
Redactional Trajectories in the Crucifixion Narrative

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A GREAT deal has been written regarding the negative results of redaction criticism. Even radical critics use a disproportionate amount of space tracing *Traditionsgeschichte*, or the development and validity of individual pericopes; and too little showing the results of *Redaktionsgeschichte*, or the theological purposes of the individual writers. The reason, of course, is obvious: there are greater possibilities for creative work in the former. Yet the latter aspect is more important in many ways, especially for the believer who wishes to apply biblical principles and attitudes to his present situation. This study will attempt to show how the methodology of redaction criticism can serve the interests of exposition and methodology. The New Hermeneutic of the radical critic recognizes the value of the proclaimed word, and so this purpose should apply to all theological strata.

At the outset, however, we might note that many scholars have pointed the way to a positive evaluation of Gospel pericopae.¹ There is no basis for demanding a pessimistic approach to the narratives and sayings of Jesus. The scholar does not have to "demythologize" or existentialize the *Tendenz* of the Gospel writer, and it is my hope that this paper will contribute in some small way to the development of a more optimistic approach to redaction study. This is not to derogate tradition criticism in any way; that is a crucial aspect of New Testament research. However, we must seek a proper balance between the two aspects, i.e., between the development of the traditions and the theological nuances of the writer. Due both to the brevity required in this article and the purpose of it, we must restrict ourselves to the former aspect.

¹ See R. S. Barbour, *Traditio-Historical Criticism of the Gospels* (London: SCM, 1972); M. D. Hooker, "Christology and Methodology," *NTS* 17 (1970-1), 480-87; and R. S. A. Calvert, "An Examination of the Criteria for Distinguishing the Authentic Words of Jesus," *NTS* 18 (1971-2), 202-19. For a more general critique, see C. Blackman, "Redaction Criticism: End in Itself or Half-way House," *Studies in Religion* 3 (1973), 97-105.

The term "trajectory" is used by Robinson and Koester in their *Trajectories through Early Christianity*² to describe alternative courses or categories within which the development of early Christianity can be plotted. I will employ it more in keeping with redaction than tradition study, i.e., to determine the "trajectories" or redactional curves of the individual evangelists. In so doing, I will attempt to show how the different trajectories of the individual evangelists with respect to the crucifixion narrative describe various aspects of a single whole rather than contradictory or opposed interpretations of an original story. Each writer used the traditions creatively (but not a-historically) to teach a theological truth.

In tracing the theological nuances we must naturally isolate the redactional highlights of the individual writers before we can interpret them on a theological plane. At the outset we must presuppose two things:

- (1) The priority of Mark, which I believe emerges quite clearly from a comparative study of the crucifixion narratives.
- (2) The development of the passion tradition—it is obvious, on the basis of the numerous additions by Matthew and Luke to Mark, that the passion story was not static but rather dynamic, and the early evangelists added or subtracted episodes as the theological situation dictated. This does not mean the pericopes themselves were necessarily non-historical, only that the story itself was fluid and subject to development.

I. MARK'S CRUCIFIXION ACCOUNT (15: 21-39)

If Mark indeed was the originator of the gospel genre, and there is no reason to suppose he was not, we must look at his account with special interest. As one would expect from Mark, it contains a mixture of brevity and redundancy. While it is the shortest of the accounts, it nevertheless contains three successive groups deriding Jesus. Also, we must note here a very special problem for redaction study, namely the difficulty of isolating Markan material from traditional sources. Mark stands as the control factor for the others, but there is no extant source underlying his gospel. Therefore, we must note linguistic and theological affinities within his work in order to determine his theological additions and emphases.

One of the most noticeable emphases is the Markan use of time-notes. He seems to divide the crucifixion narrative into three equal three-hour periods by his "third hour," "sixth hour," and "ninth hour" in vv. 25, 33, 34. Even if we allow the hypothesis put forth by

² J. M. Robinson and H. Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).

Blinzler and Lane,³ that the note in v. 25 is a gloss by a later scribe, the centrality of the time-notes remains. It is true that Mark uses them to formulate "a kind of crucifixion drama . . . compiled to meet the religious needs of a Gentile Church" (Taylor's words);⁴ yet we must also note a theological purpose in his language. The noun ὥρα is found nine times in his Gospel: all occurrences come in the passion narrative, and they have an eschatological frame of reference pointing either to the parousia (13: 11, 32) or the death (14: 35, 41).⁵ The key is found in 14: 41 in which Jesus says "The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners." It is, therefore, no accident that this term occurs four times in the crucifixion scene. It speaks of the centre of time, when the Son of God Himself is delivered up to death and the New Age is begun.

The three successive groups which mock Jesus are found in all three synoptic gospels, but this does not mean there was no Marcan redaction here. As already mentioned, repetition occurs frequently in the second gospel.⁶ and there are several Markanisms in the passage, such as παραπορεύομαι (v. 29, four times in Mark; and elsewhere in the NT only once in Matthew, in the parallel to this verse), πρὸς ἀλλήλους (v. 31, Mark is not followed by Matthew in any of the instances of this), ἀρχιερέως and γραμματεῦς (v. 31, used in Mark nearly as often as in Matthew and found in the latter usually in parallel passages), and δύναμις (v. 31, found in Mark more frequently than in Matthew or Luke).⁷

3 See W. L. Lane, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (NIC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 566f. He uses this to remove the alleged discrepancy with Jn. 19: 14, where it says Pilate pronounced his verdict "about the sixth hour." However, the discrepancy remains, so long as Mark 15: 33 stands. We might note here the thesis of J. A. Alexander, *Commentary on the Gospel of Mark* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.), 421f., who argues that the two use different calendars. This would fit recent work on the calendrical theory by Jaubert and others.

4 V. Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1959), 587.

5 The occurrences of ὥρα in 13:11 and 14: 37 may also be subtle allusions to the passion event; see Taylor, 554f., on the latter verse. The former would be evidenced by the conjunction of ὥρα and παραδιδόναι in 13: 11, both of which are normally passion words.

6 See the discussion in Lane 27-28, where he notes three types of repetition in Mark: (1) juxtaposing two contrasting accounts; (2) intercalating one account within another; and (3) developing two independent cycles of tradition in parallel fashion. This last method is employed here.

7 Of course, this does not mean that this is a fictionalized account. There are several indications of tradition present, such as the use of the imperfect ἐβλασφήμουν while Mark prefers the historic present (150 times in his gospel), and the Semitism on shaking the head in derision. We are saying that the dramatic compilation and redactional stresses are Marcan, not the incidents themselves.

As Taylor notes, "The vocabulary . . . consists of common Markan words."⁸

The key to the passage is to be found first in the episode which precedes it and then in the way the taunts themselves build on this theme. First we have the superscription, "The king of the Jews," which detailed the charge against Jesus (common Roman custom; cf. 15: 2, 8, 18 for the same charge). The taunts, then, proceed from a reference to Jesus' prophecy regarding the temple (14: 58), to a two-fold demand to "save yourself," and to derision regarding His messianic office, ending with "that we might see and believe." We would note first of all the supreme irony of the entire situation as each taunt points to the soteriological purpose of His death. Nevertheless, in the development of the Markan soteriology there is a broader theme. We are seeing here the culmination of the "Messianic secret" motif, which we would rather label "messianic misunderstanding" since Jesus corrected a false Christology which looked upon him as a wonder-worker or political king but did not deny His messianic status as such.⁹

Mark is building an atmosphere of messianic expectation throughout this scene. Although Jesus is called "King" only in the trial and death scenes (15: 2, 9, 12, 26, 32) there are several indications that Mark held a kingship christology, not only at the triumphal entry (11: 1-10) but also in the kingdom passages (9: 1; 10: 29), which connect the entrance of the Kingdom of God with Jesus' Person. Therefore, we would conclude that Mark uses the threefold mockery scene in two ways: first, to signify the suffering and rejection of the Messiah (many¹⁰ note the OT language used; cf. Lam. 2: 15; Jer. 18: 16; Ps. 22: 7); second, to make the mockers unwitting heralds of the true significance of the crucifixion, i.e., they proclaim the death of the royal Messiah who thereby procurs salvation for those who believe.

Two other segments relate to this theological stress on the suffering Messiah theme. First there is the cry of dereliction on the cross.

⁸ Taylor, 592. However this does not prove that Mark himself created the pericope. For the most part, except for those mentioned above, the words are common to all the evangelists and are used by them in non-Markan passages. Taylor himself says, p. 592, "Mark's realism is based on testimony, and it is hard to believe that this speech is the product of creative imagination."

⁹ See J. D. G. Dunn, "The Messianic Secret in Mark," *TynB* 21 (1970), 92-117; and C. F. D. Moule, "On Defining the Messianic Secret in Mark," in E. E. Ellis and E. Grässer (ed.), *Jesus und Paulus: Festschrift für W. G. Kümmel* (Göttingen, 1975), 239 ff. It should be noted that Jesus' silence here continues the "hiddenness" motif regarding his messiahship.

¹⁰ Taylor, 591; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Cambridge, 1963), 456; and Lane 569. M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel* (Greenwood: Attic Press, 1971), 186f., says the references were used to show that the Passion took place according to God's will.

Many have noted the peculiar Markan phrasing in "Eloi, Eloi," which is a Hebraized Aramaic version of Ps. 22: 1. Jeremias¹¹ believes that the Matthean version is probably original, since the Hebrew would better be misunderstood as a call for Elijah. At any rate, the progression from the darkness motif (v. 33) to the cry itself (v. 34) to the taunt¹² regarding Elijah (vv. 35-36) is meant to stress the horror of the scene and the terrible fact that at this darkest hour in history,¹³ God's Son became the sin-bearer for man. Those who try to make the cry itself a show of triumph rather than a cry of despair¹⁴ fail to do justice to the theological context. In Mark's passion narrative, this should be connected with Christ's Gethsemane prayer (cp. II Co. 5: 21, Gal. 3: 13); it thereby stresses the total abandonment of Jesus, who was now identified with man's sin. As Cranfield remarks,¹⁵ "It is in the cry of dereliction that the full horror of man's sin stands revealed." This is then strengthened by the Elijah-absence in v. 36, which adds to the abandonment motif.

The second segment is the twofold result passage of vv. 38 and 39. Verse 38 mentions the rending of the Temple veil. The discussion

- 11 J. Jeremias, "Ἠλ(ε)ϊος," *TDNT*, II 935. Popular Jewish belief said that the godly, and especially the Messiah, would be helped by Elijah in time of need. See also K. Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew* (Philadelphia: 1968), 84-87, on the linguistic difficulties involved.
- 12 Lane, 574, is partially correct when he claims that the offer of wine and the question in v. 36 were a gesture of kindness rather than a cruel jest. However, the presence of the people in v. 35 is indicative of mockery there, and the two might be contrasted in the context: this would highlight even further the isolation of Jesus from any help.
- 13 P. Benoit, *The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 199f., shows that the "darkness" motif in Scripture normally speaks of the Day of the Lord; E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Markus* (Meyer series; Göttingen, 1967), 345, declares that the darkness is meant to contrast with the glory of the Son of Man (cp. Mk. 13: 24), and goes beyond the Day of the Lord motif; E. Best, *The Temptation and the Passion* (Cambridge, 1965), 98f., adds that judgment is the major motif, especially in the darkness scene. In a very real sense, all of these—the Day of the Lord the glory of the Son, judgment—are eschatological nuances of the major motif, God at work at the crisis point of salvation-history.
- 14 For example, L. P. Trudinger, "Eli, Eli Lama Sabachthani? A Cry of Dereliction? Or victory?" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 17 (1974), 235-38. Trudinger, like many others (Cadoux, Blinzler, Menzies *et al.*) believes the cry should be interpreted in terms of the whole psalm as a faith-statement. J. H. Reumann, "Psalm 22 at the Cross," *Interp* 28 (1974), 39-58, sees the quotation as both lament and thanksgiving in light of the total Markan picture. This is possible, but the thanksgiving element is proleptic, and the lament is stressed here (see below). It is abandonment, rather than vindication, which is the subject of this section.
- 15 Cranfield, 458.

regarding whether it was the outer or inner veil¹⁶ is not really important for this discussion. The theological purpose would be similar either way: the death of the Messiah immediately results in the cessation of Temple ritual¹⁷ and the opening of direct access to God (cf. Heb. 10: 19f.). Verse 39 then builds on this passion theme, dealing with man's recognition of its significance. The centurion's statement designates the reversal of Mark's messianic misunderstanding theme. Whether or not the anarthrous "Son of God" means that the centurion was speaking from the Hellenistic view of the deified hero¹⁸ is an unnecessary question here. He probably was, but Mark uses the statement to overturn his messianic misunderstanding theme.

The "Son of God" title has a central place in his Gospel; we have no time to study in detail the attempts to "hellenize" this motif but will simply point to Martin's discussion in *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian*.¹⁹ He argues for a Jewish provenance and says that "Son of God" is the central theological concept of the Gospel (cf. 1: 1, 11; 9: 7; 12: 6; 13: 32; 14: 61, 62). In fact, the title goes beyond the messianic motif to detail the special sonship relationship of Jesus with the Father (note the connection with "beloved" in 1: 11, 9: 7, 12: 6). It, therefore, becomes the connecting link with the resurrection. In Jesus' death we have not only the fulfilment of Jesus' messianic office but also the presence of the enthroned king. Mark combines humiliation and exaltation in such a way that the former stresses the latter; in the centurion's statement, the passion prophetically anticipates the vindication of the resurrection.

In conclusion, Mark's theological emphasis is on the suffering of

- 16 See Lane, 574f, for the "outer" thesis; and Cranfield, 459f, for the inner view. Taylor, 596, lists scholars on the two sides. Heb. 4: 16, 6: 19; 9: 3; 10: 20 may be taken as evidence for Cranfield's view, but this is doubtful because Hebrews commonly mentions "Holy Place" in contexts where it clearly means the Holy of Holies (cf. 9: 12, 25). Therefore, the early church would have interpreted the outer veil as a reference to the inner one. We might also mention here the impressive array of Jewish sources which describe an extraordinary event at the Temple sanctuary and support the authenticity of this episode (see Lane).
- 17 This is a better interpretation than that of Lane, 575; and Lohmeyer, 347, who claim it was seen as a portent of the destruction of the temple. Although this may somewhat fit the temple taunt of v. 29, it does not fit the theology of the scene, which favours redemption over judgment. Dibelius, 194f., sees in vv. 38, 39 the successive acknowledgement of Jew and pagan to the universal soteriological effect of Jesus' death; and Lohmeyer further sees the entire scene as the eschatological completion to the sacrificial system.
- 18 See Taylor, 597; and Lane, 576. Lohmeyer, 347, notes this "double" meaning here.
- 19 R. P. Martin, *Mark: Evangelist and Theologian* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1972), 99-106. He follows I. H. Marshall, "Son of God or Servant of Yahweh? A Reconsideration of Mark 1: 11," *NTS* 15 (1968-9), 326-36, in his appraisal of the title.

the Messianic king as an anticipation of His enthronement. This humiliation is stressed in the derision of the people and His abandonment by God. Yet within this humiliation itself came His vindication; the suffering Messiah (cf. 10: 45) became the royal Son of David (seen in 10: 47f.; 11: 10; 12: 35f.) and the beloved Son of God.

II. MATTHEW'S CRUCIFIXION ACCOUNT (27: 33-54)

Matthew follows Mark faithfully in most sections, so the interpreter has an inestimable advantage in that Matthew's redactional additions are easier to trace. However, this does not mean he uses Mark in a static way, for he freely changes wording in places and draws out different emphases. As in our study of Mark, we must also take into account Matthean theology when determining redactional highlights. We would note two facts in this regard: (1) there are close affinities between Mark's and Matthew's narratives; (2) at the same time Matthew definitely uses Mark's data to present his own theology. With regard to the first, Matthew and Mark are the two which stress the horror of the scenes, and both emphasize also the vindication of the royal Messiah *via* suffering.

With regard to the second, Matthew extends Mark's imagery in several directions. One is noted by Dibelius,²⁰ who states, "Matthew's Passion story, and only his, is distinguished by moments of the highest Christological significance which show Jesus even in suffering as the plenipotentiary Son of God who is master of His own fate." While this is noted primarily in the pre-crucifixion Passion narrative, there are also traces here. Matthew changes Mark's "myrrh" in 27: 34 to "gall" in keeping with Ps. 69: 21 (LXX), a psalm used often in the NT for the suffering Messiah; and he also added the note that Jesus refused to drink only "after He tasted" it. The wine mixed with gall was a narcotic soldiers normally gave the criminal to dull the pain, but Jesus voluntarily faced His death fully conscious.

Finally, we would note the death scene itself, where Matthew changes Mark's "breathed his last" to "yielded the spirit." Here the voluntary nature of His death is given even greater place. Jesus Himself determined His fate.

Also, Matthew brings into the open Mark's subtle allusions to OT fulfilment. We have already noted one such in 27: 34. Also in vv. 39-44, within the taunts of the bystanders, the allusions to Ps. 22: 7 and Lam. 2: 15 in v. 39 and the addition of v. 43, which draws upon the imagery of Ps. 22: 8, provide further evidence of the OT fulfilment motif, so common to Matthew's Gospel. In R. H. Gundry's *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel*, he notes the centrality of the fulfilment theme in the first gospel.

²⁰ Dibelius, 197-98. He draws evidence from Jesus' words and actions in 26: 18f., 50, 52f., 61, 64; 28: 16-20.

There it is designed to show that Jesus fills the eschatological roles expected in the OT. In the crucifixion narrative he is seen fulfilling the "Isaianic Servant" and "representative righteous sufferer" motifs.²¹

Yet in the midst of these emphases, the victorious nature of Jesus' death shines through. As Filson declares,²² "while opponents show their spiritual blindness, the point that God is doing his saving work through the suffering of his son is made by brilliant irony and effective indirect suggestion." This is seen in the added taunt by the crowd (v. 40), "If you are the Son of God." Matthew actually uses this title more than any other evangelist (divine sonship is found twelve times). The theological overtones are similar to Mark's (e.g., the connection with ἀγαπητός), but there are added nuances, the major one being the connection with His victory over temptation (the words here reproduce the devil's temptation in 4: 3, 6).²³ Both in ch. 4 and here, Jesus is asked to vindicate Himself by proving His messianic claim. In both cases He rejects it, preferring to tread His pre-ordained path of suffering and leave the vindication to God. Yet, as in ch. 4, his messianic status is presupposed in the context, and the divine power is manifested in humiliation.

In the death scene itself, Matthew follows Mark closely except in two places. In the incident following the cry of dereliction (vv. 47-49) Matthew places the taunt on the lips of the crowd rather than the man who gave him the vinegar (so Mark). This is probably due both to tradition and theology. The statement to "wait" is much more natural on the part of the bystanders, and Matthew was seeking clarity. Yet at the same time he probably wished to make the taunt more clear than it was in Mark. The disparity between suffering and vindication is at once wider in Matthew than in Mark. It thereby becomes a vehicle for the sovereign victory motif which is introduced in vv. 51-54.

Between the rending of the temple curtain and the centurion's testimony there stands a very difficult pericope, added from Matthew's own sources and without parallel not only in the Gospels but in the New Testament as a whole. Moreover, this is only one of several such additions (cf. 28: 2-4 for other supernatural events and 27: 62f. and 28: 11f for events peculiar to Matthew) which present a major problem for authenticity. While it is not our place to discuss

21 R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 208-11. Unfortunately, he spends too much time on the authenticity of these sayings and too little on their significance.

22 F. V. Filson, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (Black series; London: Black, 1971²), 296.

23 E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus*, ed. W. Schmauch (Meyer series; Göttingen, 1967), 391, brings out clearly the relationship between 4: 3, 6 and 27: 40. He believes that Matthew makes the people a demonic force trying to destroy the work of God. There is some validity to this thesis.

such a question here, we would point to the discussion by David Wenham in *Tyndale Bulletin*, volume 24 (1973).²⁴

Matthew's theological purpose is the subject of this discussion. He adds many supernatural scenes not reported in other gospels—walking on the water, the money from the fish, the dream of Pilate's wife, and three σεισμός scenes (8: 24; 27: 54; 28: 2). His purpose throughout is probably to demonstrate the supernatural affirmation of Jesus' true nature.

The earthquake is a common Jewish symbol for God's activity and is often used in the NT to signify the deliverance miracle (cf. Ac. 16: 26; Rev. 6: 12; 8: 5; 11: 13f.; 16: 18). It is indeed possible that here Matthew indicated the ascension of Jesus' spirit to the Father *via* the earthquake motif and that at the tomb on the third day another earthquake indicated the resurrection of His body. The opening of the tombs and the appearance of the dead after the resurrection continue this eschatological motif and stress two aspects: (1) the inauguration of the Last Days, when the power of death would be broken and the righteous resurrected;²⁵ (2) the inauguration of the New Age of salvation, when life is made available to all.²⁶

In conclusion, Matthew contains many of the same emphases as Mark—the horror of the suffering Messiah, the proleptic vindication in the death—but gives these a stark reality which Mark does not. This is seen in several areas—the sovereignty of Jesus over his situation, the fulfilment motif, the victorious nature of his death, and the supernatural vindication of His victory. In each area Matthew, like Mark, gives his crucifixion scene a theological colouring which anticipates the climax in the resurrection as vindication.

III. LUKE'S CRUCIFIXION NARRATIVE (23: 33-48)

Luke has much less Markan influence than Matthew and, as one might expect, is correspondingly individual in his theological portrait. While he follows the general sequence of events, he omits a great deal of material and adds his own. In so doing, Luke is building his own theological edifice on the significance and atmosphere of Jesus' death. Dibelius²⁷ claims that the changes are due more to the growth of tradition than to Luke's special style. How-

²⁴ D. Wenham, "The Resurrection Narratives in Matthew's Gospel," *TynB* 24 (1973), 20-54.

²⁵ See D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NCB² London: Oliphants, 1972), 356; Filson, 297; and Benoit, 200. Lohmeyer, 395f., also sees the destruction of the temple here, but that is not evident in the context.

²⁶ This latter point parallels the motifs of vv. 51, 54, where the rending of the veil signifies a new access to God, and the testimony of the soldiers (not the centurion, as in Mark) points to the universal salvific effects.

²⁷ Dibelius, 199.

ever, this is debatable not only on historical grounds²⁸ but also because Luke's theological nuances are cohesively caught up with these very changes.

Dibelius also believes²⁹ that Luke's major teaching concerns the death of Jesus as the quintessential martyr who forgives his enemies and by his very attitude converts his opponents (cf. the Jewish martyr motif in the Martyrdom of Isaiah and II and IV Maccabees).

Christologically, this is true. It is seen in Jesus' attitude toward His enemies and in His trust in God, but is especially demonstrated in the centurion's statement. While Mark and Matthew relate that the centurion said, "Truly this was the Son of God." Luke has him say, "Certainly this man was δίκαιος" (v. 48). Vincent Taylor³⁰ believes that Luke drew this from his special source, but we must agree with those³¹ who say that Luke was here interpreting the meaning of Mark's "Son of God"; the similarities in vocabulary and tone demand this, and the word actually interprets the meaning of the "Son of God" concept from the Roman perspective.

It is true that δίκαιος culminates the innocence motif; this is a redactional emphasis of Luke, who has Pilate state it three times (23: 4, 14, 22), Herod once (23: 15), and the malefactor once (23: 41). Yet at the same time it means more than "innocent." The centurion is making a religious statement, and δίκαιος in its basic meaning, "righteous," may well be the major stress of the scene.³² The centurion is saying that a "righteous" man has been martyred.

Finally, immediately following the centurion's testimony, Luke adds that the crowd "returned home beating their breasts." This has implications for Luke's so-called anti-semitism, indicating that Luke saw the leaders rather than the people as being responsible for Jesus' death³³. Yet there is also a literary use of this episode in

²⁸ If Luke wrote at the same time as Matthew, one would wonder why more of the *Tendenz* of his work did not appear in Matthew, supposing Dibelius is correct.

²⁹ Dibelius, 202-203. See also H. Flender, *St. Luke: Theologian of Redemptive History*, tr. R. H. and I. Fuller (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 17, 54f.

³⁰ V. Taylor, *The Passion Narrative of St. Luke* (Cambridge: 1972), 96.

³¹ See P. W. Walasky, "The Trial and Death of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke," *JBL* 94 (1975), 81-93 (especially 93n.); and L. Morris, *The Gospel According to Luke* (TNTC² Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 330.

³² The word itself in Luke is constantly used in the OT sense of the "righteous remnant" (1: 6, 17; 2: 25; 14: 14; 23: 50) and of religious righteousness (5: 32; 15: 7; 18: 9). This sense would seem to predominate here.

³³ While Walasky, *passim*, and others believe Luke accuses the Jews and exonerates the Romans in the trial and death of Jesus, we must follow the conclusions of J. Kodell, "Luke's Use of *Laos*, 'People,' especially in the Jerusalem Narrative (Luke 19: 18-24, 53)," *CBQ* 31 (1969), 327-43. After an extensive tracing of this theme in Luke, he concludes that the leaders are presented as the ones guilty for Jesus' death, while the people, for the most part, opposed them.

reversing the taunts of the rulers and soldiers. "Beating the breast" is a Semitic sign of grief, and so in vv. 47-48 we have both the Gentile and Jewish responses to a martyr's death. The Gentiles are led to a worshipful response and the Jews to mourning, perhaps repentance.

Yet there is more to the crucifixion pericope than this. Jesus is painted as a martyr, but the scene as a whole is given a different hue. To catch this we must look at all the additions and omissions together: (1) Omissions: the wine mixed with myrrh; the cry of dereliction; and the Elijah incident. (2) Additions: the mocking of the soldiers; the plea of the good malefactor; and especially the three utterances of Jesus not found in the other Gospels—the prayer that God would forgive them, the promise to the good malefactor, and the commitment of His spirit to the Father. Finally, we might note two transpositions: (1) the presence of the two malefactors is mentioned before and after the journey to Golgotha (vv. 32, 33b) rather than after the superscription (cf. Mk. 15: 27); and (2) the taunting scene is moved before the inscription in apparent contrast with the pleas for forgiveness.

When we combine all these features, a coherent pattern begins to emerge. Luke has removed just those scenes which contribute to Mark's atmosphere of horror and replaced them with others which suggest awe and reverence. Luke gives the crucifixion a conscious air of worship. This is a major stress in the third Gospel, pervading the birth narratives (1: 8f., 35f.; 2: 9f.), the purification ceremony (2: 28f.), the temple visit (2: 49), the temptation story (4: 7), and the beginning of Jesus' ministry (4: 16f.). While Jesus' ministry in Luke was mainly one of confrontation and the journey to His passion, there are interspersed many touching scenes of worship,³⁴ especially in the area of Jesus' prayer life.³⁵ Prayer is a key theme in Luke; not only did Jesus pray often, but prayer was a major area of His teaching.³⁶ The passages mostly occur only in Luke³⁷ and centre on the special filial relationship between Jesus and the Father (all the prayers begin with *Abba*). So there is a twofold purpose in Luke's prayer theology—sonship and dependence—and both these elements are seen in Jesus' two prayers here (vv. 34, 46).

The passion events provide a special show case for the centrality of worship in Luke. The cleansing of the temple (19: 45f.) symbolizes the removal of impurities from the "house of prayer." Jesus' teaching

34 5: 26; 7: 16, 37f.; 9: 16, 43; 10: 39f.; 13: 7; 17: 15f.; 18: 43.

35 3: 21; 5: 16; 6: 12; 9: 18, 28f.; 10: 21f.; 11: 1f., 5f.; 22: 41; 23: 34, 46.

36 6: 28; 10: 2; 11: 1f.; 18: 1f.; 21: 36f.

37 In every case except 10: 21f., 41. See J. Navone, *Themes of St. Luke* (Rome, n.d.), 118.

later inspires awe and silence (20: 26, 40), centres on true worship (21: 1f.), and takes place in the temple (21: 37). The last supper scene (22: 14f.) and Gethsemane (22: 39f.), of course, were major scenes of worship and prepared for the significance of the trial and crucifixion.

The crucifixion scene becomes the crisis and culmination of worship in Luke. This is seen especially in his use of the three "last words": (1) He includes "Father, forgive them . . ." (v. 34) and contrasts it with the mocking of the rulers and soldiers (vv. 35f.); (2) he records the promise to the malefactor, offering him a place in the Kingdom (vv. 40f.); (3) he adds the final cry, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit," taken from Ps. 31: 5, which was used by Jews in their evening prayers. When one traces the themes of these—forgiveness, the promise of salvation, commitment—one discovers the progression of salvation-history. The major theme, of course, is the redemptive significance of the cross, but there is also an undercurrent of worship, with the first and third being prayers and the second a response to a "prayer" addressed to Him. This undercurrent of reverence pervades the entire crucifixion narrative in Luke.

When one compares the passion atmosphere in the synoptic gospels, one finds a certain harshness in Mark and Matthew but an awesome stillness in Luke. He changes the mocking scene by adding the soldiers' taunt to that of the rulers but muffles it by placing it in obvious antithesis to Jesus' plea for their forgiveness in the previous scene. Also, he omits the glaring cry of dereliction and replaces the "loud cry" with a prayer of commitment. In so doing, he replaces horror with reverence. Finally, in the closing scene, he says the centurion "praised God" with his statement (v. 47). The verb *δοξάζειν* is one of the major terms in Luke's worship motif, occurring nine times, eight of them with regard to God-worship. To Luke, the crucifixion was above all a scene of awesome worship.

IV. JOHN'S CRUCIFIXION NARRATIVE (19: 17-37)

The theological overtones which governed the fourth evangelist have long been recognized. The implications of this for his historical veracity are vigorously debated,³⁸ but that is not the topic here. Even more than Luke, John is orchestrating a theological masterpiece in his crucifixion narrative. One controversial topic upon which I must take a stand here is the relationship between John and the synoptics. It is popular these days³⁹ to theorize that John did not

³⁸ See the extensive discussions of Leon Morris in his *Studies in the Fourth Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 65-292.

³⁹ See C. H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge, 1963), *passim*; R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to John*, tr. K. Smyth (London: Herder & Herder, 1968), I, 34-37.

know the synoptic writers; however, on the basis of the verbal similarities⁴⁰ especially with Luke in the passion narrative, and the key omissions in the Gospel (the baptism, temptation, transfiguration, last supper, Gethsemane), I believe it is better to say that John knew the synoptics (at least Luke and possibly Mark) and wrote to supplement them.

John, like Luke, removes the details which suggest the horror of the crucifixion, like the wine mixed with myrrh, the cry of dereliction and the Elijah incident. However, John goes further than Luke by removing also the darkness and the taunts of the bystanders. As Lindars says,⁴¹ "There is a pervading calm, like an Italian primitive painting." This does not mean, of course, that John's narrative contains no concept of a suffering Messiah. He still employs the traditional fulfilment motif, looking to the messianic suffering psalms, 22 and 69. Yet the main motif is one which we have already seen in Matthew but which is much more pronounced here; in fact, it is the core of the entire Johannine passion story: Jesus as the majestic sovereign who is completely in control of His destiny.

This theme is highlighted many ways in the passion story itself. In the arrest pericope (18: 1-12), Jesus is presented as one who not only knows what is to transpire but also controls the events themselves. Nothing occurs without his permission, not even the betrayal (13: 27). At His (perhaps divine) "I AM" (18: 6) they all fall to the ground. The interrogation scene takes place before Annas (only found in John). Jesus' answer to Annas's questions (18: 20f.) illustrates His sovereign control; he turns the accusation against his captors. The interspersal of Peter's denial into the two parts of this scene (18: 15-18, 25-27) is obviously meant to be an antithesis to Jesus' sovereign dignity. Jesus stands up to His questioners and denies nothing, while Peter, facing far less formidable foes, cowers before them and denies everything.

Finally, the trial scene centres on Pilate in a dramatic series of seven episodes. In R. E. Brown's excellent study of this,⁴² he notes a chiasmic structure built around two locations: the outer court of the praetorium, characterized by frenzy and hate, and the inner

⁴⁰ See C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel According to St. John* (London: S.P.C.K., 1955), 36f.; and J. A. Bailey, *The Traditions Common to the Gospels of Luke and John* (Leiden: Brill, 1963), 116f.

⁴¹ B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1972), 573.

⁴² R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* (2 vols.; AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1970), II, 857-59. (I am indebted to him for many of the insights presented in this paragraph.) R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, tr. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 648f., has a similar arrangement but sees the central significance as the "extraordinary lustre" of Jesus shining over the "satanic powers," a conclusion which differs only as couched in the language of Bultmann's drastic theory.

house, characterized by calm and reason. As the episodes develop, Pilate's inner belief in Jesus' innocence increases in direct proportion to the frenzied demands for His death outside. In the midst of this structure the majesty and kingship of Jesus come to centre stage via the vehicle of dramatic irony, both in the mock enthronement (19: 1-3) and mock presentation to the crowd (19: 4-8) and in Pilate's own questioning of Jesus (18: 33f.). Twice Pilate calls Jesus "King of the Jews" (18: 39; 19: 15), and in the dramatic conclusion the irony is especially seen, as the chief priests are forced to acknowledge Caesar as their "only king" in order to secure the death of their true King.

This then provides the theological preparation for the crucifixion narrative itself. Brown⁴³ again tries to find a chiasmic structure but is less successful here. On the journey to the cross (vv. 17-18) John omits the part regarding Simon of Cyrene, probably to stress Jesus "bearing his own cross" and thus in control of His own destiny to the end. Many⁴⁴ have noted here imagery from the "binding of Isaac" motif (cf. Gen. 22: 16), for Isaac also went voluntarily to his sacrifice.

There are two emphases in John's redaction of the inscription scene (vv. 20-22), and both are related to the kingship motif. First, John alone states that the inscription was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. These were the three languages spoken in Palestine then and would signify to the Church that the message was meant for the whole known world. As Brown says,⁴⁵ "John turns the charge into a world-wide proclamation of enthronement." He and many others believe the crucifixion becomes a royal enthronement in John. Others also believe that the early Church saw this as another unconscious prophecy of the universal mission (cf. 11: 52 for Caiaphas).

Second, in this scene Pilate again stands up to the Jews and thus "carries forward the dialogue on kingship from the trial narrative."⁴⁶ The literary effect of the scene has Pilate upholding Jesus' royal messiahship.⁴⁷ John also expands the pericope on the parting of Jesus' garments (vv. 23-24). He alone says that the clothes were divided into four parts but that the seamless robe was not divided. John saw this as a literal fulfilment of the synonymous parallelism in Ps. 22: 18. Yet there is also a broader significance in the passage, seen in the two major opinions regarding the robe: (1) that it referred

⁴³ Brown, II, 911.

⁴⁴ See L. Morris, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (N.I.C.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 804. This was a popular theme in first-century Judaism.

⁴⁷ Brown, II, 919.

⁴⁶ So Lindars, 572.

⁴⁷ As Barrett, 547, and Lindars, 576, observe, the note as it was written could be taken as a proclamation of Jesus' messiahship, and this was why the leaders asked that it be modified.

to the high priest's robe, thus to Jesus' priestly office (he is portrayed as priest-king in Heb. 7; Rev. 1: 13); and (2) that it describes the unity of Jesus' followers in contrast to the lack of unity in Judaism then. While the first is possible, the latter theory has the benefit of explaining all the imagery—the dividing of the clothes as well as the refusal to divide the robe.⁴⁸ Jesus as royal Messiah unites His followers.

The pericope on Jesus' giving His mother to the "beloved disciple" (vv. 25-27) is difficult to interpret, especially since such fanciful eisegesis has been done on it. For example, the Catholic Fathers (Athanasius *et al.*) use this to prove Mary's perpetual virginity, i.e., if Jesus had had any brothers, He would have given her to them.⁴⁹ Also, many modern exegetes, such as Brown and Bultmann, interpret this scene allegorically, with Mary representing the Church (Mother Zion motif—Brown) or both representing the Church (Mary the Jewish segment and John the Gentile segment—Bultmann). It is difficult to discern a theological purpose; one is tempted to say that John is simply reporting tradition, giving an instance of Jesus' loving care. While this may be true, this cannot explain the total picture. John is much too careful an orchestrator to throw in a scene with no theological purpose. The key is to be found in the presence of the four faithful women (v. 25) who provide an antithesis to the four soldiers of the previous episode.⁵⁰ This touching scene was probably included to contrast with the preceding. The idea then would be twofold: (1) love will replace apathy in the New Age; and (2) a new unity will typify the community (building on the theme of the previous episode).⁵¹

The death scene (vv. 28-30) also features many new nuances. The major two, of course, are the sayings peculiar to this gospel, "I thirst" and "It is finished." Both relate to a common theme, for the first statement is preceded by "knowing that all was now finished" and "to fulfil the scripture" ("fulfil" in this one place in John is *τελειῶν* rather than *πληροῦν*). The combined picture, therefore, must be understood as the completion (in His death) not only of

⁴⁸ This second possibility would also fit the parallel imagery in 21: 11 (the net not being torn) which probably says the same thing. Also, the verb "to tear," used in both passages, is used often in John for people who are divided (7: 43; 9: 16; 10: 19).

⁴⁹ However, the problem still remains if one conjectures this. In the Jewish nuclear family, He could have given her to cousins first as well. The true explanation is that He gave her to the care of a follower rather than an unbelieving brother (at this point none were followers).

⁵⁰ In favour of this is the final clause of the preceding pericope, "so the soldiers did this," which is clearly meant to provide a dramatic contrast with the faithful women of the following clause.

⁵¹ This second aspect is not dissimilar to the conclusions of Brown and Bultmann; however, it removes their allegorical approach.

His work but also of the fulfilment motif. In Jesus' thirst and its aftermath, John is saying He had drunk to the full His "cup" of death; also, the phrasing is probably an allusion to Ps. 69: 21, which was also used in the synoptics. In the "knowing" theme, as Barrett remarks, there may well be a further allusion to Jesus' control over the situation. "The whole train of events is set in motion by him, and at the proper moment he will terminate it."⁵² Finally, John alone mentions the hyssop,⁵³ used to give the vinegar to Jesus. Here we would note Ex. 12: 22, where it was used to sprinkle the blood of the lamb around the doors. The paschal imagery intended is obvious. In summation, the major emphasis in this scene is on the fulfilment motif, involving a fusion of the suffering Messiah and paschal lamb themes.

The final episode (vv. 31-37) is also peculiar to the Fourth Gospel and narrates the piercing of Jesus' side. John stresses this in two ways: by alluding to eyewitness testimony (v. 35) and by noting a two-fold fulfilment pattern in the scene (vv. 36-37). There might also be two purposes in the scene: first, an apologetic emphasis, to show that Jesus was definitely dead (this apologetic interest is seen in the resurrection scenes of both Luke and John and is probably directed against Jewish polemic regarding the death and resurrection); second, a theological emphasis, to show that Jesus' self-sacrifice (v. 36 may show⁵⁴ that this had sacrificial overtones, signifying the command in Ex. 12: 10, 46 and Num. 9: 12 that no bone of the paschal lamb be broken) resulted in the outpouring of salvation (while the "blood and water" also have sacrificial meaning; in Johannine theology both refer to the giving of "life" to the believer⁵⁵).

John, then, uses the crucifixion scene to signify the enthronement of the suffering Messiah. Yet his picture differs from Matthew in that the suffering Messiah is not presented here as becoming the royal Messiah. John reverses this; he has been in sovereign control of the situation all along. In John the royal King performs the priestly function by providing the paschal sacrifice, thereby giving life to

⁵² Barrett, 459.

⁵³ The mention of "hyssop" presents a difficulty, for the plant was used for sprinkling in the OT and was not suitable for this purpose. For this reason many have conjectured that ὑσσώπος was originally ὑσσός (spear). However, there is no textual basis for this and we must reject the suggestion. As Brown points out in an extended footnote (813f.), there is no good reason to deny that hyssop was used, though its exact use cannot be determined.

⁵⁴ Another possible OT text would be Ps. 34: 20f., which refers to God's protection of the righteous. This would then be a proleptic anticipation of the resurrection. While this does not fit the scene as well as the sacrificial imagery, it cannot be ruled out, especially since συντριβών is found only in the psalm. Could this be another of John's characteristic double references?

⁵⁵ "Blood" is used in this way in 6: 53-56; I Jn. 1: 7; water in 3: 5; 4: 10f.; 7: 38f. The two are combined in I Jn. 5: 6.

His subjects.⁵⁶ All this takes place within a fulfilment milieu, in which Jesus' death answers the needs of prophetic anticipation.

V. CONCLUSION

Each evangelist gives us a separate picture of the meaning of the crucifixion not only for himself but also for his individual portrait of Jesus the Messiah. We have seen that each portrait very much fits into the holistic picture of the more general presentation regarding His life and significance. Mark presents the crucifixion as the culmination of Jesus' messiahship and the reversal of the messianic misunderstanding of those around Him. The horror of the scene and the humiliation of the suffering Messiah contained within it the seeds of the royal Son of God. Matthew takes a similar approach but especially brings out this latter aspect. Jesus is sovereign over the whole situation, and His death is His victory, supernaturally affirmed by God and containing within itself the seed of resurrection. Luke, however, takes a different tack; for Him Jesus is the righteous martyr and the crucifixion is a scene of awesome worship. It caused Jews to mourn and Gentiles to praise God. Finally, John makes the crucifixion Jesus' coronation. The way to the cross becomes a processional and the death an enthronement. Jesus throughout is sovereignly majestic and in control.

We are justified in asking what implications this has for the relationship between theology and history. The question itself has been sufficiently answered by Marshall and Martin in their studies of Luke and Mark, respectively.⁵⁷ The evangelists combined history and theology, selecting and colouring episodes but never departing from their historical perspective. There is continuity between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. At the same time there was a creative genius in the early Church as it interpreted the theological significance of Jesus for its own time. This is nowhere better illustrated than in each evangelist's redactional trajectory in his crucifixion narrative.

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⁵⁶ Some scholars have seen these last scenes in the sense of a king distributing gifts to his subjects at his coronation. This could quite possibly be true, though it is hard to say whether John had this in mind.