

underlying issue of power in the determination of ethics; and rap music as a medium for the expression of black rage.

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CHRISTOLOGY

- Topic: The Historical Jesus as Savior: A Dialogue with Crossan and Borg
Convener: Thomas H. West, College of St. Catherine
Moderator: Mark Napack, Catholic University of America
Presenter: Michael O'Keefe, Mercyhurst College

Michael O'Keefe first laid out Crossan's three-part method: (1) a social anthropology that places Jesus in the peasant class; (2) historical research that sees Jesus as a Jewish peasant suffering under Roman and Jewish oppression; (3) a literary analysis that regards canonical and noncanonical texts as equal but which gives priority to the oldest texts. O'Keefe notes the danger in the first two parts of reducing Jesus to a type and thereby failing to see his uniqueness. With respect to the third part, theologians may be uneasy with giving equality to non-canonical sources but O'Keefe urges that they be open.

O'Keefe judges Borg's method as generally similar to that of Crossan's, but highlights one substantial difference. Drawing from Winston Smith's idea of the "primordial truth," Borg claims to see in Jesus a recovery of the experience of "spirit," which he understands very generally as the experience of the transcendent. Jesus mediates the presence of God. And thus Borg's perspective becomes explicitly theological, even though he does not use the word "spirit" in the Christian sense of "Holy Spirit." Besides being a "spirit-person," Jesus according to Borg is sage, a reformer of Jewish life (though not in the narrowly political sense), and a nonapocalyptic prophet. Like Crossan's Jesus, Borg's Jesus is decidedly this-worldly; indeed, both suggest that Jesus was agnostic about the next life.

O'Keefe does not deny that there is an implicit theology in Crossan's portrait of Jesus. After all, Crossan's Jesus had a fundamental experience of God which empowered him to be such an insightful and disturbing presence. But Crossan makes these theological implications less explicit than does Borg. He thus relies primarily on nontheological methods and sources in his depiction of Jesus as a

Jewish cynic, who practiced opened commensality, radical egalitarianism, and a kind of "magic."

O'Keefe wonders if theological response to Crossan and Borg has not been too defensive. Have not theologians softened the sharper edge of Jesus' message by failing to take some of the noncanonical writings more seriously? And yet, are not theologians justified in asking Crossan and Borg to make their religious and theological assumptions more explicit?

In the ensuing discussion, the most frequently heard points were: (1) Crossan's and Borg's portraits of Jesus as nonapocalyptic just do not ring true. Have they not read Albert Schweitzer? E. P. Sanders? (2) The precise relation between historical reconstruction and Christian faith needs more work. Crossan and Borg would help matters by showing more sophisticated awareness of this relation. It is a pity that Crossan has studiously avoided Schillebeeckx's work, especially the first chapter of the Jesus book where Schillebeeckx lays out a detailed view of the relation between historical research and theology. (3) There seems to be an implicit anti-Jewishness in Borg's reconstruction that leaves some uneasy. (4) Theologians cannot take refuge in airy speculation. They must be conversant with the work of social scientists and historians.

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COMPARATIVE THEOLOGY

- Topic: Discussion of Joseph Bracken's *The Divine Matrix: Creativity as Link between East and West*
- Convener: James L. Fredericks, Loyola Marymount University
- Moderator: Bradley Malkovsky, University of Notre Dame
- Opening and Closing Remarks: Joseph Bracken, Xavier University
- Respondents: Whalen Lai, University of California, Davis
 Christopher K. Chapple, Loyola Marymount University

The comparative theology seminar was given over to a discussion of *The Divine Matrix: Creativity as Link Between East and West* (Orbis, 1994), by Joseph Bracken S.J. with responses from Professor Christopher Chapple of Loyola Marymount University, a specialist in South Asian religious thought, and