

LENT'S FORGOTTEN JOY:
CONTEMPORARY DEPICTION AND EMOTIONALIZATION OF THE PASSION
HISTORY EVALUATED IN LIGHT OF A LITERARY ANALYSIS
OF THE JOHN 19:1-37 NARRATIVE

BY
JACOB S. HAAG

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF DIVINITY

PROF. MARK A. PAUSTIAN, ADVISOR
WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY
MEQUON, WISCONSIN

MARCH 2015

Abstract

Especially in the past decade with Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* and the tendency to view other passion history videos in congregational settings, American Christianity has seen a rise in the graphic depiction of the flogging and crucifixion of Christ. The research question this thesis seeks to answer is, "How do contemporary depictions of the passion history compare to the unique literary intention of the Evangelist John in 19:1-37?" By utilizing the specific research lens of literary analysis, the author evaluates such emotionalizing depictions in contrast to the Gospel of John's own narration, where details on the torture involved are extraordinarily restrained. Although such passion history depictions in all their gruesome detail are not necessarily ahistorical, this thesis will contend such depictions are contrary to the overall emphases, motifs, themes, and purposes of the specific way the Evangelist John records the passion history. It cautions against passion history cinematography by arguing that such graphic depiction is based far more on medieval Catholicism than on a biblically sensitive reading of the Gospels. It concludes with an appeal to worship leaders and pastors to reframe Lent from a season of somberness to a season of joy.

Table of Contents

Part 1: Introduction	1
Part 2: Literature Review	4
Graphic Portrayals of Crucifixion	4
Analysis of the Gospels’ Literary Style in Relation to Passion History Depiction.....	10
In Exegetical Literature	10
Advances in Literary Criticism and Analysis	11
Research Gap	15
Part 3: Significance of John’s Literary Style for the Depiction of the Passion History	16
Greater Themes throughout the Gospel of John.....	17
<i>δεῖ</i> within the Gospels and its Significance to the Emotionalization of the Passion History	17
<i>δόξα</i> within the Johannine Literature and its Significance to the Emotionalization of the	
Passion History	19
Specific Themes in the Johannine Passion History.....	21
Deeper Theological Motifs Emphasized	23
Relative Importance of Brevity in John’s Narration of the Flogging and Crucifixion Scenes	
.....	33
Excursus: The Proper Role of Emotion in John.....	37
Part 4: Analysis and Evaluation of Support for Contemporary Passion Depiction and	
Emotionalization.....	39
Crucifixion as a Taboo Word in the First Century & John’s Style Compared to Greco-Roman	
Crucifixion Historiography	39
Scripture as a Compressed Narrative & John’s Emphasis on the “Personal Jesus” in	
Comparison to the Synoptics	47
The Gospels’ Reserved Prose Contrasted to Old Testament Poetry & John’s Use of Isaiah	
Themes	49
Part 5: Conclusion.....	52
Application for the Congregation.....	52
Lenten and Good Friday Worship Planning.....	52
Homiletical Ramifications for Lenten Preaching	56
Caution with Recent Cinematic Dramatization in Passion History Videos	59
Summary & Final Remarks.....	62

Appendix 1: Suggestions for Further Research and Theses	66
Appendix 2: Suggestion for Further Qualitative & Quantitative Research	68
Bibliography	69

Part 1: Introduction

Throughout a comparative study of the history of world religions, Christianity distinguishes itself from any other religion by featuring at the climax of its development and thought¹ the public shame and disgrace of its God. Gods are honored and praised; they certainly are not ridiculed and scorned. Gods demand sacrifices from mortal humanity; they certainly do not willingly sacrifice themselves. Gods are glorified in paradise; they certainly do not enter into broken human history to be publically executed. The ancient world knew nothing of the sort. Christianity stands alone. Christ's disgraceful death is not an inconsequential historical event, nor is its significance a deception to be blindly ignored; the death of Christ remains Christianity's triumphant central event.

In spite of being the defining event in Christian theology, meditation and depiction of the cross have been somewhat varied throughout its history. As Paul famously proclaimed the offense of the cross, the early church dared not use the cross as a symbol of Christianity due to its stigma of shameful execution. Rather, it developed the famous acronym of the fish to identify Christianity.² Throughout the medieval period, contemplation on Christ's suffering reached its peak. Although the cross has undergone a gradual process of domestication, American Christianity with its cultural emphasis on visualization and new mediums of cinematography has recently sought to reestablish the graphic portrayal of crucifixion.

With the advent of such cinematic works as Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ* and the History Channel's mini-series *The Bible*, along with an increasing tendency in congregations to view videos during midweek Lenten services, the last decade within American Christianity has seen a rise in the dramatically emotionalized depiction of the passion history. Particularly the flogging and crucifixion of Christ are occasionally portrayed in graphic detail. Within church settings, sermons, and Bible classes, a predominance of law threatens to intrude into our worship culture through medical explanations or graphic descriptions of crucifixion. As

¹ Unless otherwise noted, any such phrasing by the author throughout this thesis is not meant in the evolutionary sense of *Religionsgeschichte* stemming from the German university theological system strongly influenced by the Enlightenment, but simply in the sense of *Heilsgeschichte* as one, unique, united plan of salvation was revealed more and more fully and found its culmination in Jesus' work as the Messiah.

² Early Christians used the Greek word for fish (ἰχθύς) to spell out "Jesus Christ, God's Son, Savior" (Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτήρ).

Christians have for centuries focused on contrition as a necessary and defining part of the season of Lent, this could lead to a pervasive emphasis on the hearer's somber struggle against sin and Christ's suffering for sin, sometimes to the exclusion of all other motifs. Due the historical nature of Lent and this recent graphic cinematographic influence, it will not be easy to reverse such emphases. Christians have not always comprehensively examined why the Lenten passion history is historically commemorated as it is and whether it conforms to Scripture's own literary portrayal.

Standing in stark contrast to contemporary depiction and dramatized emotionalization of the passion history stand the Gospel narratives themselves, where the details of Christ's flogging and crucifixion are remarkably restrained. Historical Christianity, and especially Protestant Lutheranism, has often emphasized the content or "what" of Scripture but not always thoroughly analyzed the literary style of Scripture, "how" or "why" it speaks as it does. This approach is direly needed in the passion history, which is at times described, elaborated, or meditated upon with little interest in analyzing what the Gospel narratives do and do not emphasize and, to the extent possible, why they do so. In scholarly New Testament circles, it has only been in the last two or three decades that exegetes have sought to include insights from the field of literary analysis. Although atonement and redemption in Christ's crucifixion are certainly emphasized dogmatically as the heart of gospel-centered Christian theology which defines it from all other world religions, a literary or narrative approach can easily be lost in the dogmas of the passion history.

This thesis will analyze and evaluate contemporary depiction and emotionalization of the passion history in light of an analysis of the John 19:1-37 passion narrative. Drawing on recent emphases in New Testament scholarship in the areas of literary criticism and discourse analysis, the literary analysis in this thesis will focus especially on why John wrote the way he did. Since the limited focus of this thesis will not allow an exhaustive exegesis, it will above all analyze not merely the content but also his stylistic and literary intention, *i.e.*, not merely *what* John wrote but *why* he arranged the content in the manner he did. Rather than emphasizing word study, it will focus on macro-level insights from an examination of John's style throughout 19:1-37. The author has chosen John's Gospel for the following reasons. With his complex, intricate literary

style, this Gospel possesses an apparent simplicity that is capable of conveying deep truths.³ In addition, the Fourth Gospel was specifically chosen due to its late date of writing. It fills in some gaps from the Synoptic Gospels. If the problem were that the Synoptic Gospels lacked a full depiction of the brutality of crucifixion, John with his literary genius certainly could have provided it. In any comparison between John and other biblical texts, the author does not intend to pit John against any other biblical writer. John does not cancel out the Synoptics or suggest a suspicious reading of the Synoptics' historicity. The themes which surface in John through a literary investigation do not supplant or cancel themes in other Gospels or in the Old Testament but rather enhance and enrich them. John's themes serve as a culmination of the Gospels. The Fourth Gospel provides a mountaintop perspective of the New Testament and ought to be treated as such. This thesis will especially focus on the graphic, detailed portrayal of the torture in the flogging and crucifixion scenes compared to John's literary style. The research question this thesis will seek to answer is, "How do contemporary depictions and dramatized emotionalization of the passion history compare to the unique literary intention of the Evangelist John in 19:1-37?"

The body of this thesis will see to analyze John 19:1-37 through a literary analysis, since a literary analysis is able to provide insight in a new way that a traditional exegesis itself cannot. Specifically it will investigate the unique literary way in which John narrates the passion history in 19:1-37, examine his literary motifs, and extrapolate the possible intentions of his style. It will evaluate supporting arguments for graphic portrayals of the passion history and conclude with an application to planning an appropriate Lenten worship culture.

In a well-intentioned but nonetheless misguided approach of trying to capture the gory details of the passion, contemporary depictions of the passion history could unknowingly fail to capture John's deeper theological motifs in his Gospel. Instead, such depictions may have the

³ Gary M. Burge, 'Interpreting the Gospel of John', in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 98; Gary M. Burge, *Interpreting the Gospel of John: A Practical Guide*, Second Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 383. In the former volume, Burge encourages close literary and narrative study especially with this Gospel, "John has artfully crafted a Gospel, and it bears all the marks of a unique and careful design. . . . John is telling a deceptively simple story. And yet he has designed that story in a way that the unsuspecting reader will likely miss." In the latter, he further appeals to readers to be discontented with settling for a casual study of the book, "To study John's Gospel in detail for the first time is like becoming heir to an ancient, beautiful tapestry. Its artistry astounds. And the closer we examine it, the more we are awed by mysteries hidden from the casual observer."

potential to emphasize motifs of law and defeatism⁴ characteristic of the worship culture of the medieval European church. Such a Lenten approach could negatively affect Christians in ways they may not realize, especially the youth of our congregations who may be seeing the gruesome portrayal of crucifixion for the first time. These depictions raise the urgent question of how many believers, and not only sensitive or naive ones, have survived a childhood of Lenten experiences with a fixation on the horrific suffering of Christ that drowns out Lent's unique joy found in the Gospels themselves. In comparison to gory and graphic depictions of the passion history, both the Gospels and the early church knew nothing of the sort. Early Christians celebrated Lent as preparation for Easter, not Good Friday, which demonstrates an insight that can easily be missed in our churches today. Although such passion history depictions in all their gruesome detail are not necessarily ahistorical, this author will contend such depictions are contrary to the overall emphases, motifs, themes, and purposes of the specific way the Evangelist John records the passion history.

Part 2: Literature Review

Graphic Portrayals of Crucifixion

In a Western, American context separated by two millennia and profound cultural differences from the first century Greco-Roman world, an effort has been recently made to more forthrightly expose crucifixion proceedings and the impact of crucifixion psychology on the masses for what it really was. This is all the more relevant since Western culture, particularly in Western Europe, has increasingly been viscerally opposed to the death penalty or violent mass executions. Both in the ecclesiastical and popular cultural sphere, centuries of Christianization has lead the cross to be commonly viewed as a form of art or jewelry. Thus the original Roman context is all but lost from the Western mind. Particularly in the American religious scene, Jesus can easily be viewed as our pal, friend, or nice guy instead of a crucified Savior who fundamentally challenges our way of thinking.⁵

⁴ Throughout this thesis, the author uses the term “defeatism” when viewers approach the passion through a somber frame of reference and so focus on the ignominious death of Christ that they fail to see the joyful, resolute outlook Jesus took to his own passion where he would emerge victorious over Satan. For more, see the section on “δεῖ within the Gospels and its Significance to the Emotionalization of the Passion History.”

⁵ Laird J. Stuart, ‘Reflections on The Passion of the Christ’, *Pastoral Psychology* 53, no. 4 (2005): 381–83.

The cultural issues of the domestication of the cross has seen an acute loss of reality often found in theology and preaching, which modern reflection on the harsh reality of crucifixion has sought to address.⁶ Seminal works by Martin Hengel and Josef Blinzler,⁷ both translated into English from the original German, have provided the framework and foundation of crucifixion scholarship and are frequently referenced in the exegetical literature. Hengel repeatedly refers to crucifixion psychology as a deterrent to Roman society⁸ and seeks to bring the gruesome reality to light. He makes significant contributions in showing the stigma of crucifixion, to the point that the educated segment of Roman society had little interest in even talking about the very subject due to their overriding aversion to crucifixion.⁹ David Chapman has revised his dissertation from the University of Cambridge, which promises to be the new standard on the perception of crucifixion in the ancient world since it has incorporated an enormous scope of analysis in the primary literature.¹⁰

Some areas of popular piety and Christian scholarship have a certain fascination with the medical reasons for crucifixion. A tendency both in Catholicism and Protestantism, devotional contemplation has meditated on the wounds of Jesus, especially during the season of Lent.¹¹ The

⁶ Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 90.

⁷ Josef Blinzler, *The Trial of Jesus: The Jewish and Roman Proceedings Against Jesus Christ Described and Assessed from the Oldest Accounts*, trans. Isabel & Florence HcHugh (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Bookshop, 1959).

⁸ Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 46, 50, 61–62, 83, 87.

⁹ This issue will be dealt with more forthrightly in Part 4, “Crucifixion as a Taboo Word in the First Century & John’s Style Compared to Greco-Roman Crucifixion Historiography.”

¹⁰ David W. Chapman, *Ancient Jewish and Christian Perceptions of Crucifixion* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010).

¹¹ One recent example of overwhelming piety on the wounds of Jesus is Christina Baxter, *The Wounds of Jesus: A Meditation on the Crucified Saviour* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005). Dr. Baxter is Principal of St. John’s Theological College and a member of the Church of England. Each chapter examines one of Christ’s wounds: his back, feet, hands, side, head, and heart and then considers the implications for us in the community of faith and individually. She is reacting against the societal trend that some Christians never learn about the cross, since sermons only address it on Good Friday when people are expected to work. She thus states her purpose, “This Lent book is intended to address that issue by offering readers the chance to consider the crucified Saviour in order to deepen our devotion, enrich our worship and strengthen our discipleship. I am sure that if that happens other aims will also be fulfilled: we will embolden our witness and want to extend our service to the world. For centuries, Christians have believed that meditating on Jesus is an essential way in which we can open ourselves to the transforming grace of his Spirit which enables us to become more like him” (9). Already in the introduction,

commentator Gerald Borchert has noted how the church often has a certain obsession with Jesus' death and blood despite the biblical emphasis also on the resurrection.¹² Blinzler surveys the possible medical explanations for death by crucifixion: heart failure, suffocation, lack of circulation, edema of the lungs, or traumatic shock,¹³ as does Beasley-Murray¹⁴ and Hendrickson, who makes the specific application to the cause of the outpouring of blood and water.¹⁵ In their own way, the exegetical literature and commentaries have sought to bring this historical illumination to light by giving highly detailed or graphic descriptions of the crucifixion.¹⁶ A more moderating description of flogging and crucifixion, typical in many commentaries, is found in Godet.¹⁷ The Roman flogging found in the Johannine narrative has been variously described as “hideous torture,”¹⁸ the crucifixion as “possibly the most cruel type of death ever devised by human beings”¹⁹ or “probably the most diabolical form of death ever

remnants of medieval piety are still alive. With a classic reference to the concept of infused grace, such devotional piety can easily burden Lent with the implicit command, “Go be like Jesus and do what he did.”

¹² Gerald Borchert, *John 12-21: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, vol. 25B, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002), 248.

¹³ Blinzler, *Trial of Jesus*, 258–261.

¹⁴ George Beasley-Murray, *John*, First Edition, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987), 355–356.

¹⁵ William Hendriksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to John*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975), 437–439.

¹⁶ One example is Raymond Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave, A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, First Edition, The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 945–952. Beasley-Murray also follows Blinzler describing the flogging in graphic terms (*John*, 335-336).

¹⁷ Frédéric Louis Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John: With an Historical and Critical Introduction*, trans. Timothy Dwight (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), 933, 943. “Scourging, as it was practiced among the Romans, was a punishment so cruel that the condemned person very often succumbed to it. The scourge was made of rods or thongs armed at the extremity with pieces of bone or lead. The condemned person received the blows while fastened to a small post so as to have the back bent and the skin stretched. With the first blows, the back became raw and the blood spurted out. Sometimes death followed immediately. ... This kind of death [crucifixion] united in the highest degree the pains and infamy of all other punishments. ... The increasing inflammation of the wounds, the unnatural position, the forced immobility and the rigidity of the limbs which resulted from it, the local congestions, especially in the head, the inexpressible anguish resulting from the disturbance of the circulation, a burning fever and thirst tortured the condemned without killing him.”

¹⁸ Hendriksen, *John*, 414.

¹⁹ Joseph A. Grassi, ‘The Wounds of Jesus : Exegesis, Biblical Piety, and Liturgy’, *Worship* 72, no. 2 (1998): 142.

invented,”²⁰ and the days Christ lay dead as “the ugliest and the darkest days in all the stretches of human history.”²¹

The role of nakedness for the crucifixion victim has received recent emphasis in the scholarly literature. Victims were usually led naked to the crucifixion site while being scourged along the way.²² David Tombs’s article has pushed the limits in what a pious believer should consider about sexual humiliation in Christ’s crucifixion within the context of Roman practice by arguing that sexual degradation was a chief part in the Roman crucifixion proceedings.²³ Contending that the issue of sexual abuse – not merely sexual humiliation – must be recognized and confronted more honestly as previously evidenced, he leaves open the possibility that the Roman soldiers not only sexually humiliated Jesus but actually sexually assaulted or abused him, especially behind the doors of the Praetorium.²⁴ He demonstrates that crucifixion was not merely concerned with ending life but reducing the victim to something less than human in a ritual of sexual humiliation and domination by the victors (i.e. executioners), who in a patriarchal society bent on virility competed to show sexual power over others.²⁵

This trend towards a progressively more detailed and graphic depiction of the crucifixion is also seen in the history of Christian art. The medieval period, especially in the early second millennium, transformed crucifixion depiction from a focus on Christ’s triumph to his agony. In early Byzantine art, the triumphant and crowned Savior was depicted *standing* in front of the cross by incorporating both the crucifixion and resurrection. The medieval period exchanged the

²⁰ Merrill Tenney, *The Gospel of John*, vol. 9, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 181.

²¹ G. Campbell Morgan, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1960), 298.

²² Blinzler, *Trial of Jesus*, 244. Blinzler acknowledges that the customary scourging on the way to the execution site itself was probably not carried out in Jesus’ case due to his previous scourging. See also David Tombs, ‘Crucifixion, State Terror, and Sexual Abuse’, *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 53, no. 1–2 (1999): 102. Tombs admits that an exception might have been made in Jesus’ case due to Jewish scruples about public nakedness, which would have been especially high in the holy city of Jerusalem.

²³ Tombs, ‘Crucifixion’. He argues “that the Gospels clearly indicate that sexual humiliation was a prominent trait in the treatment of Jesus and that sexual humiliation was an important aspect of crucifixion” (100) but admits in the purpose statement of the article that “even this may not disclose the full horror of Jesus’ torture before his death” (90).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

Christus Triumphans for the *Christus Patiens* by replacing the positive themes of a victor's crown, divinity, glory, and salvation with a crown of thorns, humanity, suffering, and sin. Christ was then depicted writhing in pain and agony with his blood profusely spilling out, as the crudity and perhaps even cruelty grows. Despite many historical or even biblical inaccuracies in crucifixion artistic depiction,²⁶ the crucifixion has become the dominant focus of Christian art.²⁷ Modern artistic depictions of the crucifixion tend to view Christ's suffering as emblematic of human suffering, injustice, poverty, or loss, regardless of whether or not the viewer is a Christian; this, then, inspires the viewer to act by replacing evil with good.²⁸ This, however, ultimately removes spiritual comfort for the viewer and fails to do justice to the theological content of the Gospel narratives.

Graphic portrayal of the crucifixion narrative now reaches new heights through the medium of cinematographic art, with the classic example in the past decade of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*. Both highly successful and highly controversial, Gibson's portrayal was criticized for its excessive violence,²⁹ for catering to Hollywood's obsession of exaggerated effects,³⁰ for its ahistoricity and overreliance on the Augustinian nun Anna Catherine Emmerich's *The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*³¹ and fourteenth century passion

²⁶ Cf. Joseph William Hewitt, 'The Use of Nails in the Crucifixion', *Harvard Theological Review* 25, no. 1 (1932): 29. "In no branch of religious art is this ecclesiastical purpose more dominant and, from the standpoint of historical accuracy, more unscrupulous than in the representations of the central act of the Christian drama, the crucifixion of our Lord. I shall discuss only one subdivision of this general subject in order to illustrate from one detail what a superstructure of theologically useful depiction has been built up on the slenderest of foundations."

²⁷ The descriptions in this paragraph are found in Mikhail Sergeev, 'Crucifixion Painting: Historical Considerations and Twentieth-Century Expressionism', *ARTS* 18, no. 1 (2006): 27; Hewitt, 'Use of Nails', 30.

²⁸ Terrence E. Dempsey, 'The Wounded Body of Christ and the Modern Social Consciousness', *ARTS* 22 (1 January 2011): 23,32; Grassi, 'The Wounds of Jesus', 147.

²⁹ Bjorn Krondorfer, 'Mel Gibson's Alter Ego: A Male Passion for Violence', *Cross Currents* 54, no. 1 (2004): 16–21. See especially 17-18, where he contends that the dominate screen portrayal of a violated and bloodied Jesus is not new in Christian history. Gibson essentially borrowed and updated powerful images which conveyed meaning through emotion: the Stations of the Cross and the European paintings and iconography of the 13th to 16th century which highlighted the tortured body of Jesus.

³⁰ D. Andrew Kille, 'More Reel than Real: Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ', *Pastoral Psychology* 53, no. 4 (2005): 344.

³¹ Graham Holderness, "'Animated Icons": Narrative and Liturgy in *The Passion of the Christ*', *Literature and Theology* 19, no. 4 (3 October 2005): 390.

plays framed not from the Gospels but from Catholic piety,³² and for its anti-Semitism due to its characterization and portrayal of the Jews as “the other.”³³ As one possible beneficial aspect,³⁴ Gibson refused to downplay or whitewash the passion as commonly done; anything else would have been unacceptable to him. Because his own disillusionment in the early 1990s, Gibson was obsessed to have a Jesus whose suffering spoke to his own.³⁵ As perhaps the most profound analysis of Gibson’s movie which exposes it for what it was truly intended to be, Graham Holderness argued *The Passion of the Christ* must be understood and framed from the perspective of the ritual and liturgy of the Roman Tridentine mass, even more so than the Gospel narratives themselves.³⁶ There he refers to Victoria Messori’s commentary on the film that the blood of the passion is continuously intermingled with the wine of the mass and the tortured flesh of the Corpus Christi with the consecrated bread.³⁷ He also quotes Gibson himself, who stated, “The goal of the movie is to shake modern audiences by brashly juxtaposing the sacrifice of the cross with the sacrifice of the altar – which is the same thing. . . . The script of *The Passion of the Christ* was specifically intended to link the crucifixion of Christ with what Roman Catholics believe is the re-sacrificing of Christ that occurs in the Mass.”³⁸

³² S. Scott Barty, ‘Where Is the History in Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*?’, *Pastoral Psychology* 53, no. 4 (March 2005): 317, 319, 323. Barty criticizes the following distortions: Jesus carries a fully assembled cross, the nails are pounded into his palms instead of his wrist bones so that his hands do not quickly tear away from the cross, and the jarring dislocation of Jesus’ shoulders to make his hands reached the pre-drilled holes. He argues that the plot is not based directly on any New Testament narrative but on Catholic tradition associated with the fourteen Stations of the Cross in medieval Catholic piety. He also contends (less persuasively) that the excessive violence, especially in the Jewish trial portion, is not historically convincing.

³³ *Ibid.*, 325–326; Kille, ‘More Reel than Real’; Krondorfer, ‘Mel Gibson’s Alter Ego’.

³⁴ Kille, ‘More Reel than Real’, 344–345. As cited previously, Kille was quite critical of Gibson, especially for his exaggerated effects, but quickly admitted, “To its credit, this hyperrealistic violence may serve in part to challenge the viewers’ previous assimilation of the story of the crucifixion. Not only is our society desensitized to violent images in general, we have also managed to sanitize the way of the cross. The Christian imagination that gives rise to sentimental pictures of gentle Jesus, meek and mild, serves also to deny the human dimension of the incarnation. Gibson will not permit us such insulation.”

³⁵ Benedict Fitzgerald and et al., ‘From Gospel to Gibson: An Interview with the Writers Behind Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ*’, *Religion and the Arts* 9, no. 3–4 (2005): 328.

³⁶ Holderness, ‘Animated Icons’.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 394.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 390.

Analysis of the Gospels' Literary Style in Relation to Passion History Depiction

In Exegetical Literature

Only a few commentators³⁹ have noted this overwhelming societal emphasis on, perhaps even obsession of, crucifixion portrayal in contrast to the Gospel's own way of deemphasizing such graphic details. However, when such insights do occur, they are usually quite brief, often limited to one or two sentences. More frequently commentators will be somewhat self-contradictory when they note the paucity of words the Evangelists use but then expose the historical gruesomeness involved in the passion with their own rather elaborate writing. Exegetical analysis holds itself to the content of the biblical text. However, some exegetes add in their own extensive description of such torture to further illuminate the historical backdrop of crucifixion. Thus their own writing style may ironically compound this societal problem when they elaborate a biblical narrative which limits the description of the physical torture of Jesus. Brown is case and point when he notes John's restrained style but then proceeds to picturesquely describe the blood running down Jesus' body.⁴⁰ To a great extent, this is simply the literary burden placed on commentators. They have the responsibility to enlighten the reader to the historical context of the first century world and give a systematic verse-by-verse exposition. In some incidences⁴¹ commentators actually contribute to the graphic description of the passion narrative through their own presentation. They could create an impression in much the same way as our society tends to do when it elaborates on the physical torture Jesus endured. Although some exegetes note this problem, more only compound it. Most plausibly due to traditional exegesis's style of scholarship and its own justifiable self-imposed limitations, it has often failed to extensively or forthrightly examine this issue.

³⁹ Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, Revised Edition, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 712–713; Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 715; R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 1064. Morris is the most notable in his consistent literary analysis and application of this issue.

⁴⁰ Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 945. Less notable than Brown but still quite applicable include Hendriksen, *John*, contrast 427 with 415; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 344. Pages cited are references to John's literary style; their own more elaborate treatment of the passion history is found in the broader context.

⁴¹ See especially the treatment of the scourging account which cites Blinzler in Beasley-Murray, *John*, 36:335–336.

Advances in Literary Criticism and Analysis

Only in recent decades has exegetical scholarship sought to include insights from the field of literary criticism and analysis, which started to blossom in theological circles in the 1980s. It has sought to balance out the impression that the Bible is nothing more than a series of propositional theological truths; thus it gives the promise to fill a need that exegesis in the past has been unable to.⁴² Several works on New Testament literary analysis and theory, published in the last few years and accessible on the graduate level, have articulated this need.⁴³ They have even implored theological readers to consider the vital importance of reading the biblical text through a literary lens, since interpretation and reading cannot be done without literary theory.⁴⁴

Literary criticism both stemmed from and reacted against historical criticism, in particular source criticism, which had a fascination and overwhelming emphasis on splitting a text up into its various strains of source material. However, recent literary study had exposed the problematic tendency to look at the world behind the text and privilege hypothetical source documents over the finished product.⁴⁵ Resseguie has emphasized literary criticism's departure from traditional historical-critical methods through its analysis of both a text's content (the

⁴² See Grant Osborne, 'The Literary Devices in John's Gospel', in *Words & the Word: Explorations in Biblical Interpretation & Literary Theory*, ed. David Firth and Jamie A. Grant (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 17. "Many Christians think of and read the Bible as if it were nothing but a series of propositional theological principles stated in epistolary form. They are so inured to and controlled by epistles like Romans and Corinthians that they fail to realize the richness and diversity of biblical expression. Few books contain the incredible diversity of genre and style exemplified in this Book of all books. ... The point is that each type of literature has its own richness of expression and deeply theological message. Each needs to be read and allowed to function in its intended way on its own. ... Therefore, in analyzing any portion of Scripture one cannot do justice to it without a sound knowledge of literary theory and a fairly sophisticated use of literary techniques."

⁴³ James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005); David G. Firth and Jamie A. Grant, *Words & the Word: Explorations in Biblical Interpretation & Literary Theory* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008); Jeffrey Weima, 'Literary Criticism', in *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, ed. David Alan Black and David S. Dockery (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 150–69. Weima includes a manageable history and overview of the major methods of literary criticism, including author-, text-, and reader-centered approaches. His treatment of the communication between "what a text says" and "how a text says it" is especially helpful. For a slightly more dated treatment, see Donald Guthrie, 'The Historical and Literary Criticism of the New Testament', in *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 85–123.

⁴⁴ Osborne, 'Literary Devices', 18.

⁴⁵ Firth and Grant, *Words & the Word*, 14.

“what”) and its rhetoric and structure (the “how”) within an undivided, self-contained literary unit.⁴⁶ Weima has given a four-part summary of what literary criticism is:

1. Literary criticism appreciates the sophisticated artistry and aesthetic quality of the text.
2. Literary criticism no longer focuses on just the content of a text (*what* is said) but also has a preoccupation on the form of the text (*how* it is said).
3. Literary criticism is committed to treat texts as finished wholes.
4. Literary criticism has little interest in, or even outright antipathy toward, answering historical uncertainties about the author, context, and reader, which have played such a crucial role in traditional higher criticism, but rather concentrates on the literary features of a text with an ahistorical orientation.⁴⁷

Although literary criticism has greatly reacted against historical and source criticism with its emphasis on treating the entire text as a literary unit, some areas of scholarship have merged elements of both literary and source criticism.⁴⁸ An evolutionary or transformative presupposition, where the original subject matter was later given historical content, can be found in some areas of literary criticism.⁴⁹ However, both historical source critics and their opponents have admitted that such an approach can do injustice to the text, since it turns a text into a vehicle for a merely intellectual exploration of content, divergent traditions, or outside causes and fails to give proper attention to how a text functions in other narrative ways.⁵⁰

Such an approach which seeks to divorce the historical foundation of a text from its literary function is exceptionally problematic with the passion history. Even those in a post-Enlightenment society who desire to sort out the facts from faith’s interpretation of the facts have admitted that, no matter what presupposition one brings to the passion history, no surer fact can

⁴⁶ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 18–19.

⁴⁷ Weima, ‘Literary Criticism’, 160–161.

⁴⁸ William Beardslee, *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 24–29; Burge, ‘Interpreting the Gospel of John’, 57–86.

⁴⁹ Beardslee, *Literary Criticism*, 16.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1–2, 6; Osborne, ‘Literary Devices’, 36–37. Osborne writes that “now narrative is seen as the vehicle and goal of historical research.” Osborne also gives a historical survey of divorcing “history” (*Historie*) and “theology” (*Geschichte*), from Bultmann and Martin Kähler, to the critical reaction of such an approach by J.D.G. Dunn, N.T. Wright, I.H. Marshall, and R.T. France, among others.

be stated than that the Roman authorities in fact executed Jesus of Nazareth by crucifixion.⁵¹ Due to the perception of crucifixion in the first century, a religious tradition would never have invented a crucified Savior, unless, in fact, it actually happened. There exists no more plausible explanation. With the present study of John's narrative in 19:1-37, Guthrie's work in showing how the Gospel writers are both historians and theologians is therefore a welcomed response.⁵² Although it cannot be stated for certain whether literary criticism has strengthened the authority of the text, he finds no valid reason why true literary criticism cannot coexist with a high view of Scripture.⁵³ He has given valid cautions to oversimplified determinations of the author's style by critical scholars⁵⁴ and has cogently demonstrated the role of literary inquiry for those who hold to biblical inspiration.⁵⁵ Along with his treatment of criticism and the authority of Scripture,⁵⁶ the Johannine scholar Andreas Köstenberger demonstrates a much-needed, balanced approach with his "hermeneutical triad." We must balance all three necessary areas: history, language and literature, and theology.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Bartchy, 'Where Is the History?', 315.

⁵² Guthrie, 'Historical & Literary Criticism'.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 121.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 111–119. These include subjective stylistic criteria or comparison, overemphasis on *hapax legomena* in linguistic tests, attempts to find an author's chronological development of doctrine, arguments from silence, little attention given to patristic tradition based on the assumption that they were not critical or discerning themselves, finding an automatic link between secular and Christian traditions, or placing a priority on "dissimilarity" over "coherence."

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 110. "In much NT criticism, the work of the Holy Spirit is not mentioned, because it does not belong to the normal categories of critical inquiry. Nevertheless, it is not irrelevant for scholars to focus on the personality of the human authors, since they were the agents used by the Spirit in communicating his revelation."

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 119–120. Guthrie understand "criticism" in its basic sense of reasoned examination and contrasts the presuppositions between conservative critics who hold to the authority of the New Testament and the subjective nature of criticism among more extreme form critics who find much material historically inauthentic. He cogently finds a balanced approach among the former presupposition in which reason submits at the outset to divine authority while distinguishing it from a purely dogmatic approach which, in its appeal to divine authority, rejects any literary examination or criticism at all.

⁵⁷ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 42–44. Köstenberger gives a concise survey throughout the history of the Enlightenment and Bultmann's emphasis on "demythologizing" Scripture, to the other extreme of literary criticism which neglected the historicity of Scripture, especially when used from a postmodern perspective, to existential definitions of "faith" and the "resurrection" which seek to understand theology apart from the historical or literary nature of Scripture. History, language/literature, and theology are all part of the hermeneutical triad, with theology as the apex. He closes, "Rather than being pitted against one another, history, language and literature, and theology each have a vital place in the study of Scripture. If the interpreter is willing to pay attention to each of

Within the vast Johannine scholarship, an ever-growing body of literature incorporates literary analysis and focuses on the literary techniques of the Evangelist. The Gospel's narrative time places an enormous amount of emphasis and focus on the passion narrative itself, as chapters 1-12 linger on for two and a half years. In contrast, the narrative time in chapters 13-19 virtually grinds to a halt as it covers all of 24 hours, so that the reader's complete attention is focused on the ideological perspective of the "lifting-up" of Jesus in the all-important, climatic "hour," which Jesus has consistently anticipated throughout the Gospel.⁵⁸ In the trial and passion narrative itself, John uses his literary techniques to such a full extent that quite plausibly they are unparalleled to the other Evangelists and even the rest of his Gospel.⁵⁹ Particularly John's extensive and artful use of irony is noted in the passion narrative. Paul Duke's *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* and Alan Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* have laid the foundation as seminal works of study on John's literary techniques, particularly irony.⁶⁰ Resseguie has given a fine survey of the differing definitions between situational and verbal irony and their purpose in John.⁶¹ John makes use of irony so much that some scholars have even wondered if it is present throughout his entire Gospel.⁶² Culpepper has found that the silent communication between the author and reader exists in its most intriguing form with

these dimensions of biblical interpretation and is prepared to follow the text's directions rather than setting out on one's own whim, he or she will be equipped to take their proper place in submission to Scripture and affirm with young Samuel, 'Speak, for your servant is listening' (1 Sam 3:10)."

⁵⁸ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 188; R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study In Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 72.

⁵⁹ David W. Wead, *The Literary Devices in John's Gospel* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Kommissionsverlag, 1970), vi-vii.; Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 757-758. Brown contends that in dramatic quality only the narrative of the man born blind in chapter 9 matches John's skill shown in the Roman trial scene.

⁶⁰ Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, First Edition (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985); Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*.

⁶¹ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 67-75, esp. 70-73. He applies their purpose to John's most ironic motif in the passion history, Jesus' kingship, "A third function of irony is to heighten narrative claims in ways that straightforward discourse cannot accomplish. There is no finer example of this function of irony than the soldiers' salute, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' (Matt. 27:29; Mark 15:18; John 19:3). With verbal irony they mock Jesus as a dismal failure and a pretend king, while dramatic irony accents the truth. . . . Not only is Jesus King of the Jews, but also the soldiers' actions strangely confirm the nature of his rule: he is a suffering and rejected Messiah. Straightforward discourse could not convey the ambiguity and paradox of Jesus' mission as effectively as the acerbic irony of the Roman soldiers" (74-75).

⁶² Burge, 'Interpreting the Gospel of John', 91.

John's masterful use of irony⁶³ and has explained the vital importance of fully understanding implicit commentary in John.⁶⁴ In literary terminology, irony can have a wide spectrum of connotation. In John, however, irony does not denote a subversive reversal of meaning or sarcastic implication. The Evangelist often uses irony when he wishes to highlight two equally valid, paradoxical truths when one can only be viewed through the lens of faith. Two other prominent Johannine literary usages, misunderstanding and double entendre, have been listed among numerous other stylistic techniques.⁶⁵ Studies have shown complex or double meanings are consistent with authorial intent throughout the Johannine Gospel. As such, they need not be viewed suspiciously or lead to an approach in which all words mean all things in all contexts, as some recent hermeneutical or translation philosophies do.⁶⁶

Research Gap

Despite the massive and ever-growing amount of scholarship on the Johannine literature, John's literary techniques, literary criticism, and crucifixion historiography in the first century, all of which form the foundation for this thesis, relatively few⁶⁷ have sought to brought insights

⁶³ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 165–166. Culpepper explains his usage of “silent communication,” “The implied author smiles, winks, and raises his eyebrows as the story is told. The reader who sees as well as hears understands that the narrator means more than he says and that the characters do not understand what is happening or what they are saying. The fourth evangelist has been characterized repeatedly as a master of irony.”

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 233. “The gospel achieves its most subtle effect, however, through its implicit commentary, that is, the devices and passages in which the author communicates with the reader by implication and indirection. Here the gospel says more than it ever makes explicit. The extensive use of misunderstanding in the narrative teaches the reader how to interpret what Jesus says and warns the reader always to listen for overtones and double meanings. Through its irony, the gospel lifts the reader to the vantage point of the narrator so that we know what others in the story have not yet discovered and can feel the humor and bite of meanings they miss.”

⁶⁵ Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*, 133–134. For the definition and function of misunderstandings in John, see Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 165.

⁶⁶ Wead, *The Literary Devices in John's Gospel*, 30–46; Leon Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1965), 166; Oscar Cullmann, ‘Der johanneische Gebrauch doppeldeutiger Ausdrücke als Schlüssel zum Verständnis des vierten Evangeliums’, *Theologische Zeitschrift* 4 (1948): 360–72.

⁶⁷ To this author's knowledge and from his research, the only work presently extant which gives a comprehensive look at the overall style and theological considerations of a biblical work in its entirety, since it systematically integrates literary analysis and exegesis and focuses on both the “how” and the “what,” is Köstenberger, *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*. This is the first volume of the series *Biblical Theology of the New Testament*, published only five years ago from the time of this writing, which is really an unprecedented approach with its vast scholarship and holds the promise to be a true contribution to the scholarly world. His entire chapter on “A Literary-Theological Reading of John's Gospel” (175-262) is quite unique and sorely needed. To a lesser extent, see also Jo-Ann A. Brant, *John, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011). The recently published Paideia series seeks to incorporate a heavy emphasis on stylistic,

from all fields together, let alone apply them to the Lenten worship life of the Christian community. With the exception of the cursory references in the exegetical literature, a systematic evaluation of what John *de-emphasizes* within the overall structure of his literary style – the physical details and torture Jesus endured – is quite lacking. Much scholarship has clearly been devoted to John’s theology, rhetoric, and literary devices in his Gospel. However, to this author’s knowledge, no scholar has thoroughly examined how John’s de-emphasis on Jesus’ torture compares to contemporary passion history depictions, or why John narrates a passion history in such radical contrast to what American society has experienced in a post-Mel Gibson landscape. A lack of such treatment or systematic evaluation could possibly threaten to pose at best a misplaced focus, or at worst, harm to the Lenten worship of the Christian church, whereby such graphic images are visually seared onto the minds of the viewers to the exclusion of joyous themes which John is seeking to emphasize within his broader theological framework. The cross of Christ is the central and defining event of Christianity; it is therefore incumbent upon theological scholarship to evaluate what is and is not emphasized in the Johannine passion history and then to encourage application of such insights into the life of the Christian church.

Part 3: Significance of John’s Literary Style for the Depiction of the Passion History

If the church seeks to commemorate the Lenten season on the basis of the passion history recorded in the Gospels, it therefore has a responsibility to study the scriptural basis of the Lenten season. In an era where biblical texts can easily become sensationalized or exaggerated to fit the needs of cinematographic depiction, worship tone, or preaching, any presentation must first examine how the Gospels narrate the passion history in both content and style. Then it must highlight those themes without resorting to indiscriminately following themes inherited from an ecclesial or societal culture. Before a proper evaluation of contemporary passion history depiction can take place, literary themes throughout the Johannine Gospel and passion history will first be studied as they relate to the crucifixion.

rhetorical, and literary considerations, as it rejects the entire notion of chapters and verses and organizes its commentary on the basis of the literature’s own rhetorical units.

Greater Themes throughout the Gospel of John

δεῖ within the Gospels and its Significance to the Emotionalization of the Passion History

Particularly insightful in regard to the passion predictions, δεῖ plays a key role in understanding the emotionalization and shock factor in contemporary depiction of the passion history. δεῖ occurs 42 times within the Gospels, ten of which are in the Johannine Gospel.⁶⁸ It has a connotation that a situation or event must necessarily happen due to compulsion or that it should happen due to its fitting nature. Koine discourse, however, adapted strict usage into many colloquial functions; thus the interpretation that an event happened as part of a purposeful divine plan, not merely as inevitable, must be determined by considering contextual theological implications and not simply from the word itself.⁶⁹ As TDNT and EDNT explain, δεῖ indicates unconditional necessity and an unquestioned nature. Consistent with Hellenistic usage, although this can be overstated, behind δεῖ stands the thought of a deity which determines the course of the world, and its necessity affects the thought, volition, and action of individuals. This underlying thought is even present in weaker everyday usage. In normal New Testament adaptation of this word, it does not express a neutral necessity of fate but the will of a living God who personally fashions history according to his decree, will, and plan. This understanding is particularly true in the overarching eschatological drama to which the predictions and fulfillment of Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection belong, where Jesus sees his whole life and passion under the will of God expressed in δεῖ. δεῖ thus is not only situated in a context of faith in God's eternal plans but also assumes that God himself is committed to those plans, since it expresses a necessity which lies in the very nature of God. δεῖ indicates a way in which God acts and has no other alternative.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ 3:7,14,30; 4:4,20,24; 9:4; 10:16; 12:34; 20:9

⁶⁹ William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, Third Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), s.v. δεῖ; Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, Electronic ed. of the Second Edition (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), s.v. δεῖ.

⁷⁰ Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), s.v. δεῖ; Horst Balz, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Schneider (Eerdmans, 1993), s.v. δεῖ.

The Synoptics use δεῖ in the following predictive formula for Holy Week:⁷¹

Καὶ ἤρξατο διδάσκειν αὐτοὺς
ὅτι δεῖ τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου
— πολλα παθεῖν
— καὶ ἀποδοκιμασθῆναι
 — ὑπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων
 — καὶ τῶν ἀρχιερέων
 — καὶ τῶν γραμματέων
— καὶ ἀποκτανθῆναι
— καὶ μετὰ τρεῖς ἡμέρας ἀναστῆναι.

From the perspective of Jesus' passion prediction shown in this structural analysis, divine necessity encompassed in the plan of salvation has four symmetrical parts: suffering, deliverance to the authorities, death, and resurrection. Jesus showed no interest in subordinating the passion to the resurrection, nor does he place a negative connotation on the first three but a positive connotation on the last, nor does he consider Good Friday from a somber frame of reference but Easter from a joyous one. All symmetrical parts are equal and necessary parts of the one plan of salvation; they all fit under the linguistic nuances of δεῖ espoused above. In fact for Jesus, Peter's suggestion to avoid the cross was more shocking than the harsh and ignominious death itself. Such a satanic idea does not properly understand the sovereign divine plan of salvation, the fulfillment of the Scriptures,⁷² and how the crucifixion relates to the resurrection. Through Peter's persuasion, the devil himself tried to get Jesus not to go to the cross since Satan knew its importance, which spelled defeat for him. Thus inherent in the four-fold passion history prediction in the Synoptics, including the prediction of crucifixion at the hands of the Romans, no tone of defeatism exists but only a resolute outlook toward to the victory over Satan the Messiah would win.

John uses δεῖ in a similar fashion as the Synoptic passion predictions with his own unique literary emphasis on the necessity of the "lifting up" of the Son of Man (3:14; 12:34) and his resurrection (20:9). In John's passion history prediction that the Son of Man must be "lifted up"

⁷¹ Mark 8:31, chosen due to the wide consensus that Mark was the first Gospel written. The Matthean and Lukan parallels are found with only minor variations in Mt 16:21 and Lk 9:22. A repeated prediction in a shorter form is found in Lk 24:7.

⁷² See the usage of δεῖ in Mt 25:54; Lk 22:37, 24:7,26,44.

in his “hour” of crucifixion, the cross is at the same time his exaltation and glorification.⁷³ Thus in John, as in the Synoptics, no false dichotomy exists between the crucifixion and the resurrection in the sense of framing the former from a negative or gloomy point of view and the latter from a positive or joyful point of view. Both are by necessity interrelated and parallel parts of the divine necessity inherent in δει.

δόξα within the Johannine Literature and its Significance to the Emotionalization of the Passion History

The Evangelist John clearly has an affinity for the theme of glory, so much that the literary form of the entire last half of the Gospel (chapters 13-21) has been called “the Book of Glory,”⁷⁴ as he uses the concept of glory 19 times in 15 verses in its noun form, and 23 times in 16 verses in its verbal form.⁷⁵ John uses it in a three-fold way, all of which contain a revelatory nature:

1. the divine pre-existent nature of δόξα
2. the glorious nature of God through Jesus’ signs and works and Jesus’ own glory in his death
3. reputation and honor in Christological-apologetic and soteriological contexts⁷⁶

The first usage characterizes John’s Gospel from the opening prologue (1:14) and enjoys a rich background entirely lacking in Greek secular literature (with only one exception in Philo) of the divine radiance, loftiness, and majesty from the Old Testament.⁷⁷ In Johannine usage this reaches its profound climax within contexts of Christ’s crucifixion.

The nuance of Johannine glory connected to the passion of Christ intensifies in chapter 12. The disciples did not understand Jesus’ fulfillment of the messianic implications in

⁷³ John W. Romanowsky, “When the Son of Man Is Lifted Up”: The Redemptive Power of the Crucifixion in the Gospel of John, *Horizons* 32, no. 01 (2005): 100–116.

⁷⁴ Burge, *Interpreting the Gospel of John: A Practical Guide*, 381.

⁷⁵ δόξα in John’s Gospel is tied with 2 Corinthians for most usages in the New Testament, followed by John’s Revelation; δόξαζω is by far the most frequent in John’s Gospel, as its usage in Luke’s Gospel is second most frequent with 9 times.

⁷⁶ Balz, *EDNT*, s.v. δόξα.

⁷⁷ See esp. sections B-D, “The NT Use of δόξα, I,” “דָּבָר in the OT,” and “δόξα in the LXX and Hellenistic Apocrypha” in Kittel, *TDNT*, s.v. δόξα.

Zechariah's prophecy on Palm Sunday until his glorification (12:16). Finally the all-important "hour," foreshadowed throughout the entire Fourth Gospel, has come for the Son of God to be glorified (12:23-24). Here Jesus' metaphor of the kernel of wheat is the most explicit prediction of his death in John. Although Jesus' heart was troubled at the very thought of his death (12:27, the only such reference throughout the entire Gospel), Jesus immediately rejected any notion of avoidance, exemption, or saving but promptly stated "for this very reason I came to this hour" (12:26).⁷⁸ After he implored his Father to glorify his name, a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and will glorify it again" (12:28). John connects the glorification of the Son to his other reference to the crucifixion: the "lifting up" from the earth whereby Jesus will draw all people to himself (12:32). Thus the glorification of the Son is directly connected to his crucifixion: Jesus is not only "lifted up" on the cross, but there he is also "lifted up" in his exaltation (12:33).

Immediately before Jesus' entrance into the olive grove across the Kidron Valley, Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, especially its opening five verses, deeply connects the motif of glory to Jesus' imminent passion. From a chronological point of view, finally "the hour" has come when Jesus explicitly asks his Father to glorify him with the glory he had with his Father before the creation of the world, so that Jesus might give eternal life to all those the Father has given him. From a literary point of view, this motif of glory permeates the prayer to the very end, as Jesus desires that those the Father has given him see his glory (17:24). After Jesus' High Priestly Prayer, John does not include the Synoptic emphasis on the distress of Jesus and his prayer to take the cup of suffering away. Instead, John portrays Jesus' bold willingness to freely deliver himself to his captors with the divine power reminiscent of Exodus 3:14 and inherent in his statement "I am he" (18:4-11). With chapter 17 and the impending passion, the Johannine reference to glory practically ceases; the only exception is Peter's death by which he would glorify God (21:19).

For John who views the crucifixion only through faith, glory is not subordinate to shame or difficult to see. The motif of glory is not merely *hidden* in the cross; the disgrace *is* glory, the crucifixion *is* glory, the cross *is* glory. If the "hiddenness of God" is emphasized during Lent, it must preeminently mean that the glory is really there. The passion of Christ is the very essence

⁷⁸ Unless otherwise noted, all references come from the NIV.

and emblem of divine glory. The Evangelist profoundly considers the passion from a wider perspective than much of contemporary passion history depiction with its emphasis on the physical suffering of Christ. For John the “lifting up” of Jesus, his exaltation, and his glory are all intertwined and must be understood in terms of the cross; thus there is only one true glory to be seen.⁷⁹ The fact that the crucifixion of Christ is not his defeat but his very exaltation and glorification has been consistently described as one of John’s deepest ironies and paradoxes in his whole Gospel which dominates this section of his narrative.⁸⁰ The two competing parties in the passion narrative, the enemies of Jesus and the Evangelist, account for the differing perceptions of shame and glory.⁸¹ Leon Morris writes,

The crucifixion is no denial of the exaltation of Jesus. In fact, paradoxically, the crucifixion *is* the exaltation. ... The hour of His suffering is thus paradoxically the hour of His greatest glory. ... In the fullest sense, the exaltation took place when the Son of God died for sinful men. John sees nothing to apologize for in the cross. ... To some it might be so repulsive as to be a stumblingblock [*sic*], but to him it is glorious as nothing else is glorious.⁸²

Specific Themes in the Johannine Passion History

The specific themes and motifs which climax in the context of John’s passion history occur within a richly ornamented chiasmic structure. In what Brown unequivocally calls “deliberate artistry,”⁸³ John sets the stage of the Roman trial with a seven-fold artistic scheme which alternates between outdoor front and inside back stages:⁸⁴

⁷⁹ Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, 167–168.

⁸⁰ Burge, ‘Interpreting the Gospel of John’, 91; Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, 167; Rudolf Karl Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, trans. G.R. Beasley-Murray, R.W.N. Hoare, and J.K. Riches (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 669.

⁸¹ See Jerome H. Neyrey, “‘Despising the Shame of the Cross’: Honor and Shame in the Johannine Passion Narrative’, in *The Gospel of John in Cultural and Rhetorical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 418. “Since there are two parties competing in the passion narrative, there are two perceptions of what is occurring. The enemies of Jesus bind, slap, spit upon, blindfold, flog, strip, and kill Jesus; their actions are all calculated to ‘mock’ and ‘revile’ him. In their eyes they have shamed Jesus and so destroyed him. But the Gospel, while it records these actions and gestures of shame, tells quite a different story. In the Evangelist’s eyes, Jesus’ shame and humiliation is truly the account of his glory.” This emphasis is consistent in wider New Testament usage as Neyrey then cites Luke 24:26 and Hebrews 2:10.

⁸² Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, 167.

⁸³ Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 758.

⁸⁴ This has been adapted especially from Brant, *John*, 242; Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 758. Culpepper notes that the seven outside and inside scenes are now widely accepted and can be traced back to

A: Scene 1 (Outside)

Pilate refuses the Jews' demand for Jesus' death (18:28-32)

B: Scene 2 (Inside)

Pilate inquires about Jesus' kingship (18:33-38a)

C: Scene 3 (Outside)

Pilate finds Jesus not guilty as the Jews demand Barabbas (18:38b-40)

D: Scene 4 (Inside)

Pilate has Jesus flogged (19:1-3)

C': Scene 5 (Outside)

Pilate finds Jesus not guilty as the Jews demand the capital charge (19:4-8)

B': Scene 6 (Inside)

Pilate inquires about Jesus' origins (19:9-11)

A': Scene 7 (Outside)

Pilate concedes the Jews' demand for Jesus' death (19:12-16a)

Not only does this structure incorporate many of the motifs which have been building throughout John's Gospel (see below), but the structure itself virtually becomes a motif. Pilate is portrayed like a chameleon, who adapts to the different parties as he shuttles between ceaseless pressure from the conniving chief priests in the crowd outside and the calm, penetrating dialog with Jesus on the inside.⁸⁵ Such indecision on Pilate's part highlights John's emphasis that neutrality is ultimately impossible when faced with Jesus.⁸⁶ Duke notes how motifs present already from the Prologue (1:5,10-12,14) reach their height in this Pilate motif:

Pilate unfortunately believes he can escape responsibility by not choosing. John's irony in part entails the fall of Pilate who sinks deeper and deeper into complicity in Jesus' execution as his protestations of Jesus' innocence intensify. . . . Over against this double downward movement [of Pilate and the Jews] is the ironic elevation of Jesus to the office of King, Judge, and Son of God. So again there is a trial motif in which the apparent judge and accusers are in fact judged and condemned by the One thought to be on trial.⁸⁷

Strachan in *The Fourth Gospel* (Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 142). Virtually every modern commentator consulted has observed this design. Neyrey cautions that this is not a change between public and private scenes *per se*, since the inside scenes would still be occupied by soldiers. All scenes are public, and thus "front stage" and "back stage" seem to be more accurate (Neyrey, 'Despising the Shame', 422).

⁸⁵ Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 129.

⁸⁶ See Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 46, "Pilate's movements underscore his equivocation and the impossibility of remaining neutral in a face-to-face encounter with Jesus. He wants to be both inside and outside; to listen both to the voice of Jesus inside and to the dissonant, unappeasable voices outside. His shuttling back and forth parallels his desire to compromise truth and falsehood, light and darkness, Jesus' innocence and the strident crowd's desire to have him crucified."

⁸⁷ Duke, *Irony*, 127.

Deeper Theological Motifs⁸⁸ Emphasized

Humanity

John's emphasis on the motif of humanity occurs in the *Ecce, homo!* scene (19:1-6a) within the overarching motif of kingship (18:33-19:22). In astounding literary style, many of John's motifs and literary devices intertwine throughout the passion history, especially in 19:2-3: humanity, divinity, kingship, irony, and carnivalesque, among others. These will be examined individually in the forthcoming treatment.

John's motif of humanity reaches its literary climax in Pilate's acclamation to the crowd, Ἴδου ὁ ἄνθρωπος, the precise nuances and explanations of which have been variously described. Within the context of the Fourth Gospel, Keener sees in the title "man" the epitome of Jesus' enfleshment: he revealed God's glory in his mortality and death, which is the ultimate expression of mortality.⁸⁹ Similarly, Carson sees a reference back to the prologue (1:14) as Jesus is the Man, the Word made flesh, who ironically here shows his glory as the glory of the one and only Son in his disgrace, pain, and weakness. Such brutalization Pilate advances as evidence to those who were blind to Jesus' glory.⁹⁰ Brown sees a possible ancient Christological title for Jesus, as "Man" could be a shortened form of "Son of Man," but understands it more as an effect of making the rejection of Jesus an inhuman act.⁹¹ Brant sees possible references to the soldiers' intentions of mocking, Pilate's intention of pity, and to the divine overtones of the "Son of Man," which was doubtless meant for the intended readers of the Gospel. However, her most intriguing and persuasive explanation is how ultimately John's presentation of this scene is a parallel to

⁸⁸ Resseguie (*Narrative Criticism*, 45) follows Alter in *Art of Biblical Narrative* in defining a motif as "a concrete image, sensory quality, action, or object [which] occurs through a particular narrative."

⁸⁹ Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 1123-1124.

⁹⁰ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press; Eerdmans, 1991), 598.

⁹¹ Raymond Brown, 'The Passion according to John: Chapters 18 and 19', *Worship* 49 (1975): 130. Brown quite correctly sees here the intertwining motif of kingship, which John will bring to its climax in 19:14b-15: "no other evangelist highlights the harshness of the cry so effectively as does the fourth evangelist when he makes it a response to Pilate's *Ecce homo*. In its origins 'The Man' may reflect an ancient christological title for Jesus, something akin to "Son of Man"; but in the Johannine drama it has had the effect on countless readers of making the rejection of Jesus an action literally inhumane. Moreover, since the Jesus who is rejected wears the mantle and crown of a king, this rejection, combined with preference for Caesar, is portrayed as an abandonment by the Jews of their own messianic hopes."

trial by combat in the arena, which further emphasizes Jesus' victory over death and incorporates the Roman concept of *virtus*.⁹² Thus even with an emphasis on Jesus' humanity immediately after his scourging, John does not pity Jesus' humanity but connects it to his worth as victor who confidently approached death. Contemporary Lenten themes which emphasize Jesus' humanity often do so in a context of his passive obedience or from the perspective that his humanity enabled him to suffer and be tortured. While this is certainly true in the wider biblical context, particularly from the perspective of the thematic focus of Hebrews, it ought to be well-noted that it is not the primary focus here at this point⁹³ in John. For him the motif of humanity is a positive one, not one framed negatively from the perspective of the ability to suffer torture but one in which Jesus is presented as the epitome of *virtus*.

Kingship

Closely intertwined with John's use of irony,⁹⁴ the motif of kingship is arguably the dominant and controlling theme throughout the entire Johannine passion history.⁹⁵ The latter half of the Roman trial (19:1-16), which features Jesus' sentence to death and then flows into the debate over the *titulus* (19:19-22), features this thematic motif to its highest extent. Even though Pilate is the only character who appears in every scene of the Roman trial, the kingship of Jesus takes center stage.⁹⁶ Right after Jesus' scourging in the Praetorium, the soldiers set up a mock coronation scene characteristic of Persia and Rome, intent on shaming Jesus, but ironically in John's narration the mock coronation functions as a status elevation ritual which only increases

⁹² Brant, *John*, 247. She sees Luther's translation (*Sehet, welch ein Mensch!*) as doing just that. In silently enduring torture, Jesus showed no fear at death and no hope of evading death. She refers to Collen Conway who demonstrates that Jesus acts in ways which conform to broader Greco-Roman patterns of masculinity. Brant concludes her understanding of the *Ecce, Homo!* scene, "Pilate does not proclaim Jesus's innocence: he proclaims his worth. What he intends them to see – a body covered in red, crowned with thorns, and draped in purple – is then the image of the triumphator, the victor who earns the privilege to wear the *corona* and the *toga purpura*, and not necessarily a king."

⁹³ It can be well argued exegetically that the later emphasis on the outpouring of blood and water (19:34) was addressed to specifically counter a Docetic influence.

⁹⁴ For a summary of all the ironic elements of "the King of the Jews" from Pilate's trial to the affixation of the *titulus*, see Wead, *Literary Devices*, 55–59.

⁹⁵ See Beasley-Murray, *John*, 36:344; Brown, 'The Passion according to John', 134.

⁹⁶ Carson, *John*, 587.

Jesus' honor.⁹⁷ Thus many have seen the deep verbal and situational irony when the soldiers speak far more truthfully than they care to realize. Since Jesus of Nazareth truly is the King of the Jews, the acclamation thus turns on itself and reveals the reality of the situation from an unlikely source.⁹⁸ Through the method of carnivalesque,⁹⁹ John uses the crowning and de-crowning scene to fundamentally change the negativity inherent in the soldiers' shaming of Jesus as a joke of a king into the reality that Jesus is a profoundly different kind of king.¹⁰⁰ With John's finely nuanced intricacy, the rhetorical climax of the trial leads the crowd to reveal their true position to Jesus' kingship. With Pilate's question, "Shall I crucify your King?" the crowd, who just had implored Pilate to consider his own relationship to Caesar, reveals their own rejection of messianic kingship for the Roman rule which they abhorred.¹⁰¹

John views the sentencing to death and "lifting up" on the cross not as Jesus' defeat but the very point of his glorious enthronement as king. During the crucifixion narrative itself, the motif of kingship centers around the *titulus* affixed on the cross stating the charge: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." Since it was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek, the Evangelist quite plausibly is subtly referring back to 12:32. Jesus promised to draw all people to

⁹⁷ Neyrey, 'Despising the Shame', 427. Neyrey cites Andreas Alföldi who lists the elements of a coronation scene characteristic to Persian and Roman rulers as bending the knee, acclamation, crown, clothing, scepter, and throne. He explains John's ironic usage of it, "Thus a mock coronation ritual occurs, whose primary function is to shame Jesus, the alleged King of the Judeans. But if the actors in the drama are portrayed as shaming Jesus, it does not follow that readers of this Gospel concur. On the contrary, insiders have been repeatedly schooled in irony to see Jesus' death is his 'lifting up' to heaven (3:14; 8:28; 12:32) or his 'glorification' (12:23; 13:31-32; 17:1,5). ... In short, the Gospel inculcates an ironic point of view such that death and shame mean glory and honor. The mock coronation of Jesus, which in the eyes of outsiders means shame, truly betokens honor to insiders. In terms of Jesus' honor, it functions as a status elevation ritual. Although ironically invested with imperial honors, Jesus nonetheless is acclaimed as honorable, especially in his shame."

⁹⁸ Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 20, 74; Keener, *John*, 1118; Carson, *John*, 598.

⁹⁹ Carnavalesque is a trope concept popularized by Mikhail Bakhtin and based on the upside-down nature of carnival. For a definition, see Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 75. "Carnavalesque relies heavily on satire and parody to question, ridicule, and invert commonplace norms, values, and beliefs of the dominant culture."

¹⁰⁰ See *Ibid.*, 78. Resseguie contends, "The carnival scene of the crowning and de-crowning of Jesus appears on the surface to be absolute negation: jeering, abuse, spitting, and mockery of a pretend king. But within the ludic celebration of negativity is a positive side. Jesus inaugurates a new kind of order, a different type of kingdom. He came not to be served but to serve, not to 'lord it over others' but to be a slave. By unraveling rigid and dogmatic structures of authority, carnivalesque suggests new ways of structuring this world."

¹⁰¹ Duke, *Irony*, 135. Duke sees multiple levels intertwining between political and spiritual conditions, "Pilate with wicked irony invites them into the final noose: 'Shall I crucify your king?' Ironically enough, while 'the Jews' have just urged Pilate to be true to his king, this pagan now invites them to consider their own. Will they forfeit the Messiah, and so cease to be the messianic people of God?"

himself when he is “lifted up.” Thus through the multilingual *titulus*, John proclaims the universality of Jesus’ kingly reign.¹⁰² The charge affixed to the cross and the resulting conflict between Pilate and the chief priests contains a multi-layered ironic testimony to the kingship of Jesus. At best, Pilate only partially believed the *titulus* while the Jewish chief priests fully rejected it, yet it fully proclaimed the reality of the situation. As Duke shows, Jesus is obviously not the Jews’ king, yet he obviously is; Jesus has consistently fled the crowds when they wanted to crown him; Jesus has now triumphed over the Jews who hated him and wanted him dead, and now, without their knowledge, reigns over them.¹⁰³

Particularly for those who stress the hidden glory of the cross, it must be emphasized that the reader see a paradox from John’s perspective. From the viewpoint of faith, the glorious reign of Christ is not hidden, though it may be so to “the world” (1:10), but up until the very end it is proclaimed loud and clear at the cross. The reader ought never to forget it.¹⁰⁴ With a proper understanding of the Johannine literary style which opens up fresh insights into the passion narrative, Jesus’ kingship is not diminished in the cross. The cross *is* his very throne and his death *is* the very event in which he is proclaimed king. Kingship is not a hidden truth buried under the shame and disgrace of crucifixion but the glaring, unmistakable, and dominant motif throughout the entire narrative. The Evangelist does not intend that the reader apologize for a crucified Jesus of Nazareth or in a round-about fashion avoid his humiliated kingship for a hasty departure to his exalted kingship in the resurrection and finally in paradise; he wants the reader to celebrate kingship and view it as a positive motif throughout the passion history. As other characters fade into the background leading to the climatic 19:28-30, Jesus’ kingship emerges from the conflict with darkness, introduced in the prologue, precisely at the cross with the resounding “It is finished!”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 172; Duke, *Irony*, 136–137; Morris, *John*, 714; Keener, *John*, 1137.

¹⁰³ Duke, *Irony*, 136.

¹⁰⁴ See Morris, *John*, 713. “John stresses the kingship motif right to the end. For him the royalty of Jesus is the significant thing. He does not let us forget it.”

¹⁰⁵ Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, 179. “In this capacity he [John] depicts Him as perpetually in conflict with all the forces of darkness, and as especially in conflict with them in His death. So much does John stress all this that when the dying Saviour [*sic*] cries, ‘It is finished’ (Jn. 19:30), John sees no need for further explanation. This is the moment to which the whole Gospel leads with the remorseless logic of a Greek tragedy. But John does not see it as a tragedy. It is no coincidence that it is in the very passion narrative that Jesus

Sovereignty

Already in the Good Shepherd discourse, Jesus had foreshadowed the theme of sovereignty in the passion, as no one takes his life from him but he alone has the authority to lay it down of his own accord (10:18). Throughout the Johannine passion history, the Evangelist presents Jesus in complete control and the minor characters operating according to God's overall sovereign plan, even if they believe they are operating according to their own wicked intention.¹⁰⁶ With the two fulfillment formulas which function as bookends of the crucifixion proper (19:23-37) and with the climatic fulfillment of all Scripture (19:28) which occupies center stage structurally and thematically, the Evangelist narrates a macro-view. Through his unmistakable emphasis on how even the minor procedural details, which normally would hardly deserve an afterthought, fulfill Scripture and serve his overall theme of divine sovereignty, he brings the reader into the perspective of the Father's oversight and directive will.¹⁰⁷ Already from Jesus' arrest until his dying cry, "It is finished," John's account uniquely emphasizes divine overruling and complete control throughout the entire passion narrative.¹⁰⁸

In 19:17 John makes a significant shift when he changes the subject of the sentence from the Romans soldiers to Jesus.¹⁰⁹ As John transitions from the Roman trial to the crucifixion, this

is confronted with Pilate, the representative of earthly power and dominion. One by one all the other characters drop out, and John lets us see Christ confronted by the representative of the world's most eminent kingdoms. In this way His own kingship is brought out (Jn. 18:37,39; 19:3,14,15,19,21f.). The repeated references to the King is [*sic*] John's way of hammering this point home. It is an important idea for John. The kingship of Jesus is seen precisely in the cross."

¹⁰⁶ Brant, *John*, 255; John Calvin, *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, trans. William Pringle, vol. 18, Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 226; Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, 155. Calvin rightfully cautions here against viewing God as merely surrendering his Son to the lawless passions of the wicked executioners, although his phraseology is arguably too strong elsewhere, making it appear as if God took over control of Pilate's hand to write the *titulus*. Morris nonetheless calls John's emphasis on the divine plan for salvation in spite of the evil actions of others "not a side issue" but "the very heart of the story."

¹⁰⁷ For more, see David Allan Hubbard, 'John 19:17-30', *Interpretation* 43, no. 4 (1989): 399; Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, 159.

¹⁰⁸ Morris, *John*, 654. "As in the other Gospels it is the events surrounding the crucifixion and resurrection that form the climax of the whole book. John has his own way of handling these events, a way that stresses the divine overruling. Thus his account of the arrest emphasizes Jesus' complete mastery of the situation, and touches like the 'It is finished' of the dying Savior indicate plainly that the outcome was completely in God's control. Here supremely we see the purpose of God worked out, and here supremely is the glory of Jesus displayed."

¹⁰⁹ In 19:16b John uses a third plural as the subject of those who took charge of Jesus (Παρέλαβον οὖν τὸν Ἰησοῦν), but in 19:17 he uses a third singular with Jesus as the subject (βαστάζων ἑαυτῷ τὸν σταυρὸν ἐξήλθεν). Grammatically, the immediate context of verses 15b-16 would seem to favor the chief priests as the subject of Παρέλαβον. However, this does not fit with what follows. According to a proper understanding of the subjects and

change does not consist in a mere grammatical exercise. Already hinted at in the *Ecce, homo!* scene in 19:5,¹¹⁰ it shows profound theological depth which has the potential to be highly applicable to contemporary passion history depictions. Even in this dire hour of Jesus' waning life, John's literary style takes the focus off of the soldiers and places it squarely on Jesus himself as the subject of his own action. Far from presenting Jesus as a humiliated pawn of the soldiers or a person who is compelled by Roman subjugation to drudge out to the place of execution, the Evangelist does nothing of the sort. Since he knows of a far greater purpose for his literary style in this crucifixion narrative, he presents Jesus as one who willingly and actively goes himself to the place where salvation is to be won. With a subtle but still profound reference to the sovereign plan of salvation, Jesus is still in control. He is still the subject of the action, not the sadistic soldiers, nor the vacillating Pilate, nor the conniving chief priests. Jesus actively takes his own cross upon himself, and he actively goes out to Golgotha. He alone will accomplish salvation.

It is quite probable that John dispenses with the Synoptic interlude concerning Simon of Cyrene (Mt 27:32, Mk 15:21, Lk 23:26)¹¹¹ to further emphasize his motif that Jesus is in complete control of his destiny and will accomplish salvation alone without assistance, in a way that has been compared to simultaneously playing the dual roles of the director and lead role in a

objects in 19:16a, Pilate as the Roman authority figure still controlled the crucifixion, especially through the agency of his soldiers. The chief priests did not have the authority to actually carry out the crucifixion themselves (18:31). Thus, it seems best to understand an implied change in subject to the soldiers, who took charge over Jesus and were the ones to actually crucify him. However, some exegetes have noted the dative in 19:16a (τότε οὖν παρέδωκεν αὐτὸν αὐτοῖς ἵνα σταυρωθῆ) can be understood in a reference or ethical sense, *i.e.*, "at their insistence" or "to satisfy them." For more, see F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 365–366; Morris, *John*, 711; Carson, *John*, 606; Borchert, *John 12-21*, 25B:260, among others. A far less persuasive approach which sees no implied change in subject can be found in R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 1277.

¹¹⁰ See Duke, *Irony*, 132. Although Pilate stated that *he* would bring Jesus out in 19:4, "Jesus *came out* – was not 'led out' – and he is *wearing* the crown and robe – not 'clothed' in them. He still commands his coronation."

¹¹¹ Carson, *John*, 609. "Even so, it is important to ask why John omits mention of Simon of Cyrene. The brief answer is that it does not lend support to his central themes, and would therefore be distracting. It is possible to think of Jesus' death in terms of his resolution, his obedience to the Father, his Father's plan; it is also possible to think of Jesus' death in terms of Jesus' suffering, struggle, weakness and anguish. Both perspectives are correct (*cf.* 28); both are in some measure taught in each of the four Gospels. But John, even though he makes room for the suffering (*e.g.* 12:27–28), greatly emphasizes the sovereign plan of the Father and the Son's obedience. And so he reports, rightly, that Jesus carried his own cross."

play.¹¹² From the Johannine point of view, it was never in doubt whether Jesus would cease to be in control and command of the situation.¹¹³ Jesus is never presented as one who is a reluctant victim, compelled by the executioners to go where he does not want to go, but rather as one who goes alongside with them.¹¹⁴ Although the vicarious nature of Christ's sacrifice enjoys a rich history from the Old Testament sacrificial system, John's literary style is intent on demonstrating that Jesus was *not* a passive victim but one who activity fulfilled the plan and will which his Father given to him to do. Thus this divine and cosmological struggle is one without suspense since Jesus has already overcome the world (16:33).¹¹⁵ The emphasis on viewing the passion as something which Jesus did, not something for which he is a victim, could be one positive contribution of Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*.¹¹⁶ The voluntary nature of Jesus' sacrifice, filled from Jesus' own allusion in 10:18, dominates every scene of the crucifixion narrative, as he carries his own cross without reluctance in Scene 1, yields his garments to the soldiers in Scene 2, sets the terms of the new relationship between his mother and the beloved disciple in Scene 3, and bows his head and hands over his spirit in control of the timing of his departure in Scene 4.¹¹⁷ An emphasis on Jesus' passivity during the passion in which he allowed others to inflict suffering on him is at best prone to misunderstanding and at worst contrary to John's

¹¹² Victor C. Pfitzner, 'Coronation of the King : The Passion in the Gospel of John', *Currents in Theology and Mission* 4, no. 1 (1977): 21. "Again, one should not make too much of individual omissions are [*sic*] special features, but taken together the features of John's narrative paint a consistent picture. Jesus' behavior on the cross is nothing less than regal, it is completely consistent with his behavior during the arrest and trial. From start to finish he takes the initiative. He seems to be like the director of a play who at the same time acts out the central role."

¹¹³ For more, see Brown, 'The Passion according to John', 130; Keener, *John*, 1133–1134; Morris, *John*, 719; Neyrey, 'Despising the Shame', 420.

¹¹⁴ Bruce, *John*, 366.

¹¹⁵ See Brown, 'The Passion according to John', 127. "He is not a victim at the mercy of his opponents since he has freely chosen to lay down his life with the utter certitude that he will take it up again (10:17-18). If there is an element of struggle in the passion, it is a struggle without suspense, for the Satanic prince of this world has no power over Jesus (14:30); indeed, Jesus has already conquered the world (16:33)."

¹¹⁶ Fitzgerald and et al., 'From Gospel to Gibson', 328. Fitzgerald explains, "Mel was very intent on having a macho Jesus in charge. He wanted to make sure the Passion was something Jesus did, not something for which he was a victim." It has been well-noted that Gibson scored a muscular, strong Jesus to demonstrate this point. The fundamental problem with this, however, is that it contradicts Gibson's own admission that he intended the movie to be understood primarily from the perspective of the Roman mass, which views Christ as the victim. Cf. the relevant section of Part 2: Literature Review.

¹¹⁷ Hubbard, 'John 19:17-30', 401.

literary style. The Evangelist presents Jesus as one who did not merely *allow* himself to be tortured and killed; he actively *chose* torture and death for himself. In the 28 times where *παραδίδωμι* occurs in the Gospels in the context of the passion, the Johannine usage in 19:30 is the only reference to Jesus as the subject of his own action as he gives up his spirit in death.

The motif of sovereignty is closely intertwined with the phenomenon of the general de-emotionalization of the Johannine passion history. John's presentation narrates a plot which inevitably moves without remorse or much emotion to its predetermined climax, since nothing could prevent Jesus' death once his "hour" had come.¹¹⁸ As in both the flogging scene before Pilate and the crucifixion scene, John refuses to inject any sort of pity for Jesus as an object of an oppressive or unjust system. The Evangelist forgoes the Lukan account of the daughters of Jerusalem who weep, mourn, and wail for Jesus but who then must be corrected (23:27-28). Even with the pain and degradation inherent in crucifixion, the passion history is pervaded with a certain sense of calm since Jesus as the protagonist always remains in sovereign control, even on the cross.¹¹⁹ With idealized *apatheia* (that is, a calmness or a lack of heavy pathos), the depiction of the serene Jesus culminates on the cross and conforms to the broader concept of a noble death in the Greco-Roman world, as Jesus displays a deep sense of duty to fulfill the soteriological mission he was sent to complete.¹²⁰ There at the crucifixion scene Jesus is the one who will show concern for others and effect salvation; he needs no concern or saving from us the readers.

¹¹⁸ Morris, *The Cross in the New Testament*, 158.

¹¹⁹ Andrew Lincoln, *The Gospel according to Saint John* (Baker Academic, 2005), 482. See also Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 111, where he begins by arguing persuasively, "As Jesus enters his final hours (after Judas' departure), he seems to be entirely placid. The absence of any reference to his emotions in chapters 14-19 may be due to the shift to an external point of view that one finds here and to John's emphasis on Jesus' control over these events." However, he later continues less persuasively, "In John, therefore, Jesus is demonstrably less emotional than in the synoptic gospels, and one suspects that this aspect of his characterization fits with John's insistence that Jesus was the incarnation of the pre-existent *logos*. He is 'not of this world' (8:23; 17:14). His emotions tend to run on a rather flat plane from troubled to untroubled, and there are no real highs." For a more thorough analysis and evaluation of emotion in John, see the forthcoming excursus, "The Proper Role of Emotion in John."

¹²⁰ Harold W. Attridge, 'An "Emotional" Jesus and Stoic Tradition', in *Essays on John and Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 125-126.

Honor

Precisely due to the related motif of sovereign control, the Evangelist is able to characterize the passion history, which is often framed from a shame and disgrace perspective,¹²¹ with a reoccurring motif of honor. Through this lens of honor and shame, a careful study of the Johannine passion history reveals that Jesus is portrayed as one who not only maintains his honor but even gains prestige, despite all the shameful treatments of him.¹²² Alluded to in Gethsemane, Jesus firmly controls the situation so that the soldiers fall into the ground at his answer of “I am he.” This motif of honor continues throughout the entire passion history, as Jesus commands the soldiers to let his disciples go, as he knows all that will happen, as he asks questions, and as he receives profound respect from his aggressors. Thus Neyrey classifies him as “without doubt the most honorable person in the situation.”¹²³ In the trial portion of the narrative, Jesus is presented as one who chooses his words wisely and at times does not even speak to defend himself, to Pilate’s great amazement (19:9, cf. Mt 27:14). In contrast, John depicts those who inflict suffering on Jesus as fools, since, when they are given the chance to speak, “feet end up in mouths.”¹²⁴ Due to John’s portrayal of Jesus as one who is constantly in control and in fact chooses to lay down his life of his own accord (10:18), honor is not a forced motif which is illegitimately read into the text.¹²⁵ Contemporary passion history depictions tend to emphasize Jesus as a shameful victim, since Western culture sees nothing at all honorable when a torturous execution horrifically snatches away a life. It would be an overreaction to contend the shame inherent in crucifixion magically disappears once the reader understands John’s motif of honor (cf. He 12:2, 13:13). However, in dialectical tension with all the surrounding circumstances of crucifixion, John paradoxically and profoundly uses shame to bring a heightened honor to Jesus.

¹²¹ See Carson, *John*, 610. Carson cites Hengel and describes crucifixion as the most terrible of punishments in the ancient world which “is always associated with shame and horror.”

¹²² Neyrey, ‘Despising the Shame’, esp. 413–414.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 420.

¹²⁴ Brant, *John*, 233.

¹²⁵ Neyrey, ‘Despising the Shame’, 433. “Playing the role of victim is shameful, especially when one’s life is taken away. The eyes of the imagination sees this in Jesus’ death, but the ear hears differently in the narrative. Jesus is presented as the figure in control of events. He *knows* that all is now completed (v. 28) and he *chooses* to die; ‘It is finished’ (v. 30). Death is noble or honorable when voluntary. Because the narrative has prepared us for this scene, we are not reading these honorable ideas into the text.”

The consistent Johannine emphasis on honor could not be more telling as it challenges contemporary passion history depictions. It is a glaring omission when shame is so emphasized that the theme of honor ends up to be absent. From John's perspective, the passion is not a narrative laden with negative motifs which the reader must deflect or explain away, nor ought the reader feel a burden of shame and pity at such a wretched outlook. The Evangelist intends the reader to see a narrative which actually *increases* Jesus' honor in his death.

Victory

Christianity has tended to set up a false dichotomy between Good Friday and Easter, as it views the former as defeat and the latter as victory, or at least tended to reserve an exhaustive treatment of Christ's victory primarily for worship in the Easter season.¹²⁶ Such emphases can easily lead to the perception that during the passion history Jesus endured the punishment of sin and death, but he did not emerge victorious over them until the resurrection. John felt no need to delay the motif of victory until the resurrection. In fact, in the exclusive Johannine reference to "It is finished!" (19:30), which has been called the second climax of his entire Gospel,¹²⁷ Jesus gives his triumphant proclamation that he has fulfilled the mission he came to do, in spite of the appearance that his crucifixion was the lowest part of his life. Although in John triumph takes the form of apparent defeat,¹²⁸ the crucifixion is not defeat but nothing other than Jesus' triumph over Satan and the world, which fits with the Johannine emphasis that in his death Jesus is glorified.¹²⁹ Foreshadowed already in John's unique narrative style of recording how Jesus went out to his death, and fulfilled as Jesus actively wins victory there,¹³⁰ the motif of victory is

¹²⁶ This tendency present in some Lenten and Easter hymnody will be explored more fully in Part 5.

¹²⁷ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 551.

¹²⁸ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 83.

¹²⁹ See Keener, *John*, 1133, 1147; Carson, *John*, 621. In much the same way as John presents the "hour" of the "lifting up" as the "hour" of glory throughout his Gospel, Pfitzner ("Coronation of the King," 10,12) also mentions John's paradoxical literary emphasis on victory, "It is quite clear that Jesus' crucifixion is nothing less than an hour of exaltation, the hour of triumph, of victory. God's glory is to be revealed precisely on the cross! Even before we arrive at the actual moment of glory, John has carefully developed this theme in his gospel. Admittedly it is only the eye of faith that can view the cross as a glorification of Jesus. ... The hour of his death by crucifixion will, paradoxically, also be the hour of triumph over Satan and the world."

¹³⁰ See Morgan, *John*, 292. "John does not say they took Him out. They received Him, but – 'He went out, bearing the Cross for Himself.' We are watching Him in His majesty. Pilate has delivered Him; they have received Him, having gained their objective; but 'He went out, bearing the Cross for Himself,' no Victim, but a Victor. By

permanently connected to the cross and thus does not stand in contrast to Easter. Marsh writes beautifully, “It cannot be too strongly emphasized that for John the cross is the instrument and point of victory, not the point of defeat which has to be reversed on Easter morning. Here, as the Lord dies, he conquers. Here, submitting to death, he vanquishes it.”¹³¹ In his death, and not only in his resurrection, Jesus secures victory, as he dies with a victorious cry on his lips.¹³²

A rightful affinity for the centrality of the resurrection in the Christian life could bring about an unintended yet tragic neglect of the Johannine motif of victory present already at the cross. Particularly in a culture which struggles to see the benefit or value in dying, a countercultural emphasis on the victorious and salvific nature of Jesus’ death must be present throughout the Lenten season. John does not see a need to contrast Good Friday and Easter by relegating the former and exalting the latter by placing the motif of victory exclusively on it; the Christian worshipping community ought to learn from him.

Relative Importance of Brevity in John’s Narration of the Flogging and Crucifixion Scenes

Already from the Prologue, the Fourth Evangelist’s rich literary style shows quite adequately that he is able to artfully and profoundly describe a theme with great depth when it conforms to the overall goal of his Gospel. In such a literary context, then, it is all the more striking that he intentionally chooses to record the most brutal and torturous elements of his passion narrative, the Roman scourging and crucifixion, in the manner he does. Consistent with the rest of the New Testament, he alludes to or mentions the nails involved in crucifixion only *after* the resurrection (Jn 20:25; cf. Lk 24:39, Ac 2:23, Co 2:14). Since John as a narrator has

all human seeming, and I am inclined to think by hell’s thinking, He was beaten. He was not. ... They got their way, but He was treading a Divinely marked pathway. ... All the details of circumstances are trivial and stupid things in the last analysis, when one gets the vision of Divine procedure.” The capitalization throughout is *sic*. For the parallel in his death, see John Marsh, *The Gospel of St. John* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968), 618. “Even at the moment of dying John uses active verbs. There is no ‘passion’ in John; even death is an act for Jesus.”

¹³¹ Marsh, *John*, 618.

¹³² Morris, *John*, 720. Morris sees the motif of victory and triumph inherent in *Τετέλεσται*, “Jesus died with the cry of the Victor on his lips. This is not the moan of the defeated, nor the sigh of patient resignation. It is the triumphant recognition that he has now fully accomplished the work that he came to do.” He quotes Anton Baumstark, who says it in a thoughtful and provocative way, although perhaps he goes too far in minimizing the forthcoming resurrection, “In the mind of the great Apostle of Asia Minor, St. John, the Beloved Disciple, who stood under the dying Master’s Cross until the final *Consummatum est*, even the Resurrection could add nothing to the remembrance of that triumphant cry.”

been described as neither unreliable nor deliberately suppressive,¹³³ the reader must adequately account for his reserved style in his crucifixion narration and cannot dismissed it as merely unintentional or insignificant.¹³⁴

In spite of the gruesome historical background wrapped up in one Greek word, *ἐμαστίγωσεν*,¹³⁵ the Evangelist's stylistic intention is remarkable. As he begins to narrate Jesus' sentence to death by crucifixion in 19:1, the surprising paucity of words to describe the flogging highlights the difference in detail from the proceeding and following contexts. John takes care to present Jesus' discourse with Pilate in great elaboration compared to the Synoptics, where this section is completely lacking. However, John presents the flogging scene in a very historical¹³⁶ and matter-of-fact way which is characterized by stark de-emotionalization¹³⁷ by completely avoiding the physical and medical details of the flogging. The literary effect on the reader is profound. As the previous narrative builds and builds with literary precision in the inner courts of Pilate, and as the forthcoming narrative regains this detail in verse 2 with a six-fold progression of the soldiers' acclamation of Jesus' kingship, John's motives and purposes are

¹³³ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 19.

¹³⁴ Köstenberger, *John*, 540; Morgan, *John*, 291. Morgan explains John's selectivity, "Here as everywhere, his principle of selection is manifested. There are matters concerning the crucifixion to which he makes no reference. Unquestionably selecting, as he has done throughout, he has given exactly the presentation necessary for the completion of his presentation of our adorable Redeemer."

¹³⁵ For the three degrees of flogging in Roman law (*fustigatio*, *flagellatio*, and *verbatio*), see A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 27. Commentators have noted the notorious chronological problem between Luke/John and Matthew/Mark. In Matthew/Mark, it appears Pilate ordered the *verbatio* (the fearsome scourging with a lead- or bone-tipped scourge), which was preparatory to crucifixion and occurred after Pilate issued the death sentence. In Luke/John, it appears Pilate ordered a *fustigatio* (the lightest whipping used as a warning) in the middle of the trial proceedings in order to pacify the crowd and free Jesus. Commentators have offered many chronological reconstructions or explanations. The best accounting of all the evidence which still affirms the historical credibility of the text seems to be that Jesus was flogged twice, as provocative as that might be. The exegetes who take this view include Carson, *John*, 597 and Köstenberger, *John*, 531. In this case the *verbatio* would have happened in 19:16b. This would help to explain why Jesus could not carry the cross very far (Lk 23:26) and died so quickly (Mk 15:44, Jn 19:33), especially if the other two crucified victims were also flogged, as was customary. This insight makes John's restrained style in the flogging and crucifixion scenes all the more striking.

¹³⁶ See Keener, *John*, 1119–1120. Keener explains John's literary style in the context of the historical scene in the first century, "That the Gospels mention but do not describe the practice makes them read more like official reports than rhetorical documents with a heavy element of pathos at this point; nevertheless, John's audience would undoubtedly understand the basic procedure, for floggings and executions were generally public affairs in the Roman Empire."

¹³⁷ See Morris, *John*, 699. "It is a further example of the reserve of the Gospels that they use but one word to describe this piece of frightfulness. There is no attempt to play on our emotions."

radically different and far more theologically significant than Pilate's. John has little interest in crafting a narrative to evoke the viewer's pity or ridicule which is intended to prevent Jesus from going down the path to crucifixion.¹³⁸ As John continues to unfold his thematic purposes, he will continue to develop the theological purposes of the crucifixion.

With a simple subordinate clause in 19:18, which grammatically is not even the focus of the sentence but relegated under the main thought ἐξήλθεν, the Evangelist merely mentions the fact of the crucifixion and lets it pass at that. As with the scourging at the beginning of this chapter, the Gospels are concerned with both the flogging and crucifixion in the sense that they were historical facts. John shows no desire to elaborate on the fact of crucifixion with gruesome details. His purpose here is not to lay the burden of the law on his readers as the cause of the crucifixion with an overwhelming emphasis on sin and damnation,¹³⁹ nor does he make one explicit reference to the physical horror and pain of the execution process,¹⁴⁰ nor does he delve

¹³⁸ Commentators debate Pilate's specific purpose and goal in presenting the flogged Jesus to the crowd. Bultmann is undoubtedly correct when he states, "Clearly the purpose in this is to make the person of Jesus appear to the Jews as ridiculous and harmless, so that they should drop their accusation" (Bultmann, *John*, 659). Neyrey also warns against viewing this through pity, "I do not know when modern readers started thinking that such a presentation was supposed to inspire sympathy for Jesus, because in the culture of the Levant such a scene would provoke laughter and derision" (Neyrey, 'Despising the Shame', 427). Those who favor pity or sympathy include Hendriksen, *John*, 414; Morgan, *John*, 289; Duke, *Irony*, 132. Those who understand that the purpose was to show Jesus was a pathetic, ridiculous, and harmless joke of a king include Beasley-Murray, *John*, 36:337; Blinzler, *Trial of Jesus*, 228; Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 828; Bruce, *John*, 359; Morris, *John*, 701; Lenski, *John*, 1247. It appears Pilate was primarily trying to demonstrate to the crowd that Jesus was a ridiculous excuse for a king and therefore posed no threat. However, we need not settle on one precise motive, since Pilate's intentions could easily have been mixed. Lenski notes the bottom line: at this point in the narrative (unlike the later *verbatim*) "Jesus was not scourged in order to be crucified but in order to escape crucifixion" (Ibid., 1243).

¹³⁹ This is not to insinuate that our sin did not necessitate Christ's sacrifice; it certainly did. However, Lenten or Good Friday preaching absorbed in such an overwhelming emphasis on the law to the exclusion of all other themes ought to take into careful consideration John's literary style here and its implications to Christians today. See further in Part 5: "Homiletical Ramifications for Lenten Preaching."

¹⁴⁰ For more, see Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 945. Brown sees great significance in the grammatical phraseology of all the Gospels compared to the portrayal of crucifixion throughout history, "We now come to the centerpiece of the passion, the crucifixion itself, more often portrayed in art than any other scene in history – with great variation in the shape and position of the crosses, in how Jesus is affixed to the cross, in how he is clothed, in his expressions of anguish, etc. Yet in all comparable literature, has so crucial a moment ever been phrased so briefly and uninformatively?"

Mark: And they crucify him [historical present]
Matt: But having crucified him
Luke: There they crucified him
John: Where they crucified him

Not a word is reported about the form of the cross, about how he was affixed, about the amount of pain. In Matt [*sic*] the crucifixion is subordinated to the division of clothes, and in John, to the naming of the site. In Luke and John the crucifixion of Jesus and the crucifixion of the two criminals get the same amount of attention."

into a tirade about the great injustice which happened to our Lord. The Evangelist's concern is that meditation on the passion does not distract from the fact that the death of Christ is actual history. At the close of this crucifixion narrative, he emphasizes the veracity of the testimony about this historical fact which happened in fulfillment of the Scriptures (19:35-37).

Despite the clear laconic style in which the narrator informs the reader how Jesus went to one of the most terrible deaths known to antiquity,¹⁴¹ both Catholic and Protestant passion history depictions have tended to contemplate and meditate on the physical suffering of Jesus, if not belabor the torturous details of the flogging and crucifixion. With his intentional literary style, which conforms to the Synoptics' approach, the Evangelist finds little benefit in such treatment of the passion history. As Leon Morris shows, John rejects this and brings forth a different, deeper theological concern:

John describes the horror that was crucifixion in a single word. As in the case of the scourging, he simply mentions the fact and passes on. Popular piety, both Protestant and Catholic, has often emphasized the sufferings of Jesus; it has reflected on what happened and has dwelt on the anguish the Savior suffered. None of the Gospels does this. The Evangelists record the fact and let it go at that. The death of Jesus for sinners was their concern. They make no attempt to play on the heartstrings of their readers.¹⁴²

The Johannine narrative style cannot be due to historical amnesia which had no clue of what crucifixion actually was, nor can it be explained by an irreverent attitude toward Jesus' death with which the Evangelist sought to distance himself through aloof objectivity. John's selective historiography is vitally important since he is guided by relative importance, characteristic in the Greco-Roman world.¹⁴³ An attempt to find great significance in how the Evangelist spends so little time elaborating the flogging and crucifixion is far from a contrived argument from silence. Beasley-Murray shows how any explanation for this brevity must account for the fact that John does not consider it as important as the themes he does emphasize:

One element in John's account, shared incidentally by the three synoptic Gospels, is the brevity of his description of the actual crucifixion: it is contained in a sub-clause consisting of three words ... This is in marked contrast to the tendency of Christian devotion through the ages to meditate on the sufferings of Jesus on the cross. The

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 855.

¹⁴² Morris, *John*, 712–713.

¹⁴³ Richard Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 103–104.

evangelists' laconic statements were hardly due to their indifference to the pain of crucifixion; this mode of killing people was frequently spoken of in the ancient world as one of the most terrible of punishment that human cruelty had devised ... The strong consciousness of the early Christians that the will of God for the world's salvation was being achieved through Jesus on the cross will doubtless have powerfully affected them in their view of the cross. This especially applied to our Evangelist, who more than any other in his time seized on the crucifixion of Jesus as his "lifting up" to highest heaven, his hour of glory and truest exaltation, one with his enthronement in resurrection at the right hand of God. That conviction controls his completion of the story of the arrest, trial and death of the Son of God.¹⁴⁴

Contemporary passion history depiction which seeks to be faithful both to the content of the biblical narrative and to its literary style must therefore take a hard look at its own relative importance. It must dispense with any overwhelming emphasis on the physical horror involved in the torture of Roman flogging and crucifixion which excludes, distracts from, or minimizes the overarching theological themes and motifs the Evangelist John does emphasize. Such a misguided approach does not conform to the priorities of the biblical text. John shows no desire to affix a fascination or dwell on the physical suffering and torture of Jesus; the church must learn from his literary style if it seeks to proclaim a biblically sensitive passion history.

Excursus: The Proper Role of Emotion in John

Because of the literary devices John uses throughout his Gospel and the motifs he emphasizes in his passion narrative, especially his succinct style of narrating the flogging and crucifixion, the reader could easily surmise that the Evangelist's literary style is consistently non-emotional, or even worse, that emotion is inherently theologically suspect. This oversimplified reaction fails to do justice in properly understanding John and adequately accounting for the evidence throughout his Gospel. Although John shows little interest in piling on pity for Jesus with his specific motifs of sovereignty and honor, but instead writes a narration that builds without drama to its inevitable glorious and triumphant conclusion, it simply cannot be satisfactorily asserted that the Evangelist is inherently anti-emotion.

In a personal, touching episode exclusive to the Johannine passion narrative, John presents the "personal Jesus" who is intimately concerned for his mother, as affectionate emotion

¹⁴⁴ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 36:344.

and heartfelt concern drip off the page. With tender *philadelphia*,¹⁴⁵ the narrator brings us into the intimate life of a family as Jesus addresses his mother as “dear woman” and appeals to the beloved disciple to treat her as his own mother (19:26-27). This emotionally-laden episode could have broken Mary down and forced her to immediately return home.¹⁴⁶

The “Dear woman, here is your son” scene rivals only chapter 11 in Johannine emotion when Jesus approaches Lazarus’ grave.¹⁴⁷ The entire narrative is introduced with the message from Mary and Martha, “Lord, the one you love is sick” (11:3). In a fashion which only those who have stood in a funeral line can truly understand, the emotion builds and builds throughout the chapter until verse 35, which is so emotionally pregnant precisely because it is so concise, “Jesus wept.” In one of only two references to his weeping in all of the Gospels,¹⁴⁸ Jesus, deeply moved, openly weeps at Lazarus’ grave, only to have the Jews cry out, “See how he loved him!” (11:33-38).

Since John presents Jesus both as non-emotional and emotional, it cannot be contended that Jesus is consistently a non-emotional Stoic in John.¹⁴⁹ Although John does de-emotionalize the tortuous flogging and crucifixion scenes, his literary style is not opposed to emotion in and of itself. Here in the passion history Jesus is described as one who is concerned not only with fulfilling the messianic prophecies about himself, but also with fulfilling the law to the highest degree of concern, love, and perfection, even in his direst hour of suffering until the last minutes of his life. The Evangelist is interested in emotion when it corroborates and does not detract

¹⁴⁵ See Hubbard, ‘John 19:17-30’, 400. “Personal care and sustenance in sorrow seem Jesus’ immediate concerns, but the *philadelphia*, family love, that is to be a hall-mark [*sic*] of his church he also foreshadows in this tender transaction.”

¹⁴⁶ Due to the apparent gap of narrative detail after this scene, resumed by *Μετὰ τοῦτο* in 19:28, it is most probable that at this point the Beloved Disciple took Mary away from the crucifixion scene but then returned alone. For one of the few commentators to discover the emotion in this scene, see Godet, *John*, 947. “Stripped of everything, Jesus seemed to have nothing more to give. . . . Could He find nothing to leave to His mother and His friend? These two beloved persons, who had been His most precious treasures on earth, He bequeathed to one another, giving thus at once a son to His mother, and a mother to His friend. This word full of tenderness must have completely broken Mary’s heart. Not being able to endure this sight, she undoubtedly at this moment left the sorrowful spot.”

¹⁴⁷ For more on the intense emotion in John 11, see Attridge, ‘An “Emotional” Jesus and Stoic Tradition’, 126–129; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 110–111.

¹⁴⁸ Weeping at Lazarus’ grave is an exclusively Johannine reference; weeping over Jerusalem’s fate is exclusively Lucan (19:41). However, this certainly need not be exhaustive (cf. He 5:7).

¹⁴⁹ See Attridge, ‘An “Emotional” Jesus and Stoic Tradition’.

from his overall theological emphases. The church which seeks to conform its worshipping life both to John's content and literary style must take a similar approach to emotion in the passion history.

Part 4: Analysis and Evaluation of Support for Contemporary Passion Depiction and Emotionalization

Crucifixion as a Taboo Word in the First Century & John's Style Compared to Greco-Roman Crucifixion Historiography

Perhaps the greatest defense of graphic crucifixion depiction which argues against this thesis involves the very nature of the word "crucifixion" in the first century Roman world. Due to its widespread public use, first century readers could easily read John's brief phraseology ("Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged" or "where they crucified him"¹⁵⁰), only to have shame and horror immediately consume them. They automatically knew what was all encompassed in such proceedings without anyone needing to explain it to them. As will be seen, many aspects of this argument from first century scholarship are undeniable. The reader must take an extraordinarily nuanced approach in this complex area of determining how much crucifixion psychology and historiography influenced the literary style of the Gospels.

Western readers in the twenty-first century who are dominated by a cultural sensitivity to human rights, which tends to vigorously protest against capital punishment in any form, must set aside cultural affinities to truly understand crucifixion in the first century. Although the educated world of antiquity was similar to modern Western society in having a "schizophrenia"¹⁵¹ to the use of the death penalty, it was vastly different in simply tending to avoid talking about crucifixion as much as possible. The cultured literary world of the first century generally wanted to have nothing to do with the barbarous punishment of crucifixion, which may indeed be a factor in why the Gospels spend so little time elaborating on it.¹⁵² Even

¹⁵⁰ The author's translation here and later in the thesis.

¹⁵¹ Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 37.

¹⁵² See Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 946; Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 38; Keener, *John*, 1135. Keener explains that the full horror of crucifixion remained vivid enough in the first century so that all the Evangelists can hurry past the event quickly, sometimes even grammatically in a subordinate clause. He contends it was established

Leon Morris (who previously has been cited very affirmatively), as well as Hengel, have noted that the Gospels are the fullest and most detailed accounts on crucifixion which have survived because ancient writers do not dwell on the shameful and cruel nature of crucifixion.¹⁵³ A brief narration of crucifixion need not necessarily imply a lack of a complex emotional reaction.¹⁵⁴ Hengel has found evidence from Seneca that the gruesome reality of crucifixion could still be present in the eyes of the writer even when he does not use it in its literal sense but only as a simile or metaphor.¹⁵⁵

Although crucifixion was used well before the first century, Rome elevated its use into a systematic form of psychological deterrent and social manipulation¹⁵⁶ on a mass scale. Particularly in the troublesome province of Judea, crucifixion was commonplace as Rome subjugated the Jewish nation which consistently tended to assert its independent religious culture over against the bane of Roman domination. This easily became a nightmare for any Roman governor who happened to have the infuriating task of managing the far-flung province. In such provinces, crucifixion was one of the most important methods to maintain order and security, and Judea's turbulent history reveals numerous accounts of crucifixion.¹⁵⁷ Even individual crucifixions must be understood in a historical and political context in which the state used crucifixion to inspire terror; they were much more significant than just one individual victim, since through it Rome could keep the dire consequences of rebellion before the public eye.¹⁵⁸ Thus even if shame is not expressly stated in crucifixion writings, it is implied, especially for a

rhetorical practice to hurry quickly over points that would most disturb an audience. This will be evaluated in the following treatment on the intertextuality of the Johannine literary style compared to other Greco-Roman writers.

¹⁵³ Morris, *John*, 712; Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 25.

¹⁵⁴ For more, see Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 855. "The flogging of Jesus described by Mark/Matt [*sic*] might well evoke in 1st-cent. readers a reaction such as that of Horace (*Satire* 1.3.119), who speaks of *horribile flagellum*. Reading that Jesus was given over in order that he be crucified would evoke horror; Origen (In Matt. 27:22-26, #124; GCS 38:259) speaks of 'the most foul [*turpissima*] death of the cross.' To that Jews would add the word of Deut 21:23 that God's curse rests on him who is hanged on a tree, so that Jesus was becoming a curse (Gal 3:13)." More on intertextuality, which is the key to evaluating this premise, will follow.

¹⁵⁵ Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 25.

¹⁵⁶ For more on crucifixion psychology as a deterrent, see Bartchy, 'Where Is the History?', 315; Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 46, 50, 61-62, 83, 87.

¹⁵⁷ Blinzler, *Trial of Jesus*, 246-247.

¹⁵⁸ Tombs, 'Crucifixion', 92-94.

Jewish audience.¹⁵⁹ From the beginning of Rome's pacification of Judea, the excessive use of crucifixion led to the Jewish perception that crucifixion was a taboo form of the death penalty, which the rabbinical interpretation of Deuteronomy 21:23 only intensified.¹⁶⁰

Any attempt to bring an audience into the reality of the first century world is admirable. Crucifixion was a public and frequent experience which a person did not merely read about but *lived*. Neither John nor his audience needed any detailed medical explanation to know what was meant. However, unintended pitfalls can easily arise when well-intended modern readers or pastors do not properly understand nuanced intertextuality of the first century. Although the ancients generally agreed that crucifixion was "one of the most frightful punishments that human cruelty had ever thought up,"¹⁶¹ John boldly confronted the prevailing idea of the day regarding crucifixion by making Jesus' death a heroic event which later became central in Christian worship.¹⁶² Although John wrote in a wider literary context where people generally did not wish to dwell on the gruesomeness of crucifixion, a study of John's historiography demonstrates it is invalid to conclude that John's style is identical to the reserved style of other Greco-Roman authors. Slight subtleties in first century historiography, particularly flogging and crucifixion accounts in Josephus and Philo, will now be examined. They suggest that the Johannine style of narrating the passion history is still profoundly significant.

In his chapter on Antiochus' expedition against Jerusalem, Josephus gives a more detailed description of the process of crucifixion than is present in the Gospels. Antiochus had pretended peace, only to treacherously win over the city of Jerusalem. After he plundered the

¹⁵⁹ Chapman, *Perceptions of Crucifixion*, esp. 210–219. See the section referenced (chapter 6) for a summary of Jewish crucifixion perceptions.

¹⁶⁰ Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 85.

¹⁶¹ Blinzler, *Trial of Jesus*, 246.

¹⁶² Brant, *John*, 232. "These distinctive features [of John compared to the Synoptics], as well as many other nuances and details, point to one thematic principle that determines what is included and how it is included. In the Roman theater of cruelty, crucifixion served both to humiliate opponents of Roman authority – insurgents against Rome's political power and slaves who failed to obey or please their masters – and to reassure those who advocated the execution that the condemned indeed deserved their status. The victim's body was on display so that observers could jeer and supporters of the one crucified would feel the humiliation. ... Crucifixion was the subject of comedy and satire and not of 'serious' Roman literature (see Catullus's mime *Laurelus*, referred to in Juvenal, Sat. 8.183-93; and Suetonius, Cal. 57.4; Plautus, Mil. glor. 372; see also Josephus, Ant. 19.94); hence it would have startled a Greco-Roman audience that the first Christians made the account of Jesus' execution central to their liturgies. The earliest graphic representation of the crucifixion ... mocks Christian worship of a crucified lord. John makes clear that Jesus is in no way dishonored or humiliated by what happens: Jesus's death is heroic."

wealth of the Temple, those who refused to submit to his forced introduction of unclean sacrifices on Jewish altars and the abolishment of circumcision were faced with misery and torture:

They were whipped with rods and their bodies were torn to pieces, and were crucified while they were still alive and breathed: they also strangled those women and their sons whom they had circumcised, as the king had appointed, hanging their sons about their necks as they were upon the crosses. And if there were any sacred book of the law found, it was destroyed; and those with whom they were found miserably perished also.¹⁶³

Later in his *Antiquities*, Josephus comments on the immoral character of crucifixion, on which the Johannine passion narrative consistently refuses to elaborate. In the opening of his chapter on “How Demetrius Eucurus Overcame Alexander,” Josephus recalls the battle near Shechem where Demetrius emerged victorious. After Alexander fled into the mountains, he exacted revenge when he killed six thousand Jews who fled from Demetrius’ side out of pity for Alexander, in what Josephus calls “one of the most barbarous actions in the world:”

When he had shut up the most powerful of them in the city Bethome, he besieged them therein; and when he had taken the city, and gotten the men into his power, he brought them to Jerusalem, and did one of the most barbarous actions in the world to them; for as he was feasting with his concubines, in the sight of all the city, he ordered about eight hundred of them to be crucified; and while they were living, he ordered the throats of their children and wives to be cut before their eyes. This was indeed by way of revenge for the injuries they had done him; which punishment yet was of an inhuman nature.¹⁶⁴

In *The Wars of the Jews*, Josephus builds the rising tension between the Jews and Rome throughout the reigns of the Roman procurators Festus, Felix, Albinus, and Florus. After the commotion in Caesarea in the mid-60s, whereby Greek sacrifices rendered a synagogue unclean, Florus further infuriated the Jews when he marched against Jerusalem and fanned war into flame. He commanded his soldiers to plunder the Upper Market Place, but this was only the beginning. When Florus commanded equestrian Jews, who were not subject to such punishment by Roman law, to be whipped and crucified, Josephus considered it a “new method of Roman barbarity” which no one had ventured to do before.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶³ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 12.5.256. The translation used in this and the following citations is Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987).

¹⁶⁴ Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13.14.380-381.

¹⁶⁵ Josephus, *Wars*, 2.14.308.

During the Roman siege of Jerusalem, Josephus recounts the mass crucifixion of Jews before the walls of the city. When the famine forced some to flee from the city in desperation, each day at least five hundred were caught, whipped, “tormented with all sorts of tortures,” and then crucified. Josephus calls it a “miserable procedure” and “cruelty” on the part of the Roman soldiers, which even resulted in Titus’ great pity. Josephus concludes, “So the soldiers out of the wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest; when their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for the crosses, and crosses wanting for the bodies.”¹⁶⁶

In his chapter on the burning of the Holy Place in the Temple, Josephus narrates a flashback to the Feast of Pentecost under Albinus, when the plebeian Jesus son of Ananus cried out against Jerusalem, the Holy Place, and the whole Jewish people, only to be brought before the Roman procurator and be “whipped till his bones were laid bare.” However, he did “not make any supplication for himself, nor shed any tears, but turning his voice to the most lamentable tone possible, at every stroke of the whip his answer was, ‘Woe, woe to Jerusalem!’”¹⁶⁷ Later in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem, Josephus stated that crucifixion was one of the most wretched and miserable ways to die, as the horror of crucifixion is displayed¹⁶⁸ and the sight of it profoundly impacted the audience:

So the general of the Romans ordered that he should be taken up naked, set before the city to be seen, and sorely whipped before their eyes. Upon this sad accident that befell the young man, the Jews were terribly confounded, and the city with one voice sorely lamented him, and the mourning proved greater than could well be supposed upon the calamity of a single person. When Bassus perceived that, he began to think of using a stratagem against the enemy and was desirous to aggravate their grief, in order to prevail with them to surrender the city for the preservation of that man. Nor did he fail of his hope; for he commanded them to set up a cross, as if he were just going to hang Eleazar upon it immediately: the sight of this occasioned a sore grief among those that were in the citadel, and they groaned vehemently, and cried out that they could not bear to see him thus destroyed. Whereupon Eleazar besought them not to disregard him, now he was going to suffer a most miserable death, and exhorted them to save themselves, by yielding to the Roman power and good fortune, since all other people were now

¹⁶⁶ Josephus, *Wars*, 5.11.449-451. Chapman comments that in this section of Josephus the soldiers are portrayed as raging and sadistic torturers (*Perceptions of Crucifixion*, 85-86). As will be explained later, it is highly significant that John never does this.

¹⁶⁷ Josephus, *Wars*, 6.5.304.

¹⁶⁸ See the treatment of this selection in Chapman, *Perceptions of Crucifixion*, 84.

conquered by them. These men were greatly moved with what he said, there being also many within the city that interceded for him, because he was of an eminent and very numerous family; so they now yielded to their passion of commiseration, contrary to their usual custom. Accordingly they sent out immediately certain messengers, and treated with the Romans, in order to a surrender of the citadel to them, and desired that they might be permitted to go away, and take Eleazar along with them.¹⁶⁹

In his autobiography, Josephus gives the most poignant recounting of how witnessing a crucifixion affected his psyche. When Vespasian landed in Tyre, Josephus and Titus were sent to the siege at Jerusalem under the threat of death. Josephus requested the liberty of his family and friends, which was granted at the Temple. However, as he came back from the village of Thecoa, he had a profoundly different experience. He recounts the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem:

I saw many captives crucified; and remembered three of them as my former acquaintance. I was very sorry at this in my mind, and went with tears in my eyes to Titus, and told him of them; so he immediately commanded them to be taken down, and to have the greatest care taken of them, in order to their recovery; yet two of them died under the physician's hands, while the third recovered.¹⁷⁰

Philo of Alexandria, another Hellenistic Jewish writer of the first century who was an early contemporary of Jesus and the apostles, calls crucifixion “the tree of hopeless and helpless ignorance.”¹⁷¹ After vividly describing execution by dragging victims around until the ground lacerated an entire corpse, Philo also describes the tragic result for family and friends of these victims:

And those who did these things [*i.e.* execution by dragging from the ankles], mimicked the sufferers, like people employed in the representation of theatrical farces; but the relations and friends of those who were the real victims, merely because they sympathized with the misery of their relations, were led away to prison, were scourged, were tortured, and after all the ill treatment which their living bodies could endure, found the cross the end of all, and the punishment from which they could not escape.¹⁷²

Like Josephus but unlike the Gospels, Philo also elaborates in rather great detail on executions which contradict the very foundation of human morality and dignity. Flaccus, the

¹⁶⁹ Josephus, *Wars*, 7.6.200-205

¹⁷⁰ Josephus, *Life*, 420-421.

¹⁷¹ Philo, *On Dreams*, 2.213. The translation used in this and the following citations is Philo of Alexandria, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. Charles Duke Younge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995).

¹⁷² Philo, *Flaccus*, 9.72.

Roman governor of Alexandria, arrested 38 Jewish elders and paraded them through the marketplace to the arena, where Philo narrates their brutal flogging. He describes how Flaccus, who was “ever an inventor of new acts of iniquity,” “trampled upon every principle of justice” and showed “the extreme severity of his designing malice” and “the boundlessness of his wickedness” with a “monstrous and unprecedented attack”¹⁷³ on the Jews:

Then he commanded them all to stand in front of their enemies, who were sitting down, to make their disgrace the more conspicuous, and ordered them all to be stripped of their clothes and scourged with stripes, in a way that only the most wicked of malefactors are usually treated, and they were flogged with such severity that some of them the moment they were carried out died of their wounds, while others were rendered so ill for a long time that their recovery was despaired of.¹⁷⁴

Philo then proves “the enormity of this cruelty” from the examples of the Jewish elders Euodius, Trypho, and Audro, who were also scourged and stripped of their property.¹⁷⁵

A similar phenomenon can be observed in other Roman writers of the first century B.C. and A.D. In the second pleading of the case against Verrus, Cicero presses Verrus on his questionable crucifixions of Roman citizens, which he calls “a most cruel and ignominious punishment.”¹⁷⁶ Elsewhere he describes public sentencing to crucifixion as so cruel, dreadful, miserable, and painful that the mere mention of the word “cross” “should be far removed, not only from the persons of Roman citizens—from their thoughts, and eyes, and ears.”¹⁷⁷ Horace laments the inconsistent and unjust standards for determining flogging and crucifixion, as he describes the scourge as “horrible.”¹⁷⁸ Tacitus describes crucifixion as the “slavish death penalty.”¹⁷⁹ In a “description of the gradual expiry of the victim of crucifixion which is unique in

¹⁷³ Philo, *Flaccus*, 10.73.

¹⁷⁴ Philo, *Flaccus*, 10.75.

¹⁷⁵ Philo, *Flaccus*, 10.76-77.

¹⁷⁶ Cicero, *Against Verrus*, 2.5.64.165. The Latin can also be translated with the definite article “the cruelest and most ignominious punishment.” The translation used in this and the following citations is M. Tullius Cicero, *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, trans. C.D. Yonge (Medford, MA: George Bell & Sons, 1903).

¹⁷⁷ Cicero, *In Defense of Caius Rabirius*, 5.15-16.

¹⁷⁸ Horace, *Satires*, 1.3.119. The translation cited here is Horace, *The Works of Horace*, trans. Christopher Smart (Medford, MA: Harper & Brothers, 1863).

¹⁷⁹ Tacitus, *Historiae*, 4.2, as cited and translated in Blinzler, *Trial of Jesus*, 246.

ancient literature,”¹⁸⁰ Seneca systematically and picturesquely describes the pain and suffocation of crucifixion:

Can anyone be found who would prefer wasting away in pain dying limb by limb, or letting out his life drop by drop, rather than expiring once for all? Can any man be found willing to be fastened to the accursed tree, long sickly, already deformed, swelling with ugly weals on shoulders and chest, and drawing the breath of life amid long-draw-out agony? He would have many excuses for dying even before mounting the cross.¹⁸¹

All of Philo’s writings and Josephus’ *The Wars of the Jews* antedate John’s Gospel, and his *Antiquities* were probably written at roughly the same time in the 90s A.D. This selection of their writings on flogging and crucifixion establishes that this style of crucifixion narration was extent by the time the Fourth Gospel was written. Both Josephus and the Evangelists were essentially historians, but there is still a slight difference in the depiction and emotionalization of crucifixion narratives. Although in many accounts¹⁸² Josephus records crucifixions in the role of a rather disconnected, objective reporter,¹⁸³ similar to the Gospels’ literary style, he does at times incorporate emotionally-laden and personal appeals which vividly describe the torture, emotional pain, and unfathomable barbarity associated with crucifixion. Philo does the same in his flogging accounts.

Josephus changes his tone and increases his detail when he sees his own friends crucified, which is an unmistakably profound insight into the significance of John’s crucifixion narration. The careful reader dare never pass over this striking change and why it happens. In contrast to the other times when Josephus merely mentions crucifixion in passing, he gets emotionally divested in the situation when he sees his own acquaintances crucified. He even openly weeps at the sight and entreats the authorities on their behalf, as the emotion and literary detail spike. In other crucifixion accounts, Josephus has no qualms about delving into a denunciation of the injustice or impropriety shown in mass executions. Josephus records crucifixions in this way;

¹⁸⁰ Hengel, *Crucifixion*, 30.

¹⁸¹ Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, 101.14, as translated in *Ibid.*, 30–31.

¹⁸² In keeping with the general first century attitude in educated literary circles not to dwell on the subject of crucifixion, this is the majority of incidences. See Josephus, *Antiquities* 11.1.17 (cf. the similar 11.4.103), 11.6.208, 17.10.295, 19.1.94, 20.5.102, 20.6.129; *Wars*, 1.5.113, 2.5.75, 2.12.241, 2.13.253, 5.6.289 (although Titus’ psychological intention to make crucifixion a frightening deterrent is mentioned).

¹⁸³ Chapman, *Perceptions of Crucifixion*, 81.

John certainly could have done the same. In fact, John had an even greater reason and an even greater opportunity to do so than Josephus. The Beloved Disciple was no mere acquaintance; he was a deep personal friend of Jesus, which the inclusion of the “Dear woman” scene exclusive to this Gospel clearly shows. Yet the Evangelist consistently rejects such a narrative approach. He had a golden opportunity to narrate the crucifixion scene in a way which was specifically attested in Greek literature, but he intentionally refused. Given the wider literary context available to John, his theological motive for narrating Jesus’ crucifixion in the manner he did is unmistakably significant.

We should not expect to import a post-Gibson cultural landscape into the first century Roman world. Since the general operating principle was not to dwell on the details of flogging or crucifixion, it is not surprising that the first century lacks a fascination with meditating on crucifixion. No medical explanation for crucifixion found in some areas of Christian scholarship should be anticipated in the ancient world. Those who wish to discredit the significance of the brevity with which the Gospels record the flogging and crucifixion rightly point out this overall literary style among Greco-Roman writers, who knew their readers all understood what crucifixion was without anyone telling them. However, it is a grave mistake to treat all Greco-Roman writers as a homogeneous literary bloc. A cogent analysis of the extrabiblical literature validates that other writers do comment in some way on the poignant emotion, horrific brutality, or blatant injustice involved in some Roman floggings and crucifixions. John does not, nor do any of the other Evangelists. The difference in detail may be more subtle and nuanced than exists today in a world dominated by Hollywood cinematography, but it does still exist. Those who wish to do the hard work of comparing the Gospels to the wider literary style available to them in the first century will still hold fast to the theological significance of John’s laconic narrative style. They will not simply dismiss it with the objection, “Everyone already knew what crucifixion all entailed.”

Scripture as a Compressed Narrative & John’s Emphasis on the “Personal Jesus” in Comparison to the Synoptics

Another argument in favor of extrapolating graphic crucifixion portrayal for the benefit of twenty-first century readers is an appeal to the simple fact that Scripture by its very nature is a compressed narrative. It simply would have been impossible for biblical writers to include all

the events of Jesus' life, let alone the historical details which influence and color the world of first-century Judea. The interpreter's task is to constantly illuminate the historical backdrop of the biblical world to better explain how a history and culture far different from our own profoundly impacted the life of Jesus. Much has been clouded or lost due to historical and cultural distance; thus biblical scholarship must work extra hard to illuminate the context behind the text, which John's first readers would have readily understood. From everyday recounting of the day's events to monumental biographies of figures who changed civilization, certainly including Jesus, any person simply cannot include every possible detail which happened. A lack of recording such details need not imply that they did not happen. This contention could easily disprove the significance of John's succinct narrative style in the flogging and crucifixion scenes, simply because he is an author limited by time and space in his Gospel. Not only is this true for any biblical writer, but John is the only one to explicitly state, "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written" (21:25).

This argument ultimately begs the question, since it gets distracted by what John *could have written* but fails to fully understand the significance of what he *actually did* write. Although illuminating historical procedures is certainly not without value, it focuses too much on the historical backdrop of crucifixion and fails to do justice to the theological weight of the specific literary intention of the Gospels. A proper discussion does not primarily deal with which portrayals of Roman mass crucifixion are historically accurate, but which are theologically and biblically sensitive portrayals of Jesus' crucifixion. If we frame Jesus' crucifixion only from the perspective of what would be a historically plausible representation of the brutality of Roman crucifixion, we have then robbed the entire narrative, indeed the defining event in Christianity, of its entire theological purpose for existing.

This argument also fails to adequately account for John's overall purpose in writing his Gospel compared to the Synoptics. He wished to present the "personal Jesus" through his dominant emphasis on the discourses of Jesus. Thus one of his goals was to fill in the gaps with emphases which the Synoptics did not record. The Fourth Gospel is filled with accounts of Jesus' interaction and dialogues with others: his seven "I am" discourses, the discourse before the high priest, and the discourse on truth before Pilate. The Johannine literature is widely agreed to be the last written of all the New Testament writings; if John felt something more must

be included in the passion history to benefit Christian hearers which the Synoptics had left out, he certainly could and would have done so. In the near context of chapter 19 this is abundantly evident. John's narration of the Roman trial has far more detail than all the other Gospel writers combined,¹⁸⁴ and his dialogue before Pilate has no parallel in the Synoptics.¹⁸⁵ Through an emphasis on the words of Jesus, the Fourth Evangelist presents a more personal side than a largely biographical account of the events and actions of Jesus' life found in the Synoptics. The Gospel of John brings the reader into Jesus' inner circle through an emphasis on the discourses of Jesus, instead of viewing his actions from afar. The Synoptics certainly do this to a certain extent, but John elevates it to a new level. An account dominated with sorrow or pity for Jesus' torture would certainly appeal to a presentation of the "personal Jesus," but John resists, since he sees little benefit in it for his passion history.

The Gospels' Reserved Prose Contrasted to Old Testament Poetry & John's Use of Isaiah Themes

A third major argument advanced in favor of the emotionalization and graphic depiction of the passion history refers to the varying types of genre in Scripture. The Gospels are generally historical prose. Prose by its nature lacks the metaphors and literary pictures which touch the emotion and depict a topic with great literary detail and sensitivity. By this logic, if an interpreter is committed to all of Scripture and does not wish to permanently divorce the New Testament from the Old, passion history depiction must also do justice to Old Testament poetry, which describes the suffering of the Messiah in a far more poignant way than the prose of the Johannine narrative. In general, historical prose is inherently more detached than the emotionally-laden poetic beauty of messianic prophecy. Especially Psalms and Isaiah go into far more detail than the Gospels.

The Suffering Servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is arguably the most heartrending section of literature on the passion in all of Scripture. In contrast to Johannine brevity, Isaiah depicts the Messiah as one who was appalling to many, since "his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and his form marred beyond human likeness" (52:14). "He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was

¹⁸⁴ Carson, *John*, 587.

¹⁸⁵ Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 142.

despised and rejected by mankind, a man of suffering, and familiar with pain. Like one from whom people hide their faces he was despised, and we held him in low esteem” (53:2-3). He took up pain and bore suffering – punished, stricken, and afflicted by God (53:4). He was pierced, crushed, wounded, oppressed, afflicted, lead to the slaughter, and cut off from the land of the living (53:5-8). The literary progression builds to the profound statement, “It was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer” (53:10). All this emotionally-laden description stands in stark contrast to, and perhaps even contradicts, the succinct Johannine style in the flogging and crucifixion scenes (“Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged” or “where they crucified him”).

Psalm 22 also profoundly depicts the suffering of the Messiah, which, in this logic, discredits or diminishes John’s literary style in his passion history. It opens with the agonizing rhetorical questions, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish?” (22:1). The Messiah laments, “I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people” (22:6). Despite the Gospels’ reluctance to delve into the physical torture of crucifixion, here the description is markedly different:

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet. All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. (22:14-17)

This section of Psalm 22 seems to speak like an author who is intimately acquainted with the graphic details of Roman crucifixion proceedings and psychology. Emotionalized crucifixion depiction which learns from Gibson’s graphic portrayal seems to refute the significance of John’s literary style. Far from being a presentation which contradicts biblical themes in the passion history, it appears to do justice to the overall biblical text from an Old Testament poetical perspective.

This approach breaks down since it fails to properly understand the overall intertextuality between John and Isaiah and to account for the larger development of these themes in Old Testament poetry. John’s love of quoting or alluding to Isaiah has been well-noted,¹⁸⁶ and thus a

¹⁸⁶ Carson, *John*, 539; Keener, *John*, 1148; Douglas Moo, *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives* (Sheffield, England: The Almond Press, 1983), 79–172. Moo’s chapter on “The Use of Isaianic Servant Songs in the Gospel Passion Texts” gives an overview on the intertextuality between Isaiah and John in the passion history.

rich intertextuality exists between the two authors, particularly with the theme of glory. In the crucial transitional chapters 11-12, the Evangelist presents his fullest explanation of the motif of glory directly connected to the “lifting up” of the Son of Man in his crucifixion, but many still reject him despite the miraculous signs done in their presence. John then cites the Suffering Servant chapter (53:1), along with 6:10, to show that “Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him” (12:41). Even in Isaiah the entire literary purpose and progression of the Suffering Servant chapter is not to dwell on the vivid details of his suffering but to build to his glorious exaltation (53:11-12). This chapter’s climax and goal leaves the reader basking in the glow of how the Suffering Servant “will see the light of life and be satisfied” (53:11) and receive “a portion among the great” (53:12). Even in the Suffering Servant song which arguably has one of the most detailed presentations of the physical suffering of the Messiah, the prophet frames it from a perspective of victory, since the Suffering Servant “will divide the spoils with the strong” (53:12). Victory and exaltation do not exist *in spite of* suffering; it exists precisely *because* he suffered (53:12). Both Isaiah and John do not negatively contrast suffering in a false dichotomy to a positive theme of later exaltation in his resurrection. Suffering and exaltation are integrally intertwined.

Much the same could also be said in Psalm 22, where a similar literary progression is present. The psalm does not end with the graphic depiction of crucifixion psychology and torture but transitions in the crucial verse 22 to themes of praise, dominion, and worship. The psalm builds literarily to this climax, not a climax of graphic suffering. The descendants of Jacob and Israel are called on to praise, honor, and revere the LORD, not pity the Messiah for what he suffered (22:23-24). The psalmist David presents this psalm through the lens of the themes of praise in the great assembly (22:25) and dominion of the LORD (22:28). It ends positively with a resounding and emphatic affirmation: “for he has done it” (22:31). Here the psalmist presents the passion and suffering of the Messiah with positive themes which are not somehow relegated or put on hold until his resurrection. Even if specific details of suffering and torture are mentioned in either Isaiah or the Psalms, they do not exist to be dwelt on for their own sake. They fulfill a specific literary function when they are directly tied to the victorious themes which serve as the goal of the entire section.

Part 5: Conclusion

Application for the Congregation

Lenten and Good Friday Worship Planning

This thesis could hardly be rooted only in technical details of literary analysis or first century crucifixion historiography. A contemplative approach is sorely needed in today's church which seeks not to blindly accept what it has inherited from the somberness of the medieval period but to evaluate whether it truly does conform to the literary style of the Gospels. The church must ask whether Gibson has subtly impacted us far more than we care to realize. The implications of this thesis have the potential to cause the Christian community to fundamentally rethink and reshape Lenten worship life.

In some areas of Christianity, Lent can be dominated with an emphasis on contrition, repentance, and sin, particularly if a congregation uses the symbolic rituals of the imposition of ashes, the adornment of the chancel in black, or the Tenebrae service. Lent's transformation throughout church history from preparation for Easter to penitence is normally defended as legitimate and beneficial.¹⁸⁷ However, this could easily erect a strict dichotomy between the tone of Lent and Easter. The well-known worship principle *lex orandi, lex credendi* ("the law of praying [is] the law of believing") has demonstrated that worshippers grow to believe what they profess in worship. Historically the juxtaposition between Lent and Easter could not be more striking. The church has become accustomed to contrast Lent's color of purple or black with Easter's white, a stripped chancel to one adorned with the most beautiful flowers of the year, minor keys in hymnody with major keys, quiet or reflective music with celebratory music with all the instruments a congregation can muster, or the withdrawal of the Alleluias with their reintroduction amid a brass fanfare. Thus if worship leaders do not show caution in Lenten worship planning, such tendencies can easily cause worshippers to see a contrast between Lent

¹⁸⁷ For a brief historical survey of penitence during Lent, especially the rise of the imposition of ashes, see the sectioned entitled "Lent and Penitence" in Thomas J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year* (New York: Pueblo Pub. Co, 1986), 222–225. Lent as a penitential exercise could first be inferred to have begun in the early fifth century from communication between Innocent I and Decentius of Gubbio, as they discussed the reconciliation of penitents during Holy Week. The first datable observance of the imposition of ashes at the beginning of Lent is the Romano-Germanic Pontifical at Mainz in 960. Talley demonstrates that the shift from Lent as preparation for baptism to Lent as a public penitential observation is not as radical of a shift as first thought due to the rise of infant baptism. He considers the participation of all Christians in these rites "an authentic stratum in Christian piety," since Christ's death and resurrection involves the redemption of all.

and Easter by viewing the former negatively as somber defeat and the latter positively as victorious triumph. In doing so, the Christian church shows a fundamental misunderstanding of John and threatens to unintentionally teach worshippers a less than fully biblical emphasis.¹⁸⁸ The Evangelist is not interested in viewing the passion history through the lens of mourning, grief, sorrow, pity, distress, or defeat. Although such somber Lenten culture bent on such negative themes is well-intended and rightfully seeks to show the need for Christ's sacrifice in a growing neo-tolerant Western culture which rejects such a notion, it often misunderstands the very purpose of the word "passion" in John's narration. Brant explains, "The Gospel of John contains a Passion Narrative only insofar as it ends in Jesus's death since Jesus expresses no distress. The story is told in a way that prevents the audience from pitying Jesus or fearing and thus seeking to avoid a similar fate."¹⁸⁹ Such a misguided worship emphasis can easily distract from the original purpose of Lent as preparation for Easter¹⁹⁰ and develop into a depressing season dominated by lugubrious defeatism. Pastors and worship leaders in the Christian church dare never use this season as an excuse to add a footnote to the principle of gospel predominance by making an exception for Lent, when the doctrine of contrition ought to predominate.

Joyful and comforting hymns which celebrate the victory and salvation Christ won on the cross have been sorely lacking in a season which may even view such celebratory Lenten hymns as inappropriate, irreverent, or suspect. Instead, some hymnody by very reputable composers has even pointed to Satan's victory over Christ at his death and thus contrasted Good Friday's defeat with Easter's victory. In the first stanza of Paul Gerhardt's most famous Easter hymn, "Awake, My Heart with Gladness" (*Auf, auf mein Herz mit Freuden*), the translator John Kelly speaks of Good Friday's "gloom and sadness" in verse one and then in stanza two picturesquely describes the period between Good Friday and Easter:

¹⁸⁸ It is highly significant that Hebrews 2:14 speaks of Christ who destroys (NIV84) or breaks (NIV11) (Greek: *καταργέω*) the power of the devil, who held the power of death, "by his death," *not* "at his resurrection."

¹⁸⁹ See Brant, *John*, 231.

¹⁹⁰ Admittedly the phrase "Lent as preparation for Easter" is in danger of being understood anachronistically. The early church celebrated the Easter Vigil far more widely than is done today, when many adult converts to Christianity would be baptized after the catechumenate. It is probably true that the vast majority of American Protestants are not even familiar with the Easter Vigil. This is the usual line of reasoning in defending such an emphasis on contrition in Lent today, since contrition and repentance are part of baptism's continual significance and meaning (cf. footnote 187). Although contrition is certainly part of the baptized Christian's life, a defense of its dominance in Lent can overstate the case or have unintended consequences. See especially the insights from Luther Reed at the end of this section.

The foe in triumph shouted
When Christ lay in the tomb.
But lo, he now is routed;
His boast is turned to gloom.
For Christ again is free
In glorious victory
He who is strong to save
Has triumphed o'er the grave.¹⁹¹

Anne Meyer similarly translates stanzas two and three of C.F.W.'s Walther's Easter hymn "He's Risen, He's Risen" (*Erstanden, erstanden ist Jesus Christ*) as follows:

The foe was triumphant when on Calvary
The Lord of creation was nailed to the tree.
In Satan's domain did the hosts shout and jeer,
For Jesus was slain, whom the evil ones fear.

But short was their triumph, the Savior arose,
And death, hell, and Satan he vanquished, his foes.
The conquering Lord lifts his banner on high;
He lives, yes, he lives, and will nevermore die.

Paul Gerhardt, well regarded as the greatest hymn writer of the Lutheran church, and C.F.W. Walther, known as "the American Luther," have both made enormous contributions as great gifts to the church. Composing lyrics which possess deep biblical truth and at the same time touch the heart is one of the most difficult tasks in worship. Translation of hymnody's poetry which must conform to the meter is admittedly very problematic and difficult.¹⁹² However, this poetic phrasing is at best prone to misunderstanding and at worst directly contradicts John's literary themes in his passion history. With his reoccurring emphasis on the sovereignty of Jesus who always remains in control throughout the entire passion narrative, who views the crucifixion as the very hour of his glorification, who fulfills every last detail of the mission his Father gave him to do, who shouts out "It is finished!" as the resounding last literary touch, the Evangelist would never have dreamt to picture Satan's victory at Christ's death and would be shocked that Christians wish to delay a celebration of Christ's victory until Easter. The

¹⁹¹ Unless otherwise noted, hymns and their translations cited come from Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993).

¹⁹² In defense of Gerhardt, such an emphasis on gloom or Satan's victory is not specifically present in the original German. It is unclear how much American religious culture influenced the translation. See Evangelische Verlagsanstalt Berlin, *Lutherisches Kirchen-Gesangbuch*, 3. Auflage (Zwickau: Evangelische Lutherische Freikirche, 1988), 208. In Walther's hymn, such an emphasis on Satan's victory is present in the original German.

Christian church must more forthrightly learn from the tone of the ancient Lenten hymn by Venantius Fortunatus, who is one of the few to properly characterize Lent in a way which is sensitive to John's literary motifs:

Sing, my tongue, the glorious battle; Sing the ending of the fray.
Now above the cross, the trophy, Sound the loud triumphant lay.
Tell how Christ, the world's Redeemer, As a victim won the day.

Faithful cross, true sign of triumph, Be for all the noblest tree;
None in foliage, none in blossom, None in fruit your equal be,
Symbol of the world's redemption, For your burden makes us free.

Protestantism, and especially Lutheranism, may champion how it as the heir of the Reformation has preserved the best of the Roman church but divested itself of Roman abuses and exaggerated Lenten emphases. However, pastors must still consider more honestly whether a remnant of the somber penitential defeatism of Lent still remains from medieval Catholicism. In a noble and passionate attempt to teach how horrific Jesus' suffering and our sin truly are, some may be propagating such a somber Lenten culture without completely understanding the effect it could have. Undoubtedly they rightfully emphasize the seriousness of sin and the joy and triumph of the resurrection as they care for souls entrusted to them with Easter certainty. However, they may in the process unintentionally strip Lent of its joy and confidence which the Gospel writers wish to emphasize. In line with these motifs in the passion history, the early Christian church celebrated Lent as preparation for Easter with joy in the salvation accomplished on the cross. As Luther Reed notes, a shift from this early joy to the somberness characteristic of the medieval church was a tragic relapse which may now harm the church far more than it wishes to consider. In its worship life, the church must now discard such a negative emphasis and return to Lent's forgotten joy and victory:

The medieval observance of Lent with its rigors and efforts at appeasement was a tragic relapse from the joy of the early Christians in completed redemption to the fear and uncertainty of pre-Christian thought. Much of this is felt in the propers of the Sundays. Some of these seem to have been chosen in line with the medieval conception of fasting, penitence, and good works in the spirit of work-righteousness and the hope of acquiring 'merit' before God. ... Whether we fully realize it or not, the church has made a major shift in emphasis from the sense of joy and triumph felt by the early Christians in the long celebration of Eastertide to the somber contemplation of Christ's sufferings and death and the subjective stress upon personal penitence and self-discipline which pervade the lengthy observance of Lententide. In this, as in other matters, we might well discard

the garments of mourning and put on again the robes of victory and rejoicing worn by the pre-Roman church.¹⁹³

Homiletical Ramifications for Lenten Preaching

Lenten preaching, especially on Good Friday, has tended to emphasize the solemnity of the occasion and, like Calvin, may call on the hearers to tremble at the complete abhorrence and judgment God has against sin.¹⁹⁴ Some preachers may feel the need to specify the suffering of Jesus by describing in detail how a splinter can never compare to the thorns beaten into Jesus' skull again and again, how the flogging would tear open a man's back, how thirst in our modern world could never compare to the dehydration of suffocating under the beating Mideastern sun, how you can swat annoying flies away even though Jesus' aching and disjointed limbs were helpless to do so, or how no one here in the audience could ever imagine the searing pain of a spike driven through someone's wrists. Some preachers may desire to craft a Lenten series to relive the wounds of Jesus or his places of suffering. Some, in their attempt to apply the passion to their audience, may find it beneficial to personalize Jesus' suffering by pointing out how every one of your sins spit on Jesus, how you have abandoned Jesus when you were called upon to follow him by crying out with the crowd, "Away with him! Crucify him! Crucify him!," how every time you beat others you were bringing the blows down on Jesus, or how by your sin you were the one who raised the hammer and pounded the nails into Jesus' hands.¹⁹⁵ Some may wish to expose the injustice of the trial with themes reminiscent of Pilate's plea to the crowd, "Jesus or Barabbas?" by decrying the crowd's irrational, infamous choice or by stressing how the sinful world still today chooses Barabbas.¹⁹⁶ If congregations employ special midweek Lenten

¹⁹³ Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy: A Study of the Common Service of the Lutheran Church in America*, Revised Edition (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), 491.

¹⁹⁴ Calvin, *John*, 18:226. "Assuredly we are prodigiously stupid, if we do not plainly see in this mirror with what abhorrence God regards sin; and we are harder than stones, if we do not tremble at such judgment as this."

¹⁹⁵ In *The Passion of the Christ*, Mel Gibson contributed to this by filming the scene with himself pounding the nails.

¹⁹⁶ Unfortunately many such tendencies can be found in Georg Stöckhardt, *Passionspredigten* (St. Louis: Lutherischer Concordia-Verlag, 1884), 165–174. His sermon shares this exact theme and decries the Jewish crowd (which demands Barabbas' release and Jesus' death) and those who vacillate between a decision. The inherent problem with such phraseology or such an approach to Good Friday is that it completely misunderstands the Johannine emphasis on sovereignty. While divine sovereignty certainly does not negate human culpability, responsibility, or sin, those who wish the abominable wrongdoings of Judas, Caiaphas, Pilate, or the soldiers would have been prevented in order to rescue Jesus tend to forget that their very wish for Jesus' salvation would have prevented their own. Without condoning sin, Christians today must understand that if the crowd had been just and

services, meditations of some sort based on the progressive passion history from Gethsemane to the grave are rather commonplace. It is not all that uncommon to have a culture or tone in Lenten preaching similar to Paul Kretzmann's opening to his Good Friday sermon based on John 1:29:

It is a solemn occasion which finds us assembled here at this time, for the Christian world is today commemorating the darkest day in the history of the world, the day on which the Son of God, the Lord of Glory, the Prince of Life, suffered the most shameful death of the cross; it is the day on which He laid down His life as a ransom for the sins of the world. No wonder that the Christian Church has from olden times celebrated the day with every evidence of deepest grief and mourning.¹⁹⁷

While the Evangelist John, who from the opening of his Gospel proclaims Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29), would hardly agree with large areas of modern mainline Protestant theology which only seeks to proclaim a God of love and rejects a God of justice who punishes sin, much of this tendency in Lenten preaching finds little basis in the Johannine approach to the passion history. Lenten preaching which feels compelled to extrapolate the passion in all its graphic detail and emotionalize the passion history by laying the burden of sin on the hearers again and again, to the exclusion of most other themes, is based more on Mel Gibson's approach to the passion rather than on any of the Gospels. R.T. France gives an insight which must be taken far more seriously by preachers who feel they are serving God's people with such an approach, “The overenthusiastic attempts to draw out the physical horror of crucifixion which disfigure some Christian preaching (and at least one recent movie) find no echo in the gospels.”¹⁹⁸ Christian pastors and preachers must honestly evaluate whether what they feel is beneficial in Lenten preaching actually does conform to the approach and style of the passion history in the Gospels. They must ask the question along with G. Campbell Morgan whether such sermons on the crucifixion have fundamentally misapplied the New Testament's account of the passion and have therefore caused the church to suffer more harm than it knows:

demanding Jesus' release, there would be no salvation. If one properly understands John's literary themes, the correct answer to “Jesus or Barabbas?” is ironically the opposite one often given.

¹⁹⁷ Paul E. Kretzmann, *Jesus Only!: A Series of Lenten and Post-Easter Sermons* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1956), 66.

¹⁹⁸ France, *Matthew*, 1064.

*They crucified Him. Only three words. I am not going to add to the reverent reticence of John, and of Matthew, and of Mark, and of Luke, any detailed description of that. The New Testament writers give us no description of the crucifying. The fact is stated. It may be a challengeable opinion, but I think the Church of God has suffered more than it knows by pictures of the crucifying of Jesus; and sometimes by very honest and well-intentioned sermons, trying to describe the matter on the physical side. I am not denying the tragedy and the pain of it physically, but the physical suffering of Jesus was nothing compared to the deeper fact of that Cross. So, with reverent reticence, John tells the story and leaves it. "They crucified Him."*¹⁹⁹

Although few in American Christianity have questioned the use of midweek Lenten series based on the passion history, such an approach could actually do more harm than good. A systematic explanation of Jesus' passion in Gethsemane, before the chief priests, before Pilate, on the road to Calvary, on the cross, and in the tomb, as Jesus sweats drops of blood, is beaten, is flogged, is humiliated before the crowd, is nailed to the cross, slowly hangs to his death, and is finally placed in the tomb, can often restrict the thoughts of the audience to the physical details of Jesus' suffering without reserving adequate time for what such events mean thematically and theologically. During the season of Lent, especially in midweek services or meditations, American Christianity has perhaps not always been careful to guard against the tendency from medieval piety or more modern hymnody to focus on the wounds of Christ and not on what Christ accomplished for us. A repetition of such themes during Holy Week only compounds the problem, leaves the audience less than fully edified with Lent's joy and comfort, and causes hearers to view Lent only as preparation for Good Friday instead of Easter. Luther Reed warns against such an overemphasis on the passion history throughout all of Lent:

Its use throughout the entire season of Lent restricts thought to contemplation of the sufferings and death of our Lord, to the exclusion of practically all other ideas. By the time Holy Week is reached, the mind of the church has been so saturated with morbidity that pastors and people find it wearisome and unrewarding to repeat the same lugubrious details. Lent should prepare us for Easter, not for Good Friday.²⁰⁰

In this light, much of the scholarship of the "new homileticians" in the last few decades has the potential to make a sorely needed contribution to Lenten preaching. This new emphasis

¹⁹⁹ Morgan, *John*, 292–293. All italics and capitalization are *sic*.

²⁰⁰ Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 491.

seeks to preach not only the content of a text but also preach in the style of the author.²⁰¹ With strong parallels to the impact of literary analysis in biblical scholarship, new homiletical scholarship pleads with pastors to also understand and incorporate *the way in which* biblical authors write by asking not only “what?” a text says but also “how?” it speaks. Especially Lutheran preaching has traditionally placed a rightful emphasis on the content of doctrine and theology; however, while such an approach correctly understands the importance of the Word and its doctrine, it may unintentionally cause a preacher to lag behind in properly understanding the literary features of a text.

Lenten preaching which seeks to be sensitive not merely to overall biblical content or the historical reality of Roman crucifixion, but above all to a biblical author’s specific literary approach, need not result in dry preaching which merely states the fact of crucifixion. The Evangelists, along with the early church, knew joy and comfort as Lenten themes. Such themes must enjoy a resurgence in preaching and worship. As the congregation leaves any Lenten worship, the resounding theme from preaching which must permeate their Christian lives is primarily Lent’s joy and comfort. Adolf Hoenecke concludes his Lenten sermon in such a beautiful way, “It is the dearest wish of my God that I view Him, above all, in this comforting picture as the One who in compassion had Jesus suffer for me. Can sorrow hold its ground here? Oh no, it must take flight.”²⁰²

Caution with Recent Cinematic Dramatization in Passion History Videos

Despite its controversial nature, Mel Gibson’s *The Passion of the Christ* was nonetheless highly successful. Scores of Protestant congregations and youth groups flocked to see the movie produced by a devout Catholic. The phenomenon whereby Protestant believers received so much seeming benefit from a movie steeped in Catholic tradition delves into the complex

²⁰¹ See especially Fred B. Craddock, *As One Without Authority: Revised and with New Sermons*, Fourth Edition (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001). Craddock was one of the first of the so-called “new homileticians.” Although Craddock certainly has a point to make, he often succumbs to overstatement. However, see especially the summary on p. 5, “As will be discussed later, the separation of form and content is fatal for preaching ... It is a fact that much preaching contradicts by its method the content of its message.”

²⁰² Adolf Hoenecke, *Glorified in His Passion: Lenten Sermons Preached in 1886* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1957), 13. This was the first sermon of the series from John 12:27-30 with the theme “Understanding the Reason for Christ’s Passion Affords Great Comfort.” Although modern preachers probably could not use such elaborate phrasing when crafting themes, they certainly could learn much from his tone and approach.

communicative event of meaning making.²⁰³ Although viewing *The Passion of the Christ*, the History Channel's miniseries *The Bible*, or other such videos may be a natural congregational or youth group event, many pastors have perhaps been drawn too easily to passion history cinematography without fully realizing or showing due diligence to the psychology which happens in such communication.

In his study of Gibson's movie and the cultural phenomenon which took place in American Christianity, Andrew Kille examined the work of psychological literary critic Norman Holland and his contributions to understanding how one assimilates new material. Kille demonstrated that readers filter new material through their own personal defenses and fit it into their own identity theme. Thus Gibson's movie was capable of connecting with many different audiences because of such pre-existing interpretations. Viewers will fill in gaps with what they find meaningful without recognizing they are doing so. That dynamic can explain why an Evangelical audience, which fills in details of substitutionary atonement, can find a movie so appealing which is profoundly Catholic in its symbols and structure. They may not even notice that some story elements do not come from the Gospels but rather from the Stations of the Cross or medieval passion plays.²⁰⁴ Graham Holderness has exposed Gibson's movie for the foundation which truly underlies it. The film's narrative and dramatic structure owes less to the Gospels but seeks as its primary objective to confirm the unbreakable identity between the sacrifice of the passion and the sacrifice in the ritual and liturgy of the traditional Catholic mass.²⁰⁵ Although it may be surprising to many Protestants, the cinematography in Gibson's

²⁰³ See especially Clive Marsh, 'On Dealing with What Films Actually Do to People: The Practice and Theory of Film Watching in Theology/Religion and Film Discussion', in *Reframing Theology and Film: New Focus for an Emerging Discipline*, ed. Robert K. Johnston (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 145–61. Marsh has developed four conclusions from his research. 1. Whatever people say they go to the cinema for, they often get more than they expect, *i.e.*, films are not just escapism but affect our lives in leading us to consider life's big questions. 2. Entertainment is taking the place of religion as a cultural site where the task of meaning making is undertaken. 3. Cinemagoing reveals different types of meaning making at work in Western societies, *i.e.*, this may be far from theism of any kind. 4. Resistance to social control and didacticism are so strong in Western societies that viewers are sometimes reluctant to own up to what cinemagoing actually does to and for them.

²⁰⁴ Kille, 'More Reel than Real', 342–343.

²⁰⁵ Holderness, 'Animated Icons', 389, 394.

movie was specifically designed to effect helplessness and guilt in viewers,²⁰⁶ hardly themes which conform to John's literary approach in his Gospel.

Although congregations may at times tend to view passion history videos in youth group, Bible class, outreach, or midweek Lenten worship settings, such videos which lay crucifixion bare in all its gruesome violence are rooted far more in medieval Catholicism than an understanding of the literary function of the Gospels. Therefore, a grave caution must be issued to pastors who feel the need to automatically show such videos without properly understanding their communicative psychology, or to worship leaders who deem it beneficial to replace passion history readings in midweek Lenten services with videos or dramatizations. Even if the script is based strictly on one of the Gospels, such cinematography must by its nature extrapolate some scenes of the beatings, flogging, and crucifixion. Thus it could cause much more harm than good. Especially youth group members may be seeing such graphic portrayal for the first time and could have such scenes seared onto their still developing minds. Such crucifixion portrayal may cloud out the positive themes of joy and comfort the Evangelist John emphasizes by replacing them with historically plausible crucifixion proceedings which do little to edify theologically. Thus some may view the season of Lent through the lens of such videos which prolong the physical torture of Jesus and rob viewers of a proper understanding of Lent's joy and comfort. The Evangelists found no need to record the passion history in such graphic detail; pastors must far more honestly contemplate their own reasoning when they feel the need to contradict biblical precedent and show such graphic depiction in a congregational setting. A pastor who seeks to understand and apply the significance of the Evangelists' literary style could do much worse than simply reading and appreciating their own biblical narration of the passion history.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 396. "Violence works in this film to subvert Hollywood conventions. The ordeal of the Passion, Latin *passus* or suffering, is an ordeal of subjection, of helplessness, as well as one of violence. Witnessing such voluntary subjection, such willed helplessness, the audience has no choice but to feel com-passion [*sic*], suffering with the subjected victim. By focalising spectator perceptions through the viewpoints of John, the Blessed Virgin and Mary Magdalene, Gibson's camera guides the audience into a sympathy that is racked with the guilt of enforced helplessness. Audiences are accustomed to suffering with the subjected hero, but accustomed also to facilitating his earned manumission from the servitude of pain. In this case, the audience is obliged to contemplate the agony of suffering, but is denied the pleasures of resistance and retribution."

Summary & Final Remarks

Through research into the Evangelist John's literary style in his narration of the passion history in 19:1-37, the author identified five motifs which John wishes to highlight: Jesus' humanity, kingship, sovereignty, honor, and victory. Throughout his entire Gospel, John consistently and intricately develops his broader theme of the glorification of the Son, which does not occur in contrast to the crucifixion but precisely at the cross. There Jesus fulfills the plan of salvation viewed through the lens of divine necessity. Thus the Evangelist wishes to rule out viewing the passion from perspectives of shame, pity, surprise, guilt, grief, or defeat. The motifs John does emphasize stand in stark contrast to the physical torture inherent in Roman flogging and crucifixion. The narrator consistently refuses to dwell on the torture in those scenes but merely mentions the fact and moves on. Due to the Greco-Roman principle of relative importance, such a contrast cannot be explained as an argument from silence but must be understood as a deliberate attempt on the narrator's part to teach the reader that the motifs he does emphasize are more theologically significant than the ones he does not. Through an examination of his historiography compared to other Greco-Roman writers, John's lack of emotionalized detail regarding the physical agony of the flogging and crucifixion does occur within a wider literary context where much of the educated Roman world generally avoided the subject. However, a nuanced and balanced view shows that the Johannine approach does show some differences to descriptions and narrations of flogging and crucifixion in Josephus, Philo, and other classical Latin authors. The significance of John's laconic style of narrating Jesus' agony and torture cannot be explained by pointing to the nature of narrative prose in the New Testament or the condensed nature of all of Scripture, since John's themes strongly conform to Isaiah's themes in his poetic vividness and since John wishes to present the "personal Jesus" in comparison to the Synoptics.

Such a literary approach boldly confronts an increasing tendency inside and outside the church to expose the crucifixion in all its gory and graphic detail, especially through the medium of cinematography. While such approaches may certainly prove historically insightful to those who wish to more fully understand the psychology and proceedings of Roman crucifixion, they often leave the reader or viewer less than fully edified theologically and can cause more harm than good for the worshipping life of the Christian church. While not necessarily ahistorical, an approach which depicts the passion history in all its graphic torture clouds John's literary motifs

with gruesome detail the Evangelist found no need to include. This research has shown that viewing the passion history only from the perspective of Jesus' agonizing suffering and torture is finally based more on medieval Catholicism than on any biblically sensitive reading of the Gospels. Worship leaders and pastors must therefore resist such a trend and rediscover Lent's joy which graphic passion history depiction has often clouded.

This research incorporated insights from a number of fields: literary criticism and analysis, New Testament exegetical literature, Johannine scholarship, first century historiography and crucifixion psychology, worship, preaching, and the process of meaning making in cinematography. Thus this researcher was consistently forced to reject other related areas of research which still need to be examined, not to mention specific exegetical, historical, or archaeological issues in John 19.²⁰⁷ This very issue of contemporary depiction of the passion history certainly could be analyzed more thoroughly from a literary analysis of Old Testament poetic prophecy and New Testament epistolary writings. Future qualitative researchers must substantiate and quantify worshippers' perceptions of various parts of the church year to see if they conform to the literary approach of the biblical texts on which they are based.²⁰⁸ Despite its recent advances, the vast field of literary analysis still lags behind its potential contribution to biblical studies. This is especially true in Protestant Lutheranism, which traditionally has rightly valued the content of biblical doctrine, at the possible expense of appreciating biblical writers as unique literary authors and applying insights from their literary style to the church. In this light, a goal of this researcher has been to encourage study of this defining event in Holy Week not only dogmatically, but also with a more thorough exegetical, literary, and narrative approach.

One possible shortcoming in this research would be in the area of emotion. It could be surmised from this research that John as a narrator consistently views emotion as biblically suspect and therefore the church should as well. This researcher has questioned the emotionalization of the passion history not because emotion is inherently contrary to Scripture, since John himself uses it in poignant ways in the Lazarus and "Dear, woman" scenes, but because it contradicts John's themes which he does emphasize in his passion history. Due to

²⁰⁷ See Appendix 1: "Suggestions for Further Research and Theses"

²⁰⁸ See Appendix 2: "Suggestion for Further Qualitative & Quantitative Research"

historical reactions against Pietism, revivalism, Pentecostalism, or the mega church movement, some areas of Lutheranism rightfully have rejected basing Christ's forgiveness on personal feelings instead of Christ's finished work, but in the process may have unfortunately tended to view emotion only negatively or avoid research in the area of emotion. Among confessional Lutheranism there exists a large research gap on the proper role of emotion and the way in which biblical authors, especially Paul, incorporate emotion into the fabric of their appeals to Christian audiences.

With this thesis the author has sought to begin to fill in the information gap which exists when biblical readers fail to properly apply John's literary approach to an American church scene influenced by Mel Gibson's graphic and violent depiction of the passion. Although the area of literary analysis has made large and sorely needed inroads into the field of exegesis, this approach has largely neglected a comparison of Johannine brevity in his passion narration to a modern tendency to extrapolate the torture of the flogging and crucifixion scenes. Exegetes and commentators have typically relegated such insights to a few brief sentences. Therefore this researcher hopes this thesis may be of value to those who wish to more fully explore an issue which the exegetical literature by its very nature must limit, to those who question this modern approach to the passion history, or to those who are troubled by the somber defeatism sometimes present during the Lenten season. The implications of this research have the potential to reframe Lent from a season which dwells on Jesus' physical suffering or views Good Friday only from a somber perspective to one which unashamedly celebrates John's positive themes and rediscovers Lent's forgotten joy and comfort from the early church.

The book of Hebrews tells of Jesus who "*for the joy set before him* endured the cross, scorning its shame" (He 12:2, emphasis added). At first glance, the theme of joy seems to be a counterintuitive, irreverent, or unwelcomed guest during Lent, but from Jesus' own point of view, it is an integral part of the fabric of the passion history. During the season of Lent the passion history tells of a God who loved the world so much that he entered into it, died for it, and won forgiveness for all its sins. Nothing could bring more joy and comfort. Nothing could do more to cast away the remnant of somberness which at times has remained in this season. It is therefore no wonder that Luther in his *Hauspostille* for Good Friday called it "my joy" and "rich

and eternal comfort.”²⁰⁹ With his positive motifs emphasized throughout his narration, the Evangelist John knew Lent’s forgotten joy. In its preparation for Easter, the early church knew Lent’s forgotten joy. By setting aside an overwhelming focus on the physical torture involved in the passion history, the church today can rediscover Lent’s forgotten joy.

²⁰⁹ Martin Luther, *Dr. Martin Luthers Sämmtliche Schriften*, Walch Edition, vol. XIIIb (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1892), 1867. Translation is by this author.

Appendix 1: Suggestions for Further Research and Theses

Most of the following are admittedly broader topics more so than finally nuanced research questions. Thus varying degrees of narrowing the scope or creating new knowledge in addition to existing knowledge will have to be employed. However, these were areas which this researcher found related or noteworthy but was forced to entrust to future thesis writers.

In Areas Directly Related to this Thesis

- Contemporary Depiction and Emotionalization of the Passion History Analyzed in Light of Old Testament Prophecy
- Contemporary Depiction and Emotionalization of the Passion History Analyzed in Light of New Testament Epistles

In the Area of Literary Analysis & Hermeneutics

- An Evaluation of Contemporary Literary Criticism and Discourse Analysis from a Historical-Grammatical Hermeneutical Perspective
- The Case for Literary Analysis in Exegesis and Hermeneutics within Confessional Lutheranism
- “Intentional Johannine Ambiguity” and the Impact of John’s Double Meanings on Allegory and Biblical Hermeneutics

In the Area of the Proper Role of Emotion

- Worship which Touches both Subjective Emotions and Clearly Proclaims the Objective Gospel
- Exploration of Trends & Reactions to Emotion in American Lutheranism
- The Incorporation of Emotion into the Fabric of Appeals in the Pauline Epistles
- The Incorporation of Emotion into the Fabric of Old Testament Narrative and Prophecy

In the Areas of Exegesis, Archaeology, and Doctrine of John 19

- Survey of Archaeological Sites during Holy Week, with special reference to the location and meaning of the Praetorium and the Place of the Skull
- A Synoptic Comparison of the Various Holy Week Accounts, with special reference to an apologetic of the veracity of the Gospels
- “Sin is Sin”? Degrees of Culpability and Sin in John 19:11
- Are the Gospels’ Passion Narratives Anti-Semitic? An Evaluation of the Culpability of Pilate and the Jewish Crowd in Christian Historiography of Good Friday
- What Exactly was Finished on the Cross? The Subject of *Τετέλεσται* in John 19:30, the Plan of Salvation, and the Chronological Relationship to the Uncompleted Work of Easter

In the Area of First Century Roman History

- The Complex Linguistic Situation in First Century Palestine (Latin, Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew), with special reference to the discourse between Pilate and Jesus
- The Declining Roman Political Situation in First-Century Judea from the Prefects to the Fall of Jerusalem, with special reference to Pilate’s position during the passion history

- Jesus' Crucifixion from the Perspective of First Century Greco-Roman Crucifixion Historiography

In the Area of Worship

- Lent's Historical Transformation from Preparation for Easter into a Penitential Season
- Music Itself Communicates a Message: The Doctrine of Affections in Lenten Hymnody
- The Impact of Visualization on Contemporary American Worship & Culture
- Qualitative Research on Worshippers' Perceptions of the Church Year, with special comparison to the literary features of their respective biblical texts (see Appendix 2)

Appendix 2: Suggestion for Further Qualitative & Quantitative Research

This researcher found the potential insights from this type of future research to be highly enlightening to the implications of this thesis. This would probably be most feasible in a focus group setting. The following is merely a suggestion and would have to be adapted to the specific situation.

In three minutes, write down any associations you have with the season of Lent.

These could be descriptions, emotional reactions, objects, sensory impressions, pictures, and the like. It might be helpful to finish this sentence: “When I hear the word ‘Lent,’ I think about or feel ...”

To further specify your associations with Lent, please briefly fill out the following sentences:

1. “When I leave church during the season of Lent, I would characterize my reaction as ...”
2. “When I read the account of Jesus’ passion in the Bible, I would characterize my reaction as ...”
3. “When I see movies or videos which depict Jesus’ passion (in or outside church services), I would characterize my reaction as ...”

Please use the following word bank for the next two questions:

comfort, defeat, depressing, disgrace, exciting, glory, honor, horrific, joy, kingly, pity, shame, somber, sorrow, surprised, triumphant, uplifting, victory

For the season of Lent, arrange the descriptions in the word bank from most applicable to least applicable (the first word is the one which you associate the most with Lent, the last word is the one you associate the least).

For the season of Easter, arrange the following descriptions in the word bank from most applicable to least applicable (the first word is the one which you associate the most with Easter, the last word is the one you associate the least).

The facilitator of this study could then encourage discussion on why various participants ranked words more or less applicable to the season of Lent or Easter.

Bibliography

- Arndt, William, Frederick W. Danker, and Walter Bauer. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Third Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Attridge, Harold W. 'An "Emotional" Jesus and Stoic Tradition'. In *Essays on John and Hebrews*, 122–36. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012.
- Balz, Horst. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Schneider. Eerdmans, 1993.
- Bartchy, S. Scott. 'Where Is the History in Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ?'. *Pastoral Psychology* 53, no. 4 (March 2005): 313–28.
- Baukhham, Richard. *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Baxter, Christina. *The Wounds of Jesus: A Meditation on the Crucified Saviour*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.
- Beardslee, William. *Literary Criticism of the New Testament*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970.
- Beasley-Murray, George. *John*. First Edition. Vol. 36. Word Biblical Commentary. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1987.
- Blinzler, Josef. *The Trial of Jesus: The Jewish and Roman Proceedings Against Jesus Christ Described and Assessed from the Oldest Accounts*. Translated by Isabel & Florence HcHugh. Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Bookshop, 1959.
- Borchert, Gerald. *John 12-21: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*. Vol. 25B. New American Commentary. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2002.
- Brant, Jo-Ann A. *John*. Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011.
- Brown, Raymond. *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave, A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*. First Edition. The Anchor Bible Reference Library. New York: Doubleday, 1994.
- . 'The Passion according to John: Chapters 18 and 19'. *Worship* 49 (1975): 126–34.
- Bruce, F.F. *The Gospel of John: Introduction, Exposition, and Notes*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951.
- Bultmann, Rudolf Karl. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Translated by G.R. Beasley-Murray, R.W.N. Hoare, and J.K. Riches. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971.

- Burge, Gary M. 'Interpreting the Gospel of John'. In *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, edited by David Alan Black and David S. Dockery, 357–90. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001.
- . *Interpreting the Gospel of John: A Practical Guide*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013.
- Calvin, John. *Commentary on the Gospel According to John*. Translated by William Pringle. Vol. 18. Calvin's Commentaries. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979.
- Carson, D. A. *The Gospel according to John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Leicester, England; Grand Rapids: Inter-Varsity Press; Eerdmans, 1991.
- Chapman, David W. *Ancient Jewish and Christian Perceptions of Crucifixion*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010.
- Cicero, M. Tullius. *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*. Translated by C.D. Young. Medford, MA: George Bell & Sons, 1903.
- Craddock, Fred B. *As One Without Authority: Revised and with New Sermons*. Fourth Edition. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2001.
- Cullmann, Oscar. 'Der Johanneische Gebrauch Doppeldeutiger Ausdrücke Als Schlüssel Zum Verständnis Des Vierten Evangeliums'. *Theologische Zeitschrift* 4 (1948): 360–72.
- Culpepper, R. Alan. *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study In Literary Design*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.
- Dempsey, Terrence E. 'The Wounded Body of Christ and the Modern Social Consciousness'. *ARTS* 22 (1 January 2011): 22–32.
- Duke, Paul D. *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*. First Edition. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1985.
- Evangelische Verlagsanstalt Berlin. *Lutherisches Kirchen-Gesangbuch*. 3. Auflage. Zwickau: Evangelische Lutherische Freikirche, 1988.
- Firth, David G., and Jamie A. Grant. *Words & the Word: Explorations in Biblical Interpretation & Literary Theory*. Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008.
- Fitzgerald, Benedict, and et al. 'From Gospel to Gibson: An Interview with the Writers Behind Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ'. *Religion and the Arts* 9, no. 3–4 (2005): 3–4.
- France, R. T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.
- Godet, Frédéric Louis. *Commentary on the Gospel of John: With an Historical and Critical Introduction*. Translated by Timothy Dwight. New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886.

- Grassi, Joseph A. 'The Wounds of Jesus : Exegesis, Biblical Piety, and Liturgy'. *Worship* 72, no. 2 (1998): 141–47.
- Guthrie, Donald. 'The Historical and Literary Criticism of the New Testament'. In *Biblical Criticism: Historical, Literary and Textual*, 85–123. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978.
- Hendriksen, William. *Exposition of the Gospel according to John*. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1975.
- Hengel, Martin. *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977.
- Hewitt, Joseph William. 'The Use of Nails in the Crucifixion'. *Harvard Theological Review* 25, no. 1 (1932): 29–45.
- Hoenecke, Adolf. *Glorified in His Passion: Lenten Sermons Preached in 1886*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1957.
- Holderness, Graham. "'Animated Icons": Narrative and Liturgy in The Passion of the Christ'. *Literature and Theology* 19, no. 4 (3 October 2005): 384–401.
- Horace. *The Works of Horace*. Translated by Christopher Smart. Medford, MA: Harper & Brothers, 1863.
- Hubbard, David Allan. 'John 19:17-30'. *Interpretation* 43, no. 4 (1989): 397–401.
- Josephus, Flavius. *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*. Translated by William Whiston. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987.
- Keener, Craig S. *The Gospel of John: A Commentary*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003.
- Kille, D. Andrew. 'More Reel than Real: Mel Gibson's The Passion of the Christ'. *Pastoral Psychology* 53, no. 4 (2005): 341–50.
- Kittel, Gerhard, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1964.
- Köstenberger, Andreas J. *A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters*. Biblical Theology of the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
- . *John*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.
- Kretzmann, Paul E. *Jesus Only!: A Series of Lenten and Post-Easter Sermons*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1956.
- Krondorfer, Bjorn. 'Mel Gibson's Alter Ego: A Male Passion for Violence'. *Cross Currents* 54, no. 1 (2004): 16–21.

- Lenski, R.C.H. *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961.
- Lincoln, Andrew. *The Gospel according to Saint John*. Baker Academic, 2005.
- Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene Albert Nida. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*. Electronic ed. of the Second Edition. New York: United Bible Societies, 1996.
- Luther, Martin. *Dr. Martin Luthers Sämmtliche Schriften*. Walch Edition. Vol. XIIIb. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1892.
- Marsh, Clive. 'On Dealing with What Films Actually Do to People: The Practice and Theory of Film Watching in Theology/Religion and Film Discussion'. In *Reframing Theology and Film: New Focus for an Emerging Discipline*, edited by Robert K. Johnston, 145–61. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Marsh, John. *The Gospel of St. John*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968.
- Moo, Douglas. *The Old Testament in the Gospel Passion Narratives*. Sheffield, England: The Almond Press, 1983.
- Morgan, G. Campbell. *The Gospel according to John*. Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1960.
- Morris, Leon. *The Cross in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965.
- . *The Gospel according to John*. Revised Edition. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.
- . *The Gospel according to Matthew*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992.
- Neyrey, Jerome H. "'Despising the Shame of the Cross": Honor and Shame in the Johannine Passion Narrative'. In *The Gospel of John in Cultural and Rhetorical Perspective*, 412–38. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009.
- Osborne, Grant. 'The Literary Devices in John's Gospel'. In *Words & the Word: Explorations in Biblical Interpretation & Literary Theory*, edited by David Firth and Jamie A. Grant, 17–50. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008.
- Pfitzner, Victor C. 'Coronation of the King : The Passion in the Gospel of John'. *Currents in Theology and Mission* 4, no. 1 (1977): 10–21.
- Philo of Alexandria. *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*. Translated by Charles Duke Young. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995.

- Reed, Luther D. *The Lutheran Liturgy: A Study of the Common Service of the Lutheran Church in America*. Revised Edition. Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947.
- Resseguie, James L. *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.
- Romanowsky, John W. “‘When the Son of Man Is Lifted Up’: The Redemptive Power of the Crucifixion in the Gospel of John”. *Horizons* 32, no. 01 (2005): 100–116.
- Sergeev, Mikhail. ‘Crucifixion Painting: Historical Considerations and Twentieth-Century Expressionism’. *ARTS* 18, no. 1 (2006): 26–36.
- Sherwin-White, A. N. *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963.
- Stöckhardt, Georg. *Passionspredigten*. St. Louis: Lutherischer Concordia-Verlag, 1884.
- Stuart, Laird J. ‘Reflections on The Passion of the Christ’. *Pastoral Psychology* 53, no. 4 (2005): 381–83.
- Talley, Thomas J. *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*. New York: Pueblo Pub. Co, 1986.
- Tenney, Merrill. *The Gospel of John*. Vol. 9. The Expositor’s Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981.
- Tombs, David. ‘Crucifixion, State Terror, and Sexual Abuse’. *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 53, no. 1–2 (1999): 89–109.
- Wead, David W. *The Literary Devices in John’s Gospel*. Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt Kommissionsverlag, 1970.
- Weima, Jeffrey. ‘Literary Criticism’. In *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues*, edited by David Alan Black and David S. Dockery, 150–69. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001.
- Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993.