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Beelzebul Controversy in Mark and Luke

RHETORICAL AND SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Vernon K. Robbins

O. Introduction

There are four units in the synoptic gospels which feature an assertion that Jesus casts out demons by the ruler (or prince) of demons (Matt 9:32–34; 12:22–37; Mark 3:19b–35; Luke 11:14–36). This article focuses on, first, the rhetorical and, second, the social aspects of the Markan and Lukan versions. The basic reason for this procedure is the presence of the data in literary form. Any socio-cultural insights to be gained from the Markan and Lukan versions of the Beelzebul controversy come through the medium of verbal communication, which is the domain of rhetorical analysis. Since rhetorical analysis concerns communication in social settings, however, it opens naturally into socio-cultural analysis. The rhetorical analysis in sections 1 and 2 applies insights gained from the investigation of Hellenistic handbooks, textbooks, and treatises on rhetoric.¹ The socio-cultural analysis uses strategies proposed in Bruce Malina's *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology*.

1. Rhetorical Analysis of Mark 3:19b–35

In rhetorical terminology, the Markan and Lukan versions of the Beelzebul controversy contain a high degree of epideictic rhetoric. By its nature, the goal of epideictic rhetoric is not as clearly defined as that of judicial rhetoric, which calls for a legal decision about a past action, or that of deliberative rhetoric, which calls for a decision about future action.² Commonly, epideictic rhetoric is known as the oratory of praise and censure, and members of the audience are treated as spectators or observers

1 This rhetorical analysis is adapted from Mack and Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion*, 161–93.

2 Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 73–78.

rather than judges.³ The goal is to confirm values already held rather than to call forth a specific decision.

While the dominant tradition of epideictic rhetoric features its positive side (praise, laudation, or encomium), the units presenting the Beelzebul controversy give prominence to a negative view of Jesus and his activity in a setting where many have exhibited a positive view. For the most part, ancient treatises suggest that negative epideictic rhetoric—censure and blame (*ψόγος*), or invective and vituperation (Greek: *κακολογικόν*;⁴ Latin: *vituperatio*)—applies the same techniques as praise or encomium for an opposite effect. In certain circles after Aristotle, it became fashionable to distinguish between “praise” (*ἔπαινος*), which expresses the greatness of virtue, and “encomium” (*ἐγκώμιον*), which programmatically displays noble deeds and qualities of people.⁵ Rhetoricians did not distinguish censure from vituperation in a similar manner, because they did not give such detailed attention to negative epideictic rhetoric.⁶ Careful use of the short passages and passing comments about negative epideictic rhetoric, however, can aid the analysis and interpretation of units like those which feature an assertion that Jesus casts out demons by the ruler of demons.

The general procedure of epideictic rhetoric is to develop “topics” through amplification (*ἀξήσεις*).⁷ This procedure displays good and bad qualities in a framework that confirms generally held values. The most common setting for epideictic rhetoric was at a civil ceremony, like a funeral or a birthday celebration.⁸ But epideictic rhetoric regularly appears in judicial oratory,⁹ and the negative use of epideictic rhetoric easily creates a judicial situation.¹⁰ Also, epideictic rhetoric occurs in deliberative rhetoric to inspire a person or group toward good actions in the future. The topical nature of epideictic rhetoric is observable in both the Markan and Lukan versions of the Beelzebul controversy. The Markan version features a house as the locale and embeds common synoptic material in a sequence featuring a segmented response to three issues raised by the situation. The rhetorical dimensions of the Markan version may be displayed as follows:¹¹

3 See Aristotle, *Rhet.* I. iii. 1258a.

4 See Aristotle, *Rhet. ad Alex.* III. 1440b.5.

5 See Wilson and Russell, *Menander Rhetor*, xxii–xxix.

6 The treatises by Menander Rhetor and Pseudo-Dionysius (see Wilson and Russell, *Menander Rhetor*) discuss a wide variety of speeches in which praise is the major purpose. They do not, however, discuss situations of invective or vituperation.

7 See Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 75.

8 See Wilson and Russell, *Menander Rhetor*, 171, 159.

9 See, e.g., Demosthenes, *On the Crown*.

10 See Matt 21:23–23:39 and Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 86.

11 Since Jesus responds to the issue in reverse order, the structure may be displayed *chiastically* as Lambrecht, *Once More Astonished*, 114, suggests:

SITUATION

Introduction

Then he went home; and a *crowd* came together again, so that they could not even eat.

Partition or Division

Topic 1: Kinfolk

And when *those close to him* heard it, they went out to seize him, for people were saying, “He is out of his mind.”

Topic 2: Possession

And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, “He *possesses* Beelzebul,

Topic 3: Casting Out

and by the prince of demons he *casts out* the demons.”

RESPONSE

Topic 3: Casting Out

Quaestio (paraphrase of the scribes’ final remark):

And he called them to him, and said to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan?”

-
- A Those akin to him come to seize him (Mark 3:20–21)
 - B He possesses Beelzebul (Mark 3:22a)
 - C By the prince of demons he casts out demons (Mark 3:22b)
 - C’ It is impossible that Satan would cast out demons (Mark 3:23–27)
 - B’ Whoever says Jesus possesses an unclean spirit blasphemes (Mark 3:28–30)
 - A’ Jesus’ kin are those who do the will of God (Mark 3:31–35)

Since the final scene responds to the first part and is divided from Jesus’ response to the scribes’ charges by narrative comment, the structure may be displayed as an intercalation as Donahue, *Are You the Christ?* 58, suggests:

- Those akin to Jesus (Mark 3:20–21)
- Jesus and scribes from Jerusalem (Mark 3:22–30)
- The kinfolk of Jesus (Mark 3:31–35)

Since the narrator introduces Jesus’ response to the scribes with the word *προσκαλεσάμενος* (“summoning”), the structure may be displayed as a three-step progression as Robbins, “Summons and Outline in Mark,” 105–7, suggests:

- I. The situation into which Jesus comes (Mark 3:20–21)
- II. Interaction which calls forth teaching (Mark 3:22)
- III. Jesus “calls to” those around him and teaches them (Mark 3:23–35).

Argument for Implausibility from Analogies (ἐκ παραβολῶν):

"If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand."

"And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand."

"And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but possesses an end."

Argument for Falsity from a Contrary (ἐξ ἐναντίου):

"But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man; then indeed he may plunder his house."

Topic 2': *Possession*

Argument from a Judgment (ἐκ κρίσεως):

"Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never possesses forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin." For they had said, "He possesses an unclean spirit."

Topic 1': *Kinfolk*

Argument from Comparison (ἐκ συγκρίσεως) with Concluding Question and Answer:

And his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting about him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, asking for you."

Reply by Jesus:

And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"

Conclusion:

And looking around on those who sat about him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother."

2. Rhetorical Analysis of Luke 11:14–36

While the Markan version of the Beelzebul controversy is relatively compact, the Lukan version strings together a series of units with a topical relationship much like some of the sections in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, where a list of apophthegms occurs in a loosely organized progression.¹² The Lukan version merges the request for a sign with the Beelzebul Controversy, and this prepares the way for a series of units concerning cen-

sure, an unclean spirit, praise, and testing. The opening scene in the Lukan version contains four responses to Jesus' action which prepare the stage for the elaborate series of statements which follows.

SITUATION

Now he was casting out a demon that was dumb;

First Response: *Exit*

when the demon had gone out, the dumb man spoke,

Second Response: *Praise*

and the crowds marveled.

Third Response: *Censure*

But some of them said, "He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the prince of demons";

Fourth Response: *Test*

while others, to test him, sought from him a sign from heaven.

Topic: *Censure*

Transitional Comment:

But he, knowing their thoughts, said to them,

Argument from Analogy for the Implausibility of the Beelzebul Definition:

"Every kingdom divided upon itself is laid waste, and house upon house falls. And if Satan also is divided upon himself, how will his kingdom stand?"

Counterdefinition:

(a) Restatement

"For you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul.

(b) Enthymematic argument from quality in common (ἡ κοινὴ ποιότης)¹³

And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges.

(c) Syllogistic counterdefinition

But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you."

¹³ Hermogenes discusses this kind of argument in *περὶ τῶν στάσεων* (see Rabe, *Hermogenis Opera*, VI:52; cf. also Nadeau's translation, "Hermogenes' *On Stases*," 401).

¹² E.g., Plutarch, *Alex.* xxix–xli.

Argument from Analogy:

"When a strong man, fully armed, *guards* his own palace, his goods are in peace; *but* when one stronger than he comes *upon* him and conquers him, he takes away his armor *upon* which he trusted, and divides his spoil."

Inference:

"He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters."

Topic: *Exit*Argument from Fable (*μῦθος*):

"When the unclean spirit has gone out of a man, he passes through waterless places *seeking* rest; and finding none he says, 'I will return to my *house* from which I came.' And when he comes he finds it swept and put in order. Then he goes and brings seven other spirits more *evil* than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."

Topic: *Praise*Epidictic *Chreia* with Appropriate Redirection of the Praise:

As he said this, a woman in *the crowd* raised her voice and said to him, "Blessed is the womb that bore you, and the breasts that you sucked!" *But* he said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and *guard* it!"

Topic: *Test*

Thesis:

When *the crowds* were increasing, he began to say, "This *generation* is an *evil generation*; it *seeks* a *sign*, but no *sign* shall be given to it except the *sign* of Jonah."

Rationale:

"For as Jonah became a *sign* to the men of Nineveh, so will the Son of man be to this *generation*."

Argument from Example:

"The queen of the South will arise at the *judgment* with the men of this *generation* and *condemn* them; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here."

The men of Nineveh will arise at the *judgment* with this *generation* and *condemn* it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here."

Argument from Analogy:

"No one after lighting a *lamp* puts it in a cellar or under a bushel, *but* on a stand, that those who enter may see the *light*."

Application:

"Your *eye* is the *lamp* of your *body*;

Diairesis:

"when your *eye* is sound, your *whole body* is full of *light*; but when it is not sound, your *body* is full of *darkness*."

Concluding Exhortation:

"Therefore be careful lest the *light* in you be *darkness*. If then your *whole body* is full of *light*, not having any part *dark*, it will be *wholly* bright, as when a *lamp* with its rays gives you *light*."

The Lukan version ends with a positive image which envisions the body as a house. In Mark, the final scene envisions people sitting in a house, sharing a kinship relation because they do the will of God. In Luke, the image concerns lighting the house. If there is no lamp in the house, it will be dark. Earlier in the Lukan version, the demon and his seven associates "occupy" a house and make it worse. In Luke, then, the elaboration ends with attention to the eye as the lamp of the body, whereas in Mark it ends with an interest in people who do the will of God. From Luke's perspective, all of the hearing in the elaboration has been seeing. And if the eye is sound, the person will not seek further signs and will not enter into misguided censure or praise, but will see God's work both in Jesus' activity and in the activity of Solomon, Jonah, and the queen of the South in the past.

3. The Flow of Social Interaction in the Versions

Following strategies presented in Malina's *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology*, we may move from rhetorical analysis to the reciprocal and centric systems of interaction,¹⁴ the generalized symbolic media expressed by the units,¹⁵ and the cultural scripts as they emerge through group and grid analysis.¹⁶

14 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 98–111.

15 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 77–97.

16 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 13–20.

Malina's adaptation of a system presented by Marshall Sahlins¹⁷ suggests that social interaction flows either reciprocally or centrically. Back-and-forth movement is called reciprocity and is like the movement in Christmas gift giving. Centric movement, on the other hand, features movement toward the center and out again and can be found in taxation and other forms of redistribution.¹⁸

Both the Markan and Lukan versions of the Beelzebul controversy are dominated by centric movement. The Markan version opens with the coming together at a house (or "home"; Mark 3:21). Since this kind of social movement toward Jesus already has become customary in the linear movement of the Markan narration, we read that the crowd came together "again" (*πάλιν*). When scribes who came down from Jerusalem say devastating things about Jesus, he "summons" them (Mark 3:23). At this point the Markan narration leaves us in suspense as to whether the scribes actually were summoned into the house. But it appears that the scribes entered the house and Jesus spoke directly to them as they stood there. As he speaks to them, Jesus uses the image of "a house divided against itself" (Mark 3:25), and talks about a person who "enters a strong man's house and plunders his goods" (Mark 3:27). While Jesus is speaking to the scribes, his mother and brothers come and, standing outside, send to him and call him (Mark 3:31). While the scribes evidently submitted to Jesus' summons to them, Jesus does not submit to the summons of his kinfolk. Rather, he looks around at "the crowd sitting about him" (Mark 3:32, 34) and says, "Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother."

In the Markan version, the centric flow of interaction moves entirely inwards toward the center, Jesus. In this scene, there is no interest in movement outward. Those who have gathered around the center have come into a social status described as "doing the will of God" (Mark 3:35). When Jesus uses the image of a strong man's house, he envisions the possibility that a person's private domain may be "invaded and plundered." Hence, there is a defined boundary in the image, and the entrance of another strong man into the private domain established by the boundary is a matter of violation and theft. Jesus' physical kinfolk are not invited to cross over the boundary established by the house. The space inside this boundary is filled with those who have "acquired" a special kinfolk relation to Jesus rather than those who have an "ascribed" kinfolk relation to him. Jesus summons the scribes into this space and pronounces a verdict

of "eternal guilt" on them. In the same space, he praises kinfolk who do "the will of God."

The Lukan version of the Beelzebul Controversy is also dominated by centric interaction, but Jesus is in an open space where boundaries are not spatially marked. The centric movement is obvious from the presence of the crowds around Jesus (Luke 11:14). Also, centric movement is evident in Jesus' statement: "he who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Luke 11:23). The key words are "with me," which presuppose an action of "coming to Jesus." A centric system is also presupposed in the fable of the demon and his seven associates. When they are scattered, they wander restlessly about. Only when they return to a central location, in this instance a house, do they have collective power. This view is further supported by the action of the queen of the South who came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, "and behold, something greater than Solomon is here" (Luke 11:31). Jesus is perceived as a center of important social interaction.

While the Lukan version emphasizes inward movement toward Jesus, it also contains an outward flow of interaction. The unit begins with a movement out from the center as Jesus casts a demon out of a dumb man. This action features Jesus as a center for distribution of a resource that benefits others. Jesus identifies this resource as "the finger of God" (Luke 11:20). As the unit unfolds, Jesus is also a dispenser of wisdom. This wisdom attracts people, as Solomon's wisdom attracted the queen of the South. Jesus does not hoard this wisdom, but dispenses it freely throughout the interchange. The dynamics of the interaction are also present in the illustration of the strong man's house. When a stronger man comes, the goal is to overcome him, take away his armor, and "distribute his spoil" (Luke 11:22). The goal here is not simply theft but "redistribution." An emphasis on receiving benefits from the center is present in the immediately preceding material where Jesus tells his disciples:

Ask and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. (Luke 11:9-10)

God, the Father (Luke 11:2), distributes benefits to those who ask for them. Reciprocity is implied in "we ourselves forgive every one who is indebted to us" (Luke 11:4) and "what father among you, if his son asks for a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion . . . ?" (Luke 11:11-13). But the dominant flow of interaction in this setting in Luke is centric, with an emphasis on movement toward the center and distribution out from the center.

17 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 38.

18 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 98.

4. The Use of Generalized Symbolic Media in Luke 11:14–36

In the model used by Malina, social interaction occurs as games within symbol systems.¹⁹ There are four major games which are the generalized symbolic media of social interaction: commitment, power, influence, and inducement. Often these games are played simultaneously, or they alternate with one another on the same playing field. Each game, however, is system-specific, that is, it is played according to rules and strategies defined and governed by the subsystem in which it functions. Commitment is played in the belonging system, influence in the meaning system, power in the collective effectiveness system, and inducement in the economic system which measures usefulness on the basis of exchange of services and material goods.²⁰

The Markan version of the Beelzebul controversy is dominated by the medium of commitment, which functions in the belonging system. If the reference to the house in the opening clause means Jesus' "home in Capernaum," the scene is set immediately in an environment of belonging. When "those near him" come to get him (Mark 3:21), and his mother and brothers send to him and call him (Mark 3:31), interaction in the system of belonging is enacted by persons. Jesus responds with language about commitment when he speaks about "division" in a kingdom and a house (Mark 3:24–25). Commitment is the capacity to command loyalty, and it results from negative pressure on a person's internalized self-image.²¹ The Markan version presents an explicit negative threat against the person who is disloyal: "Whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" (Mark 3:29; cf. Matt 12:31–32). The threat functions in the symbolic medium of commitment which focuses on the internalized self-image of the person. The final scene displays the social goal of the unit as commitment when it envisions the true brother, sister, and mother as those sitting around Jesus in the house.

The Beelzebul controversy in Luke also features significant interaction in the medium of commitment. A contest begins when some people claim that Jesus' casting out of demons is characterized by commitment to Beelzebul, who is called the prince of demons. Jesus responds with analogies from the "only two significant and discernible social institutions in the first-century world of the New Testament: kinship or family and politics or government."²² When there is divisiveness rather than loyalty, com-

mitment, and cooperation, Jesus says, that kingdom or that household falls. Then, as Jesus continues, he asserts that a person who is not committed to him is opposed to him (Luke 11:23). The belonging system as perceived in this interchange suggests that a person is either for or against. It suggests that a person is either "gathered" around a center of activity or "scattered." This appears to imply the necessity to focus commitment centrally.

In the setting of the Beelzebul controversy itself, the Lukan version contains only implicit negative pressure. Disloyalty causes a kingdom to be laid waste and a household to fall. Only if a person wants a kingdom or household to disintegrate will he or she be disloyal. Also, if a person turns away from commitment, he or she lives in a "scattered" situation, lacking the resources of a gathered group. Luke contains a version of this threat in the next chapter when Jesus is talking to his disciples (Luke 12:10), but in the setting of the controversy itself Jesus does not present explicit negative pressure in the field of commitment. As a means to discover why this might be so, let us turn to the generalized media of power and influence.

Power is generally specific to the subsystem of collective effectiveness.²³ The aims and goals of power lie not with internal attitudes and experiences but with external goods and services which affect the physical and social situation of people. Thus, when Jesus casts out a dumb demon so that the man can speak, Jesus has communicated through the subsystem of power. Here, of course, lies a perceived threat within Jesus' activity. In Malina's words,

Since Jesus did not rank high on the power scale, he generally had no access to power at all, except when dealing with evil spirits and demons which were subservient to human beings.²⁴

In Luke, Jesus removes the distinctiveness of his exorcistic power by the argument from quality in common (Luke 11:19). But through his counter-definition he associates himself with the power of God ("the finger of God") and places those whom he addresses in a subservient position to God in *his* kingdom ("the kingdom of God has come upon *you*"). Immediately the interpreter wonders what the effect of this subservience will be. Will God destroy? The application of the power medium to the household analogy (Luke 11:21–22) exhibits the culture-specific field of meaning: "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace; but when one stronger than he assails him and overcomes him, he

19 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 74. See also Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 90–125.

20 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 77.

21 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 78.

22 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 85.

23 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 77.

24 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 83. Malina refers to Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities." See also Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*.

takes away his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoil" (Luke 11:21-22). Again, the final comment is a most telling one: the stronger man distributes the goods possessed by the man in his palace. The Markan and Matthean versions refer to "plundering" (*διαρπάζειν*) the man's goods (Mark 3:27; Matt 12:29). Thus, powerful action invades and takes away what a person possesses. In contrast, the Lukan illustration evokes a system where power is used as a means to gain access to the wealth of strong men and distribute it to others. The strong man is not bound, nor are his goods viewed as stolen. The armor in which he trusted is taken away and his goods are divided among others. The image is compatible with Zaccheus' decision to give half of his goods to the poor and restore fourfold anything he has swindled from anyone (Luke 19:8). Zaccheus' occupation is not said to change, but half of his wealth is distributed to others. Thus, one of the goals of power as evoked by the Lukan illustration of the strong man is a redistribution of goods and services.

Perhaps it is appropriate now to notice the effect of the absence of the threat "not to be forgiven" along with the presence of the exercise of power to distribute wealth among others. Jesus does not evoke the power of God as an external threat in the Lukan version. In place of the threat "not to forgive," which occurs in the belonging system in Mark, the Lukan version evokes the power of the kingdom of God in a system of collective effectiveness which envisions a redistribution of wealth and services.

In contrast to commitment and power which occur in systems of obligation supported by negative sanction and pressure, inducement and influence employ positive sanctions and occur in systems of consent and prestation.²⁵ "Inducement is the capacity to expropriate goods and services"²⁶ through positive sanction ("If you do this, I will give you . . ."). A person can use the medium of inducement effectively only when he or she has something socially useful to give. Jesus does not appear to have material possessions to give. Rather, tax collectors who have wealth and Pharisees who invite Jesus to dinner (Luke 11:37) are the people who could engage effectively in inducement. Yet, Jesus is not without social, and perhaps material, benefits to offer in Luke. If Jesus has control over half of the wealth of a person like Zaccheus, then he is in a position to offer material benefit to someone else. But Zaccheus does not give the goods to Jesus. He gives them directly to the poor (Luke 19:8). Thus, Jesus controls them only through influence, which is our next item for discussion. At one point, however, Jesus engages in the language of inducement. When he says, "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it" (Luke 11:28), his statement implies that a person who follows

Jesus' advice will receive a special benefit. Even here, however, Jesus is giving information more than conferring social and material benefits. God, it would appear, is the one who distributes the blessing. But Jesus is an associate of this power, and to the extent that he is perceived to be an important dispenser of God's goods and services, he is in a position to use the medium of inducement in his speech. But when inducement is not appropriate, influence may be, so let us turn to the generalized symbolic medium of influence.

Influence is the capacity to persuade.²⁷ It operates in the social subsystem of meaning and specializes in providing reasons that motivate people to think and act in certain ways. In the midst of strategies of commitment, power, and inducement, the Lukan version of the Beelzebul controversy presents a developed strategy of influence. Thus it was logical for this article to begin with an analysis of the argumentative moves in the extended sequence of units set up by the opening scene. But now we should look more closely at the way in which the sequence presents reasons and the kinds of reasons it presents. In the presence of both censure and blame, Jesus, in the Lukan version, attempts to persuade his auditors. First, he explains that he could not be using the power of Satan to drive out (Satan's) demons, because every kingdom or house whose power is used against itself is laid waste or falls. Once he shows the implausibility of the initial charge, he supplies the natural alternative of God rather than Satan as the source of the power. At the same time, he implies that their own sons have a relationship to God which makes it possible for them to cast out demons. Therefore, their own sons will judge their statement to be false.

This initial section presents reasons why the first charge was implausible and it provides an alternative view which must be correct. There is considerable activity, therefore, in the generalized symbolic medium of influence at the very beginning of Jesus' response. After this, Jesus' illustration about the strong man (Luke 11:21-22), his proverbial saying about those who are not with him (Luke 11:23), and his story about the unclean spirit who gathers seven associates display wisdom about life and the spirit world that is generally impressive in the social subsystem of meaning. When the woman responds with praise out of her worldview, Jesus presents his alternative worldview, which comes from the tasks God has given him to do (Luke 4:18-19). After this, Jesus presents cultural stories about Jonah and Solomon that evoke praise for his own wisdom and action. Then he presents an intricate argument about the eye from analogy with a lamp. Here Jesus is presenting reasons why some people do not see accurately while others have an eye and a body which are full of light.

25 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 87.

26 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 83.

27 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 80.

This entire sequence has the goal of persuasion, and it uses logical and analogical reasoning skillfully toward this end.

The Markan version, in contrast, buries the medium of influence in commitment filled with judgmental invective. Jesus' initial response about a kingdom, a house, and a strong man produces reasons for not accepting the scribes' statement about the means by which Jesus casts out demons (Mark 3:23–27). But then Jesus' response moves thoroughly into commitment language. An assertion that Jesus has an unclean spirit is an unforgivable sin. On the other hand, those who gather in loyalty around Jesus do the will of God. It is not a matter of persuasion; it is a matter of commitment.

5. The Cultural Script of Each Version

The Markan version of the Beelzebul controversy supports the view that this gospel is written from a strong group/low grid perspective.²⁸ The strong group perspective is evident from the role of groups described through kinship language or personal affiliation (Mark 3:21, 31–35). The necessity for loyalty to one's group is advanced as a dictum that applies both to kinship (house: Mark 3:25) and political affiliations (kingdom: Mark 3:24). Group boundaries arise as a result of specific affiliations of people with certain places (scribes from Jerusalem: Mark 3:22), with family (Mark 3:21, 31–32), and with leaders (Mark 3:33–34). The only unforgivable deviation is disloyalty,²⁹ and in the Markan version the personal attack on the leader's affiliation with unclean spiritual powers represents unforgivable blasphemy (Mark 3:29–30). In other words, the importance of group membership is projected upon Jesus. From the perspective of people in the setting of a strong group cultural spirit, Jesus' power to cast out spirit forces must result from a successful marshaling of "group power." Beelzebul immediately is defined as a leader of a group ("the prince of demons"). Jesus responds with "strong group" ideology from the arenas of kinship and political affiliation.

While the cultural script of the Markan version involves "strong group" presuppositions, its view of success in established society is "low grid."³⁰ There is considerable confusion about boundaries ("who is your mother, brother, and sister?"), so one must define boundaries and attend to their maintenance.³¹ The lack of well-being in "ascribed group relationships" (thus *low grid*) makes it necessary to seek "*acquired* group relationships."

Strong group commitment in the Markan version, therefore, results in praise for those who have acquired entrance into a group by means of enacted loyalty and affiliation rather than automatic membership through birth or social status. Sacred space is located in this group,³² and the boundaries around this space must be maintained. In Mark, the people who have an "ascribed" kinfolk relation to Jesus (his family) are not invited into this space—they remain standing outside. In contrast, Jesus "summons" the scribes from Jerusalem into this space and pronounces a sentence of unforgivable guilt upon them in the presence of his "acquired" kinfolk who do the will of God. The concern about boundaries and space is linked with perceptions that people who invade other people's space through their own power leave a person in an "incapacitated" (bound) and robbed (plundered) state. Violent interventions are, therefore, possible and effective.³³ A person must acquire membership in a group which can marshal enough mental and physical resources to live in a world run by other groups.

The Lukan version of the Beelzebul controversy presents a moderately different cultural script. It is likely that Luke-Acts represents a particular "social catchment"³⁴ or "social attainment" area (a possible designation for the high rung of a low grid cultural script). A major issue is whether Luke-Acts is written from the perspective of the low rung of a strong group/high grid perspective or the high rung of a strong group/low grid perspective. A key hermeneutical issue will be "whose" heritage the interpreter is looking at as he or she describes the perspective on society and culture in Luke-Acts. Perhaps the cultural script of Luke-Acts involves a high rung experience among strong group/low grid participants of Jewish heritage accompanied by a lowest rung experience among strong group/high grid participants in Hellenistic-Roman heritage. This dual ("dyadic") experience would result from a life accompanied by personal, social, and financial benefits in Hellenistic-Roman society which are associated with membership in the true Israel. As a result, cultural realities were mediated through Jewish stories, authorities, concepts, rituals, and goals as well as through interaction and exchange among a variety of Hellenistic-Roman peoples.

Such a dyadic cultural script is reflected in the rhetorical goal of the Lukan version of the Beelzebul controversy. The dominance of the generalized symbolic medium of influence indicates an optimism about persuading members of Jewish culture and members of non-Jewish Hellenistic-Roman culture. The Lukan version presupposes that the "strong

28 Neyrey, "Purity in Mark's Gospel."

29 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 36.

30 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 37–44.

31 Neyrey, "Purity in Mark's Gospel," 121–24.

32 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 38.

33 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 42.

34 Malina, *Christian Origins*, 61–64.

man" will function as a benefactor (Luke 11:22: divide the spoil), that the demon who returns to the house "finds it swept and put in order," that "those who hear the word of God and keep it are blessed," that "something greater than Jonah and Solomon" is present in Jesus, and that the eye may be sound and fill the entire body with light until it becomes entirely bright (Luke 11:34–35). The dominant images are positive, and they are nurtured both by Jewish heritage and Hellenistic-Roman society.

6. Conclusion

Socio-rhetorical analysis of the Markan and Lukan versions of the Beelzebul controversy reveals significantly different locations and functions within human community and communication. The Markan version exhibits a centric flow of social interaction toward Jesus in a medium of commitment that commands loyalty by means of negative pressure on a person's internalized self. A high value is placed on group membership around Jesus in a social environment where boundaries must continually be defined and maintained, since they are considerably confused. In contrast, the Lukan version exhibits a gathering toward Jesus that results in an outward distribution of benefits. Rather than evoking power to disempower those who are not loyal, the Lukan Jesus evokes the power of God's kingship to gain access to possessions for the purpose of distributing them to others. As an associate of God's power, Jesus is in a position to use the medium of inducement, since he can dispense God's goods and services to those who distribute social and material benefits to others. But the Lukan Jesus even more extensively uses the medium of influence as he persuades through argumentation from analogy, counterdefinition, syllogism, illustration, inference, and fable. This optimism about persuasion reflects a catchment or attainment area high in Jewish culture with access to the lower echelons of elite Hellenistic-Roman culture. This group presents itself in a positive relation both to the heritage and prestige of Jewish culture and to the social and material benefits of Hellenistic-Roman culture.

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