Recent trends in Christology
Gerald L Bray

Christology remains the centrally important subject for Christian theology: there are many issues, much debate and many opinions. But, as much as any other issue, Christology is almost universally regarded as inherently intractable, a problem almost impossible to frame and even more impossible to ask the impossible; but we are very glad that Dr Bray, of Oak Hill College in London and author of Creeds, Councils and Christ (IVP, 1984), has accepted the challenge and given us this survey article.

In the eyes of a British student there can be little doubt that a study of recent trends in Christology ought to begin with the symposium The Myth of God Incarnate which appeared in July 1977.1 Ten years later the book is still in print, and although it is neither a particularly original nor a particularly profound Christological study, it did manage to create an atmosphere which has provided a talking-point for the subsequent decade. The 'myth-makers', as the contributors to the symposium were variously destined, were quickly and almost universally criticized by most scholars working in the field, and a number of studies soon appeared which did their best to demonstrate that they, too, were on the wrong track.2 Before long there were even secondary symposia devoted to an examination of the 'myth debate', in which proponents and opponents of the original work met and other agreed and often sharply, from one another.3

Th[]e Myth[] was criticized for two main reasons. First, the contributors were criticized for what they meant by the word itself, and this led to some confusion in the minds of readers. Behind the verbal uncertainty lay an uncertain approach to historical facts which revealed itself in the cavalier approach of most of the contributors to the evidence of the gospels. On the whole it would probably be fair to say that for most of them, as good post-Bultmannians, the evidence of the Jesus of the gospels had little or no importance for the development of Christology. But in this respect the symposia were not an exception, they were a rule, not an example.

But in spite of its lingering attachment to orthodoxy, the man characteristic of recent Anglo-Saxon Christology has largely abandoned the traditional Christological canon which existed and this tradition has reasserted itself in the debates of the past decade, which found many in the conservative camp unprepared and not a few of the myth-makers' chosen ground. The Myth appeared too soon after John Robinson's Redating the New Testament for the latter to have exerted any influence upon it, but the contrast between them was soon perceived and utilized by the myth-makers.4 First, it was a radical slimmed in the English tradition of conservative biblical criticism, and in his book he managed to present a case for saying that the entire New Testament canon was in existence by AD 70 without ever suggesting what implications that might have for a radical rejection of the gospels as historical evidence. Robinson subsequently went even further and attempted to demonstrate that the fourth gospel was the oldest of the four, which is close to the original kerygma, although here he was prepared to admit that there may have been a long period in which neither the gospels nor any other part of the New Testament was read and developed by the church before committing it to writing.5

From the conservative side came John Wimmen's Easter Enigma, which was an attempted harmonization of the four gospels in their accounts of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.6 Wimmen was criticized for his forays into speculation, but partial scholars also pointed out that it is inevitable that harmonization is ever to be achieved. What Wimmen did was to show that harmonization is not impossible, even that the claims of the gospels to historicity deserves to be taken more seriously than it has sometimes been. Furthermore, it was generally recognized that Wimmen was writing in defence of traditional orthodoxy, though some attempted to develop this. Even so, this reaction demonstrates the degree to which it is still assumed that the historicity of the gospels and traditional orthodoxy stands or falls.7 But all this does not mean that Wimmen failed to carry conviction when he tried to unite a radical theology to a conservative biblical criticism.

Specific attempts to unite a conservative view of the reliability of the gospels as historical narrative with a fairly traditional model is already mentioned, although it was prepared to take the modern debates into account were made by I. H. Marshall and C. F. D. Moule.8 Marshall's study is more limited in scope, being primarily an examination of Jesus' self-assertion titles which are applied to him in the New Testament. He concludes that New Testament Christology makes sense only if we post the belief that Jesus himself taught that he was the Son of Man, the Son of God, the Messiah,Christ and Lord. Moule endorses the same view, though perhaps somewhat more tentatively and considerably more of the idea of 'corporate Christ', in which Jesus ceases to be merely an historical individual and becomes, in the understanding of the New Testament church, a cosmic figure who transcend individual personhood to embrace a new humanity in himself.

It is at this point that Moule deverts orthodox Christology, which says that each believer has a relationship with Christ, who enables him to approach the Father in the humanitarian relationship through the Holy Spirit, and expects instead for an all-embracing, essentially eschatological view, according to which Christ is the agent of the transformative work of the Holy Spirit.9

The Myth's influence on Christology had therefore little to do with its actual content. Rather, what the book did was to bring into view the problem of the gospels and what extent traditional dogmatic Christology ought to be revised in the light of the findings of biblical scholars and the speculations of modern theologians. Indeed, one might go so far as to say that attempts to write The Myth live and breathe the spirit of the biblical mind, which will develop out of these matters satisfactorily which produced a spate of material endeavouring to correct and supplement its shortcomings. To that extent the book opened up an area which had been too long neglected, and which urgently needed serious attention.

History and the gospels
The precise relationship of the gospels to scientific history has been a major issue in recent Christological debate. The authors of the Myth were basically complaining that the early church took the biblical texts at face value and out of their canonical framework which, whilst it was internally coherent, was based on a false assumption. In saying this they were following in the footsteps of Rudolf Bultmann, who had died the previous year, but ignoring the widespread reaction to his ideas which had come to dominate Christological studies in Germany. Kienemann's 'new quest' for the historical Jesus, although never widely accepted, was never completely ignored. This astonishing oversight can perhaps be explained by the fact that German historical and archaeological studies have been carried out entirely within a liberal theological framework. They have not been designed, as they have been in the English-speaking world, to support the historical trustworthiness of the gospels as the chief prop of classical orthodoxy. The myth-makers, coming as they did from an Anglo-Saxon environment, understood that only a radically anti-historical approach could serve as a persuasive basis for their theological reconstruction. Thus they were obliged to overstate their case and ignore developments in Germany which might be interpreted as evidence against it.

In the final analysis, the Myth was criticized for two main reasons. First, the contributors were criticized for what they meant by the word itself, and this led to some confusion in the minds of readers. Behind the verbal uncertainty lay an uncertain approach to historical facts which revealed itself in the cavalier approach of most of the contributors to the evidence of the gospels. On the whole it would probably be fair to say that for most of them, as good post-Bultmannians, the evidence of the Jesus of the gospels had little or no importance for the development of Christology. But in this respect the symposia were not an exception, they were a rule, not an example.

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Christology remains the centrally important subject for Christian theology, and many contemporary theologians, such as Morna Bruce, have argued that it is an area where the Church needs to focus more attention. This is because Christology is central to the understanding of the person and work of Christ, and it has implications for many other areas of theological study.

History and the gospels
The precise relationship of the gospels to scientific history has long been recognized to lie at the heart of much Christological debate. The authors of the gospels were not scientific historians, and their primary concern was to convey the message of Jesus' life and teachings. This raises questions about the reliability of the gospels and the extent to which historical events can be discerned from their narratives.

The Myth
This approach to the study of Christology argues that the emphasis on the historical Jesus has been misplaced. Instead, the study of Christology should focus on the mythological and symbolic aspects of the gospels. This approach has been influential in recent years, particularly in the work of scholars such as Richard Bauckham.

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leave the Father's uniqueness intact and at the centre of Christian theology. In general, however, Williams is certainly correct in his assessment of Arius' mind, though he may have underestimated the appeal of soteriological factors to some, at least, of his many followers. One interesting feature of recent discussion is that traditional Orthodoxy is often associated with the Council of Chalcedon, perhaps because it is the usual stopping place in university courses on early church history, though even then Council has to be seen as such a conclusion. This has been repeatedly pointed out by E. L. Mascall and two timely, though little known, studies bear him out. More recently, however, there are signs that the neglect of post-Chalcedonian developments is being repaired, at least to some extent. David Calvert* extends his rejection of classical Christological terms to the period beyond Chalcedon, and G. C. Moore criticizes the too facile rehabilitation of Chal-

dorian terminology into distinctively modern concepts. Chunras is particularly concerned to demonstrate that the apologists of the early Church, including the Confessor, had a theology which can quite easily be trans-ferred into existentialist terms. It is a brave attempt, but apart from the fact that it assumes that existentialism is the modern philosophy it is open to the same kind of objection that Rowan Williams has levelled at Gregg and Grob. Once again we are faced with an attempt to graft a modern way of thinking onto an ancient author whose own perspective was rather different. 27

Modern reconstructions

Nevertheless it is fair to say that 'Chalcedon' is now widely used as shorthand for calculation in modern Christology, and that recent speculative work in the field can largely be divided according to whether it accepts or rejects this heritage. This in turn involves a preference for either an ontological or a functional approach to the figure of Jesus. In view of the tendency of biblical scholars to opt for the latter, it is scarcely surprising that the majority of recent studies have done the same, but the ontological approach is by no means dead and has recently acquired some notable exponents and defenders. Among the books devoted to a basically functional approach, I think the title of the 1980 Sabeur Lec- tures given by F. Schubert Ogden who argues for an understanding of Jesus as the man who has given us the key to achieve authentic personal identity by his embodiment of the idea of existentialist morality of the 1960s, and he is clearly sym- pathetic to the authors of the Myth. However his approach is so firmly tied to the supposed desire of 'modern man' for the subjective experience of 'freedom' that any reference to the historical Jesus is obliged to serve this fundamental point. Because of this it becomes difficult to know whether Ogden is really presenting Jesus or merely a language in which the concepts of existentialism may be expressed. He argues that only a return to the ontological categories of Chalcedon, suitably updated to embrace the insights of modern philosophy, can solve the problems which theologians believe confront them. Galot insists that the biblical witness, taken as a whole, leads inevitably to the ontological definitions of Chalcedon, which he believes are sufficiently open-ended to accommodate modern concerns. He rightly criticizes many modern theo-

logians for having rejected traditional terminology without either a careful reading of Jesus' sayings in their own right or using Jesus' language as a hangover from the past which might still be useful for expressing human emotions today. Much less radical than this is the work of Anthony Tyrell Hanson, who rejects the Chalcedonian framework without departing from the point of view of the Chalcedonians as a whole. Hanson argues that the teaching and experience of Jesus which the early Christians received obliged them to develop a theology which allowed for distinctions within the divine activity. For Hanson of the Word, doctrine, according to which God could communicate with mankind through the activities of a particular human being. We often think of Christology in reformist terms of Arianism, but Hanson is careful to reject this. He also rejects the revamped adoptionism of Geoffrey Lampe, though he is broadly sympathetic to the concerns which it raises. In this regard, Galot, who is perhaps the greatest of the saints, a man in whom God has revealed his Word but who nevertheless remains a finite creature who speaks with a human voice, is a very eloquent witness. Hanson's work is especially notable for the amount of attention it gives to the question of Christ's pre-existence and the problem of the ongoing influence of his sacrifice as a mediatorial propitiation for our sins. Both of these concepts be elucidated Chalcedonian terms, and in the whole field of medieval and Reformation Christology, including the eucharistic controversies of the period, which have largely been left to one side in modern debates. Roman Catholic theologians have also been prominent in arguing various forms of functional Christology, though their dogmatic commitment to Chalcedon has usually pre-

vented them from being quite as radical as their Protestant counterparts. In general they have been content to stress the implications of Christ's complete humanity, particularly in the realm of his conscious self-awareness. 'A humanity com-

plete open to God' in the words of Karl Rahner, 28 H. Küng and most profoundly Edward Schillebeeckx 29 have described and developed their approach to Christ. For them the psychological experiences of a first-person perspective on the figure of Jesus are the key to Christology, and it is the meeting of Jesus' self-consciousness with ours which makes him the model for us to follow in the pursuit of our salvation. To all of these writers, as to Hanson, the traditional ontological approach suffers from being drawn largely from the fourth gospel, which they all agree is a late and unreliable source. In opposition to this tendency there is the wide-ranging and deeply based study of the Galiläischen by J. Galot, 3A or even wider, which is a study of the work of Galot which has grown up on the margins of Christianity and Marxism. The most serious criticism of this from the traditional Roman Catholic perspective is that by Jean Galot, 32 who attack this tendency for an overly historicist approach to Christology to the saving work of Christ on the cross. Galot does not stop with the teaching, however, but extends his treatment to cover the resurrection and ascension of Christ, as well as the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Unfortunately, the wholeness of Galot's vision is compromised by a limita-

tion of the substitutionary role of Christ's sacrifice to allow for a teleological view of the work of salvation, and a universalizing of redemption which has no place for the satisfaction of the Father's justice by the payment of the human debt of guilt. It has been left to Protestant theologians to defend the classical teaching of the Reformation on the atonement, and this is the line which we have been pursuing in the present paper. The doctrine of the Circumcision of Jesus and his followers and in the wider Graeco-Roman world. As it is often supposed that a concept of substitutionary sacrifice would not have fitted the socio-cultural context of early Christianity, this is a contribution of major importance. More strictly biblical in scope is the work of Leon Morris. 33 who shows in great detail just what the range of meaning inherent in the Hebrew word "atonement" actually was. However, it is significant in itself, as well as in its implications that Morris' scholarship is an unashamedly conservative, with a wealth of biblical reference and a constant concern to answer the questions which are often raise by the modern Church. In the publication of this study, and with the work of scholars of an earlier generation like C. H. Dodd and Vincent Taylor. Giving points out, modern reconstructions of Christology are not possible more than a passing resemblance to ancient be-

erries, and he attributes this fact to the rather superficial rejection of the traditional orthodox inheritance on the part of modern theologians. Gunton's book is a fresh and learned presentation of the approach to the subject and should be taken more seriously than it has been so far. Gunton does not appear to know Galot, but the two men have a good deal in common. In both approaches complement each other in a quite remarkable way.

The work of Christ

The predominance of a functional, soteriological approach to Christology is a reminder of the importance of the work of Christ within the framework of the doctrine of his person and mission. Colin Gunton points out, modern theologians frequently miss the fact that the classical two-natures Christology had a profoundly soteriological purpose in existence and its components, especially the concept of an intermediary mediator between man and God. But although the soteri-

ological theme has received great prominence, its content has been left remarkably vague. Very often the most that is said is that Christ is our 'liberator', a term which is usually under-

stood in terms of individual emotional and psychological experience, though of course it has also been applied to social and political liberation. In other words, the 'liberation' which has grown up on the frontiers of Christianity and Marxism.

Other approaches

One major aspect, in an age dominated by Karl Barth, that there would be a steady stream of theological studies relating the doctrine of Christ to the Trinity, but although such studies have appeared from time to time, they have been sur-

prisingly rare. No doubt the strong functional approach to Christology has had a lot to do with this neglect, but it is quite possible that the interest of the one factor in modern Christology in the history of the churches. Ecumenical interests have prompted the World Council of Churches to produce its excellent symposium on the Filioque dispute which has been very recently published by Yves Congar, 34 but the only major work on the place of the Son within the Godhead is that by Louis Bouyer, 35 which has not had any circulation whatever. The need to make any serious impact on Anglo-Saxon Christology.

On a completely different track is Jaroslav Pelikan's recent work dealing with the place of Jesus in the history of culture. This is an unusual subject which has seldom been studied, and Pelikan takes eighteen distinctive pictures of Christ which he sees as having dominated at successive periods in the history of the church, and he deals with each in the light of the theology, ecumenism, and history of the church. There is a reminder that Jesus has never belonged to theologians, and it even suggests to us that theology has reacted to the forces of the world and to the needs of the church. Pelikan has perhaps often thought. It is a book which deserves to be read and pondered carefully by all students of Christology, whatever their own particular approach to the subject might be.

Lastly, something should be said about the Statement of the Pontifical Biblical Commission which appeared in Latin and French in 1984 and has recently been translated into English with a commentary by J. A. Fitzmyer. 36 The Commis-

sion has noted four different trends which have appeared in modern Christology. They are as follows: a strict literalist approach to the Scriptures. Its remedy is a deeper and more comprehensive use of the Bible, including the Old Testament, for establishing a Christology which will have pastoral relevance in the church today. The document betrays no sign of denominational bias, though its comments on particular questions are often very trenchant. The use of the Bible may be a help because it fills in the background to the Commis-

sion's thinking as far as this can be done by one who was not a
leave the Father's uniqueness intact and at the centre of Christian theology. In general, Hanson is certainly correct in his assessment of Arius' mind, though he may have underestimated the appeal of soteriological factors to some, at least, of his many followers.

One interesting feature of recent discussion is that traditional orthodoxy can be associated with the Council of Chalcedon, perhaps because it is the usual stopping place in university courses on early church history, even though that Council has usually been seen as such a compromise. This has been pointed out by E. L. Mascall12 and two timely, though little known, studies bear him out.13 More recently, however, there are signs that the neglect of post-Chalcedonian development is being repaired, at least to some extent. David Calvert14 extends his rejection of classical Christological terms to the period beyond Chalcedon, and Galen M. Zecchini15 recent work is redating Chalcedonian doctrine into distinctly modern concepts. Chesnut is particularly concerned to demonstrate that the Council of Chalcedon did not mean that the two Confessors, who had a theology which can quite easily be transferred into existentialist terms. It is a brave attempt, but apart from the fact that it assumes that existentialism is the modern philosophy that it is open to the same kind of objection that Rown Williams has levelled at Gregg and Grob. Once again we are faced with an attempt to graft a modern way of thinking onto an ancient author whose own perspective was rather different.16

Modern reconstructions

Nevertheless it is fair to say that 'Chalcedon' is now widely used as shorthand for a secularized and modernized traditional orthodox Christology, and that recent speculative work in the field can largely be divided according to whether it accepts or rejects this heritage. This in turn involves a preference for either an ontological or a functional approach to the figure of Jesus. In view of the tendency of biblical scholars to opt for the latter, it is scarcely surprising that the majority of recent studies have done the same, but the ontological approach is by no means dead and has recently acquired some notable exponents and defenders.

Among the books devoted to a basically functional approach is the 1980 Samson Lectures given by Charles E. Schubert Ogden17 who argues for an understanding of Jesus as the man who has given us the key to achieve authentic personal identity by a true understanding of the most basic existentialist morality of the 1960s, and he is clearly sympathetic to the authors of the Myth. However his approach is so firmly tied to the supposed desire of 'modern man' for the subjective experience of 'freedom' that any reference to the historic Jesus is obliged to serve this fundamental point. Because of this it becomes difficult to know whether Ogden is really preaching Jesus as non-linguistic using English language as a hangover from the past which might still be useful for expressing human emotions today.

Much less radical than this is the work of Anthony Tyrell Hanson,18 who rejects the Chalcedonian framework without departing from orthodox belief in Christ. His approach is to bring into the dualistic approach to reality which characterized ancient tendencies towards adoration and deocism. As Gunton points out, modern reconstructions of Christology are more than a passing resemblance to ancient heresies, and he attributes this fact to the rather superficial rejection of the traditional orthodox inheritance on the part of modern theologians. Gunton's book is a fresh and learned philosophical approach to the subject and should be taken more seriously than it has been so far. Gunton does not appear to know Galot, but the two men have a good deal in common. In some ways, however, the two approaches complement each other in a quite remarkable way.

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The most serious critique of this from the traditional Roman Catholic perspective is that by Jean Galot,19 who attacks the liberal approach to the saving work of Christ on the cross. Galot does not stop with the Work, however, but extends his treatment to cover the resurrection and ascension of Christ, as well as the sending of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Unfortunately, the wholeness of Galot's vision is compromised by a limitation of the substitutionary role of Christ's sacrifice to allow for a new relation of the work of salvation, and a universalizing of redemption which has no place for the satisfaction of the Father's justice by the payment of the human debt of guilt.

It has been left to Protestant theologians to defend the classical teaching of the Reformations on the atonement, and this is the argument that the Church is not victorious until the Lord is victorious over all his followers and in the wider Graeco-Roman world. As it is often supposed that a concept of substitutionary sacrifice would not have fitted the socio-cultural context of earlier Christianity, this is a contribution of major importance. More strictly biblical in scope is the work of Leon Morris,20 who shows in great detail just what the range of meaning inherent in Jewish Christology actually was. This is a pertinent fact about Morris' scholarship is unashamedly conservative, with a wealth of biblical reference and a constant concern to answer the objections of the Greek scholars. The Greek scholars of an earlier generation like C. H. Dodd and Vincent Taylor.

Complementing Morris' work is the massive study by H. C. Jordan.21 They were both very well aware of the evidence of the New Testament for it, and the treatment which atonement has received in history. Complete chapters are devoted to the contributions of Anselm, Abelard, Dale, Forster, Anderegg, and Morris. Jordan's view is that the theologians are briefly discussed in the last chapter, including Leon Morris (but not C. H. Dodd, for some curious reason). Jordan's view is that the theologians have been largely concerned to show that he is always scrupulously fair to his opponents and his book is likely to become and remain a standard work of reference on its subject.

Other approaches

One might, in an age dominated by Karl Barth, that there would be a steady stream of theological studies relating the doctrine of Christ to the Trinity, but although such studies have appeared from time to time, they have been surprisingly rare. No doubt the strong functional approach to Christology has had a lot to do with this neglect, but it is quite clear that the interest in theories of the Christology of traditional creedal positions. Since the appearance of James Dunn's Jesus and the Spirit there has been almost nothing of comparable significance, in spite of the widespread growth of charismatic and 'renaissance' movements in the churches. Ecumenical interests have prompted the World Council of Churches to produce its excellent symposium on the Filioque disputandum, but this was written by Yves Congar,22 but the only major work on the place of the Son within the Godhead is that by Louis Bouyer,23 which has not had the circulation it deserves. The need is to make any serious impact on Anglo-Saxon Christology.

On a completely different track is Jaroslav Pelikan's recent work dealing with the place of Jesus in the history of culture.24 This is an unusual subject which has seldom been studied, and this is not surprising since the older, more conservative Pelikan takes eighteen different pictures of Christ which he sees as having dominated at successive periods in the history of the church, and he deals with each in the light of the theology of the next generation. In recent years, however, he is a reminder that Jesus has never belonged to theologians, and it even suggests us to that theology has reacted to the forces of the age with which it was left to think. The result has been often thought. It is a book which deserves to be read and pondered carefully by all students of Christology, whatever their own particular approach to the subject might be.

Lastly, something should be said about the Statement of the Pontifical Biblical Commission which appeared in Latin and French in 1984 and has recently been translated into English with a commentary by J. A. Fitzmyer.25 The Commission is made up of some different trends which have appeared in modern Christology, and it offers an approach to the Scriptures. Its remedy is a deeper and more comprehensive use of the Bible, including the Old Testament, for establishing a Christology which will have pastoral relevance in the church today. The document betrays no sign of denominational bias, though its comments on particular Churches are not always neutral. The need is for more Christology is a help because it fills in the background to the Commission's thinking for as far as this can be done by one who was not a
Four other gospels: review article

D F Wright

Considerable scholarship has been paid in recent years to non-canonical gospel traditions. In this article our Church History Editor, who lectures at New College, Edinburgh, reviews a significant work in this area.


This book, which is subtitled 'Shadows on the Contours of Canon', is a first response to the challenge thrown down to scholars by Helmut Koester (and also in effect by Richard Bauckham in the fifth volume of the New Testament outside the New Testament Gospels Project, The Jesus Tradition Outside the Gospels, ed. D. N. Freedman, Sheffield, 1985, pp. 380-493, esp. 389-374) to analyze the gospel tradition in primitive Christianity without isolating the canonical gospels from other gospel materials. Crossan's 'four others' are The Gospel of Thomas, Egeria Papyrus II, the Secret Gospel of Mark and The Gospel of Peter. His method of study is the standard historical-critical one, but he is not wholly comfortable with the label. A careful reader of this book, he claims, will never see the canonical gospels the same way again. On the dust-cover James M. Bailey (ed. Gospel of Thomas, 1979) says (p. vii) that George MacRae describes the volume more circumspectly as a work of 'intriguing proposals, innovative investigations and incisive interpretations'. Crossan's conclusions fall in with the growing tendency, particularly among American scholars, to regard non-canonical gospel traditions as historically and thematically independent of the canonical four. He writes for the general reader as well as for the specialist (and hence includes in each case an account of the historical context), but he would readily stand up to a deal of weight on more substantial studies by other writers, although he is happy (as he has no doubt he should be) that his material will be best to deal in turn with his evaluations of four gospels.

(1) The Gospel of Thomas (GT) is a collection of sayings (logia) of Jesus, many of them very similar to their synoptic counterparts. It was discovered in Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1945. Though now accessible in English, it is widely believed to have been compiled in Greek or Aramaic (or both) in the latter part of the first century CE, and it is independently completely independent of the canonical gospels, and that of its independence, which does not necessarily mean that it is earlier or 'higher' than the synoptics in the number of sayings it contains (but not by Craig Blomberg in his study of the parables of GT in Gospel Traditions and the Sayings of Jesus (1987)). However, Crossan regards GT as not having strengthened the case for it. One of his two broad arguments is that the apparently random sequence of sayings in GT, which has an individual, is less well ordered than one would expect of a gospel. Thomas had derived them from their gospels. This is clearly an over-simplified view. Crossan has not emphasized the gospels in the Greek: (e.g. greek-linkage more significant than the trivial instances Crossan mentions, and more extensive than is normally allowed, if linkage by words like 'Lord' and 'many' included, as Crossan implies it should be; and thematic connection, as Crossan acknowledges, which goes both directions). In any event, this point about indepedence and also because Crossan's argument seems likely to count equally against GT's dependence on any conceivable earlier (pre-canonical) collection of gospel traditions.

His second general reason argues that GT contains very little, if any, of the synoptics' 'reconstructional material'. His example is logion 54, 'Jesus said, 'One who breaks bread with me will betray me'. This is easier to be taken for granted as GT was 'mentally unstable' than that he became the 'sceptical' and 'arguing Jesus'. At least open to question, especially when we remember, as Crossan does later, that GT hardly ever uses 'God' or 'all', and perhaps never in a good sense.

Crossan's two case studies are of logia 64 (The Great Banquet) and 65 (The Sum of Doctrines). Logia 64 was recognized from the earliest days of GT study as offering one of its strongest cases for a logical position. Logia 64 is modelled on the synoptic gospels (but see Blomberg, op. cit.), and 189-190. At the same time the former appears one of the most obvious examples of tendentiousness so fundamental to all forms of writing of business and mercantile activity and perhaps marriage also. Crossan recognizes that this is a very strong objection, and Luke and John are not full of such moralistic tracts such as this. To Crossan's first point it may be replied that we have no evidence to judge whether 'Well did ...' (2:22) is anything other than characteristic of Mark, while 'Well did' ... (2:22) is anything other than characteristic of Mark, while 'Well did' ... speaks of 'all the secrets of the kingdom of heaven' to the men. It is simply a task for Luke to talk about the kingdom of heaven and God's reign, and Luke's version is also much closer than GT's to the original Markan version of God's reign (in Matthew, Luke's version is also much closer than GT's to the original Markan version of God's reign (in Matthew, Luke's version is almost an approximation to GT's original version). Nevertheless, Crossan's conclusions about GT would be among the least controversial in the book, were it not for his over-all assessment of the weight of the evidence that Jewish wisdom theology looks like after it has heard Jesus' message in the kingdom of God leaves us out of account altogether GT's advanced ascetical, wisdom theology. In the 16th century, the fruit of a call to be a man, all the secrets of the kingdom of heaven to the men. It is simply a task for Luke to talk about the kingdom of heaven and God's reign, and Luke's version is almost an approximation to GT's original version. 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