1/Dan 7:13	God's answer to Jesus's dying question

at the point when God will have put his enemies under his feet. Thus, the conflated text refers both to Jesus's exaltation to heaven and to his parousia (hence the sequence in 14:62).⁵⁰ Mark's *story* begins with God's words to him about the coming messenger who will prepare his way, probably before the incarnation and certainly before the historical appearance of John the Baptist. The *narrative* then begins with the account of John's ministry. The narrative of Jesus's *ministry* begins with his baptism, marked by the citation of Ps 2:7, and ends with his death, also marked by an allusion to Ps 2:7. The Gospel's narrative concludes with the account of the burial of Jesus and the discovery of the empty tomb. But the *story* is not complete: it continues with the resurrection (14:28; 16:7) and exaltation of Jesus to the throne of God (12:36; 14:62), includes the worldwide preaching of the gospel (13:10; 14:9), and ends with Jesus's coming to reign. These events are summed up in God the Father's promise to his Son in the words of Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13 (12:36; 13:13; 26; 14:62). Thus, the three scriptural texts in which God the Father addresses his Son serve to frame the narrative of Jesus's ministry and to frame the whole story.

50. I do not agree with Hays, *Echoes*, 61 (following N. T. Wright), that Mark interprets Dan 7:13 as "portraying the *ascend* of the Son of Man to a heavenly enthronement." The verse may just as easily be read as portraying the figure "like a son of man" descending from heaven to the throne of God that is set up on earth for judgment at the time of the end in order to be granted dominion over the nations.

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