

Glossary

Alleluia (also Hallelujah): Transliteration of a Hebrew phrase meaning “praise the Lord,” which occurs frequently in Psalms. The *Hallelujah Chorus* is a famous part of Handel’s *Messiah*, and is part of the musical score of Stevens’s *The Greatest Story Ever Told*.

Annunciation: The Lukan scene (1:26-38) in which Gabriel informs the Virgin Mary that she will give birth to God’s son.

Apocalyptic: An adjective describing people, movements, literature, and worldviews that assume a revelation (apocalypse) indicates that God will soon dramatically intervene in human history to end this evil age and establish his rule on earth. Usually accompanied by cosmic signs and resurrections.

Apocryphal: An adjective now meaning doubtful or spurious, but from a Greek word meaning hidden or obscure. In biblical studies, the word refers to ancient scripture-like material that is not part of today’s Hebrew or Christian Bibles.

Ascension: The Lukan scene (24:51) in which the resurrected Jesus ascends into the heavens (cf. Mark 16:9; Acts 1:9).

Ash Wednesday: The day in the church calendar that begins Lent, the forty days of penitence and reflection leading up to Easter. Ashes from the previous year’s burnt palms (left over from Palm Sunday) are smudged on the foreheads of worshipers to signify their penitence.

Bar mitzvah: A Jewish ceremony in which a boy at age thirteen becomes a “son of the commandment,” or an adult member of the Jewish community.

Biopics: Films that present the life of an individual. While they typically begin with model scenes from the character's youth, they focus on the highlights of the hero or heroine's career.

Blacklisted: During the McCarthy era (1950s), many film personnel were called to appear before the Congressional Committee on Un-American Activities. Those who did not answer questions about their or their associates' involvement with Communism and Communists were "blacklisted," and thereafter prohibited from working on American films.

Bosch, Hieronymous: A fifteenth-century painter famous for his images of the macabre and monstrosities. See, for example, his *The Garden of Earthly Delights* or *The Last Judgment*. His painting of *Christ Carrying The Cross* places a mob of grotesque faces, most turned away from Christ, around a serene Christ. The painting is available at <http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/bosch/carrying/carrying.jpg>.

Bultmann, Rudolf: (1884-1976) An important twentieth-century German biblical scholar famous for his attempt to "demythologize" the New Testament; that is, to remove its supernatural elements and worldviews and to restate the New Testament message in a manner more understandable to moderns. For Bultmann, that modern vehicle was existentialism and New Testament concepts like "faith" and "sin" become "authentic" and "inauthentic" existence.

Christology: Doctrine about the person and work of Jesus Christ. Deals with topics such as the divinity and humanity of Jesus, and the significance of his life and death for human salvation.

Co-redeemer: Mary's theological role in salvation, according to official Roman Catholic teaching. She is mediator and advocate for people on behalf of her son, Jesus..

Crosscut (or parallel montage): A film editing technique that moves quickly back and forth between ongoing stories or scenes, interweaving shots from those different stories or scenes.

Cruciform (or cruciate): In the shape of a cross.

Demythologize: To remove the mythical or supernatural elements from the gospel message. The term was made famous by Rudolf Bultmann (see above).

Deposition: The removal of Jesus from the cross, a scene often rendered by artists.

De Quincey, Thomas: A nineteenth-century English essayist most famous for his confessional description of his opium addiction. He also popularized the idea, advanced previously by some German scholars, that Judas wanted Jesus to establish an earthly, political kingdom and that the "betrayal" was Judas' failed attempt to force Jesus to establish that kingdom.

Deus ex machina: Latin for "God out of [the] machine." The phrase refers to the miraculous or last-minute resolution of plot complications. Aristotle was critical of Euripides for introducing a god (often lowered onto the stage by a "machine" at the last moment of the play) to resolve such complications.

Dissolve: A film editing technique that moves from one scene to the next by superimposing two shots; the first image slowly vanishing as the second image slowly appears.

Documentary: A film style in which the director purports simply to document whatever occurs in front of the camera (either as “live events” or as reenactments of past events), with no fictionalizing elements added to make the story better.

Doré, Gustav: A nineteenth-century French artist and engraver who illustrated various classics including Milton, Dante, and Poe. In the 1860s, he made about two hundred and forty illustrations for a Christian Bible that was published in several languages, including English. Many of his illustrations are available at <http://catholic-resources.org/Art/Dore/htm>. Most agree that his illustrations greatly influenced the directors of the early silent Jesus films.

Ecce homo: Latin for “behold the man.” In the gospel of John, Pilate offers Jesus to the crowd with these words (John 19:5). Also a scene often rendered by artists in which Jesus stands bound and bloody, wearing the crown of thorns.

Epic: In literature, a lengthy, poetic work detailing the story of a hero (or heroes) who embodies the virtue of a culture. In film, a lengthy, expensive work using casts of hundreds and special effects to dramatize an important, historical story.

Epic, biblical: Films that transform biblical stories into the epic format. Cecil B. DeMille pioneered this form which was particularly popular in Hollywood in the 1930s, 1950s, and early 1960s. Some interpreters believe that Gibson’s *Passion of the Christ* has reinvigorated this form.

Episodic plot: Unconnected scenes placed one after the other with little indication through character or plot of the development or transition from one scene to the next. Episodic plots make it difficult for the viewer to determine why things happen. Mark’s gospel is largely an episodic plot.

Eschatology/eschatological: Pertaining to the end times.

Eucharist: The sacramental giving of the body and blood of Christ in the bread and wine of the Last Supper, repeated every Sunday in many churches.

Eucharistic words: The words Jesus pronounced over the bread and wine (“this is my body”; “this is my blood”) at the Last Supper, and by priests during the Eucharist.

Evangelical/evangelistic: A form of Protestant Christianity that stresses the need for a personal relationship between Jesus as savior and the individual believer. Such Christians evangelize (witness) through outreach programs, revivals, and missions.

Flat character: A character with only one character trait. A character that does not develop or change through the story. Traditionally, gospel characters have been flat characters. Jesus is the Son of God who knows he is supposed to die for the sins of the world almost from the moment of his birth. Judas is chosen by Satan to betray Jesus. The Jewish crowds hate Jesus and want him crucified. DeMille and Scorsese broke with this “flat character” tradition by allowing their Judas and Jesus characters to change in the process of their films.

Fundamentalist: A form of conservative Protestant Christianity stemming from the early twentieth century that opposed modernity, or more specifically, that opposed evolution and historical criticism. More recently, people have applied the label to any religious group—for example, certain reactionary forms of Islam—that reject modernity.

Gloria in excelsis deo: Latin for “glory to God in the highest,” the hymn of the angels in the Lukan nativity story (2:14).

Gospel of Thomas: An apocryphal gospel extant only in an Arabic translation and in certain Greek fragments (Oxyrhynchus fragments) before the discovery of the Coptic library at Nag Hammadi in 1945. The discovery of the Coptic text (dating from the fourth century) reinvigorated the scholarly study of the sayings of Jesus. Some scholars consider the Gospel of Thomas to be a window on the historical Jesus and on the transmission of his sayings. The gospel presents Jesus as heavenly wisdom revealing the divinity within the individual believer.

Gnosticism: An ancient philosophical, religious movement roughly contemporaneous with the development of orthodox Christianity. It emphasized a metaphysical, ethical dualism that played down the material world (the flesh) and elevated the spiritual. In its developed form, a disguised revealer descends to earth from the spiritual realm to inform spirits trapped in material bodies of the saving knowledge (Greek: gnosis) that will liberate them from those fleshly prisons.

Great Commission: The words of the resurrected Jesus to his disciples, instructing them about their mission and authority in his absence (Matt. 28:18-20).

Hays Code: The US film industry code from 1930-1968 that set forth standards of morality and decency. The Motion Picture Association of America used it to police itself in an effort to stave off government censorship.

Hierophany: A visible manifestation of the sacred.

Historical criticism: The attempt to recover the past and to interpret documents in light of the past culture in which those documents were produced.

Historical Jesus: An understanding of Jesus created by (modern) historical critics who believe that historical criticism reveals a Jesus different from the Christ of the

church's gospels and creeds. This historically reconstructed Jesus tends to be human and Jewish, rather than the supernatural Christ of the church. In the nineteenth century, scholars imagined this historical Jesus to be a teacher of liberal ethics like themselves. In the twentieth century, most scholars imagined the historical Jesus to be an apocalyptic figure. At the end of that century, a significant number of American scholars (e.g., John Dominic Crossan) imagined the historical Jesus as a Cynic who criticized and challenged his culture, and established communities that lived alternative lifestyles in the midst of the dominant culture.

Holy Week: The week in the church's calendar from Palm Sunday to Easter that celebrates Jesus' passion.

Icon/Iconic: A religious image or symbol. Also a painted representation of a sacred person; a style of art especially characteristic of Orthodox Christianity.

Incarnation: Literally, "in the flesh." The doctrine that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh, or fully human and fully divine; an idea articulated by councils of bishops in the fourth and fifth centuries C.E.

Infant of Prague: A medieval Roman Catholic statue of the child Jesus in the city of Prague, Czechoslovakia. The right hand of the Jesus child is raised in a blessing, with his two raised fingers symbolizing his two natures (human and divine).

INRI: The first letters of the Latin word posted on the cross: Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum or "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews."

Intercalation: The crosscutting of stories or the insertion of one story within another. Some call the result a "literary sandwich." Scholars often note this interpretative technique in the Gospel of Mark (e.g., Mark 5:21-43; 11:12-24).

Johannine: Pertaining to the Gospel of John.

Luddite: A nineteenth-century British movement opposing the introduction of machinery to replace craftsmen in the textile industry. Since then, the term has been used to refer to all those opposed to new forms of technology.

McCarthy, Joseph: A US Senator from Wisconsin (1947-57). He presided over the Congressional Committee on Un-American Activities which tried to expose Communists and Communist activity in the United States. To that end, he held public hearings of suspected individuals—many of whom were in the film industry.

Messianic secret: The sense of secrecy surrounding Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels (but most obvious in Mark). This is especially created by Jesus' parables whose meaning is explained only to the disciples (Mark 4:11), and by Jesus' demand for secrecy after healing people (Mark 5:43).

Montage: A film editing technique that connects and presents a series of separate pictures in rapid succession, often with interpretative voiceovers or background music.

Neocon: Neoconservative. A term in American politics that became popular after the 1994 US elections. In the context of US foreign policy, neoconservatives tend to be interventionists, advocating the use of unilateral military force, "if necessary," to replace autocratic regimes with "democratic" ones. The 2003 US invasion of Iraq is a prime example of neoconservative foreign policy.

Neoplatonism: A mystical restatement of Plato's thought by the third century CE philosopher, Plotinus. It imagines a hierarchy of being stretching from God—the good, the spiritual, the one—to the material world of evil and multiplicity. It also

imagines that all beings have a trace of the divine within them that yearns to reunite with God. Neoplatonism sketches the philosophical path of this return. The philosophy was popular in the late Roman Empire, was embraced by Christianity, and remains, in large part, the metaphysical backdrop of (popular) Christianity.

Neo-Realism: Primarily an Italian film style that features the documentary-like portrayal of lower-class life and characters. Famous examples include Rossellini's *Open City* and De Sica's *The Bicycle Thief*. Pasolini's style builds upon this earlier Italian film movement.

New Woman: A form of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century feminism. See Progressives, Victorian.

Nimbus: The luminous disk, circle, or hazy light around the head of a saint or holy person.

Orant: A standing figure with arms raised in prayer, commonly found in Christian art.

Passion play: Theatrical performances of the most important incidents in the last week of Jesus' life. Such performances date from medieval times. The most famous passion play is the one held at Oberammergau, Germany. The earliest Jesus films were passion plays and one early film actually reproduced scenes from the Oberammergau Passion Play.

Pentecostal: A type of Christianity which emphasizes the spirit's possession or filling of the believer. This possession is frequently marked by special "gifts," like speaking in tongues.

Pericope: An extract or section of a larger work, ultimately from a Greek word meaning “cutting around.” New Testament scholars who study oral traditions and literary sources use the word to indicate small, self-contained units of the gospels.

Pietà: A depiction, common in art, of the Virgin Mary holding her son’s dead body in her lap.

Progressives: Early twentieth-century reform-minded Americans who shared a number of activist social concerns: to end “white slavery” (prostitution and sweat shops); to enact Prohibition; to “Americanize” immigrants; to enact anti-trust legislation; to enact women’s suffrage; and to end child labor.

Round character: A character with more than one character trait. A character that develops and changes through the story. DeMille and Scorsese were important directors who imagined their gospel characters as capable of change: DeMille with his Judas, and Scorsese with his Jesus. For many traditionalist Christian viewers, this new storytelling technique was scandalous.

Seven Last Words of Christ: Jesus’ last words on the cross. In the four gospels, seven different sayings occur: 1) “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46; Mark15:34); 2) “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.” (some texts of Luke 23:34); 3) “Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:43); 4) “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” (Luke 23:46); 5) “Woman, here is your son.... Here is your mother.” (John 19:26-27); 6) “I am thirsty.” (John 19:28); and 7) “It is finished.” (John 19: 30).

Shema: Hebrew for “hear.” From the opening words of Deut. 6:4-9—“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one”—often considered *the* Jewish prayer or confession of faith.

Observant Jews pray the Shema as part of the evening and morning prayers. The prayer often includes Deut. 11:13-21 and Num. 15:37-41.

Shroud of Turin: A burial cloth, kept in a chapel in Turin, Italy since 1578. Photographic negatives of the cloth seem to reveal the impression of a crucified man. Photographs of this “impression” provide the most famous “image of Jesus” in modernity.

Slaughter of the Innocents: The traditional Christian expression for King Herod’s attempt to kill Jesus by murdering all the baby boys in Bethlehem under the age of two (Matt. 2:16-18).

Spectacle: A film that advertises huge casts, special effects, casts of stars, epic stories, and huge expenses.

Stabat Mater: Latin for “stood the mother,” a thirteenth-century hymn which depicts the sorrows of the Virgin Mary at the cross.

Stations of the Cross: A devotional exercise created by the late medieval church so that worshipers could prayerfully follow Jesus’ passion in fourteen stages: 1) Pilate condemns Jesus; 2) Jesus begins to carry the cross; 3) Jesus falls for the first time; 4) Jesus meets the Virgin Mary; 5) Simon of Cyrene carries Jesus’ cross; 6) Veronica wipes Jesus’ face; 7) Jesus falls for the second time; 8) Jesus speaks to the women of Jerusalem; 9) Jesus falls for the third time; 10) Jesus is stripped and receives gall to drink; 11) Jesus is nailed to the cross; 12) Jesus dies on the cross; 13) the deposition: the removal of Jesus’ body from the cross; and 14) the entombment.

Stigmata: The wounds that Jesus suffered in his passion: nail holes in the hands and feet, wounds on the brow from the crown of thorns, the stripes from the whipping, and the

hole in the side from the spear. Religious mystics, the most famous of which is St. Francis of Assisi, sometimes bear marks resembling these wounds.

Stop frame animation: A form of animated film in which one shoots a shot (or frame) of a set, then rearranges the set slightly for the next shot, and so on. Widely known examples include *Wallace and Gromit* and *Chicken Run*.

Superimposed: Camera/editing technique in which one shot is placed over another so that the two images appear together.

Synoptic Gospels: Scholars' name for Matthew, Mark, and Luke. The word indicates that these three gospels "see" (optic) "together" (syn). That is, they share a common perspective. These three gospels are much more similar to each other than they are to the gospel of John, and most scholars believe that they share common sources. The basic theory is that Mark was the first written gospel, and Matthew and Luke used Mark and a hypothetical source "Q" to write their gospels. This theory accounts for the "shared perspective" or "synoptic" of Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Tissot, James. A nineteenth-century French artist who became famous in England for his paintings of upper class social life. A personal tragedy led him to return to France and then to visit the Holy Land. Thereafter, he began to paint water color illustrations of the Bible for which he is still famous. From 1896-1900, he published the four volume *The Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, which included three hundred sixty-five illustrations. Many of these can be found in the Brooklyn Museum in Brooklyn, New York.

Transfiguration: The traditional term for the change in Jesus' appearance that occurred on a mountain in Galilee (Mark 9:2-8).

Transubstantiation: The belief that during the celebration of the Eucharist, the invisible substance of the bread and wine changes, becoming the real body and blood of Jesus offered anew (or eternally) for the worshiper.

Tzitzit: The fringes on garments or Jewish prayer shawls to remind the faithful to be observant of God's commandments (see Num. 15:37-41).

Veronica: A nameless woman of church legend who met Jesus on the Via Dolorosa and wiped his bloody face with her veil. Jesus' bloody imprint left behind the most famous image in the Western Church. In Latin, this image was known as the "vera" (true) "icon" (image), and thus in time the woman gained a name: "Veronica."

Via Dolorosa: Latin for "way of tears." The road Jesus walked from Pilate's chambers to Golgotha, the site of his crucifixion.

Victorian: Relating to the highly ritualized (sexual) morality at the time of Queen Victoria. It is often used as a synonym for Puritan, but this is incorrect. For the Victorians, an innate, biological difference of temperaments defined feminine and masculine, and this difference laid the groundwork for the separation of spheres for men and women. According to this model, men's biological function was only concerned with fertilization, and thus they could spend their energies in public arenas dealing with issues of abstract justice. On the other hand, women's heavy role in pregnancy, menstruation, and child-rearing left them very little energy for other pursuits. As a result, they needed to stay at home in order to conserve their energy. The rise of early feminism and the ideology of "the new woman" in the late 1800s challenged Victorian sexual values. Cultural critics often describe late 19th and early 20th century American sexual mores as Victorian.

Voiceover: A technique in film where an unseen narrator or character speaks to the audience while the audience sees film visuals.

Wisdom Christology: Scholars often trace the Christology of the Gospel of John to various Jewish figures/characters who seem to have semi-divine characteristics, including, most notably, the feminine, personified wisdom figure of Prov. 8:22-31 who is there when God creates the world.

Yarmulke: The skullcap worn by Jewish males during religious activities and seasons.