



Picking Up the Fragments

FROM CROSSAN'S ANALYSIS
TO RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

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It is a clever deceit, when talking about something, to talk about it in such a manner that it becomes isolated from all other things. Things, whether ideas, artifacts, or attitudes, exist in relation to one another. Therefore, we must find ways to talk about things in their relationships.

— Anonymous

This year Robert W. Funk started a national research seminar for the purpose of displaying to a wider audience the results of past and present scholarly activity on ancient materials that depict speech and activity by Jesus of Nazareth. A major question for the members of the seminar is what kind of investigation of the ancient stories and sayings this will be. The nineteenth century saw "the quest of the historical Jesus,"¹ now regularly called the "Old Quest," and the middle of the twentieth century saw the "New Quest of the Historical Jesus."² What could make this quest different from other quests?

The primary answer lies in the unprecedented access to ancient documents purporting to present the speech and action of Jesus, and the unprecedented development of methods for understanding these documents in their own cultural environment. Both the access and the methodological developments result from discoveries that began near the end of the nineteenth century, editing and translation projects that continue to occupy numerous scholars, and investigations of sayings, stories, and legends in a wide variety of cultural arenas that allow us to see aspects of society we have not seen before.

This essay concerns a "socio-rhetorical" method for analyzing and

1 Recounted in Albert Schweitzer's *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*.

2 This phrase became standard in American scholarship with James M. Robinson's book, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*.

interpreting aspects of action and speech attributed to Jesus.³ Its purpose is to probe the inner reasoning and modes of argumentation in the data. On the one hand, the method is new, because it uses rhetorical and social analysis in a manner not applied previously to sayings of Jesus. Yet the method began before Jesus lived, since it was first nurtured into being when philosophers, orators, and teachers in Mediterranean antiquity used their skills to analyze, refine, and instruct others in the use of language in public life. Since then the method has been refined, especially by researchers in folklore and the Hebrew Bible. The use of an approach which is simultaneously new and old uncovers a bias of the writer of this essay, since an underlying presupposition is that new advances regularly occur when resources from older data (in this instance approximately 2,000 years older) are used to critique that which is recent. Another bias in the approach derives from a belief that an understanding of the dynamics of communication and transmission in Mediterranean culture at the time of the beginning of Christianity will facilitate our understanding of the transmission of traditions about Jesus.

This essay introduces a socio-rhetorical method through a critique of John Dominic Crossan's 1983 book entitled *In Fragments*, which is one of the most valuable studies of the sayings of Jesus to appear in recent years. Crossan tells us in the introduction to the book that he deliberately chose the title to evoke his earlier book *In Parables* (1973). In his own terms, the earlier book contained an analysis of the narrative metaphors or short stories attributed to Jesus. In his 1983 book, he uses the term aphorism for sayings attributed to the personal speech and wisdom of Jesus. The parables are easier to analyze comprehensively, he says, because they are restricted to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the Gospel of Thomas. The aphorisms, in contrast, "extend like hermeneutical tentacles throughout both intracanonical and extracanonical sources and throughout both first and second centuries."⁴ He lists 133 aphorisms in parallel columns in appendix I and says in his first chapter that he counts approximately "102 sayings in the synoptics which could be considered wisdom sayings."⁵

The lasting contribution of *In Fragments* will not only be Crossan's collection and numbering of sayings of Jesus for systematic analysis but also his inclusion of papyrus fragments and extracanonical sayings alongside the canonical sayings. The book is an invaluable fund of information for further work on the teaching of Jesus, the Q material,

3 The author first introduced the method in *Jesus the Teacher* (1984).

4 *In Fragments*, x.

5 *In Fragments*, 28.

and the sayings of Jesus in canonical and extracanonical literature. Moreover, Crossan's display of data is excellent. In the midst of detailed analysis, the reader is given tables, section headings, and clarifying sentences which position the reader throughout the book. In this way, Crossan makes the tradition of Jesus' sayings accessible in a hitherto unparalleled manner, and he invites us through his clear approach to engage in conversation with him. In my view, Crossan's *In Fragments* is an excellent vehicle for a transition to a new era of investigation of the aphorisms of Jesus. Therefore, I will set forth a socio-rhetorical approach in a framework that probes his analysis under three headings: How we begin influences where we go; What we look for influences what we see; and How we relate an aphorism to settings and other aphorisms influences how we understand the tradition.

1. How We Begin Influences Where We Go

Crossan's beginning point is an extremely important aspect of his book, and we will use discussions from rhetorical treatises in Mediterranean antiquity, modern analysis of proverbs in the Hebrew Bible, and rhetorical analysis of folklore in various cultures to reflect upon it. Crossan's beginning point is a discussion of the nature of aphorisms, which establishes a framework for detailed analysis of 40 of the approximately 102 synoptic sayings which could be considered wisdom sayings. In form, he says, an aphorism is like a proverb. The real difference lies in purpose and function. A proverb presents collective wisdom; an aphorism presents a personal vision through a personal voice. An aphorism receives its initial authority from the person to whom it is attributed. Then it earns its authoritative status by offering a new solution to an old problem or an old solution in a new form.⁶ When articulated in an aphorism, the new solution, the new form, or the new combination of solution and form has the quality of originality. Thus, according to Crossan, an aphorism presents newly formed content which an auditor hears as an original pronouncement by a person with a creative, personal vision.

From the perspective of rhetorical discussions contemporary with Jesus and the gospels, Crossan's distinction between proverb and aphorism is an appropriate beginning point for a study of sayings attributed to Jesus. The common Greek term for proverb is *γνώμη*. Theon of Alexandria, who is one of our most important sources since he writes in Greek toward the end of the first century CE and reflects a point of view

6 *In Fragments*, 4.

based on first century activity,⁷ says that a *γνώμη* has four basic qualities. First, it is not attributed to a specific person; second, it makes a general statement; third, it is concerned with matters useful in life; and fourth, it is a saying and not an action.⁸ To this list, William McKane's analysis of proverbs in the Ancient Near Eastern, Egyptian, and Israelite literature suggests the importance of adding that a proverb may be either concrete or abstract.⁹

It may be well to reflect briefly on these attributes of a proverb. First, a proverb's lack of attribution to a specific person allows any person to apply it without implication that some other person's application was especially informative or authoritative. The saying is restricted or enabled, in the terms of the folklorist Roger Abrahams, by its own "combination of elements of description" and "felicity of phrasing."¹⁰ Second, the "general" nature of a proverb means that its articulation of wisdom is not limited by reference to a "specific" person or group or to a "specific" occasion or event. In this context, "specific" means "precisely specified," like "Socrates," "Pythagoreans," or "the Trojan War." Third, the attribute of "useful in life" means that the proverb is neither simply a joke or retort, nor is it a logical theorem like "all sides of an isosceles triangle are equal." In Aristotle's terms, a proverb deals with "objects of human actions, and with what should be chosen or avoided with reference to them."¹¹ For this reason, a proverb may be applied by any individual to circumstances that confront daily living. Fourth, a proverb is a saying rather than an action. In other words, it is speech action

7 W. von Christ and W. Schmid, *Geschichte der griechische Literatur*, 460–61; Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 251.

8 Walz, *Rhetores Graeci*, 202,2–10. Aristotle's definition represents the basis for understanding the *γνώμη* in antiquity: "A *gnome* is a statement, not however concerning particulars, as, for instance, what sort of a man Iphicrates was, but general; it does not even deal with all general things, as for instance that the straight is the opposite of the crooked, but with the objects of human actions, and with what should be chosen or avoided with reference to them" (*The "Art" of Rhetoric*, 2.21.2). Since Aristotle did not attempt to distinguish between unattributed proverbs and attributed aphorisms (*chreiai*), he intermingled proverbs and aphorisms in his analysis. Crossan's work perpetuates this pre-chreia approach without many of the benefits of Aristotle's insights.

9 *Proverbs*. I am deeply grateful to Professor David M. Gunn, now at Columbia Theological Seminary, Decatur, Georgia, not only for making McKane's study available to me when it was difficult to find another copy, but also for calling to my attention Carole R. Fontaine's *Traditional Sayings*, which contains an excellent survey of Old Testament and folklore research as well as her own contextual analysis of proverbs.

10 "Introductory Remarks," 151.

11 *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, 2.21.2.

which combines elements of description with felicity of phrasing rather than speech which rehearses someone else's speech or action. Fifth, while a proverb is not "specific," it may be "concrete" rather than abstract. Something which is tangible, like a shirt, is concrete; something which is intangible, like hope, is abstract. When these become objects of human action in the form of making a shirt or making a wish, both are concrete. Yet a concrete situation need not be "specific." Proverbs do not speak in terms of specific persons or specific occasions. Accordingly, "weaving a garment" is concrete; "Penelope weaving a garment" is specific. William McKane has observed that:

The paradox of the "proverb" is that it acquires immortality because of its particularity [concreteness]; that because of its lack of explicitness [specificity], its allusiveness or even opaqueness, it does not become an antique, but awaits continually the situation to illumine for which it was coined.¹²

It is important, in other words, to distinguish "specificity" or "explicitness" from "concreteness." A proverb may be either concrete or abstract, but it is not limited by reference to an explicitly specified person or occasion.

Crossan's use of "a stitch in time saves nine" is an excellent example of what the ancients meant by a *γνώμη*. It circulates without attribution to a specific person; it is general, not specific like "If George makes a stitch in time, he will save nine"; it can be and has been applied to various situations in daily life; it is a saying rather than an action, and it is concrete rather than abstract.

While Crossan's use of the term and approach to the proverb is akin to the rhetorician's use of the term and approach to the *γνώμη*, his understanding of aphorism is part of their understanding of *χρεία*. As Theon says:

every concise *γνώμη*, if it is attributed to a person, makes a *χρεία*.¹³

It is understandable that Crossan does not want to use the term *χρεία*, since a *χρεία* may be constituted by either a saying or an action. In the words of Theon:

A *χρεία* is a concise statement (*ἀπόφασις*) or action attributed with aptness to some specific (*ὀρισμένον*) person or something analogous to a person.¹⁴

12 *Proverbs*, 414. Square brackets added.

13 Quoted in Walz, *Rhetores Graeci*, 202,1.

14 Quoted in *Rhetores Graeci*, 201,27–29. See the Greek text and discussion in Robbins, "Pronouncement Stories." 45–51

The term “aphorism” is an appropriate term to use for a saying attributed to a specific person, since the term captures the ἀπο- of ἀπόφασις (a statement “from”) and the ὠρισμ- of ὠρισμένον (specific) in the definition of a *chreia*. The specificity of an aphorism derives, as we shall see more clearly below, both from its attribution to a specific (ὠρισμένον) person and from the implication that it speaks from within the horizons (ὠρισμα) of a specific person’s thought and action. Thus, an aphorism is appropriately “a saying attributed to a specific person and perceived within the horizons of that person’s wisdom and action.”

Crossan’s next step is to distinguish an aphorism from a proverb on the basis of “personal” in contrast to “collective” wisdom. Again his terminology is appropriate, but here we get a lack of clarification that haunts the remaining analysis. Theon observed three attributes of personal wisdom in the aphorism, and analysis shows that these observations obtain for the aphorisms of Jesus. First, the personal aspect emerges in the attribution of the saying to a specific person. This means that an aphorism must not be isolated from the person to whom it is attributed. Second, personal wisdom as expressed in an aphorism may or may not be concerned with daily living, while a proverb always has this concern. Third, personal wisdom in an aphorism may be “general” or “specific,” while it is always “general” in a proverb.¹⁵ To this we add a fourth observation that either a proverb or an aphorism may be abstract or concrete. Analysis of these aspects of personal wisdom in aphorisms can lead us into the inner workings of the sayings attributed to Jesus in early Christian tradition. In contrast, Crossan’s analysis does not engage the inner workings of Jesus’ aphorisms, because it does not enter the inner world of the aphorism as an attributed saying which is general or specific, which may or may not concern daily living, and which may be either concrete or abstract.

A good way to begin to see the lack of clarification in Crossan’s analysis is to observe what he does *not* probe in his discussion of the proverb “a stitch in time saves nine.” His major interest, as mentioned above, is to make the appropriate observation that the proverb and the aphorism may have the same form, but the proverb presents “collective” wisdom while the aphorism presents “personal” wisdom. For this reason, he gives special attention to the form and felicity of phrasing of “a stitch in time saves nine” to show why it is such an excellent proverb.¹⁶ The weakness of this analysis lies in the failure to ask us to notice that the “Stitch” proverb is “general” rather than specific, “concrete” rather than abstract, and concerned with something useful for

15 Theon in *Rhetores Graeci*, 202,5–7.

16 *In Fragments*, 12–13.

living. The “general” quality of the proverb is present in two aspects: (a) an absence of personal pronouns allows anyone to be included in it, and (b) its wisdom is grounded in general knowledge. Let us take the absence of personal pronouns first. The proverb may potentially include anyone, even the speaker and the auditor, without explicitly including or excluding anyone, because no personal pronouns limit its direction. To say this another way, any speaker or auditor may add a first, second, or third person pronoun mentally to this proverb as follows:

a stitch in time (made by him, her, you, or me) saves nine (stitches by him, her, you, or me).

The general, inclusive nature of this proverb is supported by general knowledge about a tear or hole in a garment. Anyone who has stitched a garment, seen a person stitch a garment, or seen the results of someone’s stitching or not stitching can readily understand the proverb. The general nature of this proverb is strengthened by its concreteness. The concrete image of making a stitch in a garment grounds the saying in experienced reality that gives rise to the general wisdom that “it is good to stitch a tear or hole in a garment.” The proverb does not, however, simply present the general wisdom as a thesis. It activates the thesis in the form of general advice — the form of rhetoric the ancients called *συμβουλευτικός* (advisory) and which we translate as “deliberative.”¹⁷ The “general” advice based on concrete data concerns daily life. It can be, and has been, applied by many people to a variety of daily circumstances. The ancients saw this concern for daily life in proverbs, and by this means distinguished a proverb such as this from a saying attributed to a specific person.

The approach we are using to distinguish a proverb from an aphorism means, of course, that a proverb can be made into an aphorism simply by attributing it to a specific person. Crossan himself observes that:

Put crudely but accurately: “A stitch in time saves nine” is a *Gnome*, but “Jesus said: a stitch in time saves nine” is a *Chreia*.¹⁸

This is a very important point. When “a stitch in time” exists as a proverb, it is available for any person to apply to a situation as that person considers it appropriate. In contrast, when it is asserted that “Jesus said it,” the auditor searches for, infers, or implies Jesus’ application of it. In other words, a proverb like this is applied by means of analogy. When it

¹⁷ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 19–20.

¹⁸ *In Fragments*, 229.

exists as a proverb, the initiative lies with any person to apply it to a situation or topic he/she considers to be analogous to stitching a garment in time. When, however, it exists as an attributed aphorism, the issue becomes, "To what did that person apply the proverb?" If attributed to Jesus, the auditor of the aphorism would search for a characteristic emphasis or occasion in Jesus' action or speech for which it would serve as an analogy. For example, a person might wonder if Jesus said "a stitch in time saves nine" to present an analogy for preparation for or participation in the kingdom. But if we consider the proverb to be inappropriate as an aphorism of Jesus, and I think we should, we should ask why we readily accept it as a proverb but resist it within the perceived horizons of Jesus' speech and action. And if we would accept it as an aphorism of Benjamin Franklin, we should probe why we would consider it appropriate for him but not appropriate for Jesus.

There is, in fact, an aphorism attributed to Jesus which has an interesting relation to the "Stitch" proverb. It exists in an aphoristic compound (combination of two similar aphorisms) which Crossan entitles "Patches and Wineskins":

And Jesus said to them, . . .

"No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; if he/she does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; if he/she does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine is lost, and so are the skins; but new wine is for fresh skins" (Mark 2:21-22).¹⁹

The formed content in this saying presents concrete wisdom similar to "a stitch in time saves nine." There are, however, a number of differences. First, the "Stitch" proverb focuses entirely on a concrete action and its results. Advice emerges directly from deliberation on an action. In contrast, "no one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment," or "no one puts new wine into old wineskins" gives prominence to a personal actor in a setting of negative deliberation. To be precise, deliberation occurs through a person who has acted improperly. From the perspective of classical rhetoric, the personalization of the issue takes a significant step toward either judicial or epideictic rhetoric. Judicial rhetoric accuses or defends a person in a setting where auditors will present a verdict of guilty or innocent. Epideictic rhetoric praises or censures a person in a setting which confirms the values of the auditors.²⁰ The emphatic position of the personalized negative ("no one") at the beginning of the "Patches and Wineskins" compound focuses the attention on

¹⁹ *In Fragments*, 122.

²⁰ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 19-20.

a person engaged in an inappropriate form of activity. This posture could serve a deliberative purpose, that is, its goal could be to advise a person to do the opposite. In a deliberative setting, however, it would be natural to indicate the kind of person who would *not* do this (e.g., no one *who is wise* sews . . . or puts . . .). The omission of a qualifier intensifies the personal engagement. In other words, “no one does it this way” implies that the speaker is either censuring someone who is unthinkingly combining the new with the old or defending someone who has engaged appropriately in activity which varies from the conventional (old) pattern. This leads to the next observation.

Each aphorism in the “Patches and Wineskins” compound contains a rationale clause which gives argumentative support to the initial assertion. In the terminology of classical rhetoric, these aphorisms are rhetorical syllogisms called enthymemes.²¹ The discussion of enthymemes arose in the setting of the two basic forms of argument rhetoricians perceived to be available to anyone — inductive and deductive argumentation. Inductive argumentation produces a series of examples or analogies to support a proposition. The existence of a saying about a garment and a saying about wine in this compound functions inductively, since two examples support an underlying proposition through a gathering of additional, similar evidence. Deductive argumentation, in contrast, produces a logical syllogism. The most famous logical syllogism, undoubtedly, is:

General premise: All men are mortal.

Specific premise: Socrates is a man.

Conclusion: Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

This syllogism argues from the general to the specific, from all men to Socrates. The nature of the general premise is to ground the syllogism in general knowledge. The nature of the specific premise is to relate the general knowledge to a specific case. The conclusion, then, applies the remaining term in the general premise to the specific case. In a setting of rhetorical discourse the speaker will usually omit either the general or specific premise, since he/she presupposes the auditors will provide it. Thus, in the form of an enthymeme (a rhetorical syllogism), the statement could be either “Socrates is mortal, because all men are mortal” or “Socrates is mortal, because he is a man.”²² The syllogism in the “Patches and Wineskins” compound is:

21 *New Testament Interpretation*, 7, 16–17, 49–51, 56–61.

22 For a very important recent discussion of the enthymeme, see Conley, “The Enthymeme in Perspective,” 168–87.

Hypothetical Concrete Premise: If someone puts an unshrunk cloth on a new garment or new wine into old wineskins, he/she tears the garment, bursts the wineskins, and loses the wine.

Conclusion: Therefore, no one sews an unshrunk cloth on a new garment or puts new wine into old wineskins.

This compound aphorism gains its power not only from inductive argumentation which produces two examples (patches and wineskins) but deductive argumentation which uses a concrete premise to support a conclusion. The point is that the aphoristic compound does not simply “combine elements of description with felicity of phrasing.” Rather, it combines initial negative assertions with hypothetical concrete cases either to censure or to defend someone’s action. This is the stuff of which aphorisms are made, and they reflect the “personal” wisdom to which Crossan refers. In other words, this aphoristic compound is an argumentative package which reflects the aphoristic tradition of Jesus rather than general proverbial tradition. In fact, this compound probably provided the setting for the formulation of the general proverb, “New wine is for new wineskins” (Mark 2:22c; cf. Matt 9:17c/Luke 9:38) and for reflection on the known proverb “The old is good” (Luke 9:39).²³

If an aphorism has an enthymematic form, analysis of its rhetorical logic is a beginning point for displaying both its internal and external aspects as a unit of communication. Among other things, the rhetorical posturing in the aphorism is important to consider. Instead of simply presenting deliberative exhortation in the form of “new wine for new wineskins,” the compound presents a personalized argument postured against an alternative form of action. In other words, while a proverb like “a stitch in time saves nine” is designed to move a person from inaction (not stitching) to action (stitching), the “Patches and Wineskins” compound is designed to censure or defend a particular form of action. The “personal” nature of the aphorisms shows an investment in a situation where an action has been questioned in relation to an established (old) practice. In these aphorisms, then, there is a special “posturing”: if one has a new garment or new wine, then one will not mix it with the old in a manner that does not work properly. The posturing of the aphorism resides partly in its assertion that “a new thing is available.” But beyond this, it cites concrete “negative examples” which can be used whenever anyone questions an action which could be interpreted as “new.” It is, then, an argumentative compound arising out of a situation of conflict and designed for argumentation in a setting of

23 Cf. Sirach 9:10; Pirke Aboth 4:20; b.Ber. 51a; Plautus, *Casina* 5.

conflict. In the synoptic tradition, it is linked specifically to fasting (Mark 2:18–22; Matt 9:14–17; Luke 5:33–39). While a person might think that “not fasting” is “an old thing,” regularly encountered in a setting where fasting has been established as a way to show one’s faithfulness to a covenant relationship to God, “not fasting” should be understood as part of “a new approach.” This aphorism establishes its leverage by presupposing that a particular action is “new” and applying concrete knowledge concerning how to deal with “the new” in appropriate ways.

But there is one additional matter before leaving the “Patches and Wineskins” compound. The inner reasoning in the aphorisms is grounded in basic knowledge about life. Its concrete premises concerning patches and wineskins would be shared by almost anyone anywhere. We should also notice that its concrete premises suggest an underlying general premise like: “No one damages or destroys a thing useful for life.” The entire syllogism underlying the compound, therefore, seems to be:

General Premise: No one damages or destroys a thing useful for life.

Hypothetical Concrete Premise: If someone puts an unshrunk cloth on a new garment or new wine into old wineskins, he/she tears the garment, bursts the wineskins, and loses the wine.

Conclusion: Therefore, no one sews an unshrunk cloth on a new garment or new wine into old wineskins.

The recovery of the general premise raises some interesting questions. Was it characteristic of Jesus to support actions which violated established conventions with images from conventional daily living? How does this underlying premise cohere with premises presupposed by other aphorisms attributed to Jesus? A new attempt to reconstruct the teaching of Jesus surely must attempt to uncover the network of presuppositions at work in the action and speech attributed to Jesus. This network can be uncovered and displayed if interpreters will analyze the constituents of argumentation in the speech and action attributed to Jesus.

While the “Patches and Wineskins” compound may be general, concerned with daily living, and concrete, an aphorism may be specific, not concerned with daily living, and abstract. The aphorism Crossan entitles “On Hindering Others” is a good example of the latter, since it is specific, referring to and addressing scribes and Pharisees (or lawyers), it is only useful in daily living if you are a special kind of person, and it is abstract. The aphorism is as follows:

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, . . . “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because you shut the kingdom of

heaven against men; for you neither enter yourselves, nor allow those who would enter to go in" (Matt 23:1, 13).²⁴

This aphorism, like the "Patches and Wineskins" compound, is attributed to Jesus. But the "Hindering" aphorism is specific rather than general, since it not only refers to but explicitly addresses scribes and Pharisees (Luke 11:52: lawyers). Also, this aphorism is not based on general knowledge like repairing a garment or making wine, but on a special form of belief, namely: "It is good to enter the kingdom of God." Within the arena of this special belief, the aphorism concerns the habits of the scribes and Pharisees rather than basic daily living. This aphorism, therefore, not only differs from a proverb, but differs from the "Patches and Wineskins" compound by its specificity of reference and address, its grounding in a special form of belief, and its concern with the special habits of the scribes and Pharisees.

It is informative first to compare the "Hindering" aphorism with the proverb "a stitch in time saves nine." In order for the "Stitch" proverb to contain the qualities of the "Hindering" aphorism, it would have to be formulated something like the following:

Woe to you, seamstresses and garmentmakers, because you prevent people from having sound garments; for you neither stitch them yourselves, nor allow others to stitch.

The process of transforming the "Stitch" proverb through imitation makes a person aware of three constituents in the "Hindering" aphorism. First, there is a harangue against the Pharisees in the form of a statement of woe. Second, a rationale statement presents a general basis for the harangue. Third, an additional statement divides the rationale into two parts (neither entering themselves nor allowing others to enter). The saying, therefore, contains an initial statement, a rationale, and a division of the rationale.

When we analyze the "Hindering" aphorism as an enthymeme, we gain a clearer understanding of its attributes. In syllogistic form, it looks as follows:

Specific Premise: You [scribes and Pharisees] shut the kingdom from men.

Division of the Specific Premise: You [scribes and Pharisees] neither enter yourselves nor allow others who would enter to go in.

Conclusion: Woe [is] to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.

In this instance, as well as in the “Patches and Wineskins” compound, the general premise is not articulated. Rather, (1) a specific premise applies a presupposed general premise to a specific case, (2) a division of the specific premise partitions the “shutting” activity into “neither entering yourselves nor allowing others to enter,” and (3) a conclusion announces that scribes and Pharisees are cursed as a result of their activity. The general premise, which is presupposed but not stated, appears to be: “Cursed be [woe to] anyone who keeps men from entering the kingdom.” This presupposed premise is two steps away from a general premise about “daily living” in general culture. The first step away results from a lack of “general” wisdom about “the kingdom” in general culture. Most people in most societies would have no knowledge about whatever “kingdom” is referred to in this aphorism. The second step away concerns general wisdom in a cultural milieu like first century Judaism. Probably most first century Jewish people either presupposed for themselves or knew the meaning of the presupposition: “It is good to enter the kingdom.” One wonders how widespread the presupposition might have been that “it is good to help others enter the kingdom.” The “Hindering” aphorism presupposes an activation of this latter presupposition in a negative form reminiscent of curses that accompany the violation of a covenant: “Cursed be anyone who keeps men from entering the kingdom.” This means that the “Hindering” aphorism presupposes a negative aphorism which is assumed by a particular Jewish group to be one of the curses that accompanies their special covenant with God. This curse would likely be one step away from a more general Jewish presupposition that it is good to enter the kingdom. Therefore, the aphorism as we have it is two steps away from “general” wisdom, since it not only presupposes a premise within Jewish culture but a premise within a special group within that cultural arena. At this second remove, you and I are asked to contemplate our own actions only via the actions of two specific kinds of Jews who are censured, namely scribes and Pharisees (or lawyers).

We may draw together our observations thus far by noting that the “Hindering” aphorism contains intense epideictic censure (commonly called “invective”) in a setting of role opposition.²⁵ The intensity of the censuring distinguishes it not only from the “deliberative” quality of the “Stitch” proverb but also from the milder judicial or epideictic tone of the “Patches and Wineskins” compound. As mentioned above, the epideictic mode achieves its goals through people as the subject matter. By this means, general virtues and vices are identified and targeted for emula-

25 See Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, 110–13.

tion or avoidance. In contrast to proverbs, and to aphorisms like those in the "Patches and Wineskins" compound, the "Hindering" aphorism is "specific" internally, referring explicitly to the scribes and Pharisees. Yet the premise for censuring them is abstract. One is interested in knowing how the Pharisees shut the kingdom off from others. There is no demonstration of "concrete" knowledge about the Pharisees either in the premise or the division of the premise. The basis for the accusation is "abstract," without tangible substance. In other words, the aphorism censures a specific group by means of a negative caricature which has no concrete substance. In form and substance, the rationale for the censure is simply a logical reversal of a goal presupposed among Christians who believe they are blessed if they help others enter the kingdom. But, according to Aristotle, we can expect this kind of creation of the opposite in both judicial and epideictic material, since both kinds of rhetoric rely heavily on enthymemes which introduce contraries in a framework of deductive logic about the past. As he says:

Enthymemes are most suitable for judicial speakers, because the past, by reason of its obscurity, above all lends itself to the investigation of causes and to demonstrative proof. Such are nearly all the materials of praise or blame [epideictic rhetoric], the things which those who praise or blame should keep in view, and the sources of encomia and invective; for when these are known their contraries are obvious, since blame is derived from the contrary things.²⁶

Invective, therefore, may derive simply from contrary deduction without concern for specific grounding. The "Hindering" aphorism appears to be such an instance. It confirms the attitude of a group which feels threatened by "scribes and Pharisees," and it confirms the attitude through an epideictic enthymeme containing no "concrete" subject matter within its premise or conclusion. This kind of aphorism is not only different in nature from the "Stitch" proverb, but it is different from the "Patches and Wineskins" aphorisms as well. It will be necessary not only to negotiate the relation of this aphorism to proverbs, but it will be necessary to analyze its relation to other aphorisms attributed to Jesus in the tradition. It would be good, therefore, to gather together aphorisms like this one and analyze the relation of their presuppositions and assertions to one another.

The interpretive challenge with the "Patches and Wineskins" compound and the "Hindering" aphorism differ, therefore. With the "Patches and Wineskins" compound, we need to know what the un-

26 *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, 1.9.40-41.

shrunk cloth and the new wine are meant to represent. In other words, while the aphorism has an enthymematic form, its inner content works inductively through analogy. Are there other analogies in the tradition which, alongside this one, help to explain some aspect of that to which the “unshrunk cloth” and the “new wine” are analogous? Are the majority of these analogies based on conventional values in daily life? Aphorisms which communicate inductively through analogy should be gathered and their presuppositions and assertions should be analyzed systematically. In contrast, the “Hindering” aphorism works deductively. Supposedly, no analogy is necessary for “scribes and Pharisees.” The speaker has identified a group and censured them with deductive logic based on the premise that anyone is cursed who hinders others from entering the kingdom. Much of the power of the “Hindering” aphorism, therefore, lies in its deductive logic. Its weakness, however, lies in its lack of grounding in general knowledge. It not only presupposes a special belief that it is possible to help people into or keep them out of the kingdom, and a person is blessed or cursed accordingly, but it presupposes that we will accept the invective against the scribes and Pharisees without concrete evidence.

It would appear, then, that Crossan’s discussion needs precision based on analysis of the reasoning and argumentation in aphorisms. This kind of analysis will seek to clarify presuppositions underlying the assertions and exhibit the deductive and inductive reasoning which give the aphorisms their persuasive power. Also, this approach will start the interpreter on a program of establishing the network of communication which exists within presuppositions and arguments in the aphoristic tradition. Such a program will begin to exhibit the relation of “radical rhetoric” (grounded only in authoritative statement) to “reasoned argument” (grounded in general knowledge) in early Christian tradition²⁷ and establish a basis for a new humanistic and theological appraisal of the speech and action attributed to Jesus.

2. What We Look For Influences What We See

The next step in Crossan’s agenda is to discuss how aphorisms are transmitted in oral tradition).²⁸ Aphorisms exist in oral memory, according to Crossan, as *ipsissima structura*, not *ipsissima verba*. Basic to an aphorism, then, is a “structure” which he calls an “aphoristic core.” Beginning with this premise, he draws a boundary between performancial variations and hermeneutical variations. Performancial vari-

27 *New Testament Interpretation*, 7–8, 93, 96, 104–106.

28 *In Fragments*, 37ff.

ations occur within the basic core or structure in the form of contraction, expansion, conversion (from negative to positive, or vice versa), substitution (of one synonymous term for another), or transposition (of first for second part, or vice versa). These variations, he suggests, do not change the meaning substantially. In the midst of performancial variations, hermeneutical variations (by which he means "interpretational" variations) occur by adding commentary or reconfiguring the saying.

Crossan's approach makes a significant advance in the discussion of aphorisms in early Christian tradition. Yet, the actual application of the approach has severe limitations. In my opinion, "what we look for" in aphorisms is the initial issue. Crossan's approach leads him to find "structures," and by this means he "generalizes" aphorisms into proverbial forms. To put it another way, Crossan begins with a "semiotic" analysis, and this approach restricts the semantic dimensions which make the sayings aphorisms rather than proverbs. The performancial variations Crossan sees in aphorisms represent the alternative selections and substitutions Jakobson assigns to the metaphoric aspect of language.²⁹ These variations occur in proverbs as well as aphorisms. Crossan's discussion lacks analysis of "meaning through contiguity," the aspect Jakobson terms metonymic. The first element of contiguity must be the association of the aphorism with the person to whom it is attributed. The remaining elements of contiguity lie within the aphorism itself and the perceived horizons in which that aphorism functioned during the life of the person to whom it is attributed.³⁰ I think the best way to confront this problem is to continue with the "other way of seeing" with which this essay began.

Instead of seeing "structures" in aphorisms, I see "postured meaning effects." A postured meaning effect contains basic rhetorical effect in a tensive framework.³¹ A good way to see the difference is again to see what is lacking in Crossan's analysis. The "For and Against" aphorism³² is a good place to start, though I will call it the "Against or Not Against" aphorism. In Mark and Q the aphorism reads as follows:

But Jesus said, "... For he that is not against us (Luke: you) is for us (Luke: you)" (Mark 9:39, 40; cf. Luke 9:50).

29 *Fundamentals of Language*, 68-96

30 Exceptionally helpful analyses are available in the works by Eleanor A. Forster, Heda Jason, Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett, Carolyn Ann Parker, and Carole R. Fontaine cited in the Works Consulted.

31 For a discussion of "tensive," see Tannehill, *The Sword of His Mouth*, 12-14, 51-56, 152-56.

32 *In Fragments*, 47-50.

Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, "... He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Matt 12:25, 30/Luke 11:17, 23).

This aphorism, in contrast to the aphorisms on "Hindering" or "Patches and Wineskins," is constituted solely by an aphoristic premise. In other words, instead of functioning as an argumentative unit with a premise and a conclusion, it functions either as a rationale in an enthymeme or as a thesis which contains an aura of proverbial grounding. Internally, the images lack concreteness. Instead of "he who does not *speak* against you" or "he who does not *hit* you," it refers simply to "he who is not *against* or *with* . . ." In other words, its subject matter is more concerned with "the qualities of people" than "the objects of human actions." The "personalized" concern of the aphorism is present not only in the "he who is not . . . is," but also in the "us," "you," or "me" which are present in the different performances of the aphorism. The aphorism adopts personal pronouns which orient it toward specific people in specific situations. With these attributes, the aphorism functions intrinsically in the arena of judicial or epideictic rhetoric with a concern for evaluating or locating people, rather than the arena of deliberative rhetoric which concerns future action. If the aphorism used concrete terms like "friend" or "enemy" instead of "for" or "against," its appeal in the realm of general knowledge would be strengthened. In the absence of these concrete terms, its strength lies in the potential of the phrases to evoke such concrete images.

Surely the most interesting challenge of the "Against or Not Against" aphorism lies in the variation between "he who is *not against* . . . is for

. . ." and "he who is *not with* . . . is *against* . . ." in the different performances in the tradition. How shall we explain the potential of the aphorism for this variation, and how shall we understand the significance of the variation?

The basic item Crossan observes in the five available performances of this aphorism is the "substitution of 'for' and 'against' for one another within the same chiasmic framework."³³

In all cases, in Greek, the construction is chiasmic: is/us//us/is. This formal unity underlines the fact that the inclusive (not against, for) and the exclusive (not for, against) versions are simple performancial variations stressing in both cases the impossibility of *neutrality*.³⁴

33 *In Fragments*, 47–50.

34 *In Fragments*, 49.

Through a “structural” analysis, then, Crossan locates a common idea, namely “the impossibility of neutrality,” among all the variations. The basic problem with such an approach is that it reduces the aphorism to an “independent, general principle.” In other words, the approach bypasses the specificity of the aphorism, wherever that specificity lies, and treats the aphorism as though it had the general nature of a proverb.

In my perspective and terminology, an interpreter may locate the particular qualities of an aphorism by looking for the “postured meaning effect” rather than simply a structure. A postured meaning effect has two essential qualities: (a) tensive pattern and (b) rhetorical effect. A tensive pattern is a semantic structure rather than a semiotic structure. A semantic structure has some aspect of specificity, and this specificity signals a meaning potential within the horizons of activity and thought associated with the person to whom the aphorism is attributed.³⁵ In addition, the aphorism contains rhetorical effect, that is, an ordering of words and thoughts that postures the saying in relation to alternatives that may exist in the culture. An aphorism has a close relation to one or more social situations associated with the person to whom it is attributed. When it is applied to different social situations, it adapts internally unless it has sufficient attributes of a proverb to maintain its internal details. The adaptation of an aphorism occurs in special ways, since the tensive pattern and rhetorical effect interact with the situation.

Crossan’s structural analysis misrepresents the common features of the “Against or Not Against” aphorism when it reduces them to “for and against” and the chiasmic arrangement “is/us//us/is.” The postured meaning effect common to all the performances is rather: “location may or may not imply opposition, depending on the situation.” This meaning effect is present in a sequence where a negated “universal particular” clause introducing personal relationship vis-a-vis spatial location serves as the subject of a positive predication which contains a contrary constituent with the same personal pronoun (either included or elided). The negation creates a framework for contraries (not with/against; not against/for), the combination of personal relationship and spatial location creates a framework for substitution of terms (for/with), and the ordering of words and thoughts requires that the transposition (against/—; —/against) be accompanied by the conversion (not against/—; not —/against). The result is a “postured meaning effect” which adapts to particular situations in particular ways.

The postured meaning effect is present in the Mark/Q tradition in the form:

35 Cf. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor*, 129–33.

He who is not (in a particular relation or location to a person)
is (in a particular relation to that person).

The rhetorical posture of the aphorism lies in the tensive pattern and rhetorical effect of “he who is not . . . is . . .” The special bias of this structured, rhetorical pattern is its focus on opposition (being against) rather than alliance (being for). The issue of opposition (either opposing or being opposed) lies within the postured meaning effect in such a manner that its positive form (being against) or its negative form (not being against) is central to the aphorism. Around either a positive or negative expression of opposition lies the theme of alliance (being for), location (being not with, far, or near), or a combination of opposition and location (scattering or not gathering with). The postured meaning effect, then, does not allow a conversion from “not against” to “for,” but from “not against” to “against.”

The special nature of the tensive pattern keeps the topic of “opposition” central and “alliance” subordinate. This is a result of the negative posturing in the tensive pattern. This aphorism differs, for example, from “he who receives you, receives me, and he who receives me receives him who sent me” (Matt 10:40).³⁶ The absence of any negative components in this aphorism allows it to be converted into its opposite: “He who rejects you rejects me, and he who rejects me rejects him who sent me” (Luke 10:16).³⁷ In contrast to the “Against or Not Against” aphorism, the “Receiving the Sender” aphorism is based on general knowledge about sending and receiving, and it has a structure which can easily be converted. It is also closely related to proverbs like “he who does not honor the son does not honor the father who sent him” (John 5:23) and “every one whom the master of the house sends to do his business ought to be received as him who sent him” (Ignatius, Eph. 6:1). But the “Against or Not Against” aphorism does not maintain contact with “presupposed general knowledge” in the manner of the “Receiving the Sender” aphorism.

The special nature of the “Against or Not Against” aphorism is exhibited in the manner in which it moves closer or further away from “general proverbial” articulation. When the performance of the aphorism speaks about being “with,” the leader is speaking personally from the perspective of being “with me” (Matt 12:30/Luke 11:23 [twice]). When it speaks of being “for,” the group is the matter of concern in either “for us” or “for you” (Mark 9:40/Luke 9:50b/POxy 1224). Only “against” or “not against” are found in connection with both the leader and the

36 *In Fragments*, 106.

37 *In Fragments*, 106.

group. If a person reads "he who is not against us is for us" as though it were the general proverb "he who is not an enemy is a friend," he/she will miss the aphoristic nature of the saying. The saying is not meant to fit general situations in life like "a friend in need is a friend indeed," "birds of a feather flock together," or "one man's friend is another man's enemy." Rather, it reflects the specific situation of a group which identifies with a leader, and the issue is whether people who identify with this leader should reject people who do not join the group, since there are people who reject the leader. The aphoristic tradition, attributing authoritative speech to the leader, presents a perspective about the leader and a perspective about the group in variant performances of the same aphorism.

Luke moves the aphorism toward a proverb when he has "he who is not against you is for you." In this form, the aphorism approaches "he who is not your enemy is your friend." Crossan's analysis "proverbializes" the tradition further by reducing all the aphoristic performances to "he who is not for you (your friend) is against you (your enemy)" and "he who is not against you (your enemy) is for you (your friend)." Once he has done this, he calls it the "For or Against Aphorism" and proposes that it argues for the "impossibility of neutrality" (a person is either a friend or an enemy). Indeed, aphorisms may be nurtured into proverbs. In fact, most, if not all, proverbs undoubtedly began as aphorisms. As we saw with the "Patches and Wineskins" compound, early Christian tradition exhibits the process in which aphorisms were "generalized" or "proverbialized" as they were used as vehicles of communication and argumentation in Mediterranean society and culture. Unfortunately, New Testament scholarship often has gravitated toward the proverbialized form which could be more easily applied to "modern situations" than to the aphoristic forms which transmit the specific situations from which they arose and in which they functioned.

This analysis means that an aphorism's specificity expresses itself in terms of specific situations pertaining to "this" person and "this" group. "He who is not against us/you is for us/you" represents a specific stance by a specific group. It does not appear, for example, that the Dead Sea Community held the view that one who was not against them was for them, and one wonders how broadly such a view might have been held by other groups during the first century. On the other hand, "he who is not with me is against me" could be expressed by any number of individuals who desired to be understood or selected as a leader. Therefore, both aphorisms may reflect a postured meaning effect arising from Jesus' speech. It is informative that "he who is not against us/you is for us/you" is linked with a specific situation in which a man was per-

forming exorcisms in the name of Jesus but did not identify himself with the group. This performance of the aphorism, therefore, is likely to reflect a special view held by Jesus. The form of the aphorism with “me” in it could well have been said by Jesus, since it could have been said by almost any person wishing to be viewed as a leader.

The import of this analysis is to assert that performances of aphorisms presuppose specific situations. In other words, specific social situations are an integral part of their content. Crossan’s analysis misses this crucial aspect of aphorisms when it collapses them into a common structure. The performance, “He that is not against () is for (),” presupposes a situation in which one or more people who are not located in the group which identifies with Jesus use some of the group’s tactics but do not do anything to oppose or harm the group. In contrast, the performance, “He that is not with () is against (),” presupposes a situation in which one or more people actively oppose, malign, or attempt to hinder the leader. In other words, if a person is a certain kind of “non-enemy” of the group, he/she should not be rejected. On the other hand, if a person is a certain kind of “non-friend” of the leader, he/she will reject the leader. Within these two forms of the aphorism, therefore, lie the specific dynamics of a specific group rather than “general knowledge” about life.

In summary, aphorisms regularly presuppose and arise from specific situations. To say that situations are secondary to them, or to say that an aphorism “circulates” freely, is to misunderstand the function of aphorisms within a tradition and to misconstrue the process of transmission. Proverbs circulate freely, ready for application to situations without internal modification because of their concrete, general nature. Aphorisms, in contrast, arise from specific situations and adapt when applied to other situations. An aphorism may adapt enough to become a proverb. In this case, it has acquired a general quality which allows it to function in various situations without modification.

For Crossan, the variations we have just explored are “performancial” rather than “hermeneutical” variations. A person may wonder why Crossan draws the boundary line between performancial and hermeneutical variations in the manner in which he does. The answer lies partially within the unfortunate heritage of “oral” versus “scribal” culture which has haunted New Testament criticism for many years. The approach exhibits a misunderstanding of communication through speech and writing in Mediterranean culture. Writers, speakers, and teachers in first century Mediterranean culture presupposed a close relation between speaking and writing. As a result, Hellenistic education interwove four activities: (1) oral replication, (2) oral composition, (3)

scribal replication, and (4) scribal composition.³⁸ New Testament interpreters regularly introduce a lack of precision by collapsing these four activities into only oral or scribal activity as though oral activity were of one basic kind and scribal activity were of another kind. Both oral and scribal activity, however, interwove replication and composition. Crossan's "hermeneutical variations" are based primarily on the establishment of a written source behind another written form.³⁹ By this means, he gets artificial leverage on the analysis of a performance he considers to have occurred in the presence of a written source. Most writers and speakers, including the gospel writers, followed a principle of replication or composition as they chose.⁴⁰ Crossan's positing of "a written source behind another written form," therefore, regularly is superfluous and often is misleading. Whether written or oral, or whether written or oral in the presence of a written or oral form, the test lies in the wording of the aphorism and its function in its setting. In fact, even oral or scribal replication may entail some kind of hermeneutical variation, because the performance may relate the postured meaning effect to different data.⁴¹

A basic implication of the discussion above is to call attention to the artificial nature of source analysis, that is, the artificing which comes from the analyst who posits that one saying is the source of another. Because of the artificial nature of source analysis (which Crossan considers to be one aspect of "transmissional analysis"), it should not be allowed to obstruct analysis which exhibits both the inner and the relational nature of the data in its present form and setting. Instead of engaging in source analysis, the analyst should examine the available performances of an aphorism in the tradition. If a postured meaning effect maintains itself throughout three, four, or more performances which relate the aphorism to different situations, the tenacity of the meaning effect makes it necessary to consider whether that meaning effect is an early datum in the Jesus tradition. Analysis of the inner nature and relation of the postured meaning effect to presuppositions and arguments in the overall network of communication in sayings and actions attributed to Jesus will serve as the testing ground for distinguishing early from late tradition.

38 See the stages of teaching during primary education (oral and scribal replication) and the preliminary exercises in grammar school (oral and scribal composition) in Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome*, 165–80, 250–76.

39 *In Fragments*, 54–56.

40 See Robbins, "Pronouncement Stories," 48–70.

41 For changes in a proverb's meaning when it is placed in different contexts, see Fontaine, *Traditional Sayings*, 28–71.

Crossan proposes that instances of transposition, conversion, and substitution are performancial variations which do not make significant changes in an aphorism. What he should propose is that performances which contain variations in the form of transposition, conversion, and substitution bear a particular kind of similarity to one another, namely, they reveal a postured meaning effect which possessed a certain kind of tenacity in the tradition. The tenacity of these postured meaning effects is extremely important, and they surely are a basic means for talking about the teaching of Jesus himself. But most performancial variations are hermeneutical variations, because the variation represents part of a different configuration among speech, action, and reference within the horizons of the person to whom the aphorism is attributed. The interpreter must pursue the meaning of the variations that exist in an individual performance by finding the relation of the variations to a situation presupposed in the tradition.

3. How We Relate an Aphorism to Settings and Other Aphorisms Influences How We Understand the Tradition

Since Crossan envisioned his task as gathering variations of aphorisms together, he did not attempt to uncover the relation of presuppositions and arguments in various aphorisms. I have no desire to criticize the task he undertook. In fact, more work must be done to gather all the variations of aphorisms together, since Crossan only displays the variations in 40 aphorisms in the tradition. A basic problem arises, however, when the initial task of gathering all variations of aphorisms generates the model for interpretation, and this is what has happened in Crossan's book. Beginning with variations of single aphorisms, he develops an "aphoristic model" through a principle of addition and agglomeration, instead of attempting to relate the presuppositions and arguments to one another and to settings and actions in the tradition.

Before attempting to show how the interpreter should attempt to uncover the network of relationships among aphorisms, settings, and actions, let us look at the model generated by Crossan. Beginning with single aphorisms, Crossan organizes the aphoristic tradition according to six basic forms it acquires in transmission:

- aphoristic saying
- aphoristic compound
- aphoristic cluster
- aphoristic conclusion
- aphoristic dialogue
- aphoristic story

Three of the forms are distinct from one another primarily on the basis of the number of sayings that comprise the unit. First, the tradition may have the form of an individual saying with as many as four *stichoi*.⁴² The essential dimension in these sayings is interaction. The interaction includes parallelism, repetition, and antithesis, but it also includes more subtle dynamics between protagonists, actions and thoughts in verbs, and positive and negative statements set in relation to one another. Second, the tradition may have the form of an aphoristic compound comprised of two sayings integrally linked as a unit.⁴³ The sayings concerning a new patch on an old garment and new wine in old wineskins (Mark 2:21–22/Matt 9:16–17/Luke 5:36–37/GThom 47b) existed, suggests Crossan, as an aphoristic compound unified by the theme of impossible combinations.⁴⁴ Third are aphoristic clusters.⁴⁵ These, Crossan suggests, contain more than two sayings and are unified by common verbs, common forms, common themes, or external unifying structures. Three of the forms are therefore constituted by the content of one, two, or more aphorisms in a transmissional unit. The remaining forms are units which contain narration, conversation, or other discourse as a setting for one or more aphorisms. Unlike the first three forms, therefore, these forms are not constituted entirely by aphorisms. Rather, they present one or more aphorisms in a framework established by some other kind of discourse. In this vein, the fourth form is the aphoristic conclusion.⁴⁶ Here, an aphorism occurs at the end of a miracle, a prayer, a parable, a dialogue, or a story. Fifth, the aphoristic tradition may take the form of a dialogue where aphorisms emerge in a series of statements and responses.⁴⁷ Sixth and last is the aphoristic story.⁴⁸ This kind of story is characterized by “no interaction, dynamics or dialectic between situation and/or address and the climactic saying.”⁴⁹ The story part is simply a “set up” or convenient framework for an independent aphorism. The preceding part often includes a question or statement that could be articulated in the first part of an aphorism, and there is no discrepancy between the question and the statement. Crossan devotes an entire chapter to each form of the aphoristic tradition. This approach gives him an opportunity to present a detailed history of

42 *In Fragments*, 67–119.

43 *In Fragments*, 120–52.

44 *In Fragments*, 121–27.

45 *In Fragments*, 153–82.

46 *In Fragments*, 183–226.

47 *In Fragments*, 227–76.

48 *In Fragments*, 277–312.

49 *In Fragments*, 236–37.

the transmission of traditions in the form of sayings, compounds, clusters, conclusions, dialogues, and stories.

The model Crossan has generated exhibits an interpretational approach based on a principle of "isolation." An aphorism contains "external isolation of formed content," according to Crossan.⁵⁰ Therefore, the issue is "whether or not" an aphorism has interacted with any other phenomenon in the tradition, since it may have "circulated freely." This underlying principle leads him to a distinction between "aphoristic" and "dialectic." I would like to pursue issues raised earlier in this essay by addressing this distinction, which Crossan introduces at the beginning of his discussion of aphoristic dialogues.⁵¹ In his words:

There are certain sayings whose only force or whose total force occurs in dialectic with their preceding situation and/or address, be it question, comment, or request. That is the dialectical tradition. And there are other sayings, certainly in the Jesus tradition at least, which appear quite separately as aphoristic sayings and also elsewhere as aphoristic dialogues and stories. As such they are best interpreted within the aphoristic tradition.

In this manner, Crossan isolates aphorisms he considers to be "aphoristic" from aphorisms which depend on "dialectic" for their understanding. This "isolating" approach means the saying has no significant relation to settings, actions, or other aphorisms in the tradition unless there is an exhibited dependence. I consider this approach to be a basic weakness of the book. It is a weakness inherited from form criticism in its New Testament mode and intensified by a semiotic deconstructionism. The issue, I suggest, is whether "an interpreter" maintains the dialectic which is present in the aphoristic tradition or, alternatively, isolates the aphorisms and reduces them to structures which do not exhibit the dialectic which they contain internally.

Before returning to the aphorisms we have already investigated and looking at an additional example, let us explore Crossan's distinction between "aphoristic" and "dialectic" for a moment to ask where he got the distinction and what it means to him. The origin of the distinction appears to lie in Stanley Fish's contrast between "rhetoric" and "dialectic,"⁵² which Crossan quotes in *Finding is the First Act*.⁵³ Fish's distinction, quoted by Crossan, is as follows:

50 *In Fragments*, 17.

51 *In Fragments*, 227-37.

52 *Self-Consuming Artifacts*, 1-2.

53 *Finding is the First Act*, 118-19.

A presentation is rhetorical if it satisfies the needs of its readers. The word "satisfies" is meant literally here; for it is characteristic of a rhetorical form to mirror and present for approval the opinions its readers already hold. It follows then that the experience of such a form will be flattering, for it tells the reader that what he has always thought about the world is true and that the *ways* of his thinking are sufficient. This is not to say that in the course of a rhetorical experience one is never told anything unpleasant, but that whatever one is told can be placed and contained within the categories and assumptions of received systems of knowledge.

A dialectical presentation, on the other hand, is disturbing, for it requires of its readers a searching and rigorous scrutiny of everything they believe in and live by. It is didactic in a special sense; it does not preach the truth, but asks that its readers discover the truth for themselves, and this discovery is often made at the expense not only of a reader's opinions and values, but of his self-esteem. If the experience of a rhetorical form is flattering, the experience of a dialectical form is humiliating.

In the book *In Fragments*, Crossan has replaced "rhetorical" with "aphoristic." With this dichotomy, Crossan (following Fish) collapses "deliberative, judicial, and epideictic" rhetoric into "epideictic rhetoric," the branch which confirms the values of its auditors. This is a common bias of interpreters since the modern claim of philosophy on epistemology. The reduction suggests that no "critical" faculty functions in the realm of rhetoric.

Such a position subverts the fact that both deliberative and judicial rhetoric function critically, requiring the auditor to make a decision (*krisis*) about persons and actions. Regularly, deliberative, judicial, and epideictic rhetoric interact with one another, disturbing, overturning, and satisfying in different configurations. In fact, disturbing and overturning rhetoric, which Fish and Crossan value so highly, is often extraordinarily "satisfying" in particular social and cultural environments which are, in modern terms, "deconstructionist." To miss the manner in which this "overturning dialectic" plays into the hands of a particular group with a particular epistemology, and "satisfies" the requirements of the group, is to miss the presuppositions on one side while exposing them on the other. To dichotomize the three basic realms of communication into "rhetoric which satisfies" and "dialectic which humiliates" is to fall prey to binary thinking which parodies the arena of communication as a place either of "uncritical propagandization and loyalty" or "critical subversion and rebellion." Such a polarization of the arena of communication does little justice to the interplay of critical and affirming rhetoric which is the warp and woof of communication even in a deconstructionist mode.

A good way to see the problem is to look at Crossan's analysis of the units concerning Jesus and the Children,⁵⁴ which were the subject of a joint session of the Pronouncement Stories Group and the Structuralism and Exegesis Seminar at the 1982 SBL meetings.⁵⁵ Crossan's analysis perpetuates Bultmann's emphasis on "independently circulating sayings." This leads him to reassert that Mark 10:15, "Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it," was "an independent aphoristic saying."⁵⁶ Mark "created the entire *dialectical story* in 10:13, 14, 16 and imbedded the pre-Markan redactionally rephrased 10:15 within it."⁵⁷ The difficulty with this approach is its persistently isolating approach to interpretation. In contrast to such an approach, I would suggest that we must begin to investigate the nature of the "dialectic" within the entire aphoristic tradition attributed to Jesus.

In this instance, the dialectic could begin with the postured meaning effect in Mark 10:15. This saying, like other aphorisms we have investigated earlier in this essay, has a negative posturing which is externally dialectical since, in Robert Tannehill's terms, "it first negates a position assumed by some in the milieu of the speaker."⁵⁸ In addition, the negative formulation advances a dialectical strategy within the mind and will of the auditor, challenging the auditor to formulate the proper will by transforming the negative into its active form.⁵⁹ In other words, a "dialectic" is at work at two levels. The reference to "not receiving the kingdom like a child" establishes a pragmatic dialectic with a situation which calls for a decision against improper action, and negative formulation of the aphorism establishes a cognitive dialectic within the mind which compels the reader to reformulate the statement positively to carry it out. This means that the saying establishes semantic tension both externally in the realm of action and internally in the realm of thought.⁶⁰

A rhetorical approach will seek both the dialectic with situations and the dialectic with attitude, reason, and will in the aphorisms. The dialectic will be pursued through a networking of presuppositions and arguments about situations, actions, attitudes, and beliefs in life. Tannehill observes that although Mark 10:15 is not introduced by *gar* or *hoti*, it

54 *In Fragments*, 314–20.

55 *Semeia* 29.

56 *In Fragments*, 317.

57 *In Fragments*, 318.

58 "Response," 107.

59 Patte, "Jesus' Pronouncement," 11; cf. Scott, "The Rules of the Game," 119.

60 See Fontaine, *Traditional Sayings*, 43–62.

“provides an important reason why the kingdom is closely associated with children and why the disciples must accept the children, . . .”⁶¹ This means that the sayings in Mark 10:13–16 make a syllogism:

Concrete Premise: Whoever does not receive the kingdom like a child shall not enter it.

Conclusion: Let the children come to me,

(opposite): Do not hinder them.

(rationale): For to such is the kingdom of God.

Once again, then, we see an enthymematic formulation with a concrete premise and a conclusion. Where, however, is the general premise? Lou Silberman’s discussion helps us to locate it when he asserts that “In Mark 10:13–16 the acceptance of social marginality is a prerequisite for entering the kingdom.”⁶² Silberman’s statement “generalizes” the meaning of the story, arguing that the child is the sign of “least-ness.” Such an approach suggests that the general premise of the syllogism is something like “whoever embodies leastness (like a child) shall enter the kingdom of God.” This means, then, that the rationale, “For to such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:16), is an aphoristic paraphrasing of the general premise, “The least shall enter the kingdom of God.”

With this approach, the interpreter begins to uncover the network of communication among these aphorisms. The general premise, “The least shall enter the kingdom of God,” is closely related to “the first shall be last and the last first.” Also closely related is “if anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all” (Mark 9:35). The difference between the aphorisms often is rhetorical mode. The first two stand in the form of a thesis. The form in Mark 9:35 is motivational, talking about the will. These sayings are all “general” aphorisms, functioning at the level of general premises in the tradition. It would be informative to gather all such “general” aphorisms together to analyze their presuppositions and uncover the range of rhetorical modes used to clarify them, posture them, and motivate people to adopt them.

After finding the aphorisms which express general premises or theses, it is informative to work with conclusions. In the “Children” aphorism, the conclusion is stated both in a positive and negative form: “Let the children come to me. Do not hinder them.” This conclusion stands in an imperative form which activates its premises in exhortations. With the conclusion, we can see the dialectical relation of the aphorism to aphorisms we analyzed earlier. The division of the concrete

61 “Response,” 105.

62 “Schoolboys and Storytellers,” 113.

premise in the “Hindering” aphorism asserted that the scribes and Pharisees “neither enter themselves nor let the enterers enter.” We recall that the “Hindering” aphorism lacks concreteness, while the “Children” aphorism stands in dialectic with a situation where disciples are not letting children come to Jesus. The lack of concreteness in the “Hindering” aphorism signals a creation of the aphorism out of contraries from aphoristic traditions which presuppose concrete situations. Thus, “you do not let the enterers enter” is a transformation of the deliberative imperative, “Let the children come to me, do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God,” into epideictic invective without a concrete basis. The invective against the scribes and Pharisees is projected out of aphoristic traditions which stand in both internal and external dialectic with concrete situations. The invective itself, however, lacks the concrete dialectic.

Next it will be informative to see the dialectic at work in the aphorisms which apply general premises to concrete situations. We notice immediately the negative posturing in:

Whoever does not receive the kingdom like a child shall not enter it
(Mark 10:17).

The negative posturing calls to mind:

No one sews an unshrunk cloth on a new garment.
No one puts new wine into old wineskins.

We notice also the negative posturing in the following aphorisms:

He who is not with me is against me.
He who is not against us (you) is for you.

To these a person can add:

No one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me.

The presence of “me” in the aphorisms calls attention to the negative feature in the positive formulation:

Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me *receives not me* but him who sent me.

The tenacity of negative posturing in concrete premises, and its presence in a significant number of “me” sayings, must be the subject of investigation and discussion. Many interpreters have emphasized the importance of parables (which Crossan calls “narrative metaphors” or “short

stories”) for reconstructing the teaching of Jesus, and these have been studied in detail. If a person uses socio-rhetorical analysis, the opportunity arises for rigorous investigation of aphorisms on the basis of the logic, appeal, and attitude not only of their images but also their premises, arguments, and conclusions. Crossan’s initial collection of the aphorisms provides a new resource for this analysis. If we entertain the possibility that contraction, expansion, conversion, substitution, and transposition are not simply performancial variations but are hermeneutical variations showing us the dialectic within the aphoristic tradition, we may begin to reconstruct the network of communication within the aphorisms which instructed, argued, supported, and motivated people through theses, reasoning, premises, exhortation, praise, and blame.

Crossan’s analysis concentrates so completely on aphorisms as isolated phenomena that it does not account for the dialectic of aphorisms with one another and with specific settings and actions. Crossan has inherited this approach with integrity from the discipline of New Testament criticism. The basic problem arises from the role of the New Testament interpreter as a literary analyst. Beginning with literary documents, interpreters have developed a model of transmission which begins with the literary forms and projects back into the social setting. The irony is that the analysis reverses the process of transmission, and New Testament interpreters have not been able to liberate themselves from the shackles of that model. Stories and sayings emerge from the social situations of a person’s action and speech in this manner:

- (1) First come actions, attitudes, and speech intermingled in social situations;
- (2) second comes perpetuation of actions, attitudes, and speech through “interpretive speech”;
- (3) third comes distilled speech which purports to give “the essence” of the person.

Starting with aphorisms, Crossan begins with the most thorough distillations of speech from the tradition. When Crossan isolates these distillations from settings and actions, and analyzes them as “fragments,” he traps the interpreter into the model which arose before social history had significantly influenced New Testament scholarship. New Testament interpreters must turn this model around by looking at the actions and attitudes upon which the speech was dependent before speech dominated through interpretation and distillation. In other words, the analyst must not be lured first into the “expressions of essence” in the aphorisms. Rather, the analyst must seek the intermingled actions, attitudes, and speech which provide the base for the interpretive and distilled speech.

Crossan's concept of "dialectic" places the burden of proof on narrative and situations and presupposes that a saying will be independent unless it is proven to be dependent. The burden of proof must lie the other way. Every saying emerges from a situation. Therefore, every saying is initially related to some kind of situation and dependent upon that situation for the framework in which it communicated successfully enough to be transmitted. Only nurturing from the language of traditional scholarship "freed" the saying and began to give it "independence." Therefore, we should look at every saying from the perspective of its dialectic with other aphorisms and with situations and actions in the tradition.

4. Conclusion

Crossan's collection and indexing of aphorisms provides an opportunity for interpreters to investigate the aphoristic tradition in new ways. Within Crossan's creative approach to the aphorisms, he does not try to uncover the network of relationships that exists among the aphorisms. Rather, he talks about aphorisms as isolated units. In addition, he uses a heuristic approach that collapses tensive patterns into semiotic structures which bypass the semantic particularities of aphorisms. A closer look at the analysis might suggest that the model emphasizes a particular kind of cognition (*λόγος*) at the expense of other features in the sayings. This conflicts, I would suggest, with Crossan's use of the term aphorism to signify a personal vision. A model for personal aphorisms should not isolate cognitive structures. It should find the interrelation among presuppositions, reasons, and arguments (*λόγος*); actions, interactions, and attributes (*ἦθος*); and attitudes, desires, and responses (*πάθος*). A socio-rhetorical approach will seek the logical and affective dimensions in aphorisms, uncover the network of presuppositions, arguments, and conclusions among them, and seek their grounding in concrete knowledge and understanding. Such an approach could present a picture of Jesus' teaching and action based on a more thorough dialectic among situations, actions, attitudes, arguments, and beliefs than any previous quest. We are grateful to Crossan for a good beginning. We should build on his work with a model that emerges from the context of transmission itself rather than a model that emerges from the context of the interpretation of texts.

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