

The Lost Tales Project Agenda

Reimagining the Spirit[uality] of Jesus and his Friends

Notes jotted down in the watches of the night on 14-15 Dec 2009 in the Royal Berks hospital at a time of great clarity immediately after an operation:

From demythologizing to remythologizing, employing plausibility [and probability] to apply 'thick description' (in the spirit of Clifford Geertz) to selected gospel narratives both acknowledging their mythical creative originating, the 'meaning' in the sense of what experience and practice they were based on (eg Luke describing Jesus and John as cousins), the actual practice and teaching of Jesus and his friends before the crucifixion, and retaining somehow, the comfort factor Christians today expect from the stories (eg in Jesus and John actually being cousins).

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Scientific method; to determine what is more / most probable and expand the lost tale around that. To identify and gently put on one side in the museum of faith things that are less / least probable. These may be later retrieved to contextualize them in the formulation / thick-describing of the unfolding lost tale.

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Gaian identity as foundation principle for determining historical probabilities both for actual ancient pericopes and for lost tale foundations. This establishes a resonance between us today and Jesus and his friends then.

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Explore the lost (in the sense of not used today) embedded adjectival names that Jesus's earliest friends used for him before and after his crucifixion. For example, at Jesus's baptism, the story tells of a voice from heaven saying, This is my *'αγαπητος* (best-loved-one). What was it about Jesus that made that name so applicable then? Why do we not use it today? (Thicken the description with the words of 88 year-old Yuan Chao on the essence of Buddhist practice quoted on page 29 in John Lane's book, 'The Spirit of Silence': she wrote the characters for 'goodwill, compassion, joy, detachment').

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Chief Jake Swamp's 'Greetings and thanks': 'If you are aware of my presence, "Greetings!"; if you are attuned to my voice, "I thank you! May my awareness in your presence express my greetings; may my practice in your presence be my thankfulness." ' [My voice – like the croak of the frog, like the early morning song of the thrush, like the breek-breek of the cricket – is heard and understood by 'the Great Spirit' - Jake Swamp's Name for the One whose name is Silent and from whom we have come, the Sole Parent that makes us all siblings - frog, thrush,

cricket and me. And my practice is awaited, received and contributes to the whole, for good or ill. 22 Dec 2009]

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The methodology of remythologization:

- a) Contextualizing: culturally, archaeologically, anthropologically, religiously, etc. etc. (eg Luke written 90-100CE)
- b) Discerning and distinguishing early from late / late from early meaning (Red, Pink, Grey, Black of the Jesus Seminar)
- c) Reimagining the reimagining of Luke eg creating the story of the good Samaritan – why, for whom, how...
- d) Reinserting Luke's written tale into our reimagined tale ('Geertzing' Luke's written version)

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Is there any direct historical reportage in the gospels? How bad does it get? Why is it best to presume there to be so little, even none at all?

- a) The time between the crucifixion and the joined-up writing of the first narrative gospel = 2x the average life expectancy at that time
- b) During that time, the Romans devastated Galilee and Judea and destroyed the temple in Jerusalem, killing or dispersing those who survived
- c) Jesus communities were households or itinerants, very small clumps of people (3-5?) prior to Jesus's crucifixion
- d) The meeting between Jesus communities and devout literate Jewish leaders after Jesus's crucifixion led to an interpretation of Jesus's life and teaching through scriptural reflection (Septuagint mainly), something the original communities did not need to do and could not have done alone. The literate ones turned these reflections into stories (creating, most notably, the passion narratives). These are the first created and recorded lost tales.
- e) The discussions and writings were in Greek rather than Aramaic. This Hellenization puts distance between Jesus and the stories told about him
- f) Earliest Jesus followers were Galilean village peasants. The gospel stories were created and written down by later town communities far distant from Galilee, communities that had no links with Galilee, either familial or any other

Trajectory Fragments

Remythologizing is a method that uses plausibility [and probability] to ‘thicken up the description’ of a selected gospel narrative story (in the spirit of Clifford Geertz). This takes for granted that the story was creatively invented, a mythologizing, intended to encapsulate and rehearse a meaning and not to report a direct (first order) historical event with accuracy. The story itself emerged from an unrecorded history. It is this history that we try to reimagine, with the help of tools, methods and conclusions from modern scholarship. We can contextualize the gospel story by including it within a larger [hi]story. This [hi]story is itself our own remythologizing.

Our remythologizing differs from the mythologizing of first century writers in that we do it from within our own understanding of how things are, from our own cultural context. The description is thickened by revealing the first century cultural elements that gave rise to the structure and form the first writers gave their stories and by showing how different such cultural elements are from our own. Our expanded retelling of the story will unveil the experiences and practices of the first story tellers that impelled them to craft the writings that have come down to us. In our retelling, we hope to glimpse, through a process of reenvisaging, the actual practice and teaching of Jesus and his friends before his crucifixion.

A root presupposition behind this endeavour is that such practice and teaching did exist, that it was robust enough and established enough among various small communities to flourish without requiring Jesus to be continually or actually present within the communities before his death, and hence to have survived and thrived after his death and even in ignorance of it.
(2009-12-19)

Today, "thick description" is used in a variety of fields, including the type of literary criticism known as New Historicism.

From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thick_description

New Historicism frequently addresses the critical theory based idea that the lowest common denominator for all human actions is power, so the New Historicist seeks to find examples of power and how it is dispersed within the text. Power is a means through which the marginalized are controlled, and the thing that the marginalized (or, other) seek to gain. This relates back to the idea that because literature is written

by those who have the most power, there must be details in it that show the views of the common people. New Historicists seek to find "sites of struggle" to identify just who is the group or entity with the most power.

Foucault's conception of power is neither reductive nor synonymous with domination. Rather he understands power (in modern times at least) as continually articulated on knowledge and knowledge on power.

(from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Historicism)