'Historical Jesuses', their movements and the church

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ABSTRACT
In this article a look is taken at five scholars' constructions of Jesus and the movement(s) which originated with him. Attention is also paid to the relation between these 'Jesuses', their movements and the church.

1 INTRODUCTION
It is no longer news that the last more or less two decades of New Testament scholarship have been characterised by intensive historical investigation of Jesus of Nazareth. Forming part of and reflecting a broad renewal of historical investigation of the New Testament, historical Jesus research has been influenced by a number of factors: the intensive study of sources such as the so-called synoptic sayings source Q, the Gospel of Thomas and the Qumran scrolls, work done in the field of biblical archaeology, the emergence of new methods, a change in the composition of biblical scholars, as well as other factors (cf Hurtado 1997).

Related to a broader tendency in New Testament scholarship, historical Jesus research itself focuses on and has implications for a number of matters related to Jesus. It has been producing a number of spin-offs (cf Patterson 1991). One of the matters to which historical Jesus scholars has been paying attention, is the Jesus movement(s). Coined only a few decades ago, the 'Jesus movement' has by now not only become a common phrase in historical New Testament scholarship, but also the subject of increasingly sophisticated research. Partly following from studies on the historical Jesus, this is, of course, also related to other factors and developments in the field, for example the growing realisation that there must have been some continuity between communities of Jesus' followers in Galilee (cf Horsley 1989:105) and the sophisticated work done on the Synoptic Sayings source Q referred to above, including the community to which it is regarded to attest.

In this article a look is taken at some of the work recently done on Jesus and the Jesus movement(s). Starting with each scholar's view of Jesus, I then focus on how the Jesus movement initiated by Jesus is visualised, keeping in mind how these constructed movements are related to the church. Whereas the connection between Jesus and the Jesus movement is in most cases...
obvious and 'positive', this is not necessarily the case with the relation to the church.

Having initially intended to use the title ‘The historical Jesus, the Jesus movement and the church’, I soon decided to switch to the plural since it reminds us that the different proposals as to Jesus as historical figure are, and always will be, historians’ constructions of Jesus. It, moreover, takes seriously the diversity of views on Jesus, characteristic of historical Jesus research. The use of the plural for ‘Jesus movement’ reflects the results of what is done on the subject. In the case of the church the singular is retained for practical reasons. The church is, however, specifically defined and in this way restricted to three facets of the church: the church as community, the church as post-Easter phenomenon and the church as associated with a specific view of Jesus.

As a result of so much diversity in terms of sources used, presupposed context and conclusions reached, the most viable way of progressing is to discuss each scholar’s view separately. The aim is not really to compare their work, although aspects of their views are sometimes related. Since only a small part of what has been done on the subject will be discussed, a few remarks to clarify the choices are in order. Although Theissen did the pioneering work with regard to the Jesus movement in Palestine and his views are still influential and responded to in most of the material on the subject, his work will not be discussed here. The focus will be on scholars whose work forms part of the so-called ‘third quest’ for the historical Jesus and who also made contributions with regard to the Jesus movement. Since the focus will be on the earliest Jesus movement(s) in Galilee, the sayings source Q, which is nowadays closely associated with this movement, will necessarily receive attention. The fact that the ‘third quest’ has, broadly speaking, split into two different trends, one eschatological and the other non-eschatological, has also been taken into consideration in the choice of scholars. Since most of the work done at the moment emphasises a non-eschatological interpretation, this will necessarily receive more attention.

2 SANDERS: A THREAD RUNS THROUGH IT

The work of Sanders, well-known and widely discussed, is here used as a representative of the now less popular eschatological trend in historical Jesus research. Although the work of John Meier is also inclined in this direction, the third volume of his work has not yet been published, which means that a complete version of his work is not available at this stage.

Apart from the difference already mentioned, namely that Sanders regards Jesus as an eschatological figure, his work differs in other respects from that of others. He does not focus on a Jesus movement or movements prior to the
resurrection, apart from the church. He does sometimes use the term 'Christian movement', but then more or less as a synonym for 'church' (e.g. Sanders 1985:19). Unlike the others he does not pay much attention to the socio-economic-political context of Jesus in first-century Galilee.

2.1 The pillars of Sanders's work

Crucial for the outcome of Sanders's work is that he situates Jesus firmly within Judaism. For him this follows necessarily from the fact that Jesus was a Jew (1985:19). The Judaism to which Jesus belongs is then mainly defined in terms of Jewish eschatology: 'enough evidence points towards Jewish eschatology as the general framework of Jesus' ministry that we may examine the particulars in the light of that framework' (Sanders 1985:10). And: '...the line from John the Baptist to Paul and the other early apostles is the line of Jewish eschatology and it would be misleading to move the centre of our investigation from that line' (Sanders 1985:8).

The second facet of his procedure is that in his search for Jesus as historical figure, Sanders does not rely primarily on the words of Jesus, but on eight indisputable 'facts' about him. His focus on 'facts' instead of words has to do, not only with the fact that authentic words are hard to come by and are not easily agreed upon, but especially with the fact that they do not sufficiently explain the aftermath of Jesus' career, that is, why he was crucified and why his followers formed a messianic sect (Sanders 1985:4, 5).

In pointing to this, we have already reached the third facet, namely that Sanders argues in favour of a connection between Jesus' life and ministry and the emergence of the Christian movement. In his view 'a hypothesis which does offer a reasonable and well-grounded connection between Jesus and the Christian movement is better than one which offers no connection, but which appeals, finally, to accident and to the resurrection experiences to explain why Jesus' mission did not end with his death' (Sanders 1985:22). Since Jesus had a definite intention, a program which ended with the Christian movement, this movement can even be used to get access to (shed light on) Jesus, his views and intentions (Sanders 1985:21).

Although Sanders starts his work on Jesus from a context of restoration eschatology, he does not merely accept that the 'facts' which he identifies as belonging to Jesus as historical figure cohere with this situation. Starting with Jesus' action in the temple, he argues in detail that this event, and also the others which play an important role in his depiction of the 'historical Jesus' (Jesus' relationship to John the baptist, his call of the disciples, etc) do fit into this context. The presupposed context combined with (his interpretation of) the 'facts' about Jesus leads Sanders to seeing Jesus as a restorationist prophet: Jesus 'saw himself as God's last messenger before the establishment of the
kingdom. He looked for a new order, created by a mighty act of God, etc' (Sanders 1985:319).

2.2 What kind of continuity?

The implication of Sanders's view is that the gulf between Jesus and what followed after him, and even between different facets of Jesus' ministry as described in the Gospels, which function, for example, prominently in the work of Mack (cf below) does not exist and function in his work. One has, however, to be careful not to read too much into Sanders's view. Although he is of the opinion that there was continuity between Jesus and the Christian movement, he qualifies his position by saying: '...I shall have in mind only the historical sequence ...the one which terminates in the persecution of the early Christian movement by some within Judaism, not the one which results in the confession of John 20:28' (Sanders 1985:12, cf also :21). Not everything which was later believed about Jesus is included in this aftermath, although Sanders is of the opinion that in assigning a high role to Jesus, Christianity was true to him (Sanders 1985:333).

Wherein, then, does the continuity between Jesus and the Christian movement lie? To answer this question one must first ask how Sanders defines the Christian movement. According to Sanders the Christian movement was an 'orthodox' Jewish messianic movement which expected an imminent end and was scrupulous about the law (Sanders 1985:323). These 'facts' about the Christian movement cohere with what can be known most securely about Jesus (his start under John, his call of the twelve, his expectation that the temple would be destroyed and rebuilt, Sanders 1985: 323). The communal eschatological meal also forms part of the historical connection between Jesus and the movement which succeeded him (Sanders 1985:324). Where the early church differed with Jesus, was with regard to fellowship with sinners (Sanders 1985:324).

Written more than a decade ago, Sanders's work has already been subjected to thorough criticism (e.g Schnell 1989). A few of the problems with his work are referred to here. Some of them also apply to other historical Jesus scholars who look for a specific role in which to place Jesus.

As said at the beginning, the most decisive aspect of Sanders's work is probably that he uses Judaism, interpreted in a specific way, as main indicator of Jesus' identity. This also influences the way in which he defines the early church. The problem is that it is very difficult to define Judaism and to characterise Jesus' relationship to it. To this may be added that a predisposition towards a specific role for Jesus may prevent one from taking material in the Gospels seriously which does not fit into this role (Schnell 1989:89). This, of course, applies to most scholars who places Jesus within
one specific role. It is also not clear how he reached his 'undisputable' facts about Jesus. The nature of the sources is not reflected on thoroughly enough either (cf Schnell 1989:101).

3 MACK: A CYNIC JESUS AS INITIATOR OF A SOCIAL EXPERIMENT AND A MOVEMENT IN STAGES

Mack's work differs in most respects from that of Sanders. In fact, the work of these scholars stands in total contrast to each other. This applies to the sources used, the presupposed context, what is chosen as access route to Jesus (his deeds or his words), the kind of Jesus reached in this way, the relation between Jesus and the 'church' and the ultimate aim of the works. These matters are, of course, all closely interrelated. Mack spells out his views in two important books *The lost Gospel* and *A myth of innocence* and also in a number of articles. I will mainly focus, though not exclusively, on *The Lost Gospel*.

3.1 Q: Its nature and potential

The most crucial aspect of Mack's work is that he does not use the canonical narrative gospels, but the reconstructed sayings source Q as basis for his work on Jesus and the earliest Jesus movement. The view of Q operating in his work is basically that presented by Kloppenborg in his sophisticated study of Q in which different layers in this 'document' are distinguished. According to this view the earliest layer of Q consisted of wisdom sayings of an aphoristic kind. Only at a second stage of composition were prophetic and apocalyptic sayings added to the document which is sapiental at its core.

Decisive for the subject under discussion is that the study of Q did not remain restricted to a study of source(s). A further important step was taken when scholars started to study this multi-layered 'document' as a clue to the early Jesus movement in Galilee, the different stages in its social history and the different images of Jesus which function in each. This is basically what *The lost Gospel* is about.

3.2 Jesus as Cynic sage

From the oldest layer of Q, which consists basically of wisdom material of an aphoristic kind, Mack deduces that Jesus is here presented as a Cynic teacher. In fact, Jesus was not merely understood as a Cynic sage. The 'historical Jesus' *was* a Cynic sage. In a recent article Mack states: 'The Cynic-like data from Q and Mark are as close as we shall ever get to the real Jesus of history. Punkt' (1997:36).
3.3 The nature of the Jesus movements

That Jesus was regarded by the Q people (the community behind Q) as a Cynic-like teacher and remembered for his words, not for his deeds and destiny, had clear implications for and can therefore shed light on the kind of movement or movements he ‘initiated’ in Galilee. These movements can, at least in their initial stages, best be typified as arenas for social experimentation at a time when reigning values were called in question (Mack 1993:8). The Jesus people had a critical stance towards the way life was lived in the Greco-Roman world. It provided a challenge to individuals to dare a natural and simple life-style (Mack 1993:8,9). From the Cynic tradition’s call on the individual to live against the stream, it can be deduced that the Q people were not interested in transforming the world, in fighting Roman power or starting a new religion (Mack 1993:5,120). Q’s criticism was also not directed at a specific Jewish institution such as the temple state, the scribal authorities or the diaspora synagogue (1991:17). The attraction of the Jesus movement(s) to people can partly be explained in the light of the highly Hellenised character of Galilee as an integral part of the Greco-Roman world (Mack 1993, ch 4).

Quite early in the history of the group there are, according to Mack, indications of social formation, something which distinguishes the Jesus people from the Cynics. This is especially evident in Q2, where the Jesus movement is presented as a fully self-conscious movement with a social vision. Social formation can, inter alia, be inferred from the shift of emphasis from the public arena to relations and problems within the group (Mack 1993:129, 130). Characteristic of Q2 is the shift from aphoristic sayings to apocalyptic language, especially the presence of the theme of judgement (Mack 1993:132). This may be related to the rejection which the Jesus people experienced. The purpose of this was to ‘guarantee the threat of judgement they wanted to bring down upon people who had frustrated their mission’ (Mack 1993:134). By this time loyalty to the movement had also become a serious issue, which can be inferred from the fact that the ‘keeping’ of Jesus’ words, which marked a loyal member of the movement, was now even more emphasised (Mack 1993:136). It was the concern for measuring loyalty to the teachings of the movement which turned Jesus into an authoritative figure, in fact, to the founder of the movement (1993:137).

Thus Jesus ‘developed’ together with changing tendencies within the Jesus movement, or to use Mack’s terminology, was repeatedly reimagined. First perceived as a Cynic sage, as the circumstances of the movement changed, his role was reconceived to include that of an apocalyptic prophet. For this purpose the figure of John the Baptist was introduced (Mack 1993:149). Although Jesus was at this stage mythologised by using the two
figures of the wisdom of God and the Son of man, Mack emphasises that this mythology was still related to the view of Jesus as a sage (Mack 1993:153, 162). The outcome of Mack’s study is clear: Jesus is not only de-divinised, as necessarily happens in historical scholarship, he also ceases to be an important figure with a real impact on the people of his time.

3.4 The congregations of the Christ
Since the emphasis here is on the Jesus movement in Galilee, the other movements which Mack ‘discovered’ and which he discusses especially in A myth of innocence are not referred to here (cf Mack 1988:78-97). To attain a more comprehensive picture and to put the Jesus movement(s) in perspective, I refer briefly to what Mack calls the ‘congregations of the Christ’.

What is a Christ congregation and how is it distinguished from the Jesus movement(s)? According to Mack the congregations of the Christ, which emerged from the Jesus movement(s) and which we encounter in the Pauline letters, were characterised by a different kind of mythology than the Jesus movement(s). Whereas the Jesus movements focused on the instructions of a teacher, the mythology of the Christ congregations focused on Jesus’ death as a saving event and on his resurrection. And whereas the myth of the Jesus movements placed Jesus in historical time and place, in the Christ congregations one encounters a world which is detached from the social and environmental orders (Mack 1993:216, 221).

3.5 Jesus, the Jesus movement(s) and the church
How can the relation between Jesus, the Jesus movement and the church in Mack’s work be described? Since Mack is very outspoken about this, in his case it is not necessary to make indirect inferences. In A myth of innocence he says: ‘What Jesus set in motion, was a social experiment’ (1988:76). ‘He did not organise a church’ (1988:64). And: ‘...Jesus did not set up a program for a new society or religion, train leaders for it, and bequeath to them a legacy’ (1988:80). Since Jesus had no definite aim, it seems that, according to Mack, there existed only a loose relationship even between Jesus and the Jesus movement. That Jesus did not play a decisive role in the origin of the Jesus movement(s) and of Christianity is reiterated in a recent article (Mack 1997:36) where he says: ‘The Cynic-like data from Q and Mark ...tell us...that the Jesus of history was not nearly as important for the emergence of Christianity as the intellectual energies generated by his followers while experimenting with a novel social vision’. Jesus’ teachings, not he himself, stand at the beginning of and are crucial for what started as the Jesus movements and developed in various directions. In Mack’s view ‘Jesus is not the
"big bang" for the Jesus movements... Q is...the big bang of all mythologisations' (Oakman 1994:233).

3.6 Problems with Mack's work

Mack's work is so fascinating and even overpowering that one can easily get carried away by his views. It is therefore necessary to go back to the foundation on which his work rests.

Jesus' supposed relation to the Cynics and the problems related to such a view have been the subject of much recent discussion which need not be repeated here (cf e.g Aune 1997). What is especially problematic in Mack's approach, is the sole focus on the teachings of Jesus, specifically as presented in the first layer of Q, not only as clue to him as historical figure, but also as the starting point of almost everything which followed, that is 'most of the canonical "mythologisations"' (Oakman 1994:233, cf also Attridge 1991:233).

To use the first layer of Q, which according to Attridge (1991:229) consists of approximately 85 verses, as the sole instrument in overthrowing the traditional picture of Christian origins and reimagining it, is to overburden this hypothetical document. Mack's proposal does not do justice to the complexity of Christian origins, including the complexity of 'the originating figure' (Attridge 1991:233).

What Horsley says with regard to Jesus is also true of early Christianity: 'A particular reconstruction of Jesus based primarily on one source is inadequate if it cannot accommodate features of Jesus necessary to explain how Jesus is represented in other early sources or the development of certain social formations evident in our sources. For example, there is too strong a tradition of Jesus as an exorcist and healer to reconstruct his teachings without taking such actions into consideration. Or there is too strong a tradition of his activity and execution in Jerusalem for us to interpret his teaching and actions in Galilee without taking the conflict in Jerusalem into account' (Horsley 1991:196, 197). Another problem is the dichotomy wisdom/apocalypticism which functions in his work. Does this come from the texts or from the interpretive concepts of modern New Testament scholarship (Horsley 1989:188)? Nickelsburg's (1994:730) remark that 'in the wholeness of life in antiquity they were tied together in ways we do not yet understand' certainly deserves our attention. Even if the stratigraphic analysis is correct, can the genre of a writing really tell us so much, more or less everything, about the beliefs of the people among whom it functioned? 'Why treat Q as a sort of systematic theology, or as an exhaustive statement of someone's Christological beliefs?' (Allison 1997:44). Further: Do scholars of Q not read too much into what is left out from Q? (Freyne 1997).
It is insightful that, in the history of New Testament scholarship, also specifically in historical Jesus research, Jesus' sayings functioned prominently at times when other aspects of his ministry became problematic, either in the sense of difficult to recover or in the sense of offensive to the modern mind. Perhaps Mack’s overemphasis on the words of Jesus is not unrelated to this tendency.

4 HORSLEY: JESUS AS SOCIAL REFORMER AND THE RENEWAL OF LOCAL COMMUNITY

Horsley's proposal as to Jesus and the earliest Jesus movement(s) in Galilee differs quite dramatically from that of Mack. This is due to a number of factors: his different view and use of Q and other sources, the fact that Jesus' words and other aspects are used for depicting him as historical figure, the fact that he emphasises other aspects of first-century Galilee than Mack, so that his Galilee and therefore the social context in which Jesus is situated, differs from that of Mack.

4.1 The sources and the way they are used

With regard to Horsley's use of sources, it is important to realise that, whereas Mack regards the gap between Q and Mark as so big that, in constructing the historical Jesus, a choice has to be made between the two, Horsley presupposes some continuity between Jesus' ministry and the way he is portrayed in Mark, pre-Markan material and the other synoptic gospels. This implies not only that more than words are ascribed to the Jesus of history, but that a greater variety of material in the gospels, especially in Mark, comes into play in his construction of the historical Jesus.

Although Horsley finds the stratigraphy of Q according to genres and the procedure of deducing from genre the movement or a specific stage in the history of the movement problematic, he does make use of Q in his search for Jesus and the early Jesus movement and even makes use of the insights of recent work on Q, especially the insight in recent research that Q is not simply a collection of sayings, such as the Gospel of Thomas, but is composed of a sequence of clusters. Read in terms of complexes, 'Q can provide a ...framework in which particular sayings and sets of sayings were understood by Jesus people just a few decades after Jesus and in roughly the same circumstances' (1991:181). The fact that Horsley does not assign material in Q to different strata, implies that in his work not only the aphoristic first layer, but different kinds of sayings material from Q are used in his reconstruction of the historical Jesus and his immediate followers (1991:225). This partly explains why his Jesus differs so much from the one constructed by Mack.
4.2 The social context in first century Galilee

In his portrayal of first-century Galilee as a setting for Jesus and his movement, Horsley focuses not so much on ideas prevalent in first-century Galilee as on the concrete, down-to-earth political and socio-economic circumstances during the time: the reality of foreign rule and the tension and conflict which it caused, especially conflict between the rulers and ruled, economic pressure on the peasantry and the decay of the traditional village-based social structure, the big gap between rich and poor, as well as other factors (Horsley 1987:13, 14). He also pays attention to attempts at dealing with these problems, such as the popular prophetic and messianic figures and movements which existed in the first century and which provide a basis for understanding Jesus and his movement (Horsley 1987:121ff).

An insight which functions forcefully in his work is that, in first-century Palestine, religion was not regarded as a separate area of life, separated from social, political and economic matters (1987:152, 153). This insight deeply influences Horsley's reading of Jesus' sayings and actions in the sources, his view of 'concepts' which occur in the texts and which function prominently in New Testament scholarship, and his construction of Jesus and the movement initiated by him. It provides an attractive realistic, material basis to his interpretation of Jesus' teaching. When it is, for example, kept in mind that the beatitudes were directed specifically at those who were concretely, economically poor and hungry, one does not have to look for reasons why the poor are called blessed (1987:248-250). In his view, the kingdom of God refers, not to something abstract, such as the last, final, eschatological act of God (1987:168), but to the continuing action of God as well as response by and the participation of people. It is concerned with the liberation and welfare of people: "In the preaching and action of Jesus, including the "kingdom of God" sayings and reference to God as Father, the focus is almost always on the people, and the concern is not abstract or even primarily religious, but is with the people's concrete circumstances, both somatic and psychic, both material and spiritual" (1987:191). His view of the kingdom is related to how he understands apocalyptic literature. In his discussion of apocalypticism he emphasises that apocalyptic literature is closely related to historical circumstances, of which it tries to make sense. This kind of literature stands, moreover, in continuity with the late prophetic literature and is basically concerned with the renewal and restoration of the people of Israel (Horsley 1989:96, 97).

4.3 Jesus according to Horsley

The Jesus who can be inferred from the sources within their socio-historical context did not merely initiate a social experiment which, due to various fac-
tors, turned out to work. According to Horsley Jesus was actively engaged with his world. He had a specific purpose in mind in the service of which he acted: the renewal of the people of Israel. He can thus be typified as a prophetic figure (Horsley 1991:175), even as a non-violent social revolutionary (Horsley 1987:147).

In Horsley’s view there are in Q various pointers in this direction, such as the references to the traditions of Israel (which to Mack belongs to a later stage in the development of the Jesus movement), the mission discourse in 10:2-16 and the pronouncement that the followers of Jesus will effect justice for the twelve tribes of Israel (Horsley 1991:198). Mark agrees with Q in this respect (cf Horsley 1991:199). Another aspect of Jesus’ ministry which Horsley emphasises, is his conflict, and that of the Jesus movement, with the ruling institutions (Horsley 1989:130-132).

4.4 Aimed at a community: of what kind?

It is clear that, according to Horsley, the Jesus movement in Galilee dated from the time before the resurrection. In its initial stage it did not exist as a separate movement apart from Israel (Horsley 1987:210, 211). In fact, from allusions to figures and events in Israelite historical tradition it becomes clear that the Q people saw themselves as the continuation, the fulfilment of the hopes of Israel (Horsley 1989:110, 111, 115).

Which form did the Jesus movement take? Although in this regard we have only indirect information, the impression one gets from Q, Mark and pre-Markan material is that of the village communities of Galilee as the entities to which Jesus ministered (Horsley 1987:212). All the facets of Jesus’ ministry, including his healings, were concerned with the renewal of people’s lives in their own communities (Horsley 1987:212). In his discussion of the Jesus movement he therefore argues against the idea of ‘wandering charismatics’ in the sense of intentional homelessness (Horsley 1987:229–231; 1989:111). Whereas the Cynics lived without home and possessions as an intentional way of life, the delegates of Jesus left homes, possessions and family behind temporarily as an unavoidable, but more incidental matter necessitated by their mission (Horsley 1989:117, 119). If the Jesus movement originated in and was initially based on some villages and towns of Jewish Palestine, it is also more readily understandable how it could fairly quickly spread to other areas (Horsley 1989:119).

What, exactly, did the renewal entail? In a society in which poverty, debt and oppression were pressing problems, it is highly unlikely that Jesus articulated abstract truths. His sayings have to be understood concretely. He and the members of the Jesus movement were concerned with the concrete alleviation of hunger, debt and other symptoms of poverty (Horsley
1987:254, 262). The Jesus movement was not anti-family, but traditional patriarchal forms were sharply criticised (Horsley 1989:122, 123). The relationships in the community were supposed to be egalitarian. The movement rejected rank, power and prestige, valuing instead service to the community (Mk 10:25-45; Luke 11:42, 44, 46).

4.5 The relation between Jesus, the Jesus movement and the church

In Horsley's case the relation between Jesus and the Jesus movement is straightforward: Jesus initiated and formed part of the Jesus movement. Although he does not reflect explicitly on the relation between the Jesus movement and the church, a few inferences can be made from his work. It is clear that his work leaves him with a different picture of the origins of the church which calls into question the traditional view (1987:209). This does not imply that he denies any continuity between Jesus' ministry and the church. In fact, the positing and study of the Jesus movement partly follows from the conviction that there was some continuity between Jesus' ministry and the church(es) (Horsley 1989:106). He does not reflect explicitly on the relation between the Jesus of the Jesus movement and what was later on believed about him in the church(es). The one point of continuity between Jesus, the Jesus movement and the church to which he explicitly refers is that of the Christians' care for each other (Horsley 1989:124).

To conclude the discussion of Horsley's work, a few general remarks are made. It is clear that his work is, like that of Borg which will be discussed below, methodologically less sophisticated than, for example, the work of Crossan. He also deals with the sources in a less rigid way than Mack. Though he may sometimes be in danger of obliterating the differences between the sources he uses (e.g. Q and Mark), he at least tries to take their literary and social contexts seriously (e.g. in his use of Q). His view of Jesus and the Jesus movement is, of course, closely related to his view of and dealing with 'apocalyptic', a matter which is subject to much controversy.

5 BORG: JESUS THE SPIRIT-PERSON AS FOUNDER OF A REVITALIZATION MOVEMENT

Although Borg focuses mainly on Jesus, not so much on the movement which he initiated, his Jesus is inter alia the founder of a revitalisation movement, to which he pays some attention. As is the case with the other scholars discussed here, the Jesus movement which he has in mind is closely related to his view of the 'historical Jesus'.
5.1 A multi-faceted Jesus

Characteristic of Borg's work on Jesus is that he takes seriously and uses in his construction of Jesus most of the kinds of material about Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels. His Jesus is therefore, even more so than in the case of Horsley, not an either-or figure, but a multi-faceted one: 'a charismatic who was a healer, sage, prophet, and revitalization movement founder' (Borg 1987:15). Foundational to the other facets of his Jesus is the fact that Jesus was, according to him, 'a Spirit-filled person in the charismatic stream of Judaism. This is the key to what he was like as a historical figure. In an important sense, all that he was, taught and did flowed out of his own intimate experience of the "world of spirit"' (Borg 1987:25).

Borg relates the view of Jesus as a spirit person to what he refers to as the primordial tradition's view of reality. According to this view, which also functioned in the Biblical tradition and is especially evident in the lives and acts of the prophets, there is another level of reality than the material one which many modern people regard as the only one, a reality which is not merely an article of belief, but which can be experienced and known by people (Borg 1987:26-34). Different incidents during Jesus' life and ministry (e.g. the voice at his baptism, his experience in the wilderness, his prayers, the beginning of his ministry according to Luke, etc) fit within the view of Jesus as a spirit person (Borg 1987:39-51). The same applies to important facets of his work, such as his healings and exorcisms and his teaching of unconventional wisdom (Borg 1987:57-71).

The spirit-filled Jesus, was, according to Borg, actively involved in and engaged with his social world. In fact, apart from the role of the spirit, the other main category around which A new vision is organised, is Jesus' relationship to culture (Borg 1987:15).

5.2 Jesus' social world

What was the social world like in which Jesus' teaching and his prophet-like ministry took place? Like Horsley, Borg emphasises the conflict and economic pressure in first-century Palestine brought about by Roman rule. Crucial for his view of Jesus and the nature of the Jesus movement is the supposed response by the Jews to this situation, typified by Borg as the politics of holiness. By this he means that the Jewish social world was increasingly structured around holiness in the sense of separation and the polarities characteristic of it, such as clean and unclean, purity and defilement, righteous and sinful (Borg 1987:86, 87). The politics of holiness led to greater divisions among the Jewish people themselves and to intensified conflict with Rome (Borg 1987:91, 92). In this context Jesus taught his unconventional wisdom,
in a prophet-like way called his people to change and founded a revitalisation movement (Borg 1987:116).

5.3 The nature of the Jesus movement

Borg describes the revitalisation movement as a renewal movement within Israel, whose purpose was the transformation of Jewish tradition and their social world. Coming into existence in part because of the Spirit-filled experience of its founder, it was a movement characterised by the presence of the spirit (Borg 1987:127). Other characteristics of the movement initiated by Jesus were, according to Borg, its itinerancy, its inclusive character exemplified by outcasts and women as ‘members’, its ethos of compassion which came into expression in table fellowship with outcasts, its concern for the economically poor, its rejection of violent resistance to Rome (Borg 1987:125–140). Despite the fact that elements of the Jewish tradition was spiritualised by the Jesus movement, it was still concerned with the historical life of the actual Israel: ‘Jesus remained deeply Jewish, even as he radicalized Judaism... His movement was concerned with what it meant to be Israel’ (Borg 1987:141).

Not as methodologically sophisticated as the work of Crossan, Borg nevertheless makes a serious attempt to explain how the different roles ascribed to Jesus in the gospels could cohere and make sense in the historical life of Jesus. His emphasis on the spirit and on experience with regard to Jesus and the Jesus movement provides a more plausible explanation for at least part of what happened after Jesus than the intellectual words/myth-making dichotomy of Mack. Unappealing though the categories of experience and spirit may be to modern New Testament scholars, it is questionable not only whether Christianity and the church can be meaningfully explained without these, but whether they should be restricted to the post-Easter era. Although to Borg Jesus is not the founder of the church or of Christianity (Borg 1987:126), his view leaves room for some continuity between Jesus and the church, at least in the importance of the spirit for both.

6 CROSSAN: JESUS AS THE FOUNDER OF AN Egalitarian MOVEMENT

Of the work of scholars discussed here, Crossan’s is perhaps most discussed and therefore also scrutinised and criticised. This also applies to his method, which will therefore only briefly be referred to.
6.1 Countering subjectivity

Crossan's method, 'invented' to counter the subjectivity in historical Jesus research, consists basically of three 'levels': 'a macrocosmic level using cross-cultural and cross-temporal social anthropology, a meso-cosmic level using Hellenistic or Greco-Roman history and a micro-cosmic level using the literature of specific sayings and doings...' (Crossan 1991a:xxviii). It is especially the last facet which is decisive for the outcome of his work. It is also for this last facet, namely the sources he chooses as access route to Jesus (the privileged place of extra-canonical writings) and the way he deals with the sayings of Jesus that he has been and still is criticised (cf especially Kelber 1994; also Freyne 1997).

Of more direct interest to us here is the Jesus he reaches by means if his use of method and sources. Into which context is Jesus placed and who is he?

6.2 Jesus, his context, program and movement

Although Jesus lived and worked in Galilee, and Crossan accordingly starts his book (1994a:xi), he focuses primarily on the broader Mediterranean context, of which Jewish Palestine formed part. The socio-political-religious context of Jewish Palestine as part of its wider context is painted in dark colours, and by means of social-anthropological terms such as patron and client, as one of social discrimination, cultural domination and imperial impression (1994a:47). In this situation it was especially the peasantry, who made up the vast majority of the population, who suffered (Crossan 1991a:45).

Within this context of social stratification and inequality, Crossan’s Jesus and his program take form. As in the case of Horsley’s Jesus, he is a social reformer, this time a more ‘specialised’, even a more radical one (Crossan 1997:8, n 3). Resembling a Cynic sage, he is sufficiently different for ‘Jewish’ to be added to ‘Cynic’ (Crossan 1991a:421). This difference lies especially in the fact that, contrary to the Cynics, Jesus focused on the farm rather than the marketplace. It lies, moreover, in the fact that Jesus did not merely have a personal Cynic-like lifestyle, but inaugurated a social movement, something Crossan infers especially from the conjunction of free healing and common eating in Jesus’ ministry (Crossan 1991a:421; 1997:13).

A summary by Crossan in a recent article (1997) of the chapter ‘Magic and Meal’ in The historical Jesus, which he regards as the key chapter of his book (1991a:xxix), sheds more light on his view of Jesus’ program and the movement he initiated. Crossan emphasises that Jesus had both a personal or individual vision and a corporate or social program for the kingdom of God in Galilee during the early first century. That program was intent on opposing and dissociating itself from the systemic injustice and structural violence...
of colonial oppression brought about by Roman imperialism, something he calls 'ethical radicalism'. It entailed the rebuilding of society on principles of religious and economic egalitarianism. The Jesus movement took the form of a network of missionaries who were willing to live like Jesus and announce the kingdom’s presence not merely with words, but in and by their life-style. Their mission involved a reciprocity of healing and eating, which was an embodiment of the presence of the kingdom. Unlike the Cynics, whom they resembled, these missionaries were characterised by co-dependency instead of self-sufficiency, a pointer to the different principles at stake in their rebuilding of society. So radical was this program that it can be typified as a social revolution (Crossan 1991a:xii, 1997:9-12).

6.3 More light on the Jesus movement

Having indicated the general nature of the Jesus movement and its mission, Crossan goes on to investigate the more specific structure of the Jesus movement, especially its composition of itinerants and householders and the relation between the two. Contrary to Horsley, Crossan is of the opinion that itinerancy is not merely a functional necessity of mission: ‘the itinerancy of Jesus’ movement is a symbolic representation of unbrokered egalitarianism’ (Crossan 1991a:346, 347). Contrary to Theissen he grants ‘sympathisers’, which he call householders, a more substantial place in the Jesus movement. He even tries to infer, from the first layer of Q (specifically Q 6:20-23, 27-45) and from the Didache, something about the interaction between the itinerants with their radical teaching and life-style, and the more pragmatic householders (Crossan 1997:12-22).

6.4 The Jesus movement and the church

Although Crossan does not specifically reflect on how the Jesus movement relates to the church, a number of facets of his work may be illuminating in this regard: his emphasis on the communal nature of the Jesus movement, his identification of different early Christianities and his view of the relation between the ‘historical Jesus’ and the church’s view of him.

Like Mack, Crossan concludes from the absence of references to the death and resurrection in Q that the faith of the community behind Q shows no interest in the Jesus’ death and resurrection. What was important to these Christians, was to live and act in continuity with Jesus (Crossan 1994b:15). In his view Pauline Christianity, with which the church is usually closely associated, was only one of a number of early Christianities.

With regard to the relation between the ‘historical Jesus’ and the Christ, Crossan’s view seems ambiguous and inconsistent. He finds ‘no contradic-
tion between the historical Jesus and the defined Christ, no betrayal whatsoever in the move from Jesus to Christ' (Crossan 1991a:424). It is difficult to reconcile this statement with his emphasis that Jesus saw no role for himself in the kingdom of God (cf Hurtado 1997:290). Crossan's statement must, of course, be read in context. This statement is made in the context of the church's view of Jesus as 'wholly man' and 'wholly God', which Crossan then interprets as (Jesus as) 'the unmediated presence of the divine to the human' (Crossan 1991a:424). But even this is problematic.

For Crossan the betrayal is in the move from Christ to Constantine. To this he adds the following, which is again inconsistent with his previously stated position: 'Maybe, Christianity is an inevitable and absolutely necessary 'betrayal' of Jesus, else it might all have died among the hills of Lower Galilee' (Crossan 1991a:424). Did the necessary betrayal, then, in his view, indeed start much earlier?

7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

At the end of this brief survey one is again struck by the diversity of views about Jesus with which scholars come up, even those who work more or less within the same paradigm. This also applies to some extent to the movement(s), which Jesus, according to these scholars, initiated. Can some agreement with regard to the Jesus movement(s) nevertheless be detected? What about their relationship to the church?

Despite differences between the scholars discussed, except for Mack they all agree that Jesus and therefore the Jesus movement(s) which he initiated, were in some way concerned with the renewal of Israel. This applies even to Sanders, who situates this renewal within an eschatological context. The contribution of these scholars lies especially in the fact that they try to relate Jesus in a meaningful way to his social world and to give content to the part of the history of early Christianity, especially in Galilee, which is presupposed, but not narrated by Luke (cf Schille 1992). In this way they contribute to a more comprehensive picture of early Christianity.

Although the work discussed above distinguishes clearly between the Jesus movement(s) and the church, this does in most cases not imply total discontinuity. Since not all the scholars reflect explicitly on this relation, their views on this matter has sometimes to be inferred indirectly. Sanders is the most emphatic about the positive relation between Jesus and the church (church in the sense of a messianic sect), a relation which he grounds in Jesus' intention.

Mack, on the other hand, emphasises discontinuity. Although there is some historical continuity between the Jesus movements and the congregations of the Christ (what can be called the church) in the sense that the last
emerged from the first, the mythology of the one differs totally from that of the other. Jesus as historical figure is unrelated not only to the church, but in a sense also to the Jesus movement (s). Since, except for the words of Jesus, more or less everything in early Christianity can be explained in terms of mythmaking, no resurrection or even crucifixion is necessary to explain the origin and nature of the church (Mack 1993:247).

Not really intending to reflect explicitly on the matter, Horsley does refer in passing to some continuity between Jesus' ministry, the Jesus movements and the church, although he does not elaborate on this. The importance of the spirit and of experience for Borg's Jesus and his movement bridges in his work to some extent the gap between the Jesus movement and the church. Crossan's emphasis on community with regard to the Jesus movement provides an important point of continuity between the Jesus movement and the church. He also pays some attention to how the 'historical Jesus' relates to the church's Jesus, but remains somewhat ambiguous on the matter. As said above, Pauline Christianity, which is usually closely related to the church, is in Crossan's view only one of four different kinds of early Christianity (Crossan 1994b).

WORKS CONSULTED


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