

FROM NOBLE DEATH TO CRUCIFIED MESSIAH*

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In his excellent study of crucifixion, Martin Hengel has documented the harsh reality of the penalty in antiquity and has shown that it was seldom portrayed in detail or in an idealized manner.¹ These facts are important and should be kept constantly in mind. They make all the more pressing the question why a detailed narrative of Jesus' death was composed and lead us to look closely at the way the story is told. An ancient opponent of Christianity, Celsus, provides an interesting illustration of both the cultural situation and the literary question. On the one hand, he expressed the general view that crucifixion was the most ignominious and shameful type of death.² On the other hand, he made charges that were based, not so much on the disgrace of death by crucifixion as such, but on the way the story is told, on the character of Jesus as revealed by the narrative. As is well known, in part of his work entitled *On the True Doctrine*, he employed the device of a fictitious Jewish interlocutor. Alluding to the scene in Gethsemane, this critic challenged the teaching that Jesus was a god or the son of the most high God because he hid and tried to escape when the Jews decided that he was worthy of death. Further, this so-called god was betrayed by his own disciples, a criticism that applies to several scenes of the passion narrative.³ Returning to the Gethsemane story, the interlocutor attacks the theory that Jesus foreknew and intended his sufferings on the basis of his portrayal as mourning and lamenting and praying that this cup might pass from him.⁴ He denies that the death of Jesus can function as an example to others of how they should despise punishment⁵ and implies that Jesus lacked courage.⁶

Celsus' criticisms of the account of Jesus' death are based, not

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¹ Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (London: SCM; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977).

² Origen, *Contra Celsum* 6.10.

³ *Ibid.*, 2.9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.24.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.38.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.42.

only on the idea that gods, being immortal, cannot die, but also on the widespread ancient notion that a human being worthy of the epithet 'divine' faces death with unwavering resolve, dignity, and courage. In other words, he used the standard of the heroic or noble death to judge the passion account. This state of affairs raises an interesting set of questions. Was the passion narrative an attempt to present Jesus' death as heroic or noble? If so, why did it fail to impress Celsus? Was the passion narrative, on the contrary, based on a typically Jewish model which differs radically from the Greek tradition of a noble death? Or, finally, must we conclude that the account of Jesus' death is something profoundly new, based on stubborn historical facts and the creativity elicited by those events?

THE NOBLE DEATH

Although the ancient notion of the noble death was not always and everywhere the same, it developed certain typical features over time. Its oldest and deepest root was the heroic death, the image of a glorious death in battle. This heroic ideal is expressed by Achilles to the emissaries of Agamemnon in book nine of the *Iliad*: 'if I stay here and fight beside the city of the Trojans, my return home is gone, but my glory shall be everlasting'.⁷ Similarly, when Hector is threatened by Achilles, he says, 'But now my death is upon me. Let me at least not die without a struggle, inglorious, but do some big thing first, that men to come shall know of it'.⁸ The story of Tellus of Athens concludes with a classic statement of this ideal, 'he crowned his life with a most glorious death (τελευτή . . . λαμπροτάτη): for in a battle between the Athenians and their neighbors at Eleusis he attacked and routed the enemy and most nobly there died (ἀπέθανε κάλλιστα); and the Athenians gave him public burial where he fell and paid him great honour'.⁹

The death of Socrates and the literary accounts of it redefined the noble death in philosophical terms. During the time of Julius Caesar's dictatorship, Cicero praised the voluntary death of

⁷ Homer, *Iliad* 9.412–13; the translation is cited from Richard Lattimore, *The Iliad of Homer* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago, 1951) 209. On the noble death in antiquity, see Arthur J. Droge and James D. Tabor, *A Noble Death: Suicide and Martyrdom among Christians and Jews in Antiquity* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992) and David Seeley, *The Noble Death: Graeco-Roman Martyrology and Paul's Concept of Salvation* (JSNTSup 28; Sheffield: JSOT, 1990).

⁸ Homer *Iliad* 22.303–5; Lattimore, *The Iliad of Homer*, 443.

⁹ Herodotus *History* 1.30; Greek text and translation from A. D. Godley, *Herodotus* (4 vols.; LCL; London: Heinemann/New York: Putnam's Sons, 1931) 1.34–5.

Caesar's opponent Cato Uticensis and likened it to that of Socrates.¹⁰ The image of the noble death and the example of Socrates were especially important during the reigns of Nero, Vespasian and Domitian. The sufferings and deaths of those killed or exiled by Nero were recorded by Fannius and those under Domitian by Titinius Capito. These accounts were important sources for Pliny the Younger and Tacitus in their own writings.¹¹ The same cultural situation made this tradition important for the philosophical reflection upon death in the writings of Seneca and Epictetus.¹² The tradition of the noble death was adapted by Hellenistic Jewish authors in their treatment of those who died in the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes.¹³ The Stoic and Hellenistic Jewish texts extol the virtue of ἀπάθεια, the control of the emotions by reason. Beginning in the second century, the example of Socrates and related traditions of noble death were taken up by Christians in speaking of Jesus and the Christian martyrs.¹⁴

It is important to recognize that the paradigm of the noble death was not the only way of portraying death in the ancient world. In the Hebrew Bible we find genealogical death reports,¹⁵ death reports in the context of an itinerary,¹⁶ and death reports that are, in the proximate literary context, part of the life-story of a cultural hero and, in a more distant literary context, part of a larger legendary or historical work.¹⁷ The death report as part of a man's

¹⁰ Cicero *Tusculan Disputations* 1.71–4; for discussion see Klaus Döring, *Exemplum Socratis: Studien zur Sokratesnachwirkung in der kynisch-stoischen Popularphilosophie der frühen Kaiserzeit und im frühen Christentum* (Hermes Einzelschriften 42; Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1979) 39.

¹¹ See Adela Yarbro Collins, 'The Genre of the Passion Narrative', *Studia Theologica: Scandinavian Journal of Theology* 47 (1993) 3–28, especially 13 and the literature cited there.

¹² See Döring, *Exemplum Socratis*, 16–20; see index b under 'Gefangenschaft und Tod des S[okrates]' for further passages.

¹³ 2 Maccabees 6–7; 4 Maccabees 5–18; for discussion see Yarbro Collins, 'The Genre of the Passion Narrative', 7–11. See also the account of the death of Razis in 2 Macc 14.37–46.

¹⁴ Döring, *Exemplum Socratis*, 143–61.

¹⁵ E.g., the death of Adam in Gen 5.5; Westermann calls the genealogy a type of enumerative narrative (Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary* [Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1974; ET 1984] 6–18).

¹⁶ E.g., the death of Deborah, Rebekah's nurse (Gen 35.8); this is another type of enumerative narrative (Claus Westermann, *Genesis 12–36: A Commentary* [Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1981; ET: 1985] 36, 552).

¹⁷ E.g., the report of Jacob's death, which is a redactional product including an oath regarding his burial, blessings, prophecy, accounts of mourning and burial (Gen 47.28–50.14). See also the accounts of death which include a farewell discourse (e.g., Moses in Deuteronomy 31–4; and Joshua in Joshua 23.1–24.31) and the notices (i.e., brief reports) of death and burial in the context of a regnal resumé (e.g., David in 1 Kings 2.10–12a; see Burke O. Long, *1 Kings* [The Forms of the Old Testament Literature 9; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984] 22, 160–4, 259 and *idem*, *2 Kings* [FOTL 10; 1991] 109; see also Simon J. De Vries, who speaks of a death and burial formula, *1 and 2 Chronicles* [FOTL 11; 1989] 346).

life, incorporated into a larger historical work, is also found in the *History* of Herodotus.¹⁸ In the Hellenistic period in Alexandria, collections of accounts of the deaths of philosophers and other famous men were made.¹⁹ The account of the death of Chrysippus, preserved by Diogenes Laertius from one of these collections, shows that these stories were not all glorious or glorifying.²⁰ Having been invited to a feast by his disciples, Chrysippus drank unmixed wine, became dizzy, and died five days later. Diogenes himself wrote a sportive poem (παίγνιον) on this event, indicating his awareness that the philosopher's death was not a noble one. In fact many of the accounts of the deaths of philosophers preserved by Diogenes portray a less than noble death and many of the epigrams dealing with these deaths seem to mock rather than praise.²¹ These accounts and epigrams seem to be parodies of the noble death tradition. In a more serious vein, Plutarch distinguished between the noble death of Demosthenes and the ignoble death of Cicero. The death (τελευτή) of the Roman is judged ignoble (δι' ἀγέννειαν) because of his flight and attempt to hide, whereas the clever voluntary death of Demosthenes is deemed admirable (ἀγαστή).²²

ALTERNATIVES TO THE GREEK IDEAL

One way to explain Celsus' failure to be impressed by the passion narrative is to associate the account of Jesus' death with the prophetic value of *pathos* which is opposed to the Greek ideal of *apatheia*. According to Abraham Heschel, the God of the prophets is a God of *pathos*, which means that God is not revealed in abstract absoluteness, but in a personal and intimate relation to the world. God does not simply command and expect obedience, but is also moved and affected by what happens in the world. This *pathos* is not irrational, but the result of decision and determination. It is

¹⁸ For discussion see Yarbro Collins, 'The Genre of the Passion Narrative', 6–7.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 9–10.

²⁰ Diogenes Laertius *Lives* 7.184.

²¹ E.g., the deaths of Diodorus (Diogenes Laertius *Lives* 2.112), Stilpo (2.120), Menedemus (2.144), Speusippus (4.3), Arcesilaus (4.44–5), Lacydes (4.61), Lyco (5.68), Menippus (6.100), and Ariston (7.164). Lucian's account of the death of Alexander, whom he dubbed 'the pseudo-prophet', belongs in this category as well. Whereas he had predicted that he himself was fated to live 150 years and die by a stroke of lightning, Lucian reports that he actually died from a mortified leg, complete with maggots, and that the medical treatment exposed his baldness (*Alexander the False Prophet* 59).

²² Plutarch *Parallel Lives, Comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero* 5; for a Greek text and English translation, see Bernadotte Perrin, *Plutarch's Lives* (11 vols.; LCL; Cambridge: Harvard University/London: Heinemann, 1986) 7.220–1.

not self-centred, like the emotions of the Olympian gods, but is always directed outward, expressing a relation to humanity.²³ Heschel contrasted the prophetic sense of life with that based on a notion of fate. According to Homer, even Zeus was powerless against Fate and Plato concluded that divine providence is limited by Necessity. The divine *pathos* represents a sharp antithesis to the belief in destiny, since it is a dynamic category which makes every decision contingent and provisional.²⁴

Heschel's insights may be applied to the passion narrative by pointing out that there is a relation between a culture's or sub-culture's understanding of God and its portrayal of an ideal human being. The philosophical Greek notion of an immutable and absolute God correlates with the human ideals of *apatheia* and indifference to all that is beyond one's control, whereas the prophetic portrayal of God's decisions as contingent encourages prayer for rescue and complaint. The main obstacle to this line of interpretation is the theme of the predetermined character of the death of Jesus, a theme which is similar to the Greek idea of fate. The fated nature of Jesus' death is expressed most clearly in the references to the scriptures, which foretell or determine it, but also in the way in which God has receded as a character in the narrative. God speaks twice in the earlier part of Mark but not in the passion narrative. Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane is not answered by a voice from heaven. The personal God recedes and the impersonal force of Scripture controls the events.

In the context of his study of immortality and resurrection, Oscar Cullmann, following others, contrasted Socrates and Jesus. For the Socrates of Plato's *Phaedo*, death is the great liberator because it leads the soul out of the prison of the body and back to its eternal home. In keeping with this teaching, the death of Socrates is a beautiful death; nothing is seen of death's terror, since it is the soul's great friend. In Gethsemane, Jesus knew that death stood before him, just as Socrates knew it. But Jesus trembled and was distressed; his soul was troubled unto death. He prayed that the cup might pass from him. And when he concludes, 'Yet not as I will, but as thou wilt', this does not mean that at the last, he like Socrates, regards his death as the friend, the liberator. He means only that, if it is God's will, he will submit to the greatest of all terrors. The Jesus of the passion narrative is so thoroughly human that he shares the natural fear of death. But Jesus is not a coward;

²³ Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* Part 2 (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) 3–6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 18–20.

he does not fear the men who will kill him or the pain and grief which precede death. Rather he knows beforehand that death is the great enemy of God and that to die means to be utterly forsaken, abandoned even by God. The ancient opponents of Christianity saw more clearly than the exponents: he was really afraid. Whereas Socrates drank the hemlock with divine calm, Jesus cried out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and with another inarticulate cry he died. According to Cullmann, Jesus had to undergo death in all its horror because only so could he conquer death. With this contrast he argued for a radical difference between the Greek doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the Christian doctrine of the resurrection.²⁵

The strength of Cullmann's interpretation is that he can make sense of the two sayings of Jesus which constitute the greatest stumbling blocks to reading Jesus' death as a heroic or noble death. Further, he is able to integrate the Gethsemane story with the account of the crucifixion. The main problem with his theory is that, like Celsus, he underestimates the significance of the second part of Jesus' prayer in the garden. The acceptance of the divine will expressed at the end of the prayer suggests that the purpose of the description of Jesus' distress and the request to let the cup pass is to magnify the choice to submit to death, to highlight Jesus' freely chosen obedience. Friedrich Schiller, in his essay 'On the Pathetic', argued that it is impossible 'to represent moral freedom, except by expressing passion, or suffering nature, with the greatest vividness . . . Therefore the *pathetic* is the first condition required most strictly in a tragic author . . . The pathetic only has esthetic value insofar as it is sublime.'²⁶ The two-part prayer thus creates a tragic tone in the Gethsemane narrative. Rather than imply that pain and suffering are illusions, the narrative takes them utterly seriously and nevertheless shows how they may be overcome.²⁷

²⁵ Oscar Cullmann, 'Immortality of the Soul or Resurrection of the Dead: The Witness of the New Testament', in *Immortality and Resurrection* (ed. Krister Stendahl; New York: Macmillan, 1965) 9–53, especially 12–20.

²⁶ Friedrich Schiller, 'On the Pathetic', *Schiller's Works, Aesthetical and Philosophical Essays* (London: George Bell & Sons, 1898) 142–68; citations are from pp. 143 and 147; for the German original, see *Friedrich Schiller: Werke und Briefe* (12 vols.; Bibliothek Deutscher Klassiker 78; ed. Otto Dann *et al.*; Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker, 1988–) vol. 8; *Theoretische Schriften* (ed. Rolf-Peter Janz; 1992) 423–51, especially 423–4 and 428; this work was cited by Heschel, *The Prophets*, 271. *Pathos*, as described by Schiller, is characteristic of the tragedies of Seneca; see, for example, *Hercules Oetaeus* 796–807, in which the sufferings of Heracles from the poisoned garment are described.

²⁷ A widespread theory about the earliest understanding of the death of Jesus is that it was interpreted in terms of the Biblical and Jewish motif of the suffering just person. This theory was proposed by Lothar Ruppert (*Jesus als der leidende Gerechte? Der Weg Jesu im Lichte*

THE PRODUCTION OF THE PASSION NARRATIVE

As noted earlier, Celsus' criticisms of the passion narrative result from his application of the standard of the noble death. This procedure raises the question of genre. If genre is understood primarily in formal terms, the passion narrative may be classified as a death-report and placed in the same category as Plato's account of Socrates' death. From this point of view, the passion narrative may also be understood as a redefinition of the noble death of comparable significance to the philosophical redefinition. The most disgraceful death has become the most noble of all. If, however, genre is understood in terms of production, a different result is achieved. The passion narrative is then seen to be a particular kind of historical account: a narration of the fulfilment of prophetic oracles. Such an account may be called eschatological history. This definition of the passion narrative will be supported by an examination of the motives and modes of its composition.

The motives for composing such a narrative may be inferred from the text itself, but may also be deduced from what is known about the historical situation. Virtually everyone who has considered the matter agrees that Jesus was in fact crucified by the Romans. Opinions differ, however, on the reason. It is unlikely that Pilate would have given the order for crucifixion if he did not perceive Jesus as a threat to public order. This inference supports the historicity of the report in all four Gospels that Jesus was executed on the charge of claiming to be the King of the Jews. It is thus likely that Jesus was crucified as a supposed messianic pretender.²⁸ The hypothesis that an unmessianic Jesus was accused and convicted in this way by mistake is implausible. It is even more implausible that, after his execution by the Romans, the

eines alt- und zwischentestamentlichen Motivs [SBS 59; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1972]). If the earliest recoverable Christian traditions about Jesus' death are already associated with his role as messiah, it is unnecessary to posit a stage at which the motif of the *passio iusti* was the only model for the interpretation of his death. Although the motif is not explicit in the Gospel of Mark, it does play a role in the accounts of Matthew and Luke. For further discussion, see Yarbrow Collins, 'The Genre of the Passion Narrative', 4–5.

²⁸ So also Martin Hengel, 'Jesus, der Messias Israels', in *Messiah and Christos: Studies in the Jewish Origins of Christianity Presented to David Flusser* (ed. Ithamar Gruenwald, Shaul Shaked, and Gedaliahu Stroumsa; Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992) 155–76, especially 165–70; *idem*, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers* (Studies of the New Testament and its World; New York: Crossroad, 1981) 39; see also Nils A. Dahl, 'Der gekreuzigte Messias', in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus* (ed. H. Ristow and K. Matthiae; Berlin: Evangelische, 1960) 157–69; ET: *idem*, 'The Crucified Messiah', in *idem*, *The Crucified Messiah* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1974) 10–36.

followers of Jesus first conceived the idea that he was the messiah. It is thus highly probable that a significant number of the followers of Jesus were convinced, during his lifetime, that he was the anointed of God, the Messiah of Israel.²⁹ The reasons for this belief require further discussion, but are beyond the scope of this paper. The important thing for our topic is that this conviction preceded the death of Jesus.³⁰

Since the fate of John the Baptist was known to Jesus and his followers, the violent death of Jesus may not have taken them by surprise. On the other hand, the disciples, and perhaps even Jesus himself, may have expected a divine intervention that would establish the kingdom and overthrow the opponents of Jesus before they could harm him. If the latter scenario was the case, the death of Jesus would have been a great shock and would have seemed to be disconfirming evidence of the claim that he was the messiah. Thus, possibly during the lifetime of Jesus, or more likely soon after his death, the followers of Jesus were faced with the challenge of explaining why the messiah had to die a violent death. As Barnabas Lindars and others have shown, Scripture played a major role in the resolution of this problem. This fact is evident in the earliest summaries of the gospel, for instance in the statement that 'Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures' (1 Cor 15.3). It is likely that an analogous process was at work in the production of the passion narrative.

Given the highly charged situation, it is unlikely that the death of Jesus was ever described in narrative form as a simple historical report. The Roman protocol, if there was one, any account given by Jews who opposed him, as well as accounts produced by his followers, must all have involved interpretation and evaluation as well as facts. Since the death of Jesus was an intrinsically horrible and humiliating event, his followers would narrate it in detail only

²⁹ There was of course considerable diversity of eschatological expectation in contemporary Judaism; but the identification of Jesus as an anointed one, apparently as the Davidic messiah, in the earliest Christian traditions about his death and eschatological role is the focus here. See also the article by Nils Dahl cited in the next note.

³⁰ Nils Dahl has argued that it is highly probable that Jesus was crucified as the King of the Jews, i.e., as a messianic pretender, and that this fact is at the basis of the developing tradition of the passion narrative (N. A. Dahl [revised by D. H. Juel], 'Messianic Ideas and the Crucifixion of Jesus', *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* [ed. J. H. Charlesworth; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992] 382–403; reference is to p. 390). It is not clear, however, whether he concludes that this was an understandable mistake made by the opponents of Jesus or whether a significant number of Jesus' followers acclaimed him as a messianic leader (*ibid.*, 402–3). Dahl describes his work, in effect, as a retrieval of J. Wellhausen's thesis that the crucifixion of Jesus caused a radical alteration of the concept 'Messiah'.

if they were confident that this horror and humiliation had meaning. Since Jesus was probably executed as a messianic pretender, it is reasonable to conclude that the earliest passion narrative was composed in order to vindicate him as messiah in spite of his ignominious death. The narrative may be defined as an account of the crucifixion of the Messiah, the King of Israel. Since the intelligibility of such an event could hardly be communicated in a brief notice or death-report, it is likely that the oldest written account placed the crucifixion in at least a somewhat larger literary and historical context.

Many scholars have concluded that Mark was not the first to write such an account. The main reasons are literary. Mark achieves a far greater degree of coherence and temporal and spatial specificity in chapters 14 and 15 than in the rest of the Gospel. This difference may be explained by a difference in his sources. Much of the material in these chapters cannot be analyzed into units that were plausibly independent oral traditions at one time. Finally, tradition and redaction can be distinguished in these chapters in a way that makes the tentative reconstruction of Mark's source possible. The hypothesis that there was a pre-Markan passion narrative must be supported by reconstruction of the social setting of such a text. The purpose of such a text may have been liturgical, for example, it may have been composed in order to be read in a communal observance of the anniversary of Jesus' death. Or it may have been composed with a catechetical purpose, either to be read by new converts or by those preparing to instruct them. Another possibility, neglected by form critics, is that the text may have been composed by an educated member of the community in the process of articulating Christian faith; such an act may be understood as a type of self-expression and self-definition.³¹

In another context I have attempted to reconstruct the pre-Markan passion narrative and I presuppose the results of that effort in this article without repeating the detailed arguments.³² The reconstructed Greek text may be found in the Appendix below. I should emphasize that I do not place a great deal of weight on

³¹ I use the phrase 'Christian faith' here to mean a religious perspective arising from the acclamation of Jesus as the messiah. This religious perspective and the social formation associated with it may be seen, on the one hand, as one form of Jewish messianism among many; on the other, it may be viewed as the beginning of a process that eventually led to the separation of Christianity, as a religion with its own institutions, from Judaism.

³² See Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel: Probings of Mark in Context* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1992) 92–118. An English translation of the reconstructed text may be found in *eadem*, 'The Genre of the Passion Narrative', 21–2.

the exact wording of the reconstruction. Rather, my intention is to indicate which pericopes were included in the recoverable pre-Markan passion narrative, their general form (i.e., without probably Markan expansions), and their approximate wording.

THE PRODUCTION OF THE PRE-MARKAN PASSION NARRATIVE

As Ludger Schenke has argued persuasively, the first recoverable scene in the pre-Markan passion narrative is the Gethsemane story.³³ The narrator informs the audience that Jesus became distressed and anxious and then introduces Jesus' words, 'My soul is deeply grieved unto death.' This saying alludes to a sentence that appears several times in Psalms 42 and 43: 'Why are you grieved, my soul?'³⁴ Psalms 42 and 43 originally constituted a single psalm whose genre is individual complaint. In its original context, the individual is probably a literary device to express the hope of the early Jewish community in a diaspora situation of humiliation.³⁵ The use of the refrain from these psalms in the passion narrative takes seriously the form of the psalm as individual speech.³⁶ In light of the historical context described above, it is likely that the individual speaker of the psalms is identified with the messiah. Thus the hermeneutical stance of the later author involves taking the psalm as prophecy of the sufferings of the messiah.³⁷ In the narrative, when Jesus speaks the refrain, the

³³ Ludger Schenke, *Studien zur Passionsgeschichte des Markus: Tradition und Redaktion in Markus 14.1–42* (Würzburg: Echter, 1971) 353, 360–2, 423, 561.

³⁴ Pss 42.6, 12; 43.5 MT; Pss 41.6, 12; 42.5 LXX (ed. Rahlfs); 42.5, 11; 43.5 RSV. On the use of Psalm 42/43 in the Gospel of John, see Johannes Beutler, 'Psalm 42/43 im Johannesevangelium', *NTS* 25 (1983) 33–57; *idem*, *Habt keine Angst: Die erste johanneische Abschiedsrede (Joh 14)* (SBS 116; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1984) 25–46.

³⁵ See Erhard S. Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 1* (FOTL 14; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988) 178–82.

³⁶ On Christ as the speaker of the psalms in early Christian texts, see Richard B. Hays, 'Christ Prays the Psalms: Paul's Use of an Early Christian Exegetical Convention', *The Future of Christology: Essays in Honor of Leander E. Keck* (ed. A. J. Malherbe and W. A. Meeks; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993) 122–36.

³⁷ This technique of interpretation is analogous to one employed by the authors of *pēšārīm* (commentaries on biblical texts) found at Qumran. The latter is described by Maurya P. Horgan as follows: 'The pesher may follow the action, ideas, and words of the lemma closely, developing a similar description in a different context' (*eadem*, *Pesharim: Qumran Interpretations of Biblical Books* [CBQMS 8; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1979] 244). It is exemplified by the apparent identification of the kings who bring gifts to God in Psalm 68.30 with 'the Kittim' in 1QpPs frg. 9.1–2 (see *ibid.*, 67–8). It is also noteworthy that those who produced the *pēšārīm* understood the psalms, as well as the prophetic books in the narrow sense, as prophecies of the history of their community, including the past, present, and the future (*ibid.*, 248–9).

prophecy is fulfilled. The context of this saying in the pre-Markan passion narrative resonates with the context of the refrain in the psalms: Ps 42.11 associates 'a deadly wound in my body' with 'adversaries [who] taunt me'.³⁸

The saying of Jesus alludes also to Jonah 4.9. This verse is part of the story in which God instructs the prophet by means of a plant which grows enough in one day to provide shade, but is then destroyed.³⁹ After destroying the plant, God sends a hot wind, so that lacking shade and tormented by the sun, Jonah wishes for death. God then asks Jonah if he is grieved over the plant and Jonah answers, 'I am very grieved unto death.' God then uses this response to explain the divine attitude toward Nineveh.

A striking difference between the passage in Jonah and the Gethsemane scene is that God initiates the dialogue with Jonah and both parties speak. In the Gospel story, Jesus initiates the dialogue, but God does not respond. Nevertheless, Jesus' desire to avoid death is overcome and his acceptance of it is expressed in the prayer: the cup is for God to remove, not Jesus; what is to be done is God's will, not that of Jesus. As the story continues, not only is God silent, but the disciples fall asleep and one of them is a betrayer. Jesus is isolated; he receives neither divine nor human support or encouragement.

As already noted, the context of the refrains in Psalms 42–3 resonates with that of the Gethsemane story. The allusion to Jonah 4.9 also seems to evoke the context in which an agent of God receives instruction about the divine plan. A further reason for alluding to the book of Jonah may be that this prophet was defined by early Christians as a type of Jesus, because his being swallowed by a fish and spewed out on dry land was taken as a prefigurement of the death and resurrection of Jesus.⁴⁰

It should be noted that the image of the cup presented to Jesus evokes the metaphor of the cup of wrath which is widespread in the Hebrew Bible and associated with the theme of the judgment of the nations.⁴¹ The judicial wrath of God is compared to the experience of extreme intoxication. The implication is that God is the power behind the death of Jesus. As, for example, Babylon was a

³⁸ Ps 42.11 MT; 41.11 LXX (ed. Rahlfs); 42.10 RSV; the LXX differs from the MT and reads ἐν τῷ καταθάλασαι τὰ ὅσα μου ἀνείδισάν με οἱ θλίβοντές με.

³⁹ For an analysis and interpretation of this text, see Jack M. Sasson, *Jonah* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 1990) 269–320, especially 306–7, 316–20.

⁴⁰ See Matt 12.39–41; cf. Matt 16.4; Luke 11.29–30, 32.

⁴¹ For a summary and brief discussion of the evidence, see Leonhard Goppelt, *ποτήριον, TDNT* 6 (1968) 149–51.

golden cup in the hand of Yahweh, making all the earth drunken,⁴² so Rome and the Jewish leaders are tools of God in laying the judicial punishment owed by the nations upon Jesus.⁴³ Although God has receded as a character, this narrative implies that the course of events is determined by God. The personal God of the prophets has been re-pictured as Fate-like.

It is impossible to prove that the Gethsemane story has an historically accurate core. Similarly, it is impossible to demonstrate that the story is pure fiction, inspired by Scripture. It is clear, however, that Scripture has played a major role in shaping the specificity of the text, in determining precisely how the story is told. The author of this pre-Markan text was faced with the stubborn fact of the crucifixion of Jesus. He or she accepted this fact head-on as the mysterious will of God which is powerful even from a distance in both time and space.⁴⁴ This plan was revealed long ago in Scripture, although the revelation of this state of affairs was recent, and God, though silent and distant, is active in bringing Scriptural prophecy into fulfilment.

The Gethsemane story ends in such a way as to lead directly into the account of the arrest: Jesus says, 'See, the one who delivers me has drawn near.' This person is identified in the introduction to the arrest-story as 'Judas, one of the twelve.' Once again, it is impossible to be certain whether the story of the betrayal by Judas rests on historical fact or creative reflection. Most scholars have argued that such a humiliating story could not have been invented by the followers of Jesus. But in a situation in which an author is coming to terms with the enormity of the humiliation of the cross, such a story could well have been invented, as an incident in keeping with Jesus' apparent abandonment by all. The more important question is how the story of Judas is told and what significance it has. It is not by chance that the verb παραδίδωμι is used to describe the activity of Judas. As noted earlier, the divine will is in the background of the narrative, expressed through Scripture. The verb παραδίδωμι occurs in the Septuagint's description of the suffering servant in Isa 53.12, 'He shall divide the spoils of the mighty, because his soul was delivered to death . . . and he bore the sins of

⁴² Jer 51.7.

⁴³ For discussion, see Ernest Best, *The Temptation and the Passion: The Markan Soteriology* (SNTSMS 2; 2nd ed.; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University, 1990) lxvi, 153.

⁴⁴ On the likelihood of Christian and Jewish women authoring written works in the Greco-Roman period, see Ross S. Kraemer, 'Women's Authorship of Jewish and Christian Literature in the Greco-Roman Period', in *Women Like This: New Perspectives on Jewish Women in the Greco-Roman World* (ed. Amy-Jill Levine; SBL Early Judaism and Its Literature 1; Atlanta: Scholars, 1991) 221–42.

many, and was delivered because of their iniquities.' In the Septuagint, the passive *παρεδόθη* is used, no doubt implying that it was God who delivered the servant to death. This idea fits with the point of the Gethsemane story. The notion that Jesus bore the sins of many is consonant with the image of him drinking the cup of God's wrath. In an account designed to narrate the fulfilment of prophecy, God's act of delivering the servant to death needs a human instrument. Even though such people are carrying out God's plan, they are nonetheless responsible for their deeds. Whether Judas' betrayal is historical or fictional, he is placed in this role in a way that resonates with Scripture and implies the fulfilment of Isa 53.12.⁴⁵ He is the first 'to deliver' Jesus in a process that leads to death. The motive for telling his story is to show that his deed is not the consequence of poor judgment or ineptitude on the part of Jesus in choosing such a disciple or in educating him, but the intended fulfilment of an aspect of the mysterious, though revealed, plan of God.

According to the reconstructed passion narrative, the chief priests, after a consultation, 'delivered' Jesus to Pilate. The verb *παρέδωκαν* once again echoes Isa 53.12. For the first time in this narrative, Jesus is presented as a king, when Pilate asks him, 'Are you the king of the Jews?' The response of Jesus, 'You say [so]', is ambiguous, but more positive than negative. The ambiguity is probably meant to indicate that the wording is more Roman than Jewish or Christian; compare the saying of the mocking passers-by in the crucifixion scene: 'Let the Messiah, the king of Israel, come down now from the cross, in order that we may see and believe.' The restraint may also indicate that Pilate's understanding of the meaning of the title is also misinformed. After this brief response to Pilate, Jesus becomes silent. Pilate marvels at the fact that Jesus does not respond to his accusers. This theme was probably inspired by Scripture. Psalm 38 contains the words, 'But I am like the deaf, I do not hear; like the mute, who cannot speak. Truly, I am like one who does not hear, and in whose mouth is no retort.'⁴⁶ In its original context, this psalm was a complaint of the individual, probably associated with healing rituals that were also

⁴⁵ Scholars who come to similar conclusions include Friedrich Karl Feigl, *Der Einfluß des Weissagungsbeweises und anderer Motive auf die Leidensgeschichte: Ein Beitrag zur Evangelienkritik* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1910) 49–50 and Barnabas Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (London: SCM, 1961) 80–1.

⁴⁶ Ps 38.14–15 MT; 37.14–15 LXX (ed. Rahlfs); 38.13–14 RSV.

penitential and petitionary.⁴⁷ If the Gospel theme was inspired by this text, it has been reinterpreted as a prophecy of the behaviour of the messiah in the context of his suffering. Such a reinterpretation could have been supported by reference to the superscription of the psalm; since it is labelled as a psalm of David, it could be connected, by extension, with the messiah.

Another possible source is Isa 53.7, 'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.'⁴⁸ As noted earlier, the Septuagint's version of Isa 53.12 played a role in the theme of Jesus' deliverance to death. Although strong allusions and actual quotations of this chapter of Isaiah are rare in early Christian literature, it is nevertheless one of the most likely passages behind the idea that 'Christ died *for our sins* in accordance with the scriptures' (1 Cor 15.3).⁴⁹ If the whole context of Isa 52.13–53.12 was important for those attempting to make sense of Jesus' death, as seems to have been the case, the passage may have been applied to Jesus as messiah by identifying the servant described there with the eschatological king.⁵⁰

The scene involving the interrogation of Jesus by Pilate ends with the remark, 'And he delivered Jesus, after whipping him, to be crucified.' The verb *παρέδωκεν* resounds once again like a refrain. Before the crucifixion is narrated, however, the mocking of Jesus by the soldiers is depicted. Although there are echoes of Scripture in this account,⁵¹ its overall logic and details are more

⁴⁷ See Gerstenberger, *Psalms Part 1*, 160–5.

⁴⁸ See the discussion in John Dominic Crossan, *The Cross That Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988) 174–87.

⁴⁹ See the discussion by Feigl, *Der Einfluß des Weissagungsbeweises*, 10.

⁵⁰ The term servant [of God] was of course widely used, usually without any connection with Isa 52.13–53.12. If, however, the epithet 'servant [of God]' was common, or at least predictable, as a designation of the messiah in Jewish circles of the time, the association between the two terms would have facilitated the early Christian identification of the servant of Isaiah 52–3 with the messiah, since the suffering of this servant was no longer a deterrent, but rather an advantage for such an identification in their eyes. The designation of the messiah as the servant of God is attested by 4 *Ezra* 13.32; for discussion see Michael Edward Stone, *Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990) 207, 392.

⁵¹ The motif of spitting recalls Isa 50.6–7; on the allusion to this passage in the *Gospel of Peter*, see Jürgen Denker, *Die theologiegeschichtliche Stellung des Petrus-evangeliums: Ein Beitrag zur Frühgeschichte des Dohetismus* (Europäische Hochschulschriften 23, Theologie 36; Bern: Herbert Lang; Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 1975) 62. For hypotheses about the role of this passage in the development of the passion tradition as a whole, see Helmut Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International/London: SCM, 1990) 224; Crossan, *The Cross That Spoke*, 142–3. As noted above (see note 38), the motif of mocking is present in Psalm 42 (41 LXX), though it is clearer in the MT than in the LXX.

similar to Philo's account of the mocking of Agrippa I in Alexandria than to any single Scriptural text. Philo wrote that this impromptu event was similar to the theatrical mimes.⁵² In the *Acts of Paul and Antoninus*, one of the so-called Acts of the Pagan Martyrs, Paul, a non-Jewish citizen of Alexandria, says that the people of the city mocked a Jewish king by performing a mime. The setting is the reign of Hadrian and the king in question was probably the leader of the Jewish revolt in Cyrene.⁵³ These two texts may be evidence that there was a well-known type of theatrical mime, 'the mocked king', which may have been a model for this scene in the passion narrative.⁵⁴

The presence of this scene of mockery in the passion narrative and its similarity to mimes raises the question of the role of parody and irony in the account of Jesus' death. Parody is the artful and subversive use of mimicry to expose pretension or falsity in the original that it imitates. The activity of the soldiers is thus a parody of Jesus' claim to be king or of his followers' acclamation of his kingship. The written account of the soldiers' activity is ironic insofar as it employs a rhetorical device in which the intention of the author is in sharp contrast to the literal meaning. This device depends on the collaboration of an audience who, along with the author, know that Jesus is in fact a king.⁵⁵ This literary device is a key element in the production of the passion narrative. The logical and historical starting point of this production was a hermeneutic which involved the recontextualization of certain passages of Scripture. Texts which originally referred to a symbolic individual representing the community or an individual speaker giving voice to a type of person in the community were interpreted as prophecies of the suffering of the messiah.⁵⁶ The *narrative* use of these texts constituted a novel act of recontextualization. An account which, to an outsider like Celsus, appeared to portray Jesus in a shameful and degrading situation,⁵⁷ was, for the insider, an ironic

⁵² Philo *Flaccus* 36–9; see the discussion by Herbert Box, *Philonis Alexandrini: In Flaccum* (London/New York/Toronto: Oxford University, 1939) xl–xliii; 91–2.

⁵³ See Herbert A. Musurillo, *The Acts of the Pagan Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1954) 49–50, 184.

⁵⁴ See the discussion in Yarbro Collins, 'The Genre of the Passion Narrative', 15–16; see also Koester, *Ancient Christian Gospels*, 225; Crossan, *The Cross That Spoke*, 139–59.

⁵⁵ According to Wayne Booth the relevant portion of the text of Mark displays a 'double irony' (*idem*, *A Rhetoric of Irony* [Chicago/London: University of Chicago, 1974] 92).

⁵⁶ Donald Juel calls this process 'messianic exegesis' and argues that its logic is midrashic (*idem*, *Messianic Exegesis: Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament in Early Christianity* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988] 90).

⁵⁷ See Origen *Contra Celsum* 2.34.

portrayal of the true king. The perception of the irony depends, however, on familiarity with the novel hermeneutic.

The account of the crucifixion in the pre-Markan passion narrative has two strong allusions to Psalm 22. The first is the statement that those who crucified Jesus 'divided his clothing, casting lots for them [to determine] who would take what.'⁵⁸ The psalm reads 'they divide my clothes among themselves, and for my clothing they cast lots'.⁵⁹ The second allusion occurs in the description of the mocking of Jesus by passers-by. 'And those who passed by reviled him, shaking their heads and saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot save . . ."' The psalm reads, 'But I am a worm and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people. All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads; Commit your cause to the Lord; let him deliver – let him rescue the one in whom he delights!'⁶⁰

It is probable that Christian interest in this psalm originally focused on the complaint, 'a pack of evildoers encircle me, piercing my hands and feet'.⁶¹ There are other texts that could be and were cited as proofs that the messiah was foreordained to suffer, but this is the only one that seems to prophesy the *crucifixion* of the eschatological king. The appropriateness of this verse to the context, along with the fact that other verses from the same psalm are clearly alluded to, makes it certain that this verse stands in the background.⁶² It very likely played a major role in the production of the narrative, in the sense that it provided a motive for telling the story by supplying a meaning, and that it was evoked in the minds of competent readers, that is, knowledgeable or instructed insiders.⁶³

⁵⁸ The reconstruction and translation are based on Mark 15.24.

⁵⁹ Psalm 22.19 MT; 21.19 LXX (ed. Rahlfs); 22.18 RSV; the LXX reads διεμερίσαντο τὰ ἱμάτιά μου ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν ἱματισμὸν μου ἔβαλον κλῆρον.

⁶⁰ Ps 22.7–9 MT; 21.7–9 LXX (ed. Rahlfs); 22.6–8 RSV; the LXX reads, beginning with v. 8, πάντες οἱ θεωροῦντές με ἐξεμυκτήρισάν με, ἐλάλησαν ἐν χεῖλεσιν, ἐκίνησαν κεφαλὴν "Ἠλπισεν ἐπὶ κύριον, ῥυσάσθω αὐτὸν· σωσάτω αὐτὸν, ὅτι θέλει αὐτόν.

⁶¹ Ps 22.17 MT; 21.17 LXX (ed. Rahlfs); 22.16 RSV; the translation of the MT cited above is taken with slight modification from Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 1: 1–50* (AB Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) 137; see the comments on 140–1; the LXX reads ὠρυξαν χεῖρας μου καὶ πόδας.

⁶² Compare the discussion in Feigel, *Der Einfluß des Weissagungsbeweises*, 65–6.

⁶³ Even though Psalm 22 has little intrinsic connection with messianic ideas, it was interpreted messianically in the earliest recoverable Christian traditions. The presupposition of this interpretation was the execution of Jesus by crucifixion as a messianic pretender. The process by which the followers of Jesus arrived at this conclusion and attempted to persuade others of its validity cannot be determined exactly, but they probably began by interpreting a more messianic psalm as a prophecy of Jesus and then extended the argument to other psalms. Donald Juell has attempted to reconstruct the process (*Messianic Exegesis*, 90, 98–117); see also Hays, 'Christ Prays the Psalms', 130–1.

In the account of Jesus' death, the narrator says that darkness came upon the whole land or earth at the sixth hour, that is, at midday. If there is an allusion to Scripture in this motif, the most likely text is Amos 8.9, which reads 'On that day, says the Lord God, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight.' The context of the passage is appropriate to the new use, since the latter part of the following verse reads 'I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day.' 'That day' in Amos is a day of judgment upon the people for their sins. In the pre-Markan passion narrative, it is unlikely that the motif is meant to indicate primarily or simply that the death of Jesus is an event of the end-time which will lead soon to the manifestation of the kingdom of God.⁶⁴ In light of the metaphor of the cup in the Gethsemane story, the notion of judgment evoked by the image of darkness refers to the bearing of the wrath of God by Jesus.

Various attempts have been made to argue that the loud cry with which Jesus dies is a sign of his victory over death or Satan.⁶⁵ Such arguments have little basis in the text. The cry is followed immediately by the tearing of the curtain of the temple. Since the narrative coherence and high degree of temporal and spatial specificity mentioned earlier extend only through the account of the death of Jesus, it is unlikely that the notice about the women watching, the burial and the empty tomb were part of the pre-Markan passion narrative.⁶⁶ Although the purpose of the passion narrative was to explain the *death* of Jesus, it is likely that it contained from the beginning some indication of the vindication of Jesus. The tearing of the curtain, as a miracle or symbolic event, indicates such a vindication. The acclamation of the centurion is also a means of expressing Jesus' vindication. Since the words of the centurion tie in so nicely with the Markan theme of Jesus as the Son of God, it is likely that this verse is a Markan addition. It is credible then that the pre-Markan passion narrative ended with the statement about the veil.

The meaning of this event is ambiguous and interpretations differ widely.⁶⁷ In the context of the pre-Markan passion narrative,

⁶⁴ Feigel makes this argument (*Der Einfluß des Weissagungsbeweises*, 72); it may hold, however, for the motif as part of the *Markan* passion narrative.

⁶⁵ E.g., Feigel (*ibid.*, 73–6). His argument is based on the *Markan* form of the passion narrative and takes the cry together with the reaction of the centurion.

⁶⁶ See Yarbro Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, 117.

⁶⁷ On the ambiguity of the relation between the tearing of the curtain and the death of Jesus, see Robert M. Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand: Reader-Response Criticism and the Gospel of Mark* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1991) 202–3, 211. On the variety of

the only point that is absolutely clear is that the audience is invited to reflect on the relationship between Jesus' death and the tearing of the veil of the temple. It is highly likely that the event symbolizes the vindication of Jesus, although precisely how it does so is concealed as much as revealed. The following reflections are one reader's attempt to clarify the symbolic meaning.

The tearing of the curtain may be a mysterious sign for insiders that Jesus was vindicated by God immediately following his death. Since allusions to the Psalms play such an important role in the narrative, one is led to consider whether such an allusion may be the case here. A search for analogies leads to Psalm 18 which reads:

In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help.
From his *temple* he heard my *voice*, and my cry to him reached his ears.⁶⁸

The divine response to this cry is described first of all in terms of a mighty theophany. Then the speaker's vindication is recounted:

He reached down from on high, he took me; he drew me out of mighty waters.
He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from those who hated me; for they were too mighty for me.
They confronted me in the day of my calamity; but the Lord was my support.
He brought me out into a broad place; he delivered me because he delighted in me.⁶⁹

Since Psalm 18 is a messianic thanksgiving song or royal victory hymn,⁷⁰ it would be a logical choice as a source for images of the vindication of the messiah.⁷¹ If the veil in the passion narrative is the inner one, which hung before the Holy of Holies,⁷² one may conclude that the elaborate theophany of the psalm has been transformed into the mysterious tearing of the curtain, which would symbolize God or divine power revealed or coming forth from the

interpretations, see Timothy J. Geddert, *Watchwords: Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (JSNTSup 26; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989) 140–3.

⁶⁸ Ps 18.7 MT; 17.7 LXX (ed. Rahlfs); 18.6 RSV; note that φωνῆς occurs in Ps 17.7 LXX and φωνῆ or φωνῆν in the pre-Markan passion narrative; cf. Mark 15.34 and 37; ναοῦ also occurs in both; cf. Ps 17.7 LXX with Mark 15.38.

⁶⁹ Ps 18.17–20 MT; 17.17–20 LXX (ed. Rahlfs); 18.16–19 RSV.

⁷⁰ Gerstenberger, *Psalms* Part 1, 96. This psalm is explicitly associated with David by its appearance, with minor variations, in 2 Samuel 22 as his victory song.

⁷¹ The book of Jonah has a similar motif; it presents the prophet as saying, 'As my life was ebbing away, I remembered the Lord; and my prayer came to you, into your holy temple' (Jonah 2.7). The LXX reads ἐν τῷ ἐκλείπειν ἀπ' ἐμοῦ τὴν ψυχὴν μου τοῦ κυρίου ἐμήσθην, καὶ ἔλθοι πρὸς σὲ ἡ προσευχὴ μου εἰς ναὸν ἁγίόν σου (Jonah 2.8, ed. Rahlfs).

⁷² See Josephus *Jewish War* 5.219.

temple.⁷³ If the veil is the outer one, upon which a panorama of the heavens was portrayed,⁷⁴ the tearing of the veil may symbolize the ascent of Jesus to heaven, that is, his exaltation.

It may be that making a distinction between the two veils involves overinterpretation of the text and that the splitting of the veil symbolizes both divine revelation and the ascent of Jesus. The widespread ancient notion that the earthly temple was a copy of a heavenly reality may be at work here, so that the tearing of the earthly curtain reflected the passing of Jesus through its heavenly equivalent into the presence of God. If this reading is correct, the pre-Markan passion narrative may be the source of the analogous imagery and thought found in the letter to the Hebrews.⁷⁵

THE MARKAN PASSION NARRATIVE

Due to limitations of time and space, a full discussion of the Markan passion narrative here is impossible. The most important passage for this paper is the saying attributed to Jesus as his last articulate words, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' As is well known, the saying is a strong allusion to the beginning of Psalm 22,⁷⁶ which is quoted first in Aramaic and then translated into Greek. It is given in Aramaic to prepare for the misunderstanding of some of the bystanders who conclude that Jesus is calling Elijah. Their misunderstanding appears to be deliberate, since the similarity between the two relevant words is not close. Thus, the reaction is presented as additional mockery.⁷⁷ The primary motivation for adding the saying does not seem to be to reveal Jesus' state of mind, but to remind the reader of Jesus' teaching concerning Elijah which was recorded in the dialogue between Jesus and the few disciples allowed to witness the transfiguration (Mark 9.9–12). On the way down the mountain, Jesus warns them to say nothing about what they have seen until the Son of Man has risen from the dead. They ask about the scribes' teaching that

⁷³ On the tearing of the veil as theophanic, see the discussion in Yarbro Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, 116–17; see also Geddert, *Watchwords*, 141.

⁷⁴ Josephus *Jewish War* 5.212–14; David Ulansey argued that the outer veil was meant and that Mark intended to link this image with the tearing of the heavens at the baptism of Jesus (*idem*, 'The Heavenly Veil Torn: Mark's Cosmic *Inclusio*', *JBL* 110 [1991] 123–5).

⁷⁵ Heb 6.19–20; 10.19–20; for discussion see Harold Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989) 183–5, 284–7.

⁷⁶ Ps 22.2 MT; 21.2 LXX (ed. Rahlfs); 22.1 RSV.

⁷⁷ See the discussion in Yarbro Collins, *The Beginning of the Gospel*, 115–16.

Elijah must come first. Jesus says that Elijah has already come and been mistreated, apparently referring to the activity and death of John the Baptist. In light of this dialogue, the scene at the cross is ironic. The bystanders parody Jesus' eschatological beliefs, but the competent reader knows that Elijah has already come.

Some scholars have argued that Jesus must actually have spoken these words, since the tendency of the tradition was to present Jesus as more and more divine, courageous, and in control. Support for this hypothesis is found in the fact that later Christians apparently took offence at the saying.⁷⁸ But the fact that some later Christians thought that they could improve on the saying does not imply that Jesus actually said it. Once again it is impossible to prove or disprove the historical accuracy of the attribution. The important question for this paper is the role of this saying in the passion narrative. My own position is that Mark added the saying along with the misunderstanding about Elijah. One must leave open the possibility that Mark's attribution of the saying to Jesus in this context is based on reliable oral tradition. It is also possible to explain the origin of the saying through Mark's reasoning that, since Psalm 22 contained prophecies of the events associated with Jesus' death, it could also be employed as a guide to his last words.⁷⁹

Opinions differ as to the meaning of the saying in its new context. Many modern readers have tended to understand the saying in terms of its inner or psychological meaning. Mark, however, may have used it in a more formal sense; the saying in the psalm was a prophecy of what the messiah would say; Jesus said it to show that he was the messiah. If Mark considered any further intention of Jesus in speaking such words, it is likely that he understood them to be a complaint rather than an expression of despair. In Psalm 22, the complaint is a cry for help; according to Mark, God's response to this cry was the raising of Jesus from the dead.

CONCLUSION

Greek or Hellenized readers of the pre-Markan passion narrative may have seen some similarity in the second part of Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane, 'not what I want, but what you want', to the serene acceptance of death manifested by Socrates and his imitators. But

⁷⁸ E.g., by K. Hase, mentioned by Feigel, *Der Einfluß des Weissagungsbeweises*, 67.

⁷⁹ Compare Feigel, *ibid.*, 67–8.

such readers would have expected a more loquacious Jesus in the scene before Pilate, since the account of a noble death was often exploited in literature as a didactic opportunity. Mark has taken the passion narrative a little further in this direction by adding the trial before the Sanhedrin in which Jesus' response to the high priest is a didactic prophecy (14.62).⁸⁰ The unanswered mocking by the soldiers before the crucifixion and by those who passed by the cross would have been puzzling to such readers, as would the inarticulate cry of Jesus and the mysterious tearing of the veil. The darkness at noon, however, would have been intelligible as a sign of cosmic sympathy and mourning at the death of a great or favoured man.⁸¹ Mark's addition of a burial story and an account analogous to stories of apotheosis again brought the account closer to Greek and Roman stories of noble or at least notable deaths.⁸²

On the whole, however, the passion narrative, whether pre-Markan or Markan, is profoundly different from such Greek and Latin accounts. Further, it does not make sense to define the passion narrative as a parody of the noble death tradition, since parody is closely related to satire and both have a playful and humorous dimension, as well as the intention of criticism or attack.⁸³ On the other hand, there is no Jewish type of story that corresponds any more closely. The accounts of the deaths of those who perished in the persecution of Antiochus are permeated with the values of the noble death and the protagonists make long didactic speeches. It would seem best to conclude, therefore, that the passion narrative embodies a new kind of death-story, one in which the intractable and appalling facts of the end of Jesus' life

⁸⁰ In ancient literature, the last words of a dying man were often prophetic; examples include Patroklos (*Iliad* 16.843–54), Hektor (*Iliad* 22.355–60), and Pherecydes, who prophesied his own death (Diogenes Laertius *Lives* 1.117–18); this motif occurs also in the Hebrew Bible in connection with Jacob (Genesis 49), Joseph (Gen 50.24), Moses (Deuteronomy 32), Joshua (Joshua 23) and in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*.

⁸¹ Compare the account of the death of Carneades; Diogenes reports that the moon is said to have been eclipsed at the time of his death; he interprets this phenomenon as a sign of the sympathy of the brightest luminary next to the sun, in spite of the fact that he states that the philosopher met his death with a certain lack of courage (Diogenes Laertius *Lives* 4.64). See also the accounts of the death of Julius Caesar (Virgil *Georgics* 1.468; Plutarch *Lives: Caesar* 69.4–5).

⁸² See the mention of burial in the story of Tellus, cited above in relation to note 9; Suetonius gives an account of the funeral, cremation and apotheosis of Julius Caesar (*The Twelve Caesars: Julius Caesar* 80–2, 84, 88). Diogenes Laertius occasionally mentions the funeral or burial of his subjects (e.g., of Chilon [1.72], Pherecydes [1.118], Anaxagoras [2.15], and Plato [40–1]).

⁸³ See, for example, the discussion by M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (ed. Michael Holquist; trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist; Austin: University of Texas, 1981) 51–68. An example of a parodistic travesty of the account of a noble death is Lucian's *The Passing of Peregrinus*, especially 23 and 42.

were illuminated by a new use of Scripture. This new use of Scripture, defined by early Christians as inspired by the risen Christ or the Holy Spirit,⁸⁴ attests also to the resourcefulness of the followers of Jesus and to the profound impact his person and life had upon them.

The role played by Scripture in the production of the passion narrative has tremendous implications for the question of its genre and thus for its meaning. The noble death tradition is closely linked to biography and the purpose of biography is exemplary. The passion narrative has a biographical dimension and it did become exemplary for the later Christian martyrs.⁸⁵ But as Celsus noted well, the point of contention with regard to the life of Jesus was whether he was the messiah. The dispute between Jews and Christians on this point reminded him of the proverbial fight about the shadow of an ass.⁸⁶ From his point of view, there was simply nothing at stake in this dispute. In the context of Jewish messianism, however, nothing less was at stake than the course of history itself and the destiny of the world. Jesus is silent in the passion narrative because the focal point is not his state of mind or his character, but the events. The narrative depicts a sequence of events that was prophesied and whose fulfilment changed the world. It is for this reason that the biographical genres are inadequate to define the intention of the passion narrative and the Gospel of Mark as a whole. For the author of the earliest passion narrative and for Mark, the death of Jesus is admirable, not because he faced it bravely and thus became an example for others, but because it was 'for our sins' and 'according to the Scriptures'.

⁸⁴ See Luke 24.13–32, 44–9; John 14.25–6; for discussion of this point in relation to the Emmaus story, see Hans Dieter Betz, 'The Origin and Nature of Christian Faith according to the Emmaus Legend (Luke 24:13–32)', *Interpretation* 23 (1969) 32–46; for a German version of this article, see *idem*, 'Ursprung und Wesen christlichen Glaubens nach der Emmauslegende (Lk 24.13–32)', in *idem*, *Synoptische Studien: Gesammelte Aufsätze 2* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1992) 35–49.

⁸⁵ Like the passion narrative, the letter to the Hebrews combines the notions that the death of Jesus was exemplary and that it changed reality. See Heb 2.10–18; for discussion see Attridge, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 78–87.

⁸⁶ Origen, *Contra Celsum* 3.1; compare Plato *Phaedrus* 260c where Socrates uses the proverb 'shadow of an ass' to make a point about good and bad speaking and writing. Celsus apparently used the proverb to signify a dispute of no importance.

APPENDIX

A reconstruction of the Pre-Markan Passion Narrative

Καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς χωρίον οὗ τὸ ὄνομα Γεθσημανὶ καὶ ἤρξατο ἐκθαμβεῖσθαι καὶ ἀδημονεῖν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· περίλυπός ἐστιν ἡ ψυχὴ μου ἕως θανάτου· μείνατε ὧδε καὶ γρηγορεῖτε. καὶ προελθὼν μικρὸν ἐπιπτεν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ προσηύχετο καὶ ἔλεγεν· αββα ὁ πατήρ, πάντα δυνατά σοι· παρένεγκε τὸ ποτήριον τοῦτο ἀπ' ἐμοῦ· ἀλλ' οὐ τί ἐγὼ θέλω ἀλλὰ τί σύ. καὶ ἔρχεται καὶ εὐρίσκει αὐτοὺς καθεύδοντας, καὶ λέγει τῷ Πέτρῳ· Σίμων, καθεύδεις; οὐκ ἴσχυσας μίαν ὥραν γρηγορῆσαι; ἐγείρεσθε ἄγωμεν· ἰδοὺ ὁ παραδιδούς με ἤγγικεν.

Καὶ ἔτι αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος παραγίνεται Ἰούδας εἷς τῶν δώδεκα καὶ μετ' αὐτοῦ ὄχλος μετὰ μαχαιρῶν καὶ ξύλων παρὰ τῶν ἀρχιερέων. δεδώκει δὲ ὁ παραδιδούς αὐτὸν σύσσημον αὐτοῖς λέγων· ὃν ἂν φιλήσω αὐτός ἐστιν, κρατήσατε αὐτὸν καὶ ἀπάγετε ἀσφαλῶς. καὶ ἐλθὼν εὐθὺς προσελθὼν αὐτῷ λέγει· ῥαββί, καὶ κατεφίλησεν αὐτόν· οἱ δὲ ἐπέβαλον τὰς χεῖρας αὐτῷ καὶ ἐκράτησαν αὐτόν. καὶ ἀφέντες αὐτόν ἔφυγον πάντες.

Καὶ ἀπήγαγον τὸν Ἰησοῦν πρὸς τὸν ἀρχιερέα. καὶ πρῶτ' συμβούλιον ποιήσαντες οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς, δῆσαντες τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἀπήνεγκαν καὶ παρέδωκαν Πιλάτῳ. καὶ ἐπηρώτησεν αὐτόν ὁ Πιλάτος· σὺ εἶ ὁ Βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων; ὁ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς αὐτῷ λέγει· σὺ λέγεις. Καὶ κατηγοροῦν αὐτοῦ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς πολλά. ὁ δὲ Πιλάτος πάλιν ἐπηρώτα αὐτόν λέγων· οὐκ ἀποκρίνη οὐδέν; ἴδε πόσα σου κατηγοροῦσιν. ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς οὐκέτι οὐδὲν ἀπεκρίθη, ὥστε θαυμάζειν τὸν Πιλάτον. καὶ παρέδωκεν τὸν Ἰησοῦν φραγελλώσας ἵνα σταυρωθῇ.

Οἱ δὲ στρατιῶται ἀπήγαγον αὐτόν ἔσω τῆς αὐλῆς καὶ συγκαλοῦσιν ὄλην τὴν σπεῖραν. καὶ ἐνδιδύσκουσιν αὐτόν πορφύραν καὶ περιτιθέασιν αὐτῷ πλέξαντες ἀκάνθινον στέφανον· καὶ ἤρξατο ἀσπάζεσθαι αὐτόν· χαῖρε, βασιλεῦ τῶν Ἰουδαίων· καὶ ἔτυπον αὐτοῦ τὴν κεφαλὴν καλάμῳ καὶ ἐνέπτυν αὐτῷ καὶ τιθέντες τὰ γόνατα προσεκύνουν αὐτῷ. καὶ ὅτε ἐνέπαιξαν αὐτῷ, ἐξέδυσαν αὐτόν τὴν πορφύραν καὶ ἐνέδυσαν αὐτόν τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ.

Καὶ ἐξάγουσιν αὐτόν ἵνα σταυρώσωσιν αὐτόν. καὶ ἀγγαρεύουσιν παράγοντά τινα Σίμωνα Κυρηναῖον ἐρχόμενον ἀπ' ἀγροῦ, τὸν πατέρα Ἀλεξάνδρου καὶ Ρούφου, ἵνα ἄρῃ τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ. καὶ φέρουσιν αὐτόν ἐπὶ τὸν Γολγοθᾶν τόπον, ὃ ἐστιν μεθερμηνευόμενον Κρανίου Τόπος, καὶ ἐδίδουν αὐτῷ ἐσμυρνιασμένον οἶνον· ὃς δὲ οὐκ ἔλαβεν. καὶ σταυροῦσιν αὐτόν καὶ διαμερίζονται τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ βάλλοντες κλῆρον ἐπ' αὐτὰ τίς τί ἄρῃ. ἦν δὲ ὥρα τρίτη καὶ ἐσταύρωσαν αὐτόν. καὶ ἦν ἡ ἐπιγραφή τῆς αἰτίας αὐτοῦ ἐπιγεγραμμένη· ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων. καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ σταυροῦσιν δύο ληστὰς, ἓνα ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ ἓνα ἐξ ἐυνύμων αὐτοῦ. καὶ οἱ παραπορευόμενοι ἐβλασφήμουν αὐτόν κινοῦντες τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν καὶ λέγοντες· ἄλλους ἔσωσεν, ἑαυτὸν οὐ δύναται σῶσαι· ὁ χριστὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραὴλ καταβάτω νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἵνα ἴδωμεν καὶ πιστεῦσωμεν. καὶ οἱ συνεσταυρωμένοι σὺν αὐτῷ ὠνείδιζον αὐτόν.

Καὶ γενομένης ὥρας ἕκτης σκότος ἐγένετο ἐφ' ὄλην τὴν γῆν ἕως ὥρας ἐνάτης. καὶ τῇ ἐνάτῃ ὥρᾳ ἐβόησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς φωνῇ μεγάλῃ [καὶ] ἐξέπνευσεν. καὶ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχίσθη εἰς δύο ἀπ' ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω.