Diana Perez
Precis: "The Political Synedrion and the Religious Sanhedrin" by Solomon Zeitlin
3/15/23

In his article "The Political Synedrion and the Religious Sanhedrin"(Oct 1945), Solomon Zeitlin argues that there are two Sanhedrins that develop, one that is a state court and a religious Sanhedrin. Zeitlin's purpose is to show that Jews do not have the power to inflict capital punishment, so the argument then becomes that the Jews did not condemn Jesus but Rome, and Jesus is condemned not for blasphemy but for claiming that he is the king of the Jews. He does argue the existence of a Sanhedrin, but that they did not have the power for capital punishment.

Zeitlin begins by defining the term Sanhedrin and its usage in Greek and Judeo-Hellenistic literature. The word Sanhedrin in greek, *synedrion* means assembly or gathering of people. In Greek literature, it is not used as the name of any permanent institution. He uses examples of Greek writing as evidence. The text then goes through the historical background of the Jewish judicial system and what that looked like beginning with Moses through the destruction of the second temple. *Elohim* was the judge and Moses would have been the appointed judge for all of Isreal then Joshua. He then gives an account of the political history of Israel, as a theocracy and then turning to a commonwealth and the development of the Jewish court.

He used the term Passover and the festival of unleavened bread to show its evolution using two writings of Josephus and how it changed. He uses this as an example of how the Sanhedrin term has changed. He shows this as evidence that *synhedrion* changed in exactly the same way. He argues that Jesus was tried by Romans and not by Jews, as there was a political Sanhedrin but it was not within their power or jurisdiction-but could they recommend it? Did they work "hand in hand"?

Diana Perez

Precis: "Central Authority In Second Temple Judaism And Subsequently: From Synedrion to Sanhedrin" by Howard Clark Kee

3/15/23

In "Central Authority In Second Temple Judaism And Subsequently: From Synedrion to Sanhedrin"(June 2008), Howard Clark Kee argues that the *synedrion* existed when Christianity was developing and that it was not a group that was created by Jewish religious authorities for religious purposes but established by the government for control and local presence. Kee backs up his claims by giving evidence from Greek and Jewish sources from the Hellenistic and Roman period, the development of the *synedrion* after the fall of Jerusalem, and the transformation of the synedrion in the New Testament.

Kee begins by giving the "traditional understanding" of the word Sanhedrin in the New Testament. The *synhedrin* was made up of religious leaders and they were in direct opposition to Jesus and the apostles. He writes that some sources say that *synedrion* was made up of a political-council court others claim that the "Great Sanhedrin was a criminal court"(Kee) and discusses the roles of the people in this institution. The people looked for guidance from them. The Greek definition of the word *synedrion* from Greek literature is an informal gathering and used words by Plato describing Scoartes' conversations. A few centuries later the term evolved (second century) using Polybius as a source and the word is associated with more in a political sense and linked with regional senates. He breaks down 3 different terms that were used at the time ekklesia, boule, and synedrion. All of these words are similar in their description of an assembly. He defines the *synedrion* as an "authoritative body which set and enforced the governing laws and the life of the community and which announces honors offered by the city to lead figures" (p53.) Jewish literature becomes more specific to a formal council of monarchs.

He uses the texts by Josephus to support the range of meanings of this word. Rome was in charge. Evidence shows that the councils or synedrion together dealt with the religious issue but functioned within “guidelines established by, the Roman authorities”(p56.)

In the final section, he shows the development with evidence in the New Testament Gospels. He compares the role that it plays in the different accounts of the crucifixion of Jesus. The *synedrion* only had local authority that answered to central powers. In Mark's account, the *synedrion* cannot find any legal basis and turn him over to the Roman authorities, and in Luke, the only account that “adds political charges made by the *synedrion* against Jesus”(p60.) In Acts, the Sanhedrin had the power to execute and collaborates with Roman authorities. He comes to the conclusion that *synedrion* “was varied and limited”(p62.)

Diana Perez
Precis: "Anti-Semitism in the New Testament: New Scrutiny of a Chronic notion, part 1"
3/15/23

In "Anti-Semitism in the New Testament: New Scrutiny of a Chronic notion, part 1"(April-June/2021), David Mash asserts that certain New Testament texts that are "problematic" are not naturally anti-Semitic but they are. He claims that the texts are not the problem but the interpreters are. Mash backs up his claim by using three different articles to address the questions of whether there was tension between Jesus and Jewish people by identifying the crowd that welcomed Jesus during Passover and the crowd that wanted him to be crucified and the culpability of Jewish people for the crucifixion. So naturally, the Sanhedrin would be looked at in detail. Mash's purpose is to show the anti-Jewish elements by specifically focusing on the relationship between Jesus and the Jewish leadership.

The article begins with a bias as he opens up with the experience of anti-Semitism in New York City in 2001. He argues that it is the Jewish leadership and not the general population that opposes Jesus. He identifies the Sanhedrin as the "supreme political, religious and judicial body"(p147) that makes up this leadership. He argues that the Sanhedrin was appointed by the Romans and was subject to do whatever the Romans wanted them to do he calls them "power-brokers" with "corrupt motives."

Diana Perez
Precis: "The Sanhedrin" By David Goodblatt
3/15/23

In "The Sanhedrin," David Goodblatt argues that the Gospels do not have enough evidence of the existence of an actual group or institution called "the Sanhedrin." He begins by defining the word Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was a 2-tier judicial system that every town with a certain population could have. There was a "great Sanhedrin" that was made up of 71 members and met at the Jerusalem temple. The "small sanhedrin" was made up of 23 members. It seems that the system broke down and there are not many rabbinic sources that place Sanhedrins in the late second century, the time of Jesus and Paul. There are no sources that say how to serve and become a member. Although there are references to "Sanhedrins" there is no biblical reference to an actual institution. Goodblatt back up his claim with evidence from the Gospels. The books of Mark and Matthew speak of a local Sanhedrin. The book of John has no group meeting and there is no mention of the council. In Mark, when it is mentioned they met as a "national body." It is unclear if this is a council of sorts or just people coming together. He does say that the book of Acts has better evidence but still leaves this unclear.

Is the Sanhedrin referred to something specific or is it just a description? Goodblatt comes to the conclusion that the Gospels do not have enough evidence to prove that this was an actual institution in existence.

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