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The Jesus controversy: perspectives in conflict

Oscar Cole-Arnal

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curiously, the location of the notes are not indicated by reference numbers in the text and this makes their placement somewhat difficult to follow.

Twenty-eight black and white illustrations and 12 colour plates presenting relevant visual images are included, with most discussed in the text. There is an index and select bibliography for those wishing to pursue additional research.

Diane E. Peters

Wilfrid Laurier University/Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

The Jesus Controversy: Perspectives in Conflict

John Dominic Crossan, Luke Timothy Johnson, Werner H. Kelber
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1999
v + 121 pages, \$26.50 Hardcover

Over the last ten to fifteen years we have borne witness to an explosion of controversy and research in historical Jesus studies, what has been dubbed by some as the Third Quest. Indeed, Luke Timothy Johnson, one of the contributors to this lecture series become book, says that the quest which began in the 1960s "as a small trickle" has become "a major tributary...again in full flood, with new versions of Jesus available at Barnes and Noble almost monthly" (48). Certainly popular magazines like *Time*, *Newsweek* and *Maclean's* have fueled the controversy by laying it before the general public – not that such action offends most of the "Questers". After all, Robert W. Funk, a primary organizer of the recent Quest, has taken great pains to present the scholarly debate before the public eye.

The Jesus Controversy is still another of the mountain of publications that continues to appear on the subject, and between its two covers are lectures sponsored by the Rockwell Foundation, an activity inaugurated in 1938. As one who began his graduate career in the field of New Testament and who took up the challenge of Bultmann student Ernst Käsemann to search for the historical Jesus in order to ground the *kerygma* in history over against Gnosticism, I am caught up again in the simultaneously academic and faith challenge to find the Jesus of history through the layers of faith traditions in ancient documents, canonical and otherwise.

Certainly, the book contains some genuine nuggets, and I applaud these. I appreciated greatly Crossan's debate and challenge with Daniel Boyarin; I find his points profound (especially with our Lutheran love of Paul) and compelling. On some points, here and there, I disagree with Crossan, but overall I applaud his scholarship, his methodological genius, his literary skills and the radical faith he

exudes, both openly in his presuppositions and with nuance in his reconstructive historiography. However, if one wishes to read Crossan at his best, I recommend his monumental *The Birth of Christianity*.

Perhaps my inclinations toward Crossan dispose me to approach Luke Timothy Johnson's lecture critically. He argues (indeed, his style is that of an apologist) for a resurrection of Martin Kähler's defense of Pauline-style *kerygma* over against the post-Enlightenment historical Jesus. As a seminary student, I was taken by this classic in its powerful pre-Bultmannian devotion to Paul and the Lutheran notion of the Gospel, but I find today that the two are not radically exclusive of each other. Although I think Johnson posits *some* appropriate challenges, he tends to drown them in his own display of erudition and polemics. One point with which I agree heartily is his recommendation of Russell Shorto's popular *Gospel Truth* which introduces the current quest in a creative way for a general reading public.

The last lecture, by Werner Kelber, seeks to portray a broad perspective that integrates the Crossan and Johnson lectures while moving beyond them. Since this is my first taste of Kelber's work I found it both interesting and useful. Although his broad historical survey falls short of satisfying integration, I am gratified as both scholar and believer by his celebration of pluralism, a commitment that he repeats and underscores with the inspiration of an artist. He builds upon this pluralism by his concluding five points, points which strike me as a mandate worthy of us all.

Would I recommend this book? Yes, easily! Would I recommend it in my top ten books on the current Quest of the Historical Jesus? I guess not.

Oscar Cole-Arnal
Waterloo Lutheran Seminary

Preaching Mark

Robert Stephen Reid
St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999
199 pages, \$30.75 Softcover

In this recent monograph, Robert Stephen Reid evaluates the Gospel of Mark in light of the rhetorical shape of the text. By determining the literary boundaries of a text's "architectural symmetry", Reid argues that the form of Mark's storytelling carries the burden of argument. The rhetorical structure that embodies the argument is the *chiasm*, a kind of visual "crossing" where the members exhibit an "X" shape (see below). The *chiasm* is the argument strategy