METHODOLOGY AND THE SEARCH FOR THE HISTORICAL JESUS: A RESPONSE TO JOHN DOMINIC CROSSAN

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In his book, *The Birth of Christianity. Discovering what happened in the years immediately after the execution of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFranciso, 1998), John Dominic Crossan makes the following comments:

> When I finally published *The Historical Jesus* in 1991, I intended not just to present another reconstruction of Jesus but to inaugurate a full-blown debate on methodology among my peers. I spent no time debating other views of Jesus because, without methodology, method and inventory, one view was as valid as the other. There is still no serious discussion of methodology in historical Jesus research, and the same applies to the birth of Christianity (p. 139).

This is both a telling criticism of contemporary scholarship, and an invitation to dialogue. This paper is written in response to that invitation. It will attempt to provide the rational for an alternative methodology to that advocated by Crossan, and then provide a brief critique of some aspects of Crossan's methodology before contrasting the different views of Jesus that emerge as a result of different methodologies.

Starting Points

Perhaps the most important issue in any reconstruction of the historical Jesus is what historical credibility can be given to each of the sayings and deeds of Jesus recorded in the canonical Gospels. This topic has been canvassed endlessly for at least the last two centuries, both in NT scholarship and in the pulpit, and the battle

lines are clearly drawn. Most participants in the debate would fall somewhere between two poles, which I might describe as those who "doubt everything", and those who "believe everything."

The most famous representative, perhaps, of the "doubt everything" approach is Rudolf Bultmann. In one of his writings he says, "I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist."[1]

At the other end of the spectrum, as a representative of the "believe everything" standpoint, one might cite the position taken by the Evangelical Theological Society, based in the USA. Inside the front cover of every edition of the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* is found the following statement of the "doctrinal basis" of the society: "The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs."[2]

These, then, are the two extremes. One demands of the evidence a test rather like that required in a court of law: reliability beyond all reasonable doubt. The other argues, almost on an *a priori* basis, that everything is the Gospel accounts is reliable. Only a minority work at either extreme. The wider community engaged in the academic study of the NT would fit somewhere in between these two poles. Yet probably one of the two extremes represent the starting point for most of us. The methodology

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1 R. Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1935) 8. Bultmann's words are widely quoted, but in their original context are only denying the possibility of dealing with the personality of Jesus. He goes on to state that rather than discussing Jesus' personality or pronouncing value judgments, he plans to discuss the teachings of Jesus. These are arrived at by noting the different layers of tradition that are evident in the Gospels, and relying on the earliest layer. He observes: "Naturally we have no absolute assurance that the exact words of this oldest layer were really spoken by Jesus" (p. 13). While his words are quoted out of context, they do sum up his attitude towards what can be known of the historical Jesus as he reveals it in this and his other writings.

2 These words are taken from the inside cover of the December 1998 copy of the journal. One might compare the words of the "Chicago Statement" formulated at the International Conference on Biblical Inerrancy in Chicago, 1978: "4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than it its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives." This part of the Chicago statement is cited from the appendix in, *Inerrancy* edited by Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1980) 494.

advocated so eloquently by Dom Crossan, for example, is much closer to the position taken by Bultmann than that taken by the Evangelical Theological Society.

For Crossan, the traditions in the Gospels need to be proven historically reliable before they can be used. In his recent books he devotes significant attention to developing a methodology to arrive at historically reliable data.[3] He despairs of the use of criteria such as the criterion of dissimilarity or the criterion of embarrassment as a test for deciding whether or not a particular saying is authentic, or a particular event historical. Instead he places great reliance on three things: anthropology, history and literature.[4] In using literary sources, he searches primarily for multiple independent sources nearest in time to the events.[5]

The four canonical Gospels are treated as only one source, and a rather suspect one at that. This is because the Gospel of Mark forms the basis for the Matthew and Luke, and John is written on the basis of the other three Gospels.[6] Furthermore, the Gospels are written rather late, and are written to persuade rather than as an objective report.[7] For Crossan there are two much earlier sources on which he relies greatly: the Gospel of Thomas, and the sayings Gospel, Q, which we can reconstruct from the material common to Matthew and Luke that is not in Mark. For the crucifixion he

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3 John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991) xxvii-xxxiv, and throughout pp. 228-416; see also 427-466; Crossan, *Birth of Christianity*, xiii-xxxiv, 19-22, 31-149, as well as numerous other places in the book.

4 *Historical Jesus*, xxviii.

5 E.g. ibid., xxx-xxxiv.

6 Crossan, *Birth of Christianity*, 109-114.

7 "... we have learned that the *gospels* are exactly what they openly and honestly claim they are. They are not history, though they contain history. They are not biography, though they contain biography. They are gospel — that is, good news. *Good* indicates that the news is seen from somebody's point of view — from, for example, the Christian rather than the imperial interpretation. *News* indicates that a regular update is involved. It indicates that Jesus is constantly being actualized for new times and places, situations and problems, authors and communities. The gospels are written for faith, to faith, and from faith. We have also learned that Matthew and Luke used Mark as a source. So we can now see, by comparing Matthew and Luke with their Markan source, the sovereign freedom with which the evangelists adopted and adapted, added and omitted, changed and created the very words and deeds of Jesus himself. And if, as many scholars now think, John is dependent on those three synoptic authors, that creative freedom is almost as great as we could possible imagine." Crossan, *Birth of Christianity*, 21. Cf. Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, xxx-xxxi for similar comments.

relies on the Cross Gospel, something which has been reconstructed from the later Gospel of Peter, but which he believes is early, and pre-dates the canonical Gospels, which, in fact, used it as their source for the passion narrative.[8]

I, on the other hand, work from another perspective. I think the Gospels, particularly the Synoptic Gospels in which I do most of my research, to be fundamentally reliable. As will emerge later in the paper, I do not pass the litmus test for membership in the Evangelical Theological Society, yet my general approach still has more to do with the "believe everything" end of the spectrum.

Crossan describes the situation which happens when two different scholars use two different sets of texts (or inventory) on which to base their historical reconstruction of Jesus in these terms: "... we are not just ships that pass in the night, we are ships that pass on different nighttime oceans. We have radically divergent inventories."[9] This is perhaps why so few have attempted an explicit debate about methodology. Methodology often includes a discussion of starting points, or attitudes of mind, which are based on each individual's assessment of the right approach. In the case of the NT, a personal faith is also frequently part of the mix. We are in the realm of presuppositions. From time to time, all of us examine our presuppositions against the data with which we deal. Yet they are basically statements of starting points, and have to be stated, not argued.

So, have I taken the risk of alienating many of my scholarly colleagues by frankly revealing my incorrigible conservatism, or alienating those who work with methodologies closest to mine by making concessions with which they vehemently disagree, to no good purpose? I admit to being conscious of this risk, but think it important that the different conceptions of Jesus be made available in the public forum, despite the fact that few minds are likely to be changed in the process. To this end, this paper will try to present an alternative view of Jesus which results from a different methodological stance to that adopted by Crossan. It will begin by putting forth arguments that point towards the likelihood of reliable transmission of the traditions from and about Jesus.

The Reliability of the Canonical Gospels: The Problem

The fundamental problem for those who would affirm the reliability of the Gospel

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[8] The evidence for this reconstruction is provided in appendix 7, pp. 462-66, *Historical Jesus*. Cf also Crossan, *The Cross That Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

[9] Crossan, *Birth of Christianity*, 143.

traditions relates to the fact that for a considerable period of time, the teachings of Jesus and the events surrounding his life, death and resurrection were subject to the frailties of human memory. None of the Gospels can be dated with any real confidence. But there was a period of time of between ten and fifty years between the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and their writing down.[10] Furthermore, the likelihood is that the time period is longer rather than shorter. Those of us whose professions involve marking examinations need no reminder of the frailty of human memory and understanding, even about recently acquired information for which students have taken some pains to retain. This, then, is the issue – is there any evidence that would speak to the reliability or otherwise of the process of transmission of the sayings of Jesus? In fact, there are a number of lines of argument that could be put forward. The exigencies of space will limit my treatment to two: the probability of reliable oral tradition, and the existence of multiple independent sources.

The Reliability of the Oral Transmission of Jesus' Teaching

I would like to take as my starting point the well-known, but little utilised, datum that Jesus was recognized by his contemporaries as a teacher. What T. W. Manson said in 1957 is still true: "The two most certain facts in the gospel tradition are that Jesus taught and that He was crucified."[11] Jesus is frequently pictured as teaching, he is called a teacher, and he gathered disciples to himself who lived closely with him.

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[10] The use of the phrase "till this day" in Matt 27:8; 28:15 indicates that some time had passed between the events recorded in the Gospels and their writing down, but not how much. John A. T. Robinson has proposed dates as early as A.D. 40[-60+] for Matthew; 45[-60] for Mark; 57[-60+] for Luke; *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976) 352. This represents a date as early as has been seriously advocated. Most would agree with Crossan in dating Mark before A.D. 70, but would place Matthew and Luke sometime in the 80s rather than the 90's as does Crossan. *Historical Jesus*, 430-31.

[11] Manson goes on to say, "In Mark the verb 'teach' occurs seventeen times, and in sixteen of these cases Jesus is the subject. In the same Gospel He is called 'teacher' twelve times – four times by His disciples, once by Himself, five times by persons not of His circle but not hostile to Him, and twice *by His opponents*. Four times also in Mark He is called 'Rabbi,' the usual name for a Jewish teacher." T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1957) 11. Cf the comment of Ichiro Yamauchi: "... no *Leben-Jesu-Forschung* has ever repudiated the fact that Jesus did teach and Gospel traditions frequently used the 'teacher' title in addressing Jesus, along with numerous Christological titles such as 'Christ', 'Saviour', and 'Son of God'. Despite the fact that the total number of titles used is over forty, there is no gospel picture clearer than the picture of Jesus as teacher."

While we have no exactly contemporary documents from first century Palestine that directly describe the type of teaching methods Jesus would be likely to use, we do have two sources of information that enable us to gain a relatively good idea as to how Jesus may have conducted himself: there is a relatively rich fund of primary sources on educational methods in antiquity outside of Palestine, and we have quite extensive descriptions of teaching methods in Palestine from later Rabbinic writings.[12] For our purposes the point is this: any educational method we know of from the ancient world, including the world of Palestine in which Jesus was part, started with memorisation, and memorisation continued at each stage of education. In later Rabbinic circles, the basic rule was that "The material was first committed to memory, and then an attempt at understanding is undertaken."[13] Thus the disciples would have committed significant sections of the teachings of Jesus to memory.

As there is other good evidence that the earliest converts underwent instruction,[14] the disciples would have got their own followers to also memorise some of this tradition. Aside from writers such as Harald Riesenfeld, Birger Gerhardsson, Heinz Schürmann, Samuel Byrskog and Rainer Riesner,[15] few have considered this aspect

"Jesus as Teacher Reconsidered," in *Die Mitte des Neuen Testaments*, edited by Ulrich Luz and Hans Weder (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983) 414.

12 The following sources (amongst others) are helpful on the educational methods in antiquity: H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1956); William Barclay, *Educational Ideals in the Ancient World* (London: Collins, 1959); James Bowen, *A History of Western Education* (London: Methuen, 1972); Martin P. Nilsson, *Die Hellenistische Schule* (Munich: Beck, 1955); Stanley F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome* (London: Methuen, 1977); Aubrey Gwynn, *Roman Education from Cicero to Quintilian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926). Among writings on the teaching methods of the Rabbis might be found: Etan Levine, "Ancient Jewish Eductaion: A Composite Picture," *American Benedictine Review* 21 (1970) 240-253; Nathan Drazin, *History of Jewish Education from 515 B.C.E. to 220 C.E.* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1940); Max Arzt, "The Teacher in Talmud and Midrash, in *Mordecai M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume: On the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1953) 35-47. C.f. also Louis Finkelstein, "The Transmission of the Early Rabbinic Traditions," *HUCA* 16 (1941) 115-135.

13 Birger Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript* (Uppsala: Gleerup, 1961) 126, this sentence is in italics in the original, and represents a thought repeated several times in the book.

14 E.g. Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 11:2, 23; 1 Thes 2:15.

15 Harald Riesenfeld, *The Gospel Tradition and it's Beginnings: A Study in the Limits of 'Formgeschichte'* (London: Mowbray, 1957); Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript*; Heinz Schürmann, "Die vorösterlichen Anfänge der Logientradition" in *Der historische Jesus und der kerygmatische Christus*, edited by Helmut Ristow and Karl Matthiae

of the preservation and transmission of the oral traditions of Jesus' teaching and deeds. That these traditions were intentionally memorised and transmitted makes reliable transmission much more likely than if the transmission of the teachings and deeds of Jesus were remembered haphazardly.[16] Yet one cannot assume verbatim memorisation and transmission in oral cultures.[17] What then, is transmitted, and how reliably?

This is a complex question. When one consults the material in the Gospel attributed to Jesus there are several different tropes. The reliability of transmission is likely to be different for each type. I can only give one example, and needless to say, it will be one that is positive to the case that I am making. Parables are tropes which would have a remarkably reliable transmission. Parables share many of the characteristics of a joke: a "punch line" is often attached to a story. A joke is preserved whole, or not at all, because to work not only must the punch line be preserved, but enough of the story must remain so that the joke works. Studies have shown the remarkable persistence of jokes.[18] Thus the assessment of Jeremias that "the student of the

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(Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1960), 342-370; Samuel Byrskog, *Jesus the Only Teacher* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International, 1994); Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 3rd edn., 1988); Riesner has provided a statement of some of his principal conclusions in "Jesus as Preacher and Teacher," in *Jesus in the Oral Gospel Tradition* edited by Henry Wansbrough (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1991), 184-210. One might also mention the work of Bo Reicke, *The Roots of the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), who also lays stress on the role of oral tradition.

16 "Es handelt sich deshalb bei ihr nicht um eine wild wuchernd, volkstümliche Überlieferung, sondern um bewusst gepflegte Lehrtradition. ... Man darf dann die synoptische Tradition mit der berechtigten Hoffnung befragen, dass sie uns darüber Auskunft geben kann, wer Jesus war und was er wollte." So Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, 502. The conclusion in his English article is also to the point: "... we possess a rather reliable tradition of the words of Jesus." "Jesus as Preacher and Teacher," 210.

17 Walter J. Ong has conveniently gathered together much of the relevant research on oral cultures and their accuracy of transmission. While verbatim transmission is not unknown, especially when the material is set as words to music, what is transmitted is meaning rather than exact words. See, eg. *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London & New York: Routledge, 1982) 57-68, esp. 63-63.

18 Private communication from Marie Carroll, Centre for Applied Psychology, University of Canberra. This type of memory research is likely to be of more relevance to the study of the Gospel materials than is the work of Frederic Bartlett, described by Crossan in *Birth of Christianity* 78-84. One of the reasons Bartlett chose "The War of the Ghosts," as his test material was because "the story as presented belonged to a level of culture and a social environment exceedingly different from those of my subjects." Frederick C. Bartlett,

parables of Jesus, as they have been transmitted to us in the first three Gospels, may be confident that he stands upon a particularly firm historical foundation,"[19] is one that is shared by a large number of others. Thus, for parables at least, there is a strong possibility of reliable transmission. Similar arguments can be advanced for other types of Gospel materials.

Let me make an admission at this point. Except in a few isolated instances, that the exact words of Jesus would be transmitted over this length of time is improbable. Memory does not work like that. Furthermore, it is most likely that Jesus spoke Aramaic,[20] but the canonical Gospels are written in Greek. Every undergraduate student who has done any translation from Greek into English will know that translation of itself brings changes. Despite this, I would wish to assert that while we have lost the exact words of Jesus, we have a fundamentally reliable account of his words and actions.[21]

Remembering (Cambridge: University Press, 1932, repr. 1961) 64. Many of the changes Bartlett observed arose as the participants in the experiment tried to make sense of what otherwise did not make sense to them. My point is that in both parables and jokes the whole is needed to make sense, and this gives more a more stable process of transmission.

19 Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1972) 11.

20 "... the evidence of the Aramaic *ipsissima verba* of Jesus in the Gospels is impossible to explain if Aramaic was not his normal spoken language." So Matthew Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels* 3d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967) 48. See also Paul Kahle, "Das zur Zeit Jesu in Palästina gesprochene Aramäische," *TRu* 17 (1948-49) 201-16; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Languages of Palestine in the First Century A.D.," in *A Wandering Aramean: Collected Aramaic Essays* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1979) 29-56. Eric M. Meyers & James F. Strange note that while Greek was the language of the cultured elite in the time of Jesus, Aramaic was the language of the majority of the population. Greek replaced Aramaic over the next two centuries as the language of the majority, a process accelerated by the two wars against Rome. *Archaeology the Rabbis & Early Christianity* (Nashville, NT: Abingdon, 1981) 62-91, esp. 90-91. Not everybody follows the consensus that Jesus spoke primarily Aramaic. For a recent and well argued presentation of the case that Jesus may have used Greek as his primary language in Galilee, see Stanley E. Porter, "Jesus and the Use of Greek in Galilee," in Bruce Chilton & Craig A. Evans, eds. *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (Leiden: Brill, 1998) 123-154.

21 The case of John Dean's memory might serve to illustrate the way memory works. Dean, former counsel to President Nixon, testified to the Senate Watergate committee about conversations that later turned out to have been recorded without his knowledge. When his testimony about the particular conversations was compared with the actual taped record, it was discovered that it was systematically distorted. For example, Dean tended to recall his role as more central than it actually was. Furthermore, even his memory for

How Many Independent Sources do the Canonical Gospels Represent?

The desirability of multiple independent sources is a truism of historical research. It forms an important element in Crossan's approach to the reconstruction of the historical Jesus, and is one that I would agree is an important consideration. But I would like to challenge his assertion that the four Canonical Gospels should be considered to be only one source. Let us lay aside for the moment the fact that a vociferous minority in NT study reject the two document hypothesis,[22] and allow Crossan the validity of this assumption, which, one probably could still say is the working assumption of the majority of those actively researching in the Synoptic Gospels. In other words, Matthew and Luke had two documents available to them as they wrote their own Gospels: they had before them some version of the Gospel of Mark, and a now-lost sayings source commonly referred to as Q. Let me make the following observations:

The Gospel of John is Independent of the Synoptic Gospels.

I began my own graduate study of the New Testament with the Gospel of John, and have twice returned to it in conjunction with my work in the Synoptic Problem. I have had occasion to compare all of the various parallels within the four Gospels, including the Gospel of John, and am currently in the process of doing a similar comparison with the Gospel of Thomas. What has always struck me is how different to the Synoptic traditions are those found in the Gospel of John – even were John is describing an event also found in the Synoptics, such as the feeding of the five

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the gist of a specific conversation was poor. Yet Dean was fundamentally right about what had been happening. Ulric Neisser, "John Dean's Memory: A Case Study," in *Memory Observed: Remembering in Natural Contexts* edited by U. Neisser (San Francisco: Freeman, 1982).

22 From Crossan's point of view the Griesbach hypothesis — that Matthew was the first Gospel written, that Luke had Matthew before him as he wrote, and that Mark used both Matthew and Luke — is open to the same conclusion: the three synoptic Gospels represent only one source. As will emerge later in the paper, I take yet another position on the relationship between the Synoptic Gospels.

23 To be fair, Crossan argues only that the passion and resurrection of Jesus in John is dependent on the other Gospels. Other parts of John, for example the aphorisms, are independent (*Birth of Christianity*, 112). The passion narrative will be considered below,

thousand. The vocabulary is quite different, as are the sequencing of events, as indeed, the events themselves.[23]

This is perhaps best expressed visually. The following parallels are taken from Matt 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48 and John 2:13-22. Words which are exactly the same are underlined completely, differences of tense and mood are indicated by partial underlining, and continuous underlining indicates that the words are in exactly the same order.

Matt 21:12-13

12 Καὶ εἰσῆλθεν Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν καὶ ἐξέβαλεν πάντας τοὺς πωλοῦντας καὶ ἀγοράζοντας ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, καὶ τὰς τραπέζας τῶν κολλυβιστῶν κατέστρεψεν καὶ τὰς καθέδρας τῶν πωλούντων τὰς περιστεράς, 13 καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· γέγραπται· ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται, ὑμεῖς δὲ αὐτὸν ποιεῖτε σπήλαιον λῃστῶν.

Mark 11:15-17

15 Καὶ ἔρχονται εἰς Ἱεροσόλυμα. Καὶ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν ἤρξατο ἐκβάλλειν τοὺς πωλοῦντας καὶ τοὺς ἀγοράζοντας ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, καὶ τὰς τραπέζας τῶν κολλυβιστῶν καὶ τὰς καθέδρας τῶν πωλούντων τὰς περιστερὰς κατέστρεψεν, 16 καὶ οὐκ ἤφιεν ἵνα τις διενέγκῃ σκεῦος διὰ τοῦ ἱεροῦ. 17 καὶ ἐδίδασκεν καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· οὐ γέγραπται ὅτι ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν; ὑμεῖς δὲ πεποιήκατε αὐτὸν σπήλαιον λῃστῶν.

Luke 19:45-46

45 Καὶ εἰσελθὼν εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν ἤρξατο ἐκβάλλειν τοὺς πωλοῦντας 46 λέγων αὐτοῖς· γέγραπται· καὶ ἔσται ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς, ὑμεῖς δὲ αὐτὸν ἐποιήσατε σπήλαιον λῃστῶν.

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and again, the material in John shows itself to be independent of the Synoptic Gospels.

The above two examples show a very high percentage of common vocabulary and phrasing in the materials they share in common. This is in marked contrast to John:

Matt 21:12-17

12 Καὶ εἰσῆλθεν Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν καὶ ἐξέβαλεν πάντας τοὺς πωλοῦντας καὶ ἀγοράζοντας ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, καὶ τὰς τραπέζας τῶν κολλυβιστῶν κατέστρεψεν καὶ τὰς καθέδρας τῶν πωλούντων τὰς περιστεράς, 13 καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· γέγραπται· ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται, ὑμεῖς δὲ αὐτὸν ποιεῖτε σπήλαιον λῃστῶν.

John 2:13-22

13 Καὶ ἐγγὺς ἦν τὸ πάσχα τῶν Ἰουδαίων, καὶ ἀνέβη εἰς Ἰεροσόλυμα ὁ Ἰησοῦς. 14 Καὶ εὗρεν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ τοὺς πωλοῦντας βόας καὶ πρόβατα καὶ περιστερὰς καὶ τοὺς κερματιστὰς καθημένους, 15 καὶ ποιήσας φραγέλλιον ἐκ σχοινίων πάντας ἐξέβαλεν ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ τά τε πρόβατα καὶ τοὺς βόας, καὶ τῶν κολλυβιστῶν ἐξέχεεν τὸ κέρμα καὶ τὰς τραπέζας ἀνέτρεψεν, 16 καὶ τοῖς τὰς περιστερὰς πωλοῦσιν εἶπεν· ἄρατε ταῦτα ἐντεῦθεν, μὴ ποιεῖτε τὸν οἶκον τοῦ πατρός μου οἶκον ἐμπορίου. 17 ἐμνήσθησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι γεγραμμένον ἐστίν· ὁ ζῆλος τοῦ οἴκου σου καταφάγεταί με. 18 Ἀπεκρίθησαν οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· τί σημεῖον δεικνύεις ἡμῖν ὅτι ταῦτα ποιεῖς; 19 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· λύσατε τὸν ναὸν τοῦτον καὶ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἐγερῶ αὐτόν. 20 εἶπαν οὖν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι· τεσσεράκοντα καὶ ἓξ ἔτεσιν οἰκοδομήθη ὁ ναὸς οὗτος, καὶ σὺ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἐγερεῖς αὐτόν; 21 ἐκεῖνος δὲ ἔλεγεν περὶ τοῦ ναοῦ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ. 22 ὅτε οὖν ἠγέρθη ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἐμνήσθησαν οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ ὅτι τοῦτο ἔλεγεν, καὶ ἐπίστευσαν τῇ γραφῇ καὶ τῷ λόγῳ ὃν εἶπεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς.

In many ways, there are more similarities between the Gospel of Thomas and the Synoptics than the Gospel of John. One example that might be given is the parable of the lost sheep (see the following page):

Matt 18:12-13

12 Τί ὑμῖν δοκεῖ; ἐὰν γένηταί τινι ἀνθρώπῳ ἑκατὸν πρόβατα καὶ πλανηθῇ ἓν ἐξ αὐτῶν, οὐχὶ ἀφήσει τὰ ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα ἐπὶ τὰ ὄρη καὶ πορευθεὶς ζητεῖ τὸ πλανώμενον; 13 καὶ ἐὰν γένηται εὑρεῖν αὐτό, ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι χαίρει ἐπ' αὐτῷ μᾶλλον ἢ ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα τοῖς μὴ πεπλανημένοις.

GThom 107[24]

234 λέγει Ἰησοῦς ὁμοία ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία ἀνθρώπῳ τινὶ ποιμένι ἑκατὸν πρόβατα ἔχων· 235 ἓν ἐξ αὐτῶν, ἐπλανήθη· μέγα ἐστιν· 236 κατέλιπεν τὰ ἐνενήκαντα ἐννέα [καὶ] ἐζήτησεν τὸ ἓν ἕως εὗρη αὐτό· 237 ... εἶπεν τῷ προβάτῳ· ἀγαπῶ. σε παρὰ τὰ ἐνενήκοντα ἐννέα·

So, if Crossan wishes to insist that the Gospel of Thomas is independent of the Synoptic Gospels, and I agree with him in this assessment, I think that consistency would demand that he considers the Gospel John to be likewise an independent witness.[25]

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[24] The Gospel of Thomas is known in Greek only from a few fragments. This reconstructed Greek text is that of Rodolphe Kasser, *L'évangile selon Thomas* (Paris: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1961) 115. The line numbers are those of Kasser. One could argue that his choice of Greek vocabulary is influenced by the synoptic Gospels, that is until one does the kind of comparison recorded here, and considers also the fact that the parallel in Luke 15:4-7 uses quite a different vocabulary to Matthew. Kasser's choices of vocabulary are sometimes closer to Luke than Matthew, and often different from both.

[25] Dwight Moody Smith concludes from his survey of the secondary literature on the relationship between John and the Synoptics: "At the beginning of the century, the exegete or commentator could safely assume John's knowledge of the Synoptics. We then passed through a period of a quarter of a century or more (1966-1980) in which the opposite assumption was the safer one: John was perhaps ignorant of the Synoptics, certainly independent of them. We have now reached a point at which neither assumption is safe, that is, neither can be taken for granted" *John Among the Gospels: The Relationship in Twentieth-Century Research* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) 189. Also cited by Crossan, *Birth of Christianity*, 111-112. My own detailed comparison of the sources convinces me that the traditions in John are independent of those in the Synoptic Gospels. Perhaps it should also be pointed out that the majority of scholars have moved away from a very late dating of John, such is still found in Crossan's book *The Historical Jesus*, 431. In his appendix listing his dating and evaluation of the sources he uses, he suggests "The first edition of the Gospel of John was composed, very early in the second century C.E. and under the pressure of Synoptic ascendancy, as a combination of the Johannine *Signs Gospel* and the Synoptic traditions about the passion and resurrection." On p. 432, he

The Independence of the Lukan Passion Narrative

Within the synoptic traditions, it has long been acknowledged that the Gospel of Luke ceases to be dependent on the common tradition from Luke 22:14 onwards.[26] In other words, from the celebration of the Lord's supper, through the betrayal, arrest, trial, crucifixion and resurrection. Take for example the account of the crucifixion found in Matt 27:32-44 and Luke 23:26-38. This is a lengthy passage, so only a part of it can be shown. It is instructive to compare the parallel between Matthew & Mark as a contrast to the parallel between Luke and Mark.

Matt 27:37-42

37 Καὶ ἐπέθηκαν ἐπάνω τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ τὴν αἰτίαν αὐτοῦ γεγραμμένην· οὗτός ἐστιν Ἰησοῦς ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων. 38 Τότε σταυροῦνται σὺν αὐτῷ δύο λῃσταί, εἷς ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ εἷς ἐξ εὐωνύμων. 39 Οἱ δὲ παραπορευόμενοι ἐβλασφήμουν αὐτὸν κινοῦντες τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν 40 καὶ λέγοντες· ὁ καταλύων τὸν ναὸν καὶ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις οἰκοδομῶν, σῶσον σεαυτόν, εἰ υἱὸς εἶ τοῦ θεοῦ, [καὶ] κατάβηθι ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ. 41 ὁμοίως καὶ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς ἐμπαίζοντες μετὰ τῶν γραμματέων καὶ πρεσβυτέρων ἔλεγον· 42 ἄλλους ἔσωσεν, ἑαυτὸν οὐ δύναται σῶσαι· βασιλεὺς Ἰσραήλ ἐστιν, καταβάτω νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ καὶ πιστεύσομεν ἐπ' αὐτόν.

Mark 15:26-32a

26 καὶ ἦν ἡ ἐπιγραφὴ τῆς αἰτίας αὐτοῦ ἐπιγεγραμμένη· ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων. 27 Καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ σταυροῦσιν δύο λῃστάς, ἕνα ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ ἕνα ἐξ εὐωνύμων αὐτοῦ. 28 29 Καὶ οἱ παραπορευόμενοι ἐβλασφήμουν αὐτὸν κινοῦντες τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν καὶ λέγοντες· οὐὰ ὁ καταλύων τὸν ναὸν καὶ οἰκοδομῶν ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις, 30 σῶσον σεαυτὸν καταβὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ. 31 ὁμοίως καὶ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς ἐμπαίζοντες πρὸς ἀλλήλους μετὰ τῶν γραμματέων ἔλεγον· ἄλλους ἔσωσεν, ἑαυτὸν οὐ δύναται σῶσαι· 32 ὁ χριστὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραὴλ καταβάτω νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἵνα ἴδωμεν καὶ πιστεύσωμεν.

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dates "a second edition" of the Gospel of John (esp. chap. 21) to the period 120-150 C.E. Most would date John in the late 1st century.

26 E.g. Vincent Taylor, *The Passion Narrative of St. Luke: A Critical and Historical Investigation* (SNTSMS 19; Cambridge: University Press, 1972).

Luke 23:33-38

33 Καὶ ὅτε ἦλθον ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον τὸν καλούμενον Κρανίον, ἐκεῖ ἐσταύρωσαν αὐτὸν καὶ τοὺς κακούργους, ὃν μὲν ἐκ δεξιῶν ὃν δὲ ἐξ ἀριστερῶν. 34 [[ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἔλεγεν· πάτερ, ἄφες αὐτοῖς, οὐ γὰρ οἴδασιν τί ποιοῦσιν.]] διαμεριζόμενοι δὲ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἔβαλον κλήρους.[27] 35 Καὶ εἱστήκει ὁ λαὸς θεωρῶν. ἐξεμυκτήριζον δὲ καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες λέγοντες· ἄλλους ἔσωσεν, σωσάτω ἑαυτόν, εἰ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ ἐκλεκτός. 36 ἐνέπαιξαν δὲ αὐτῷ καὶ οἱ στρατιῶται προσερχόμενοι, ὄξος προσφέροντες αὐτῷ 37 καὶ λέγοντες· εἰ σὺ εἶ ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων, σῶσον σεαυτόν. 38 ἦν δὲ καὶ ἐπιγραφὴ ἐπ' αὐτῷ· ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων οὗτος.

Mark 15:26-32a

26 καὶ ἦν ἡ ἐπιγραφὴ τῆς αἰτίας αὐτοῦ ἐπιγεγραμμένη· ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων. 27 Καὶ σὺν αὐτῷ σταυροῦσιν δύο λῃστάς, ἕνα ἐκ δεξιῶν καὶ ἕνα ἐξ εὐωνύμων αὐτοῦ. 28 29 Καὶ οἱ παραπορευόμενοι ἐβλασφήμουν αὐτὸν κινοῦντες τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν καὶ λέγοντες· οὐὰ ὁ καταλύων τὸν ναὸν καὶ οἰκοδομῶν ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις, 30 σῶσον σεαυτὸν καταβὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ. 31 ὁμοίως καὶ οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς ἐμπαίζοντες πρὸς ἀλλήλους μετὰ τῶν γραμματέων ἔλεγον· ἄλλους ἔσωσεν, ἑαυτὸν οὐ δύναται σῶσαι· 32 ὁ χριστὸς ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἰσραὴλ καταβάτω νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἵνα ἴδωμεν καὶ πιστεύσωμεν.

Their underlying meanings agree with, and, to a large extent, complement each other. At the level of expression, however, these two accounts are remarkable for the different ways that the same information is conveyed. The common vocabulary is very small, and there are frequent differences in the sequencing of such details they share.[28] I agree that Matthew and Mark are very closely parallel through their accounts of the passion. But by my count, on Crossan's criteria of independent attestation, there are at least three independent accounts of the passion narrative within the four canonical Gospels: Matthew/Mark, Luke and John.

[27] This phrase shares common vocabulary with Mark 15:24: καὶ διαμερίζονται τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ, βάλλοντες κλῆρον. It is an example of the differences in sequencing as well as differences in vocabulary that characterises Luke's account, when compared to either Matthew or Mark.

[28] By my count, there are 169 words in Matt 27:32-44 and 153 in Mark 15:21-32; of these 93 are common to both accounts (55% and 61% resp.). There are 282 words in Luke 23:26-43, of which 37 are shared with Mark 15:21-32 (13% & 24% resp.). These are

Does Relatedness Preclude Independent Evaluation of Sources?

That there is some relationship between Matthew, Mark and Luke is patent. But again, one must ask does this mean that they can only be "counted" as one independent source? Luke 1:1-3 states explicitly that the third evangelist had access to a number of sources, and that he actively chose what he considered to be the most reliable. One would imagine that the first evangelist also had available to him a number of sources. According to Crossan's assumption, at least two: Mark and Q. Perhaps a number more. But here is my point. Both Matthew and Luke were selective in their use of sources. They made an independent evaluation of the validity and reliability of the traditions available to them, be they written, oral, or indeed the evangelist's own memory. Again, working with these three Gospels, one is struck by the willingness of the first and third evangelists to depart from the putative sources, and to substitute accounts which they felt were more reliable, or better suited to their purposes. To give just one example, Matt 13 and Mark 4 are clearly related, yet where Mark 4:26-29 has the parable of the growing seed, Matt 13:24-30 has the parable of the tares. Furthermore, Mark and Luke had access to other traditions, some of which they included in their Gospels. In this they were acting as independent witnesses to the Jesus tradition. Sure, there is some connection between the three Synoptic Gospels, and so in a sense Crossan is right – they are one strand of tradition. But in another sense, Crossan is too quick to dismiss their independence of evaluation of the traditions.

Critique of Crossan's Reliance on Q and Thomas

I also question Crossan's heavy reliance on Q and the Gospel of Thomas.[29] Each of these is problematic in its own right. Take Q, for example. There is a growing, very active and vociferous minority in Gospel studies, who are adopting the Griesbach

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words such as "Simon, Cyren., cross, skull, left, right, others he saved, the king of the Jews." One would be hard pressed to describe the crucifixion without recourse to these words! As Crossan would have the passion narrative in John depend on the Synoptics is it interesting to compare this passage in John. Matt 27:32-44 (169 words) parallels John 19:16-27 (247 words), and share 16 words in common (9% and 6% resp). It is hard to see how two accounts could be so little related and still describe the same events. For me, all of John, including the passion narrative, is independent of the synoptics.

[29] I leave aside the question of the use of the Cross Gospel as a source. To say "I am unpersuaded," while accurate, and an opinion shared by others, is hardly constructive.

hypothesis as an explanation of the relationships between the three synoptic Gospels.[30] These scholars are not just uncomfortable with Q, they are downright hostile to the whole construct. From Crossan's perspective, with his desire to develop a methodology that commands general assent,[31] it is very unfortunate to rely so heavily on a document that this many others cannot agree to. I do not have this problem, because even though I have a somewhat distinctive approach to the problem of Synoptic relationships, I still think some such document as Q existed.[32] Take, for example, the following which is taken from the parallel between Matt 3:1-12 & Luke 3:1-20.

Matt 3:7-10	Luke 3:7-11
7 ἰδὼν δὲ πολλοὺς τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ Σαδδουκαίων ἐρχομένους ἐπὶ τὸ βάπτισμα αὐτοῦ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, τίς ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς; 8 ποιήσατε οὖν καρπὸν ἄξιον τῆς μετανοίας 9 καὶ μὴ δόξητε λέγειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς· πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ. λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι δύναται ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων ἐγεῖραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ. 10 ἤδη δὲ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ῥίζαν τῶν δένδρων κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται.	7 Ἔλεγεν οὖν τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ὄχλοις βαπτισθῆναι ὑπ' αὐτοῦ· γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν, τίς ὑπέδειξεν ὑμῖν φυγεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς μελλούσης ὀργῆς; 8 ποιήσατε οὖν καρποὺς ἀξίους τῆς μετανοίας καὶ μὴ ἄρξησθε λέγειν ἐν ἑαυτοῖς· πατέρα ἔχομεν τὸν Ἀβραάμ. λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι δύναται ὁ θεὸς ἐκ τῶν λίθων τούτων ἐγεῖραι τέκνα τῷ Ἀβραάμ. 9 ἤδη δὲ καὶ ἡ ἀξίνη πρὸς τὴν ῥίζαν τῶν δένδρων κεῖται· πᾶν οὖν δένδρον μὴ ποιοῦν καρπὸν καλὸν ἐκκόπτεται καὶ εἰς πῦρ βάλλεται. 10 Καὶ ἐπηρώτων αὐτὸν οἱ ὄχλοι λέγοντες· τί οὖν ποιήσωμεν; 11 ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς· ὁ ἔχων δύο χιτῶνας μεταδότω τῷ μὴ ἔχοντι, καὶ ὁ ἔχων βρώματα ὁμοίως ποιείτω.

[30] William Farmer's book, *The Synoptic Problem: A Critical Analysis* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1976), probably marks a watershed in this development. Prior to Farmer's publications, earlier protests against the two-document consensus, such as that by B. C. Butler, *The Originality of Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1951), had gone virtually ignored. Since the appearance of Farmer's work, there has been a mini-deluge of articles and some substantial books and commentaries espousing the Griesbach hypothesis: e.g. William Farmer, ed., *New Synoptic Studies* (Macon, GA: Mercer University, 1983); Bernard Orchard, *Matthew, Luke & Mark* (2d ed.; Manchester: Koinonia, 1977); and Thomas R. W. Longstaff, *Evidence of Conflation in Mark? A Study in the Synoptic*

These are one of several texts, almost all found in parallels between Matthew & Luke, which show characteristics of long sequences of words in exactly the same sequence. To me, this is characteristic of copying. Both Matthew and Luke used a common written source for their description of the preaching of John the baptist, and thus I think the source generally described as Q exists. Yet I have a problem with how confident we can be about the actual content of Q. Except for a few pericopae, I am unsure of what exactly is in Q, and doubt that we can confidently know the exact wording of more than a few sentences of those. In the above example, for instance, should Luke 3:10-11 be included in Q or not?

The Q seminar at SBL, though, has no such hesitations in publishing an agreed text. Some of its members are not only confident of the exact text of Q, they are able to work out its history of development – from an initial source of sayings of Jesus which reflected his wisdom orientation, through to the Q used as a source by Mathew and Luke.[33] All this seems a very fragile basis on which to base one's whole reconstruction, yet this, to a large extent, is what Crossan does. He relies very heavily on the "first layer" of Q to find his non-apocalyptic Jesus.

The Gospel of Thomas is the other document on which Crossan places most reliance in his reconstruction of Jesus. In his book, *The Birth of Christianity*, Crossan gives some attention to defending his use of the Gospel of Thomas. The main thrust of his argument is to show that the Gospel of Thomas is independent of the canonical

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Problem, SBLDS 28 (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1977); Bernard Orchard and Thomas R. W. Longstaff, *J. J. Griesbach: Synoptic and Text Critical Studies 1776-1976* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1978). This is not to mention the many articles which have been published in the area. See also the useful bibliography in *The Two Source Hypothesis: A Critical Appraisal*, edited by Arthur Bellinzoni (Mercer: Mercer University, 1985).

31 He criticises the approach to the study of the historical Jesus based on the use of criteria in the following terms: criteria "have been around for quite some time, and their employment has not created any consensus on anything" (p. 144). "If a group of scholars accepted them and applied them to the gospel traditions, would those scholars come up with a reasonably common inventory?" (p. 145). One would conclude, then, that Crossan would seek a methodology that would allow a wide acceptance of his conclusions. Nobody espousing the Griesbach hypothesis is going to be convinced by a work based on Q as a principal source.

32 See Robert K. McIver, "Implications of New Data Pertaining to the Problem of Synoptic Relationships," *Australian Biblical Review* 45 (1997) 20-39.

33 Eg. Burton L. Mack, *The Lost Gospel Q: The Book of Christian Origins* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993).

Gospels.[34] In that I am in agreement with Crossan, as are many others. Yet independence need not be the same as early. If Crossan can consider that the Passion narrative is a construct built from the only known fact — that Jesus was crucified — together with a reading of the Old Testament, what exempts the Gospel Thomas from this type of process? Indeed, as one reads through the Gospel of Thomas one is struck by the very obvious tendencies in its treatments of the traditions about Jesus which we also know from the Synoptic Gospels, particularly in highlighting Jesus as a teacher of esoteric wisdom. The issue for the dating of Thomas is: what set of circumstances best fit these characteristics? A case could be made for the first century,[35] but then an equally convincing case could be made that the best background against which to understand Thomas is the gnostic Christian movements of the second century. There can be no confidence about a date for the Thomas materials.

Summing up, I have serious methodological qualms about Crossan's great reliance on and his use of Q & the Gospel of Thomas. In comparison, I place a great deal more weight on the canonical Gospels, supplementing what is found there by as wide an acquaintance with contemporary literary and archaeological records informed by any relevant insights that come from other academic disciplines, such as sociology. Here, in fact, I find myself in agreement with Crossan's methodology. The insights of historical anthropology, sociology, archaeology, history, geography can only enhance our understanding of Jesus. Yet despite my enthusiasm for them as sources of information, I still find the most useful data on Jesus to be found within the four canonical Gospels.

What Kind of Jesus Emerges on the Methodology Like that Advocated in this Paper?

In Crossan's books *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, and *The Birth of Early Christianity* a coherent view of the historical Jesus emerges. Jesus is to be placed in the context of the farms and villages of Lower Galilee. The refounding of Sepphoris, and the building of Tiberius within 20 miles and 20 years of each other exacerbated the impact of the commercial agricultural

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[34] *Birth of Christianity*, 114-118.

[35] Wisdom is one of the themes emphasised by at least one of the groups at Corinth with which Paul finds himself in dialogue (e.g. 1 Cor 1-4, passim, eg. 1:22).

[36] As Crossan says on p. 216 of the *Birth of Christianity*, "... a peasant without a city is simply a happy farmer."

empire which was the Roman empire.[36] Dispossessed peasants could join the artisan class, of which Jesus was a member, but often swelled the ranks of the expendable class, the bottom 5-10 percent of Roman society. In this atmosphere of social crises Jesus advocated a radical religious and economic egalitarianism which he promoted by means of healing a common eating.[37]

One of the most interesting aspects of his reconstruction flows from his clarification of his earlier expression of Jesus as a peasant Jewish cynic.[38] Rural commercialisation was pushing the landed to a landless status, from poverty to destitution. These new members of the expendable class, were the ones that Jesus sent out without money or bag (for food). Money and a bag were things a cynic would always travel with as a philosophical statement that he had with him all he needed in life. Instead, without money or food the follower of Jesus, the bearer of the message of the kingdom, is forced into a reciprocal relationship with the householder. "The kingdom program forces those two groups into conjunction with one another and starts to rebuild peasant community ripped apart by commercialization and urbanization."[39]

The methodology advocated by this paper for arriving at a judgment regarding the historical reliability of the canonical Gospels is but one of many alternate methodologies that have been advocated. Many of them would yield a judgment of authentic on a significantly larger amount of the Gospel materials (inventory) that

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[37] "The historical Jesus was, then, a *peasant Jewish Cynic*. His peasant village was close enough to a Greco-Roman city like Sepphoris that sight and knowledge of Cynicism are neither inexplicable nor unlikely. But his work was among the farms and villages of Lower Galilee. His strategy, implicitly for himself and explicitly for his followers, was the combination of *free healing and common eating*, a religious and economic egalitarianism that negated alike and at once the hierarchical and patronal normalcies of Jewish religion and Roman power. And, lest he himself be interpreted as simply the new broker of a new God, he moved on constantly, settling down neither at Nazareth nor Capernaum. ... He announced, in other words, the brokerless kingdom of God." Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 421-22. In *Birth of Christianity* he defines this brokerless Kingdom of God in the following terms: "What *is* the kingdom of God if it is neither apocalyptically nor ascetically eschatological? It is marked by what I have termed *ethical eschatology*, a divinely mandated and nonviolent resistance to the normalcy of discrimination, exploitation, oppression, and persecution" (p. 317).

[38] Crossan, *Birth of Christianity*, 334-37. The expression "peasant Jewish Cynic" is found as a subheading and part of the following discussion in *Historical Jesus*, 421. In a private communication, Crossan has expressed that at times the phrase has caused considerable misunderstanding of his real position..

[39] *Birth of Christianity*, 331.

that advocated by Crossan. How different from his reconstruction would be the Jesus that would emerge from considering historically authentic much of the Gospel materials? Interestingly enough, **many elements would remain**. The basic structuring of first-century society, and the position in it of Jesus and his followers is, with some variations brought about by further study,[40] likely to remain fairly constant. Against this background, Crossan's insight that Jesus is bringing healing to a fractured society is most helpful. Further, Jesus' egalitarianism is something that is not only present in the sayings traditions accepted by Crossan, it is present throughout the Gospels, and indeed the rest of the New Testament.

Yet there are some **significant differences**, which emerge mainly as additions to Crossan's reconstruction of Jesus. Of these, let me highlight just two. The first relates to the assessment Jesus makes of himself and his role in the wider scheme of things; the second relates to what is made of the resurrection and its place in our present appraisal of Jesus.

If we allow the authenticity of a wider selection of the sayings material attributed to Jesus in the Gospels, then we cannot avoid concluding that eschatology was a prominent theme of his teaching. Now, as Crossan points out in several places, eschatology can mean different things. Amongst the different possible types of eschatology, he discusses three at length: apocalyptic eschatology, ascetical eschatology, and ethical eschatology.[41] He concludes that the eschatology of Jesus is an ethical eschatology, an eschatology that "negates the world by actively protesting and nonviolently resisting a system judged to be evil, unjust, and violent."[42] While this element is certainly present in the teachings of Jesus, I would contend that the eschatology of Jesus is best described by what Crossan's would define as apocalyptic eschatology. This type of eschatology "negates this world by announcing

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[40] I am not yet convinced that Sepphoris should be described as a Greco-Roman city at the time of Jesus (*Historical Jesus,* 421; cf. *Birth of Christianity,* 218-225), especially if that implies a strong Romanisation. See Robert K. McIver, "Sepphoris and Jesus: Missing Link or Negative Evidence?" in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shae,* edited by David Merling (Berrien Springs, MI: Institute of Archaeology, Andrews University, 1997), 221-232. Sepphoris had a strongly tradition Jewish flavour at the time of Jesus. Nor should it be remembered, that even when it was very much Romanised in later centuries, it and Tiberius was still the centre of Rabbinic Judaism – a movement that is hardly to be confused with a cosmopolitan acceptance of various Greco Roman philosophical approaches to life.

[41] Crossan, *Birth of Christianity,* 257-289; summarised pp. 283-285.

[42] Ibid., 284.

that in the future, and usually the imminent future, God will act to restore justice in an unjust world." [43] Many of the sayings attributed to Jesus would best fit this kind of description. To give but two examples:

> Matt 7:21-23 (// Luke 13:25-27[44]): Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven. . . . On that day many will say to me, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name? Then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers."[45]

> Matt 24:30-31 (// Mark 13:26-27 // Luke 21:25-27): Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

One could multiply these examples.[46] It is clear, that if our inventory of authentic sayings is larger, then we have a Jesus with a definite apocalyptic eschatology.

But more than this, and this perhaps is the most important thing is this: Jesus saw himself as the key agent which would bring about these world-altering events. In Luke 11:20, Jesus is quoted as saying: "... if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, the kingdom of God has come to you" (cf. Luke 17:21). Jesus and his actions are both the harbingers of the future kingdom of God, and its reality in Palestine in the first century.[47] As the "son of man," Jesus is the one who will come in the clouds of

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[43] Ibid., 283.

[44] Incidentally, this parallel illustrates to me the problems in identifying the exact contents of Q with any confidence. It is true that there is some parallelism between Matt 7:13-14, 21-23 and Luke 13:22-30. Yet the actual content is quite different. If nothing else, this is revealed by the shared vocabulary (9 of Luke's 161 words). It is hard to conceive that such differences could arise out of usage of a common written source.

[45] Scriptural citations are from the NRSV.

[46] Dale C. Allison has noted the following as amongst Crossan's "first stratum" the following: Jesus' apocalyptic return (1 Thess 4:13-18; *Did* 16:6-8; Matt 24:31a (M); Mark 13:2-27 = Matt 2:29, 30b-31 = Luke 21:25-38; Rev 1:7, 13; 1:14; John 19:37); before the angels (Luke 12:8-9 = Matt 10:32-33; 2 Clem 3:2; Mark 8:38=Matt 16:27=Luke 9:26; Rev 3:5; 2 Tim 2:12b; knowing the danger (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Pet 3:10; GThom 21:3; GThom 103; Luke 12:39-40=Matt 24:43-44), etc. *Jesus of Nazareth: Millennarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998) 116-117.

[47] The kingdom of God, central as it is to Jesus' teaching, has proven itself to be a very

heaven seated at the right hand of power (Mark 14:62), who will judge all nations (Matt 25:31-46). There will be a new covenant, a new basis for the relationship between God and his followers on earth, that will be formed on the body and blood of Jesus (Matt 26:26-30; Mark 14:22-26; Luke 22:14-23; 1 Cor 11:23-26). In other words, if we allow the authenticity of most of the materials in the canonical Gospels, we find that Jesus considers himself to be the central agent involving the radical elimination of evil from this entire world. He considers himself to be of cosmic importance.

My second difference is the place given to the resurrection. For Crossan, "Nobody knew what had happened to Jesus' body,"[48] after his death. He defines the resurrection in these terms:

> If those who accepted Jesus during his earthly life had not continued to follow, believe, and experience his continuing presence after the crucifixion, all would have been over. That *is* the resurrection, the continuing community of the past Jesus in a radically new and transcendental mode of present and future existence.[49]

What happens if we take a different attitude to Crossan not only to the possibility of the miraculous in the ministry of Jesus,[50] but that Jesus was actually raised from

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sophisticated complex of interlocking ideas. Not only is it present in the ministry of Jesus and of the early church (see Robert K. McIver, "The Parable of the Weeds among the Wheat [Matt 13:24-30, 36-43] and the Relationship Between the Kingdom of God and the Church as Portrayed in the Gospel of Matthew," *JBL* 114 [1995] 643-659), it is conceived as a seen expected future reality in which God directly intervenes in world history (Matt 3:2; 4:7; 10:7; 13:40-43, 49-50; 25:31-46; Mark 1:14-15; etc.).

48 Crossan, *Historical Jesus,* 394, original in italics.

49 Crossan, *Historical Jesus*, 404. Crossan gives a concise statement of his viewpoint in his debate between William Lane Craig & William F. Buckley (Buckley was listed as moderator, but participated extensively in the debate): "Go back to Emmaus—two people, probably one male and one female ... leave Jerusalem. It's Easter Sunday morning. Somebody joins them. Now it's not a vision; it's not a hallucination. There is no blinding light. The stranger explains the Scriptures to them. They say later that their hearts were warmed, but they still didn't recognize him. They then invite this person to come in and eat with them. During the meal they recognize Jesus; then he's gone. That for me is a perfect metaphorical summary of the first years of the church—the searching of the Scriptures and the breaking of bread. Jesus is present—not in a vision, not in a trance, not in a hallucination—but in searching the Scriptures and sharing food with strangers." *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up?* edited by Paul Copan (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998) 66.

50 The following comments by Crossan are apposite: "A doctor at Lourdes might admit, 'I have absolutely no medical way of explaining what has happened.' That is a right statement.

the dead in a way in which the first believers would have thought. This, in fact, is the crucial question. How would somebody living in first century Palestine understand the claim that Jesus was raised from the dead.[51] They would have shared a view of the resurrection rather like the Pharisees. Their concept of resurrection involved a real bringing back to life of an individual – including a real physical presence, expressed by a body. If we accept the reality of the Gospel accounts of the resurrection in the way intended by their original writers and hearers,[52] then we have something that changes the course of human history. We have evidence that life after death is possible. Furthermore, Jesus is the one who has made it possible for us all to share in resurrected life. He indeed, is the one on whom all human history turns.

On this reconstruction, Jesus is the resurrected one, the proclaimer of the imminent end of the world, and the one who claims to have a relationship with God that Christians have had to explain it by attributing to him full divinity. It is this Jesus who comes to us demanding a decision. Do we believe? Will we accept what he has provided for us at such great cost. This is a disturbing Jesus, and one quite different to the one we meet in the writings of Dom Crossan.

Ships on a Different Ocean?

While working on this paper, I had the pleasure of listening to a recording of Jane Austen's novel, *Sense and Sensibility* during an extended car journey. One phrase in the book caught my attention. It comes from the scene where the heroine of the novel, Elinor, meets Mr Robert Ferrars, the brother of the man she has come to love. Robert reveals himself to be a fool, and after a rather long sample of this foolishness, the narrator says, "Elinor agreed to it all, for she did not think he deserved the compliment of rational opposition."[53] The phrase appealed to me at the time, because

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Then one has the right to say, 'I by faith therefore believe that God has intervened here.' *But it's a theological presupposition of mine that God does not operate that way.*" *Will the Real Jesus*, 61 [italics mine]. In *Birth of Christianity* 294-304 Crossan carefully distinguishes between healing and cure. Diseases need a cure; illness needs healing. Crossan is more than willing to attribute to Jesus healings, but not cures.

[51] This is a question that Crossan discussed at length in the third paper that he gave at the July 1999 combined ANZATS/ANZSTS conference held at Newcastle.

[52] Crossan agrees and I agree on how resurrection would be understood in the first century. We disagree in whether or not it is a description of reality. In his lecture he used the telling phrase, "Christianity has both the scandal of the cross and the missing/empty tomb."

[53] *The Penguin Complete Novels of Jane Austin* (London: Penguin, 1983) 149.

I must admit feeling somewhat of the same as I have read some of the literature on the historical Jesus. Some of it is so preposterous as to warrant no serious response. To give an Australian example, the recent work of Barbara Thiering has always struck me in this light.

But the works of Crossan belong to a different category. I first met his studies on the parables as an undergraduate. Compared with the Jeremias, who at the end of his clinical dissection of the tradition history of the parable left something which had all the appeal to me of a lifeless body on a mortuary slab, Crossan's writings were like a breath a fresh air. Here was somebody who brought a freshness and excitement to the study of parables. Nor has my subsequent acquaintance with the more recent writings Crossan changed my mind. Crossan's work shows a serious interaction with the texts of the Gospels, a willingness to address what I consider to be the crucial questions, and a creative and coherently argued picture of the historical Jesus. His work is not something to be dismissed lightly. But how can one engage in dialogue with one who starts with such a different set of presuppositions and works from such a different set of source materials? Despite a willingness to dialogue on both sides, are we condemned to be like ships sailing on different oceans?

Perhaps the metaphor of the ships on different oceans, correct though it is, can be nuanced. Even ships that travel on different oceans sometimes call in at a common port. While there the captains and crews of the ships might meet to share with each other what they have discovered in their various voyages. Perhaps this response to Crossan might be described in similar terms. In our search for Jesus both Crossan and I are on a journey of discovery. I, for one, have listened to Crossan's discoveries with real interest. We have different a method, a different inventory of texts which we work from, and, as a result a different Jesus. But I find helpful his careful attention to method, his clear analysis of the social and historical backgrounds, and the resultant reconstruction of Jesus. Furthermore, he is most helpful in the pointed questions he raises that directly challenge my own presuppositions about how I might go about my own search for Jesus.