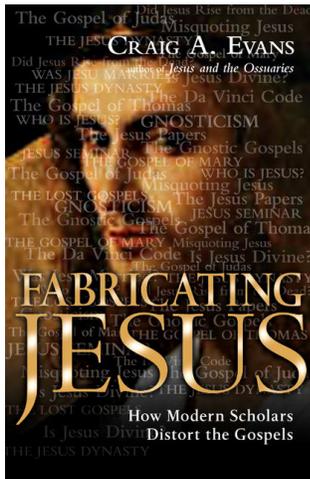




AN INTERVIEW
WITH CRAIG A.
EVANS, AUTHOR
OF *FABRICATING
JESUS*



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—Craig Evans

Q: IN WHAT WAYS HAVE SCHOLARS “FABRICATED JESUS” IN RECENT YEARS?

CRAIG EVANS: In recent years scholars have fabricated eccentric and unhistorical portraits of Jesus by making generous use of late and highly gospel sources, such as the *Gospel of Thomas* and the *Secret Gospel of Mark*. This approach not only misleads the public but has left the discipline of New Testament studies open to serious criticism from scholars in other fields. The *Gospel of Thomas* probably does not date any earlier than the end of the second century A.D. and the *Secret Gospel of Mark* is a modern hoax. Making use of dubious sources is only part of the problem. Another problem is that some scholars discount much of the material in the New Testament Gospels, either declaring many sayings and deeds of Jesus as inauthentic and interpreting many of the remaining sayings and deeds in contexts and senses other than those provided by the Gospels. The result is a confusing buffet of portraits of Jesus that contradict one another and bear little resemblance to the Jesus of the New Testament Gospels—our earliest sources.

Q: WHY DO YOU THINK SCHOLARS ARE, ESPECIALLY IN RECENT YEARS, SO PRONE TO FABRICATE A NEW JESUS?

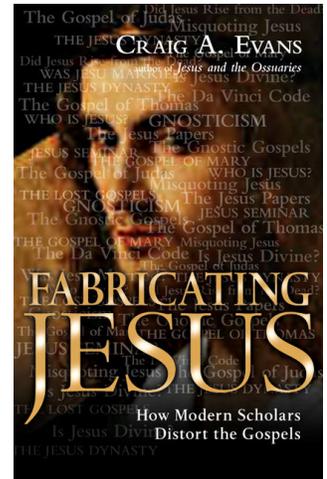
EVANS: Scholars are always searching for something new. This is in part due to the pressure to publish and the fact that publishers want new and original. Some publishers, of course, want sensational and shocking. Therefore, advancing wild theories—such as the idea that Jesus was not buried but eaten by dogs, or that he was a Cynic and not a Savior, or that he did not see himself as the Messiah—usually pays off in one way or another. Also, I think television has become a factor. Today we see an unprecedented interest in Jesus and Christian origins in network television, not just cable. Television tends to be more interested in the new and sensational, not the solid and plausible.

Continued. . .



Q: ALONG THE SAME LINES, WHY DO YOU THINK THE PUBLIC IS SO EAGER TO ACCEPT SUCH FABRICATED CLAIMS ABOUT JESUS?

EVANS: People are curious; they want to hear more. Many people are willing, to a degree, to buy into conspiracy theories, so that they can say: “Ah, now I know the truth, and it is very different from traditional Christianity!” The other problem is that many people, including Christians, do not know historic Christianity very well. They are fuzzy when it comes to details and so do not always recognize the oddness of some of the new theories and fabricated claims about Jesus. Most people do not know the world of Jesus—the geography, the culture, the history, the issues. Accordingly, they don’t perceive the inherent improbabilities in much of the recent extreme scholars. For example, the proposal that Jesus was a Cynic is highly unlikely, because there were no Cynics in Galilee prior to the year 70 and because the city of Sepphoris—near Nazareth—was thoroughly Jewish and evidently lacked a Gentile or Cynic presence. But most people do not know this, so when a scholar suggests that Jesus was a Cynic, people do not view the suggestion with informed skepticism.



Q: WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH WITH *FABRICATING JESUS*? AND HOW DOES THE BOOK SET OUT TO ACCOMPLISH THOSE THINGS?

EVANS: I hope *Fabricating Jesus* helps readers see through the nonsense and distortions proffered in recent years by scholars and pseudoscholars. The book tries to do this by showing that the Gospels outside the New Testament are neither earlier than nor superior to the New Testament Gospels and that the portrait of Jesus in the New Testament Gospels is plausible and reliable. *Fabricating Jesus* also busts myths and misunderstandings with regard to what Jesus was all about and on what Christian faith actually rests. *Fabricating Jesus* is not simply an attack on bad ideas; it is a positive presentation of the truth of the Christian message.

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