Christology: Memory, Inquiry, Practice

ed. Anne M. Clifford
Anthony J. Godzieba

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What Does Jesus Have to Do with Christ? What Does Knowledge Have to Do with Faith? What Does History Have to Do with Theology?

Paula Fredriksen

*Memoriae Tony Saldarini sacrum**

My formal assignment for this meeting was to speak on the impact that recent work on the historical Jesus has had, or perhaps should have, on contemporary christology. I'd like to offer four items to serve, collectively, as our point of departure.

- Two ancient philosophical definitions of God, the first from c. 160 C.E., the second from c. 360: "That which always maintains the same nature, and in the same manner, and is the cause of all other things: that, indeed, is god." "All god is free from passion, free from change."
- A sixth-century mosaic of a uniformed Roman army officer, perhaps even an emperor. He holds aloft a military standard. The banner proclaims: *Ego sum via, veritas et vita.*
- A question-and-answer volley in the spring of 1998 during a three-day conference for lay people sponsored by Duke University's theology school on the question, "Who was Jesus?" Someone in the audience asked the panel (all reputed experts in historical Jesus research), "Did Jesus think he was God?" Tom Wright

*One of the best things about working at Boston University was having Tony Saldarini just a little further down on Commonwealth Avenue, at The Other Place (Boston College). I miss his humor, his erudition, his sharp intelligence, and his company. I am grateful to have known him and to have had him as my colleague. May his memory be for a blessing.

leaned into the mike to say "Yes" at exactly the same moment that I leaned into the mike to say "No." After a perfect pause, A. J. Levine then opined, "Jesus was not bi-polar."

- Another question-and-answer volley, this time among hardened professionals at a meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, in 1992 or 1993. The ideas that would eventuate in my book *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews* (1999) were just taking shape. I had presented a paper challenging one of the few orthodox doctrines still holding the field, namely, the historicity of what is known in the field as the "Temple tantrum," especially in its Markan mode as the trip-switch for the Passion. I compared Mark and John; I reexamined the redactional problems and issues of chronology; I surveyed the size of Herod's huge outer court and Josephus' population estimates of holiday crowds. I spoke of the sheer irrelevance of the gesture both to the evangelists' narratives and to Pilate's historical decision to crucify. I then took questions. The very first one to come from the floor—from another member of this scholarly body—was this: "Are you saying then that the Jews did *not* kill Jesus?"

Let's think with each of these points as a way to get into our topic.

Theology

The first sentence I quoted comes from one of history's great failed interfaith dialogues, Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, chapter 3. Other Christians of philosophical, practical, and exegetical persuasions different from Justin's lurk in the background, and occasionally pop to the surface: Justin writes from a field thick with Marcionites, Valentinians, Basilidians, and other "heretics" (c. 35), where gentile Christians, harkening to Jewish Christians, begin themselves to live according to Jewish practice (c. 47); where gentile pagans voluntarily Judaize and, indeed, where some convert fully to Judaism (c. 122-123). Justin presents his own position through a dialogue with a literary persona who embodies key elements of Justin's own commitments. Trypho, unlike Valentinus or Marcion, has a positive exegetical orientation toward the Septuagint; unlike most gentiles, he worships the god of Israel; like Justin and like other well-educated gentiles, pagan or Christian, he is committed to philosophy.

I will return to the impact that Justin's gentile Christian opposition had on orthodoxy's *contra Iudaeos* tradition when we consider my fourth point above. Here it suffices to note that Platonizing philosophical *koinē*, the vernacular of antiquity's middle-brow intelligentsia, structures the *Dialogue* and determines Justin's reading of the Bible.[1] His *logia* about *theos*—what other philosophers, pagan, Jewish, or Christian, call "the high god" or "the being" or "the One" or "the Father"—is purely pagan; hence the fourth-century quotation from Sallustius, *On the Gods and the World*, also adduced in my first point. His high god is Justin's high god is (for that matter) Valentinus's high god[2] is virtually any educated person's high god in this period. Immutable, transcendent, discernible only to or by the mind, without body of any sort: ὁ Θεός, *the* god.[3]

Christology is a form of theology, and I want to use both terms in the way that they would have been understood in their formative period, and occasionally still are in ours. By "theology" I *do not* mean something like "religious feelings and thoughts." By theology I mean specifically: ordered, rational discourse on the nature of god/divinity (*theos* translates both ways). As such, theology is *not* native to ancient religion, whether pagan, Jewish, or Christian. Its cultural and social matrix was the school; its project unabashedly intellectual, indeed, philosophical. "God" as defined stands as a discrete item within a larger rational discourse that seeks to coordinate *theos* with other ideas constitutive of "reality": cosmos, matter, *psychē*, *sōma*, mind/*noûs*, and so forth. The metaphysical distance between the highest *theos* and this material *cosmos,* reinforced by the concepts of ancient science, accounts for the hyper-development of philosophical ideas of mediation in Graeco-Roman *paideia*, among which, in both its docetic and non-docetic modes, is ancient christology.

Herewith, then, is one principle source of our current complications. Theology is philosophical. In principle, it coordinates "god"/"divinity" with other elements within a larger—and, ideally, a systematic—discourse of meaning. But scripture is narrative. In the Bible, God is a character, not a rational principle; in the gospels, *encore plus*, so is Jesus. (That Jesus is an historical character as well as a literary one is, of course, a point to which I shall return.) We can read biblical texts—we can read *any* text—philosophically, should we so choose, but what results is a meta-textual interpretation. (Historically, typological allegory closed the gap between *mythos* and philosophy.[4]) Bib-

lical texts themselves, in a first-order way, yield stories, not systems. They can be made to yield systems—or perhaps, to yield *to* systems—only through hermeneutical effort.

The fact that modern philosophy—since Wittgenstein? Spinoza? Descartes? pick your point—suffers (or should suffer) from metaphysical aphasia only adds another layer to contemporary theology's problems. But problems always attended the effort to make philosophical sense out of traditional religious texts, because of the intrinsic differences between these two forms of human reflection and expression. Posidonius had to sweat over Homer and Hesiod no less than Philo over Moses, no less than Justin or Origen or Athanasius over Isaiah and Matthew.[5] Current historical research may not oblige the intellectual concerns and commitments of traditional christology; but in its resistance to philosophical reformulation, history is little different from scripture itself. Put more simply, history is more like biblical scripture and biblical scripture more like history than either is like philosophy. The intellectual problems facing theologians who wish to avail themselves of the results of current historical research have already been rehearsed in the foundational Christian problem of reading the Bible philosophically, which is to say, theologically.

Context and Meaning

Next, our second item, the mosaic. Most people reading this have already decoded the Roman officer as an image of the Johannine Christ. My undergraduates, less at home in Latin, always gasp in surprise once I translate its banner. I wish I could get them to react the same way when I present them with Jesus the feminist, Jesus the countercultural performance artist, Jesus the advocate of peasant land reform, Jesus the social egalitarian, Jesus the post-Zionist anti-nationalist—alas, I could go on.[6] These later images—*forte à la mode* in current constructions of the historical Jesus—are no less anachronistic than this Johannine Christ from Ravenna.

In many ways, though, the sixth-century image has more intellectual rigor than many of its modern academic counterparts do. To the degree that the artist was familiar with the gospels, he would have been aware that the figure he presented was not an historical—that is, evangelical—image of Jesus of Nazareth at all. He was, instead, making a theological and political statement about ancient monotheism,

divine mediation, and the imperium. One God; One Lord; One Empire; One Emperor. That the emperor ruled and protected the commonweal as heaven's special agent on earth was imperial boilerplate. In its Christianized form, the idea flowers fully for the first time in the writings of Eusebius. Native to Mediterranean piety, expressed in Hellenistic ruler cults, and then adopted by Rome, its specifically imperial expression begins when the empire begins, with Augustus, although Aurelian, Diocletian, and then Constantine give it a special spin.[7] Our mosaicist condensed and Christianized these ideas, elegantly offering as visual representation what the cult of the emperor and his image encoded behaviorally, from the first century B.C.E. to long after 312.[8] The image's anachronism stood in service to theology.

What do the modern anachronisms serve?[9] Primarily, I think, the idealized politics of their authors; too often, I fear, demeaning stereotypes about Jesus' native religion.[10] These images of Jesus, in their appeal to history, serve somehow to authorize their authors' beliefs—about genuine religion (no blood sacrifices, no messy rituals!); about Jews or Jewishness ("Judaism" is okay; but Jews, as Jesus and Paul realized, needed to drop "ethnic boundary-markers," circumcision, *kashrut*, and Sabbath observance); about good societies (egalitarian, thus, so goes the "argument"—anti-purity). The items on the list vary according to the concerns of the particular scholar. The images' moral "relevance"—their meaningfulness, their emotional familiarity—is exactly what makes them age rapidly, and reveals them for the unhistory they are. Their fundamental interpretive context is the present. As this present drifts inexorably into the past, the images lose their resonance, appearing instead as the projections they are. As John Meier, musing (for thousands of pages) on the historical Jesus, has observed: Nothing ages faster than relevance.

Are *theological* images of Jesus intrinsically anachronistic? Yes, because the categories of meaning that structure the theological enterprise are not native to Jesus' historical context: to interpret him in light of them means taking him out of his "native" context and putting him somewhere else. But this is what theology—any theology—does. (The "historical" Moses would have been no less baffled by Philo's assertions about him in *de opificio mundi* than the "historical" Jesus would have been by the consensus document hammered out by the professional theological politicians at Chalcedon.) And theological categories of meaning are themselves also subject to the march of

time. "Ground of being" and "ultimate concern" now creak; so do "substance" and "essence" and "person" (though more subtly, perhaps, their aging masked by the botox of ecclesiastical institutions). Time takes no holiday.

The anachronistic quality of theology is an inevitable consequence of its mission: the philosophical restatement of principles that can be supported by appeal to scripture. But anachronism in the historical enterprise collapses it, betraying its *raison d'être*. Put differently, theology, to be theology, will inevitably be anachronistic; history, to be history, can never be anachronistic. Those modern theologians who wish to incorporate the results of the Third Quest into their constructions of christology, then, must proceed with caution. Thanks to the problem of anachronism *in historical studies* (the place where it *is* a problem), stoked as it is by the desire that the ancient figure be immediately relevant to modern concerns (especially to modern ethical or political concerns), there are a lot of *doppelgänger* out there.

Anachronism in historical Jesus work is just bad history. Anachronistic Jesuses in theological works are worse than bad history, they are bad theology. The classical phrase for "bad theology" is "heresy." Anachronism in historical Jesus studies leads, for theology, to Docetism.

I speak now to the theologians. And I invoke not theology as such, but an essential doctrine of Christian theology, namely, the Incarnation. Historians can do and indeed do history without any thought to this doctrine or, indeed, to any other. Theological doctrine not only *is* irrelevant to doing history (any history, not just ancient Christian history), it *should* be irrelevant.

But the doctrine of the Incarnation cannot be irrelevant to Christian theology. Again, the theological enterprise is intrinsically anachronistic because of the sort of hermeneutical enterprise it is. But if christology draws on anachronistic constructions of Jesus—if the historical component of the theological effort is itself compromised—then it stumbles into heresy. A supposedly historical Jesus who is more at home in our century and in our culture than in his own is not a fully and truly human Jesus, one who lived and acted meaningfully and coherently in a particular place and time: in the Galilee and in Roman Judea, as a religious Jew, in the days of the late Second Temple. A truly "historical" Jesus can be no less constituted by his historical, social, and cultural circumstances than are we.

Whether good history can help yield good theology is a complicated question: We would need to know what "good theology" would look like. But bad history clearly yields bad theology. Presented in these studies as an ancient figure, such a Jesus is actually a displaced modern Christian, a man without a country. Unstuck in time, he is not a real person. An anachronistic Jesus is a docetic Jesus. And a docetic Jesus can only produce, in turn, a docetic Christ.[11]

Speaking strictly as an historian—but one who cares about christology and about Christianity—I would be sad to part with the doctrine of the Incarnation. I hope that my colleagues who actually are theologians feel the same way. Incarnation, for Christians, anchors the philosophical idea of "god" in human time, giving the biblical God—the creator of this time and of humans—and the biblical myth their purchase in Christian theology. Incarnation is what keeps Christianity, in this sense—the biblical sense—Jewish. As a doctrine, it provides the reason for a point of contact between the Bible and the church, and between Jesus and Christ.

Incarnation as a concept and as a doctrine complicates all sorts of other issues, and we review some of those here: divinity, humanity, time, history, hermeneutics, meaning, identity. As angels go, it's a particularly tough one to wrestle with. But if being a Christian theologian were easy, everyone would be doing it. To the theologians among us, then, I say: *Hazak, hazak*: Be strong, and go for it.

Concepts of Personhood

Did Jesus think he was God? Let's start with A.-J. Levine's proposal—Jesus was not bi-polar—and think from there.

Chalcedon, in 451, lay down the terms of classical christology: Jesus was "fully god and fully man without mixture or confusion." This formulation does not require of believers what Wright, in response to our questioner, affirmed, namely, that *Jesus thought* he was god. It was the bishops who thought Jesus was god. They found verses in scripture that supported their claim, but the reasons behind the claim itself had been generated long ago, by theological concepts of intermediation between *cosmos* and the high *theos*. What happens when we gather these issues as articulated in the fifth century—ideas about god ("theology") and about the human being ("anthropology")—around the historical figure of Jesus?

Theos in ancient monotheist imagination—pagan, Jewish, and Christian—was a much more flexible term than is "God" in its modern avatars. For moderns, conceptually "God" functions as a unique divine point. For ancients, divinity was on a gradient, from the high god at a defined pinnacle through the celestial and super-celestial intelligences populating and structuring *cosmos*[12] to the messengers (*angeloi*) who communicated between these different strata to, finally, special humans who functioned as heaven's agents, not least among whom, to either side of 312, was the emperor. Divinity did not imply ontological identity. The logos was god, that is, divine (θεὸς ην ὁ λόγος, John 1:1), but not the same as "God" himself (θεὸς ην ὁ λόγος).[13] Neither was Metatron. For pagans, Jews, and Christians, other gods existed along with—that is to say, "beneath," contingent upon—the high god. For Jews and Christians, but not for pagans, these other gods were not to be worshiped, yet their existence and their power were certainly acknowledged.[14]

Thus claims about Jesus' divine status originally appeared within a culture where such a thought was thinkable, without *eo ipso* calling into question either the integrity of Jesus' humanity[15] or the high god's (God the Father's) distinctive difference.[16] Theologically, the claim cohered with contemporary constructs of monotheism (one god at the top, others of varying degrees below). Chalcedon affirmed an extreme version of this more traditional concept of graduated divine personalities. It bordered on paradox. But it was not nonsense.

That was then. This is now. The classic christological formula remains, embalmed by institutional sanction; but both the universe and philosophy are much changed. With the advent of modern science, the world has grown progressively disenchanted. In consequence, Western ideas of godhead have grown more austere, while Western concepts of personhood increasingly focus on issues of identity, memory, and embodiment.[17] To affirm that a human being is god, howsoever moderns might try to do that, is not paradox. Without reworking or redefining the terms, it *is* nonsense.

All this has led the historical study of Jesus into a curious secondary fundamentalism. Despite the slough of post-modernist relativism, empirical science—the jewel in the crown of Western culture since the Renaissance—still sets many of the criteria of legitimacy or of meaningfulness for any sort of truth claim. This empiricism complicates theological claims about the historical Jesus by promoting a particular sort of fundamentalism, a fallacy of intention. To legitimate or authorize Christian beliefs about Jesus, these beliefs are imputed *to* Jesus himself. If Jesus himself did not think a thought, then the thought—usually, a theological thought—seems less than legitimate for the tradition.

Thus, if Christian doctrine holds that Jesus died for humanity's sins, then Jesus must have thought so too, and he arranged to die accordingly. If Christianity holds that Jesus was the messiah, then Jesus must have thought so too—despite the problem that even the evangelists, who clearly thought of Jesus as messiah, do not clearly represent him as having said so.[18] If Christianity developed as a law-free gentile church, then that is what Jesus must have intended to happen. And so on (and on).[19] Hence, again, Wright's response to our questioner at the Duke University conference.

To end where we began, then: Did Jesus think he was God? I do not know, but I doubt it. From what I can tell, on the basis of the gospels and of my knowledge of his social context, he seems to have operated more within the Jewish paradigm of prophecy. Within his culture, a prophet might be designated a "son of God," but that implied no ontological claim. This does not mean that Christian theologies might not have good reason to hold that Jesus was "divine" in whatever ways they choose to constitute the claim; but one of those reasons will not be what Jesus thought of himself.

After his lifetime, within the matrix of the Hellenistic synagogue, Christian theological reflection *about* Jesus—early, if we see Paul's letters as involved in this enterprise; certainly by century's end, if that indeed is the provenance of the final redaction of John, for example, or the period of composition for Hebrews, or Revelation—did make claims about Jesus' status as a divine agent in both senses: agent of God, more-than-human himself. These positions based themselves not on what the historical Jesus thought or said so much as on what followers thought about Jesus in light of their experience (direct or according to *paradosis*) of his resurrection.

Systematic theological reflections about Jesus as a divine entity had to wait for Christians with the education and ideological motivation to articulate them. Here we come to the roll call of second-century, formerly pagan intellectuals: Valentinus, Marcion, Ptolemy, Justin, and other early fathers. Their project was largely hermeneutical, its terms dictated by philosophical issues, biblically re-conceived.

The church, howsoever conceived or identified, is the matrix of Christian theology. Jesus of Nazareth was its necessary though insufficient cause. To impute later theological positions to the historical Jesus is anachronistic in a simple way. To sum up simply, then: Whatever the criteria of legitimacy churches use to validate their christologies—and different churches will judge by different criteria—what the historical Jesus "would have thought" cannot be one of them. Intentionalist fundamentalism is both silly history and bad theology.

Christianity and Judaism

Why was my unknown colleague at this long-ago meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature so alarmed by my arguments about Jesus and the Temple?[20] As a scholar, he would have already known that if Jesus died by crucifixion, he died by Rome's hand. My reconstruction had the ancillary effect, however, of reducing the priests' first-order interest in getting Jesus out of the way. No principled religious dispute or intrinsic religious antagonism between Jesus and the priests, I had argued, could be teased from the evangelical evidence. *This* point, not some inference about agency in the crucifixion, was what actually bothered my colleague.[21] But the way his query came out was: "Are you saying that the Jews did *not* kill Jesus?"

Modern scholars, of any denominational affiliation or none, cannot but see the Christian past through the prism of the orthodox *contra Iudaeos* tradition.[22] The "Jew" as a theological and hermeneutical idea—fleshly, hard-hearted, philosophically dim and violently anti-Christian—had assumed its familiar shape in the disputes of early second-century, formerly pagan intellectuals.[23] The concept helped them to articulate their convictions as readers of the Septuagint against the other biblical communities. In no ancient gentile theological system do Jews and Judaism seem to figure positively. For orthodox theology in particular, however, hostile characterizations of Jews became a defining characteristic.

Constantine's patronage ultimately empowered orthodox bishops, the conduits of the erudite *contra Iudaeos* tradition. In the West, with the collapse of Mediterranean civic culture and the consolidation of local power around the bishop, this tradition facilitated the eventual, progressive social separation of Jews and Christians; and separation facilitated targeted aggression. And this anti-Jewish hermeneutic controlled the church's understanding of its own past, whereby the Hellenistic Jewish texts that composed its core canon—the gospels and the letters of Paul—were read as *contra Iudaeos* themselves. Both Jesus and Paul thus came to be seen as preaching and working *against* Judaism.

For centuries, then, Christian constructions of Christian identity and of the formative Christian past have worked with this idea of Judaism as Christianity's opposite. We see this in patristic, intra-gentile Christian polemic: this is how Tertullian can call Marcion a "Jew"; how Origen can call the millenarian *simpliciores* of his own church "Jews"; how Athanasius can brand his opponents "Jews"; and Ambrose, his; and Augustine, his. Combining with nineteenth-century theories of racial purity, the *contra Iudaeos* tradition contributed to the efforts of German Protestant churches, which produced a de-Judaized New Testament and an Aryan Jesus.[24] Combining with the identity-politics of the modern academy, it has produced the darkness of Jewish sexism and patriarchy against which the light of Jesus' feminism can shine; the oppressive, purity-rule-obsessed hierarchy of Second Temple Judaism against which the egalitarian Jesus gallantly takes his stand; the nationalist, racially exclusivist Judaism, which the internationalist, inclusivist Jesus defies. Out with the old slogans (grace vs. works; freedom vs. legalism; gospel vs. law) and in with the same-old, same-old (compassion vs. purity).[25]

Does Christian identity have to depend on caricatures of Jews and Judaism? Must the Jews always and everywhere be the ones who killed Jesus, so that Christians can affirm with the comfort of clarity who they (think they) are? I do not know. The most recent cycle of violence in Israel has exposed a level of Christian anti-Judaism that I had never, in my lifetime, seen before. Spain's *El Periodico de Catalunya* ran a cartoon of a young Arab boy, much like Simon of Trent, crucified on the Star of David on Israel's flag.[26] When armed Palestinian militants barricaded themselves against Israel's army in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, a church in Edinburgh responded by unveiling, at Easter, a huge oil painting of Christ on the Cross, complete with Roman soldiers and Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) officers at his feet. A newspaper cartoon in Italy depicted baby Jesus (one supposes, in his cradle in Bethlehem) looking at Israeli tanks and crying out, "Oh, *no*. Do they want to kill me again?"[27] The *L.A. Daily News* featured a cartoon by Patrick O'Connor: IDF soldiers beating the (un-

armed) magi outside the numinous manger.[28] Synagogues have been torched in Europe and in North America. Criticisms of Israeli politics spill with vertiginous ease into anti-Zionism, thence anti-Semitism, thence into classic, christological anti-Judaism.

Will Christian anti-Judaism ever go away? I do not know. The pessimists among us argue that, if the Shoah did not shock Christian culture out of its anti-Judaism, nothing will. Again, I do not know.

What I do know is that, despite this noxious patrimony, Christian scholars have led the way in the Third Quest, the hallmark of which has been the recovery of Jesus' Judaism. In its challenge to simple—and hateful—constructions of Christian identity, the Quest has also invigorated modern christology.[29] I can do no better than to repeat the words of one of the most eminent toilers in the historical vineyard, John P. Meier:

> The third quest's emphasis on the Jewishness of Jesus has willy-nilly made a lasting contribution to christology. . . . To speak in Johannine terms: when the Word became flesh, the Word did not take on an all-purpose, generic, one-size-fits-all human nature. Such a view would not take seriously the radical historicity of both human nature and divine revelation. The Word became truly flesh insofar as the Word became truly Jewish. No true Jewishness, no true humanity. . . . I think that a proper understanding of the Chalcedonian formula, illuminated by the third quest, necessarily leads to a ringing affirmation of the Jewishness of the flesh the Word assumed. Even if the third quest has no other impact on contemporary Christology, the emphatic reaffirmation of the Jewishness of Jesus will make the whole enterprise worthwhile.[30]

I agree with Meier, which is to say, I would like to think he's right. Theologians: It's up to you.

Notes

[1]By which I (and Justin) mean the Septuagint (LXX). Justin's church has no "new testament"—that was Marcion's repudiated innovation—and Justin refers to specifically Christian writings as the apostles' "memoires" (105).

[2]"The nature of the ungenerated [i.e., non-contingent or self-existent] Father is incorruption, self-existent, simple and homogeneous light," Ptolemy, *Ad Floram* 7.7.

[3]*Pagan Monotheism in Late Antiquity*, ed. Polymnia Athanassiadi and Michael Frede (Oxford: Clarendon Press/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[4]See the essays collected in *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period*, ed. Jon Whitman (Leiden: Brill, 2000), which treat the period from Homer to the mid-twentieth century.

[5]See Robert Lamberton, "Language, Text, and Truth in Ancient Polytheist Exegesis," *Interpretation and Allegory*, 73-88.

[6]Earlier and more orderly laments available in my *From Jesus to Christ*, 2d ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), xiii-xxviii; *Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews: A Jewish Life and the Emergence of Christianity* (New York: Knopf, 1999), esp. 197-213; "What You See Is What You Get: Context and Content in Current Research on the Historical Jesus," *Theology Today* 52 (1995): 75-97.

[7]On Aurelian, solar monotheism, and Constantine, see Henry Chadwick's still valuable discussion, *The Early Church* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), chap. 8.

[8]See esp. S. R. F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984); H. A. Drake, *Constantine and the Bishops: The Politics of Intolerance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), on Constantine's orchestration of solar and Christian images in service to imperial politics; J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Continuity and Change in Roman Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press/New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), esp. 235-304 on imperial theology and (literally) the politics of divine mediation; G. W. Bowersock, "Polytheism and Monotheism in Arabia and the Three Palestines," *Dunbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997): 1-10. Bowersock points out that, as late as the fifth century, in Constantinople, Constantine was revered as a god (ὡς θεὸς; Philostorgius, *Hististoria Ecclesiastica* 28), and Theodosius II wrote about reverence to his *numen* and image at public festivals, *Codex Theodosianus* 15.14.1 (in 425).

[9]See E. P. Sanders' meditations on anachronism in academic portraits of a Jesus who stands aloof or opposed to blood sacrifices, purity rules, demonic agency, and apocalyptic constructions of redemption ("Jesus as the First Modern Man") in his "Jesus, Ancient Judaism, and Modern Christianity: The Quest Continues," in *Jesus, Judaism, and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust*, ed. Paula Fredriksen and Adele Reinhartz (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2002), 31-55.

[10]With these concerns in mind, Sanders has incisively reviewed modern Pauline scholarship (*Paul and Palestinian Judaism* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977], 33-59 and 434-42) as well as work on Jesus (*Jesus and Judaism* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985], passim); before him, George Foot Moore's fundamental essay, "Christian Writers on Judaism," *Harvard Theological Review* 14 (1921): 197-254; also my works cited above, n. 6.

[11]On this point, Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 340; Fredriksen, *From Jesus to Christ*, xxv-xxviii, 214-215.

[12]No matter what the denominational affiliation of this cosmos. For a pagan statement, again, Sallustius; a Jewish statement, Philo, *de opificio mundi* (where Philo unself-consciously refers to stars as *theoi*); a Christian statement, Origen, *Peri Archōn.* ὅ

[13]Any competent commentary will walk readers through the forest of Greek grammatical issues surrounding articles in the attributive position and their relation to John's prologue.

[14]Biblically, e.g., Micah 4:5 ("All the peoples walk, each in the name of its god; but we will walk in the name of the Lord *our* god forever and ever"); cf. Exodus 22:28 (LXX), where the injunction not to revile God (*elohim*) becomes, "Do not revile *the gods* (*theous*)." So too Paul, 2 Corinthians 4:4 (the "god of this cosmos" works against Paul); Galatians 4:8-9 (*stoicheia*); 1 Corinthians 15:25 (astral or cosmic entities). Inscriptions give details of practical arrangements between Diaspora Jews and these lower divine entities, respected and occasionally invoked (as in the manumission inscriptions from the Bosphorous) but in principle not worshiped. Evidence is collected and discussed in Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* (New Haven, Conn.:Yale University Press, 2000).

[15]That is to say, "humanity" as defined in antiquity. In defense of gnostic and Marcionite christologies, I will point out here that while *soma* was a necessary component of all non-divine reality (for Origen, only "God" as Father, pre-existent Son, and Holy Spirit was absolutely asomatic), *sarx* was a detachable item for anthropology—hence, for christology as well. The docetic Christ did not truly have a fleshly body; but *pace* Tertullian, Irenaeus, and the other high-voltage heresiologists, this was *not* the same as claiming that Jesus was not truly "human." Docetism coordinated with concepts of redemption: while a *soma pneumatikon* would be rescued, the *sarx* would not be—as, indeed, Paul had long ago stated plainly (1 Cor. 15:50). In historical context, this anti-docetic rhetorical ploy defends, if obliquely, the resurrection of the flesh and, in the late second/early third century, millenarian ideas of redemption. See Paula Fredriksen, "Apocalypse and Redemption in Early Christianity: From John of Patmos to Augustine of Hippo," *Vigiliae Christianae* 45 (1991): 151-83.

[16]*Pace* Athanasius, this was Arius' point: not that Christ was a "creature," but that he was contingent, and that God the Father was the only self-existent, non-contingent entity. Arius had tradition right: the vocabulary of both the New Testament (father/son) and of philosophy (*theos/logos*) was hierarchical. I understand how Athanasius won; but he shouldn't have.

[17]On science and the disenchantment of the universe, Max Weber's classic essay, "Science as a Vocation," *Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946) 137-144, 150-156. Alfred I. Tauber, *Confessions of a Medicine Man: An Essay in Popular Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 2000), gives a lucid and compelling overview of modern constructions of personhood both philosophical and legal, and how confusions there compound problems in medical ethics.

[18]Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 137-154.

[19]Wright's oeuvre, both on Paul and especially on Jesus, is a monument to this sort of intentionalist fundamentalism. See, most recently, *Christian Origins and the Question of God, Vol. 2: Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996); see also Fredriksen, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 293-94.

[20]Summarized in *Jesus of Nazareth*, 207-59; now see my paper, "The Historical Jesus, the Scene at the Temple, and the Gospel of John," Society for Bibilical Literature Annual Meeting 2002, available from *tom.thatcher@cincybible.edu.*

[21]For a similar response, see the essay in this volume by Terrence W. Tilley, "Teaching Christology: History and Horizons," n. 18. Tilley observes, "Fredriksen's reconstruction nearly collapses Jesus into his background." Exactly my point: Jesus' native religion is not his "background," but his context. Why not look at Christianity—especially if we wish to trace the phenomenon into the lifetime of Jesus himself—as an extreme form of Judaism, rather than as something distinct from it?

[22]For an overview of the social and intellectual history behind this identity-confirming construct, see my essay, "What 'Parting of the Ways?' Jews and Gentiles in the Ancient Mediterranean City," *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Tübingen: Mohr, 2003).

[23]There is a valuable discussion in Judith Lieu, *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996).

[24]Susannah Heschel, *Transforming Jesus from Jew to Aryan: Protestant Theologians in Nazi Germany* (Tucson, Ariz.: University of Arizona Press, 1995).

[25]On anti-Judaism, Jewish patriarchy, and the feminist Jesus, see especially the essays in *Women and Christian Origins*, ed. Ross Shepard Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); on some Third Questers' use of demeaning characterizations of Jews and Judaism to define the particular moral excellence of their Jesus, see my "What You See Is What You Get" (n. 6). Historically, socially, anthropologically, and religiously, compassion is to purity as fish is to bicycle. The slogan is Marcus Borg's, against whose reconstruction in particular my essay, "Did Jesus Oppose the Purity Laws?" (*Bible Review* XI.3 [1995]: 20-25, 42-47), is directed.

[26]October 6, 2000.

[27]"Non vorranno mica farmi fuori un'altra volta?!" *La Stampa*, 3 April 2002.

[28]December 12, 2001.

[29]See especially William P. Loewe, "From the Humanity of Christ to the Historical Jesus," *Theological Studies* 61 (2000): 314-331.

[30]"The Present State of the 'Third Quest' for the Historical Jesus: Loss and Gain," *Biblica* 80 (1999): 459-87, at 486.