

Jesus Revised

You may be familiar with the biblical scholarship of the Jesus Seminar (1994)

In summary, these 77 biblical scholars found that 80% of what has been attributed to Jesus was made up by his movement followers after his death. Further, Jesus never claimed to be the Messiah, nor did he predict the end of the world. His followers are the ones who compared the bread and wine of the Last Supper to the eating of his body and blood, not Jesus. He did not teach the prayer of the Our Father because it was made up after his death. Finally, the Jesus Seminar agreed that Jesus was a social revolutionary, not an apocalyptic visionary.

How refreshing.

I remember during our years of monastic training, great teaching emphasis was put on the fact that Jesus was both divine and human – not one without the other. Even so, the Jesus presented to us in our everyday regimen of worship, prayer, spiritual reading, and asceticism was that of the divine, or more accurately stated: the pious divine. Handsome, clad in long flowing robes of pastel colors, this Jesus was pictured in a bearded profile, dreamy eyes cast heavenward and with long and delicate fingered hands clasped together. He looked like no man I had ever met, which of course made perfect sense to me since I had never met a divine one.

I also remember the emphasis that was placed not on the study of the gospels, but on the teaching tradition of the church. It was what the church taught through its tradition that determined the meaning of scripture, not the words themselves. I

suppose one of the purposes of the Jesus Seminar is to distinguish between the gospel tradition of the life of Jesus as created and promulgated by the church during the early Christian centuries from the sliver of information available about Jesus himself.