The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus and its Inplications for Jewish-Christian Relations

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Introduction

There is no doubt that one of the most significant aspects of modern 'Jewish Research', to use Charlesworth's phrase, is the participation and contribution of Jewish scholars in the whole enterprise. The purpose of this paper is to outline the history of this Jewish movement towards a new appreciation of Jesus, to draw out some of the main issues involved in the contemporary debate, and to suggest some of the major challenges to the church in terms of the broader issue of Jewish–Christian relations. My title was inspired by a 1984 book written by Donald Hagner, then a professor of NT at Fuller Theological Seminary, in which he was at pains to show that Jewish interest in Jesus was in fact being pursued at the expense of his true identity, *viz.* the Son of God and Saviour of the world.[1] We shall attempt to evaluate this claim as part of the present study.

Specifically, we are concerned here with those Jewish scholars who fully belong to the Jewish traditions. In other words, we shall not be examining the work of so-called 'Jewish Christians', whether in any given case theirs is a genuine faith in Jesus or a device to achieve security in a Christian society. In either event, they will be determined to defend the divinity of Jesus. Nor shall we be dealing with those who seem to be Jewish simply by accident of birth, but who in reality bring no real Jewish perspectives or learning with them. This is a study of those Jews who identify with their Jewish traditions.

The fascination that mankind has had with Jesus became part of what we would today call a disciplined scholarly research programme with the publication in 1778 of Hermann Reimarus' 'Fragments'.[2] What was known as the 'quest for the historical Jesus' has moved in three phases, according to most analysts. Craig Evans, in a recent article, has spoken of them as the 'Old Quest' (1778–1906), in which it was presupposed that the real historical figure was non-supernatural, the 'No Quest' (1906–1953), built upon the conviction that not only was the real historical figure lost in history (or better still, lost to history), but in fact it was the Christ of faith who alone was important in any case, and the 'New Quest' (1953–), whose proponents have moved in almost Hegelian fashion to combine a renewed search for the Christ of faith, seeing the twin search as somehow indivisible.[3] He takes his 1906 date from the publication of Albert Schweitzer's critical survey of the first period, and his 1953 date from the appearance of Ernst Käsemann's programmatic essay on the quest up to that point.[4]

Our particular interest lies with the increased Jewish participation in Jesus research, especially in the context of the post-World War Two New Quest. They form part of what Tom Wright refers to as yet another new phase of the quest for the historical Jesus, one that is admittedly diffuse, but based on a general consensus that Jesus can only be recovered and reclaimed, both as historical person and God-with-us, as we recover and reclaim his own historical context, which is to say first-century Jewish society, in its cultural, political and religious reality. We must penetrate beyond the naïvety and superficiality (not to forget limited historical sources) of the Old Quest, the dogmatic negativity of the No Quest, and the anachronistic existentialism of the New Quest.[5]

Just as the new 'realistic quest' (if one may be allowed to coin a phrase) is not monolithic with respect to the images of Jesus produced by those scholars who are involved in it, neither is there a common portrayal of Jesus by Jewish scholars. From Christian participants have come images of Jesus including aggressive political revolutionary, social and political anarchist, committed advocate for the poor, eschatalogical prophet, and magician.[6] Examples of Jewish images of Jesus include political revolutionary, Essene Torah-purist of the Hillelite stream, and Galilean charismatic leader.[7] Christian scholars, on the whole, are convinced that the contribution of Jewish expertise *vis-à-vis* the Second Temple period is proving to be invaluable. And so we move to begin our tracing of the path which has led to this amazing Jewish preparedness to consider the Jewishness of Jesus once again, after the awful experience of Jews down the generations at the hands of Jesus' representatives on earth.

In a sense, we can date the real impetus and momentum in contemporary Jewish research on Jesus to the turn of the century, when the German non-Jewish scholar, Wellhausen, wrote a statement which changed the face of NT scholarship, not simply for specialists, but also for Christian and Jewish religious leaders. In his introduction to the synoptics he stated:

> Jesus war kein Christ sondern Jude.[8]

These words have driven and haunted Jesus research ever since. Never again could the Jewishness of Jesus be ignored or undervalued. Of course, there have been strong negative reactions to Wellhausen's claim, notably in Nazi-influenced scholarship, but this in itself shows how deeply the debate was engaging the churches. It was, and is, no mere historical truism, but has implications for the assessment of the person and work of Christ. Eighty years after Wellhausen, another non-Jewish scholar, James Charlesworth, could write authoritatively that Jesus' Jewishness was not simply a matter of interesting background to his life, but rather part of the indispensable foreground for coming to terms with him.[9] A significant contribution to the work done in those 80 years has been offered by Jewish scholars.

There have been some particular landmarks along the way. In 1922, Joseph Klausner wrote the ground-breaking book on Jesus by a Jewish scholar. His Hebrew original was translated into English in 1925 by Herbert Danby, and it took the Jewish world by storm. At one summary point he wrote:

> Jesus is a great teacher of morality and an artist in parable. He is the moralist for whom, in the religious light, morality counts as everything: in his ethical code there is a sublimity, a distinctiveness and an originality in form unparalleled in any other Hebrew ethical code.[10]

Then, in 1930, Martin Buber wrote:

> From my youth onwards I have found in Jesus my great brother . . . I am more than certain that a great place belongs to him in Israel's history of faith and that this place cannot be described by any of the usual categories.[11]

By 1973, Geza Vermes was able to say that

> no objective and enlightened student of the Gospels can help but be struck by the incomparable superiority of Jesus. . . . Second to none in profundity of insight and grandeur of character.[12]

Finally, one could mention Pinchas Lapide, who declared in 1981 that at the end of the 1970s

> Jesus is no longer the central figure in the discussion between church and synagogue. Thanks to the current surge of interest in Jesus within the State of Israel, the Nazarene, long shrouded in silence, is beginning to be acknowledged among his own people and in his own land.[13]

These kinds of statements would have been unthinkable for Jewish people before the modern period, and even now, most Jewish people advise a more cautious appreciation of Jesus, lest the Jewish community develop the wrong attitude to Christianity, *viz.* that it too is acceptable for Jewish people. However, Jesus is very definitely back on the agenda in Jewish–Christian relations, and this is of paramount significance for the church.

Indeed, it is worth mentioning here that the Jewishness of Jesus is beginning to feature more prominently in contemporary documents published by church authorities, such as Diocesan statements, Synodal statements, World Council of Churches statements, and the like. For example, one might cite the progress in Roman Catholic documents from the 1965 publication of Vatican Two's influential *Nostra Aetate*, through the 1975 *Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate*, to the 1985 *Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church*. Section Three of the *Notes* of 1985 is devoted to 'Jewish Roots of Christianity', and its opening words are, in their own way, as significant and unexpected as were Wellhausen's some 80 years earlier:

> Jesus was, and always remained, a Jew.

What role, then, have Jewish scholars played in the eight decades between those two programmatic Gentile Christian statements? And what are the implications for Jewish–Christian relations?

Pre-modern Jewish views of Jesus

There is hardly any actual reference to Jesus in the literature of Talmudic times, which is to say, the first six centuries of the Common Era. Since there is no doubt whatsoever of the significance of Jesus for the history of the Jewish people, seeing that in the fourth century the processes of self-definition by both church and synagogue, following in particular the conversion of Constantine and the consequent Christianization of the Empire, led to the oppression of the Jewish people, by followers of Jesus, in hitherto unknown systematic ways, the lack of reference to Jesus and the birth and growth of the church must be the result of a conscious decision to avoid, and indeed prevent, discussions about Jesus in the Jewish community. What mention there is of Jesus, or even of those Jewish people who became his followers, is further differentiated by being usually ascribed to the period of the Amoraim (*c.*200–500) rather than the Tannaim (first and second centuries). In other words, the gospels are the only first-century documents which give us accounts of the early Jewish reaction to Jesus. When he is spoken of in the Rabbinic literature, he is regularly referred to as 'that man', or some form of symbolic name such as 'ben Pandera'. Occasionally, we find him called 'Yeshu', a term which soon became known as an acronym for the Hebrew curse, 'Yimach Shemo Uzzikhrono' (May his name and memory be blotted out).[14]

Two important points need to be made about the presentation of Jesus in these texts. (a) *There is no denial that Jesus was an historical person*, though there is some confusion about his exact dates. (b) *Jesus is denigrated as a blasphemer and heretic* who tried to exploit the divine Name in order to aggrandize power to himself and lead the Jewish people away from their true path of faithfulness to God.

By the ninth century, a whole series of calumnies of Jesus were being crystallized into various recensions of a popular piece which came to be known as *Toldot Yeshu*. This purports to be an account of the life of Jesus, but it is clearly apologetic and polemic in tone and intention. Jewish scholars today consistently maintain that it has no historical value whatsoever for the life of Jesus, though of course it does have immense importance for study of the attitudes of Jewish communities to Jesus and the church, particularly Jewish believers. *Toldot Yeshu* became the prime, if not the sole, source of the Jewish community's knowledge of Jesus from the early Middle Ages to the early twentieth century in Eastern Europe. The narrative is made up of stories of Jesus' illegitimacy, blasphemy, immorality and hubris, presenting him as a thoroughly reprobate Jewish man, one of whom the Jewish community should be ashamed, and at whose actions and attitudes it should be outraged.[15] Note should be made of the fact, however, that Jesus' existence is still taken for granted.

The Middle Ages saw another source of information about Jesus develop as the church began to see religious capital in imposing formal controversies on the Jewish communities of Europe. These so-called Disputations were structured like an open dialogue between Christian theologians (often converts from Judaism) and Jewish religious leaders, but in reality the Jewish participants were placed in a situation in which it was impossible for them to win. What ensued was, of course, polemic and counter-polemic. The Jewish spokesmen knew that it might be better for their community were they to 'lose' the debate, and so there was also a great deal of political retreat on behalf of the Jewish religious leadership. As Hagner summarized:

> We encounter here, by way both of reaction and self-protection, at worst a wholly negative, destructive attitude to Jesus, and at best a cold neutrality.[16]

One can sum up the attitude to Jesus which resulted from the interaction between Christians and Jews in the pre-modern period quite easily: because of the anti-Semitism of the church, expressed in contemptuous attitudes, social marginalization, theological demonization, and outright persecution and murder, Jewish people came to fear and hate Jesus. Of course, not only was there the push away from Jesus due to the attitudes and behaviour of the church, but there was also the constant pulling back by the rabbis, who developed their own theological system for interpreting history and redemption for the Jewish people. As a result of both discourse contexts, the Jewish people did not consider Jesus a worthy subject of discussion.

Enlightenment and emancipation

These are without doubt the two key events and issues in the modern Jewish reclamation of Jesus. The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw the gradual opening of the West to Jewish involvement, participation and even influence. The European Enlightenment of the eighteenth century had its impact on the Jewish communities of Europe and the West. There we also find increased questioning of authority and tradition, increasing faith in the supremacy of reason, open enquiry and experiment, a determination to foster tolerance and the priority of morality over theology, and a commitment to the separation of church and state. The proponents of Jewish Enlightenment were convinced that Jews were persecuted because they persevered in being different from the non-Jewish world in terms of culture, language, educational policy, ritual observance, *etc.*

When we speak of the Emancipation of the Jews, the reference is to the gradual abolition of those disqualifications and inequities which had been meted out specifically to Jewish people. Citizenship was granted; admission to politics, higher education and the arts, *etc.*, was given. Nothing was ever to be the same again in any sphere of Jewish intellectual, aesthetic or religious life. In terms of our present concern, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, in 1925, following the translation into English of Joseph Klausner's *Life of Jesus*, said about it at a public meeting in New York:

> It marks the first chapter in a new literature. Such a book could never have been written years ago. . . . Thank God the time has come when men are allowed to be frank, sincere and truthful in their beliefs.[17]

The context for the writing of this first chapter was a momentum of political freedom in which Jewish people could develop confidence in speaking publicly at all about Jesus. This relative freedom within the Christian society of Europe led also to an increased willingness to consider Jesus within the Jewish community itself. Above all, it was vital that there be a general cultural context in which the traditional Christian views of Jesus could be challenged.

Until the late eighteenth century, Jews and Christians only really encountered each other as adversaries, the whole process being under the domination and control of the theological dogmas which informed and established each community's self-definition *vis-à-vis* the other. The Enlightenment, and perhaps most

especially, as Novak points out, the rise of nineteenth-century historicism, made it possible for the new, liberally minded Jews and Christians to side-step dogma, whether about Christ or Torah, and begin to examine one another's faith/ethics/community life matrix more openly, more objectively, and more generously.[18]

Liberal Christians began to look at Jesus in a new, non-christological light. Liberal Jews, already working out a life no longer dominated by the Torah as defined by the Orthodox Rabbis, began to question whether such a 'de-dogmatized Jesus', to use a phrase of Novak's, could be a suitable person for Jewish people to investigate. Of course, one must not forget that anti-Semitism was alive and well throughout this entire period. There was no hidden agenda among the liberal Christian scholars which sought to enable a rapprochement with the Jewish people. Judaism was still denigrated as legalistic, in contrast with Jesus' gracious ethics of love. Jewish spokesmen were well aware of the continuing negative attitude towards them, but they began to gauge the spirit of the times as at least allowing them at last to counter the claims of Christianity publicly, as well as within their own walls, as had always been the case. The most celebrated such exchange of opinions remains the response of Leo Baeck in his 1905 book, *Das Wesen des Judenthums*, to Adolph Harnack's 1900 book, *Das Wesen des Christenthums*!

Jewish thinkers came increasingly under the influence of Kant's rationalism, specifically his rationalizing of religion, whereby it was held that if ideals were to be considered valid, they had, of necessity, to be of universal significance. Jesus was therefore increasingly presented as a paradigm of the universal ethical ideals of civilized, rational humanity, these being simultaneously presented as the heart of Judaism. These liberal scholars were determined to be emancipated from the prisons of their respective Orthodoxies, and both groups, as part of their own agendae, wanted to emancipate Jesus from the dogma of the church's Christology. Buber, in his 1930 book, *Two Types of Faith*, showed a certain desire to see this development progress apace. As Novak perceptively states:

> Buber wants to release Jesus from the confines of both Christian and Jewish dogma. The former makes too much of him, and the latter too little.[19]

Interestingly, Charlesworth stresses this very point in his work on modern Jesus research. In his opinion, it only became possible to search realistically for the historical Jesus once he had been freed from the traditional christological dogma of the church which prevented even an attitude of open enquiry into these matters, let alone the development of alternative reconstructions of Jesus. He argues in *Jesus Within Judaism* that, having come through the turmoil of the years of so-called critical scholarship of the Bible, we are now in the position of proclaiming, Jew and Christian together, that all theological truth about Jesus *must* be based squarely upon what he calls 'free historical inquiry'.[20] In his other major work in this area, he comments that the new situation has helped both Jewish and Christian communities in coming to a more mature appreciation of the Jewishness of Jesus. Jewish people are learning that they need to escape the caricature of Jesus as a confused, deluded, probably illegitimate person, and Christians are realizing the error of seeing Jesus as either not really Jewish at all, or else as so unique that he has nothing in common with other Jews, then or now.[21]

It is important to emphasize that this movement towards a new appreciation of Jesus in the Jewish community has only involved those Jewish people who are true children of the Enlightenment and the Emancipation. The traditional, Orthodox communities, as a rule, resisted, and continued to resist, this change. To this day, they generally continue to operate on the level of avoiding all conversation about 'that man' of the Talmud. Largely, this reflects a reaction against what they see as the widespread assimilation of the Jewish people in the modern period, and is thus much more of a negative response to the Enlightenment, with its drive for the supremacy of free enquiry, reason, and the search for universal ideals, than it is specifically a reaction against the purported Jewishness of Jesus. Relatively few Orthodox Jews are involved in the Jewish reclamation of Jesus, then, and those who are do not really represent mainstream Orthodoxy.[22]

Of course, it must also be emphasized that these Reform Jews were essentially setting out to challenge their own community's traditional self-understanding, and its role in the modern world. So their investigation of Jesus must be seen as part of this more particular quest for self-identity. Post-Enlightenment Jewish thinkers were not concerned with helping Christians in their faith. They wanted a de-dogmatized Judaism, a faith for a faith community which was de-ritualized and de-supernaturalized, and a lifestyle and relationship model which was liberated from the domination of *halakhah*. Jesus was therefore viewed primarily (once he had been de-dogmatized) as a most important representative of the universal ethic of the de-dogmatized Judaism. In the 1901 book written by the Reform Rabbi, Joseph Krauskopf, the following words are to be found, words which capture exactly the motivating agenda of the Jewish reclamation of Jesus:

> when the Jew shall have completely cast away his obstructive exclusiveness and ceremonialism, and the Christian his Christology, Jew and Gentile will be one.[23]

Above all, one needs to point out that it has never been part of the Jewish agenda to have their faith in any way 'fulfilled' by their participation in the quest for the historical Jesus. As Samuel Sandmel, one of the most influential Jewish students of NT studies, has put it:

> I neither feel nor understand that my Judaism is in any way incomplete . . . I do not discern any religious incompleteness which the figure of Jesus would fill in, just as I see no incompleteness which a Mohammed or a Confucius would fill in.[24]

Much of the early Jewish optimism and enthusiasm faded during the pogroms in Russia in the 1880s, and then also during the Hitler years in Europe, but nonetheless the overall momentum has never been lost. Indeed, many Jewish people see an especial need, since the Holocaust, to find the real Jesus of history, and thus expose the awful sham and shame of the church's Christ. Be that as it may, Christian biblical scholarship has been enormously enriched by the participation of Jewish scholars of the Second Commonwealth, and of the various Judaisms of that period, and to this subject we now turn our attention.

The major issues

There are five significant issues which will be dealt with here. Rather than present a potted summary of the contributions of selected Jewish scholars, I have decided to look at the main issues involved, and the implications for Jewish-Christian dialogue that arise from them. References to the work of specific scholars will be found throughout.

(a) Jewish confidence that the real Jesus can be recovered

For most Jewish people, of course, it is experienced as an actual discovery, rather than a recovery, but nonetheless the conviction is clearly expressed that this real Jesus is not only Jewish, but also a Jewish man of his own time and place. From the beginning, there was a definite tendency to see Jesus as in need of rescue from the Christian theological constructions of him. Already in 1888, an American Reform Rabbi, Isaac Mayer Wise, was dismissing Christian biographies of Jesus in no uncertain terms:

> All so-called lives of Christ or biographies of Jesus are works of fiction, erected by imagination on the shifting foundation of meagre and unreliable records.[25]

David Flusser, in his 1969 book, *Jesus*, and Geza Vermes, in his 1973 book, *Jesus the Jew*, try to minimize the importance of the fact that they are Jewish. Their intention is to stress that the Jewish Jesus is in fact the only Jesus there is, the only Jesus that historical research can recover for us. For them, the faith or heritage of the historian is actually irrelevant. Vermes went so far as to give to his book the sub-title, 'A Historian's Reading of the Gospels'. He wrote in the opening pages of that work that his intention was

> to discover the authentic, original, historical meaning of the words and events reported in the Gospels.[26]

Clemens Thoma, a non-Jewish Roman Catholic scholar who specializes in the issues of Jewish-Christian relations, accepts this view that Christian piety has blurred the historical Jesus from our sight, welcoming Jewish clarification of the situation. It is to the Jewish people that we must turn for proper knowledge of the Israel of Jesus' day, and therefore of Jesus himself:

> Christians have torn Jesus from the soil of Israel. They have de-Judaïsed, uprooted, alienated, Hellenized, and Europeanized him. The consequences of these manipulations and whitewashings are hopeless confusion about the person of Jesus, the nature and tasks of Christianity, and the meaning of Judaism in religious history.[27]

The particular advantages accorded to Jewish scholarship are, on the one hand, non-contact with the Christian traditions of christological faith, and on the other hand, knowledge of and familiarity with the prime sources of Jewish history and religious thought from the early centuries of the Common Era. As we shall see, the first matter is rather complex, since Jewish scholars will nonetheless be coming from a position of contact with the Jewish traditions of a priori reductionism *vis-à-vis* Jesus. This is to say that any possibility that there might be any form of quantum leap in knowledge of God with the life and work of Jesus is denied. The traditions are different, but no less significant. This at least is an issue for us to consider together today.

As to the second point, we are now far more aware of the methodological problems involved in trying to use critically the Jewish sources which are regarded as throwing light on Jesus the Jew. The dating and establishing of provenance for the various sayings and traditions in the literature (whether Rabbinic, from Josephus or from the pseudepigraphical materials) is notoriously complicated. Indeed, the severe rejection by the Orthodox communities of any attempts to apply modern critical methods to the Rabbinic sources has made progress in this discipline slow and difficult for Jewish scholars. Those, like Jacob Neusner, who have ploughed this lonely furrow have become *bêtes noires* in traditional Jewish circles. But the truth remains that one simply cannot, as many Jewish writers presume, use sources from the third century onwards to establish the beliefs and practices of the first century. In his latest book on the subject, Neusner criticizes the traditional Jewish position according to which

> In the case of the first century, we have been asked to see one Judaism, the orthodox one, and to see that Judaism in the first century as an exact representation of what would emerge in the Talmud of Babylonia seven hundred years later.[28]

In other words, the Talmuds and the Midrashim, *etc.*, are every bit as much confessional documents as are the gospels. Daniel Harrington puts it this way:

> There is greater appreciation of the creativity and coherent vision of the rabbis as they worked out their vision of Jewish life in the second and third centuries, and more than a little doubt whether it is proper to look upon them as the lineal continuation of the Pharisaic movement.[29]

Just as gospels specialists insist on the need to sift through the material in order to retrieve the authentic Jesus from the various presentations of him, so the specialists in later Jewish literature are learning the tools for sifting through that material. We are still at the early stages of this research, and must beware the positivist presupposition of those who believe that the real Jesus can be recovered from the Rabbinic literature rather than, or without reference to, the gospels. Here is yet another major issue for us to debate.

(b) Jewish confidence in the historical value of the gospels

We are now dealing with Jewish scholars who regard the gospels as valuable (some would say invaluable) first-century works which, generally speaking, reflect faithfully the actual beliefs, customs and practices of the different Jewish communities of Palestine at that period, and which probably reflect much of the actual historical context of Jesus' life (notably not the accounts of the trial of Jesus). It is striking how Jewish scholars often take so-called liberal Christians to task for not crediting enough historical credibility to the gospels, at least to the synoptics. For example, in 1977 Trude Weiss-Rosmarin was able to state that as a rule, Jewish students of Jesus gave more credence to the gospels than their Christian counterparts.

> Jewish students of nascent and early Christianity tend to be more 'Gospel true' than modern and contemporary Christian New Testament scholars, who are in agreement that the 'Historical Jesus' is beyond recovery. . . .[30]

Vermes took the same line in his 1973 book, in which he quoted Bultmann's famous words that 'we can know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus'. In response to this, Vermes said:

> My guarded optimism concerning a possible recovery of the genuine features of Jesus is in sharp contrast with Rudolf Bultmann's historical agnosticism.[31]

He spoke with what might be regarded as consummate common sense in his 1981 Riddell Lectures, in which he said:

> A theological interest is no more incompatible with a concern for history than is a political or philosophical conviction.[32]

His point, echoed by Jewish scholars generally, is that so long as one is aware of one's theological interest, and allows for it, then one can do responsible history as well as responsible theology. David Flusser, of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, opened his book, *Jesus*, with the words:

> The main purpose of this book is to show that it is possible to write the story of Jesus' life.[33]

E.P. Sanders acknowledges the contribution of Jewish NT scholarship, as well as that of various Christian scholars (not uninfluenced themselves by Jewish work on Jesus), when he says in his 1985 book:

> The dominant view today seems to be that we can know pretty well what Jesus was out to accomplish, that we can know a lot about what he said, and that those two things make sense within the world of first-century Judaism.[34]

Sandmel is quite atypical of Jewish scholars in this regard, perhaps mainly because he is so influenced by liberal Protestant gospel research. In the years when so much solid work was being done by others, he wrote:

> We can know what the Gospels say, but we cannot know Jesus. If our objective is an accurate history of Jesus, then we are more apt to find that the Gospels obscure than reveal him.[35]

While no Jewish scholar would deny that a great deal of work has to be done to recover Jesus from the gospel accounts, Sandmel is more the exception than the rule when it comes to his negative assessment of the possibility of regarding the gospels as reflecting historically acceptable documents of Jewish life at the time of the first half of the first century.

Christians have much to be grateful for in this overall Jewish conviction that the synoptic gospels at least deserve a high 'historicity quotient'. The fourth gospel is, as always, more problematic, but even here there has been a reclamation of its essentially Jewish provenance and pedigree. The way is opening up with some acceleration for all non-Jewish students to reap the rewards of this increased attention to Jewish texts, as well as to the traditional worlds of the Greek poets and the Roman legislators, *etc.*

(c) Jewish confidence that Jesus can be, and should be, rooted and grounded in the Judaism of his day

Leo Baeck, the great German statesman of Reform Judaism, opened this century with what became an extremely influential remark:

> Most portrayers of the life of Jesus neglect to point out that Jesus is in every characteristic a genuinely Jewish character, that a man like him could have grown only in the soil of Judaism, only there and nowhere else.[36]

In 1913, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise wrote with considerable rhetorical power that Jesus should never have been removed from his only rightful context:

> Jesus should not so much be appreciated by us as assigned to the place in Jewish life and Jewish history which is rightfully his own.[37]

Sadly, there has been no shortage of Christian reductionism which has tried (largely successfully, it must be conceded) to deny the significance, and even the very fact, of Jesus' life- and faith-context within first-century Judaism. Jewish scholars are certainly forcing this issue back onto the agenda, insisting that Jesus cannot be alienated from the Hebrew Bible or the Judaism of his day. If one attempts to de-Judaïze Jesus by making him an Everyman in his relationship to the Divine Being whom all acknowledge as God, rather than by recognizing the indispensable context of his being a Jewish worshipper of Israel's God, then one commits theological suicide, losing not only the *Jesus of history* but also the theologically unique *Christ of faith*. A non-Jewish Messiah is a contradiction in terms!

Having said this, one is of course aware of the dangers involved in deciding a priori that Jesus could in no way have also transcended the norms of his day. Hagner draws attention to what he calls the hidden agenda of Jewish scholarship at this point:

> In demonstrating the Jewishness of Jesus, Jewish scholars thus have an unavoidable interest in vindicating the Judaism of his day. While the methods may vary, the interest is a common one. For these scholars it is impossible that Jesus the Jew could truly

have spoken against the Judaism in the name of which he is being reclaimed in their writings.[38]

Hagner has been accused of cynicism by some, and of paranoia by others, but the general point he makes is valid. We must beware of artificially restricting Jesus to being merely one among many. But on the other hand, we have the equally artificial construct of the so-called criterion of dissimilarity, restricting authenticity to those sayings of Jesus which are judged to be dissimilar to Judaism (and Christianity). Käsemann, for instance, concluded that:

> only in a few instances are we standing on more or less firm ground; that is, where the tradition, for whatever reason, can be neither inferred from Judaism nor attributed to earliest Christianity.[39]

Both of these groups of scholars are claiming to be able to find the real Jesus by means of exploiting our increasing knowledge about the Judaism(s) of his day — Jewish scholarship tending to collapse him into that Judaism, and critical Christian scholarship tending to disassociate the real Jesus from that Judaism. A major concern which they have in common is the promotion of research into the Judaism(s) of Jesus' time and place. The major theological concern which follows this research is the issue of how to relate Jesus to his Jewish context(s). Jewish scholars are quite right, however, to highlight the unacceptability of the presupposition of so many Christians that Jesus' religious self-definition is to be determined primarily, if not solely, by what are perceived to be the *differences* between him and Judaism.

Another quite basic problem in this area of research is the overall methodological problem of determining the nature of Palestinian Judaism in Jesus' day. We are now more aware than at any time since the beginnings of the quest for the historical Jesus of the complexity and creativity of Jewish religious life in Jesus' day. On the one hand, we have more information, and on the other hand, we have matured in our understanding of the issues and of the historical-critical tools used in our research. As Neusner is fond of saying, we are amassing enough knowledge to realize how little we know. Perhaps more caution is needed, then, in trying to assess the confidence with which some Jewish scholars tell us the kind of Jew Jesus was.

(d) Jewish reduction of Jesus to being simply a great Jewish figure of his time

Zwi Werblowski, one of the leading proponents of Jewish–Christian dialogue in Israel, and a professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, said in 1978 that:

> the activity of Jesus himself and of his disciples is regarded today by most Jewish researchers as being a part, not of the history of Christianity, but of that of Judaism.[40]

This is a very significant statement. Equally important is the confident assertion of Pinchas Lapide:

> . . . since Jesus of Nazareth during his entire life on earth was a pious Jew, and not a Christian — much less a Paulinist, we Jews ought to be allowed to determine for ourselves what this rabbi of Galilee means for us.[41]

The momentum lying behind confidence such as this can certainly be traced back to the pioneering work of Klausner, who was bold enough already in the early 1920s to state that Jesus was 'wholly explainable' by the Judaism of his day.[42] This has gained such currency within the Jewish communities of the West that it is taught almost as a commonplace in school textbooks. Here are two typical examples from North American materials:

> Jesus was a Jew and taught the best and noblest that was in the Jewish tradition.

> Throughout, we observe that, though somewhat of a mystic, Jesus was nonetheless a loyal Jew.[43]

As far as the Jewish community at large is concerned, the most influential Jewish scholar after Klausner has been Martin Buber. He presented Jesus, as we have seen, as his 'brother', and as a uniquely important Jewish figure, but Buber was no anonymous Christian. *Vis-à-vis* traditional Judaism he elevated Jesus to the level of great brother, but *vis-à-vis* traditional Christianity he reduced Jesus to the level of the Jewish people's great brother. It is true that Buber saw messianic import in the teaching and lifestyle of Jesus, but he did not regard Jesus as Israel's Messiah. He was a paradigm of Buber's I-Thou relationship with God, but fell far short of being the supernatural Son of God of Christian theology.

The issue, then, is whether or not there is in fact a Jewish hidden agenda, setting out to strip Jesus of what is seen by Christians as his full and universal significance. Craig Evans is of the opinion that there might well be.

> Jesus is so like his Jewish contemporaries, there is hardly any difference worth mentioning. Could it be that current ecumenical concerns are colouring our assessment of the historical Jesus? Time will tell.[44]

One certainly finds a considerable number of comments which seem to be representing such a Jewish apologetic position. Remarks like the following:

> There is a profound difference between a prophet and a teacher. A prophet is an innovative genius who discovers or expresses a spiritual truth above and beyond any that existed previously. A teacher transmits such truth to others. It has already been agreed that Jesus was a great teacher. In our judgement he was not a prophet. Insofar as his teachings were authentically Jewish, they were enunciated eight centuries earlier by Hosea, six hundred years before by Isaiah.
>
> His teaching, where good, was not original, and where original, was not Jewish or good.[45]

Most clearly, the theological impasse occurs at the consideration of the resurrection of Jesus. For Jewish scholars (with one notable exception, as we shall see), this is simply not acceptable as part of the authentic life of Jesus the Jew. In Klausner's programmatic work, he comes to the end of his chapter on the death of Jesus with the famous words:

> Here ends the life of Jesus, and here begins the history of Christianity.[46]

David Flusser closed his book on Jesus with the very words:

> And Jesus died.[47]

Shalom Ben-Chorin states unequivocally that in his opinion the Jewish image of Jesus quite naturally comes to a close with the death of Jesus on a cross.

> The Jewish Jesus-image thus recognizes neither Christmas with the crib and the star of Bethlehem nor Easter with the open grave and the resurrection.[48]

The exception to this Jewish consensus is Pinchas Lapide, already referred to several times in this paper. He asserts that it is quite possible for an Orthodox Jew to accept in principle that God raised Jesus from the dead, since Judaism affirms God as the One who can, in fact, bring the dead back to life. However, this would not of itself constitute proof of Jesus' Messiahship, let alone his divinity, since the Bible itself relates other accounts of mortal men being brought back to life by the power of God. But Lapide's view has not won general acclaim within the Jewish community.[49]

So we are left with the issue as to whether the Jewish reclamation of Jesus can only be shared by Christians at the expense of a Jesus who is allowed to transcend the context and the normal boundaries and constraints of history.

(e) Are history and theology being hijacked to create a premature rapprochement between Jews and Christians?

Not only is this the conviction of Christians like Hagner, arguing from a distinctively evangelical basis, but it is also the opinion of the Jewish scholar of the origins of Rabbinic Judaism, Jacob Neusner, whom we have had occasion to quote earlier. Throughout his career, he has maintained that Judaism and Christianity always were, and still are, different religions. In his latest book he puts it like this:

> The two faiths stand for different people talking about different things to different people.[50]

He is quite clear in his mind that there is a misguided attempt afoot to blur the differences between Judaism and Christianity, an attempt which implicates both faith communities. The reason for this indisciplined interpretation he sees as a desire to reconcile the two faith communities of today. The belief is that if Jews and Christians could only come to accept each other as different incarnations of the one faith, inviting the other to continue in its own distinct path, then there would at last be peace between them. Therefore

> our century has witnessed a fundamental theological error which has, as a matter of fact, also yielded an erroneous

> hermeneutics. . . . The theological error was to represent Christianity as a natural, this-worldly reform, a continuation of Judaism in the terms of Judaism.
>
> It is the simple fact that Christianity is absolute and Judaism is unique. . . . The blurring of the boundaries between the one and the other, . . . the representation of Christianity as a kind of Judaism, the appeal to Judaism for validation and judgement of Christianity – these familiar traits of contemporary biblical and theological studies obscure that simple fact.[51]

Neusner is especially contemptuous of the idea that Christianity is best seen as the daughter religion of Judaism:

> Christianity came into being as a surprising, unexpected and entirely autonomous religious system and structure, not as a child, whether legitimate or otherwise, of Judaism.[52]

He is, therefore, a severe critic of Jewish scholars like Vermes and Hyam Maccoby, who present Jesus in complete continuity with his Jewish context.

> The characterization of Jesus as a Galilean wonder-worker like Honi the Circle Drawer, for example, is a total fabrication, a deliberate misreading of the Gospels, and a distortion of the very character of the rabbinic evidence adduced on behalf of that proposition.[53]

This is a major theological and moral issue, and one which we must take seriously. What *is* the relationship between Christianity and Judaism? Christian tradition cannot accept that the two are completely autonomous, just as the church maintains that the two Testaments belong together. On the other hand, the traditional Christian theology of replacement, or supercessionism, is no longer acceptable. There can be no doubt that Jesus was, in one sense, a product of his time and place, so that we can say with some confidence that had he been born in a totally different context, then his would have been a different life. Therefore, the search for a more thorough understanding of, and appreciation for, the Jewishness of Jesus, a search in which Jewish scholarship is proving to be of increasing importance, should be encouraged.

Implications

By way of summary and conclusion, then, let us review the main issues and their implications for the urgent matter of Jewish-Christian relations today and tomorrow.

(a) Evaluating Jesus as an historical figure from the distant past

This is, of course, a major methodological issue affecting all research into historical personalities. Scholarship is constantly trying to chart the correct course between not one but two sets of Scylla and Charybdis. On the one hand, there are the extremes of continuity and discontinuity. If one sails too close to the former, then the person's unique genius will be lost, allowing no transcending of culture, whereas if one veers too much towards the latter, then the actual person can be lost, leaving one with a disembodied idea, or academic construct, a fate to which Jesus has been subjected more than once. On the other hand, one risks the dangers of particularity and universality. To focus exclusively on the former will make it very difficult for those who belong to other national and social groups, *etc.*, to relate to the person (a problem being felt keenly at the present time, for instance, by Arab Christians coming into contact with the presentations of Christian Zionist interpreters of the Jewishness of Jesus). But of course, to insist on the correctness of the universal image of Jesus is to lose his concretely real life and personality.

Speaking generally, one can state that the church has tended to (over)stress Jesus' discontinuity with his Jewish matrix, and his universal humanity, at the expense of the other dimensions. And yet, if Jesus has nothing to say directly to Jewish people, then how can he have anything to say directly to anyone else? It can easily degenerate into the creation of various Jesuses, each in a different culture's or scholar's image, a state of affairs which has in fact repeatedly occurred. Jewish research into the historical Jesus is helping us to redress the balance with proper regard for Jesus' continuity with, and particular identity with, his own and his community's Jewishness. In good Hegelian fashion, we hope that from this old thesis of alienation and the new antithesis of radical contextualization will come the synthesis of what I have called a 'realistic quest' for the historical, Jewish Jesus.

It is to be hoped that evangelical Christian scholars will be at the heart of this new synthesis. How many of us, therefore, and how many of our students, are involved in disciplined study of the Jewish sources, or in substantial dialogue with Jewish scholars, or are even *au fait* with the Jewish works being published today on Jesus research? One implication of all this is that we *must* be involved in the debate with Jewish scholars.

(b) Evaluating the historicity of the gospels

The church has cause to be grateful to Jewish scholarship for introducing a new confidence in the historical reliability of the overall presentation of Palestinian life given in the (synoptic) gospels. What one might call credal conflict is obvious when it comes to the accounts of the virgin birth and the resurrection of Jesus, and considerable mistrust is evident as regards the trial narratives, these three issues being predictably the most sensitive. Needless to say, there is also a different interpretation given to the issue of Jesus' attitude towards the Torah, both oral and written, than that commonly found among Christian exegetes, but this tends to be disagreement of a useful nature. The point to be stressed at this juncture is that the historicity of the bulk of the gospel material is being defended on a non-Christian basis by Jewish people.

In particular, it is through the use of Jewish religious and historical sources, and through Jewish familiarity, indeed intimacy, with those sources, that Jewish scholars are claiming that Christians are being introduced to the life and times of Jesus. The methodological problems associated with this approach can be briefly summarized: the sources come from communities writing generations after the time of Jesus' life, which communities only reflect the *Tendenz* of what became the dominant pre-70 CE religious outlook, and which communities are operating out of their own agendae, and therefore writing for their own purposes, purposes which by definition sometimes run counter to those of the Jesus Movement, if one may use that term in this context. This methodological debate must therefore be enjoined between Jews and Christians, providing what is now a major issue in scholarship.

(c) Recovering the real Jesus

This point obviously belongs closely with the one above, and the same methodological problems will be involved. It has been refreshing nonetheless to find Jewish scholars expressing confidence that Jesus of Nazareth can be sufficiently recovered from the gospel accounts that it is possible for us to encounter him today. New life has come into the debate, and we are indebted to the Jewish contribution. Is this to be desired unreservedly, or do we, like Hagner and others, detect hidden pitfalls?

Certainly one cannot separate the knower from the known, or in this case, the seeker from what is sought. Jewish people are looking for a different Jesus, a Jesus who will vindicate the Judaism of first-century Palestine. The possibility of Jesus being a divine figure as well as a human personality is denied a priori by Jewish scholarship, whereas traditional Christianity refuses to depart from this fundamental tenet of faith.

Here lies an extremely important issue for us: can one suspend judgment on the divinity of Jesus, or at the very least relegate that conviction to the sidelines for a time, until work is done on his life as a human being, and a Palestinian Jewish human being at that? Or does his divinity influence the kind of Jewish person he was? Did the society in which he grew up, and particularly the synagogue in which he learned the Scriptures and the traditions, actually contribute to his development as a person, in relationship to his Father as well as to others? If the answer to these questions is yes, then we have much to learn about him from the new realistic quest. But this brings us back to the issue at stake here.

If one is able to distinguish clearly between the aspects of Jesus research in which Jewish scholars can help, and those subsequent aspects in which they cannot, then does it follow that Christians will simply have to accept that Jesus will remain only as an important Jewish teacher for the Jewish community? Can Jesus be, at one and the same time, the Christ of the church and a rabbi of the Jewish people? Are evangelicals compromising their faith by being involved in such inter-faith projects?

(d) Separating Jesus from his disciples

This is another major issue facing the church in its Jesus research. Evangelicals have a particular concern to preserve a relationship of continuity between Jesus and the nascent and emerging church. However, it has become something of a commonplace to find

Jewish scholars driving a wedge between Jesus and, particularly, Paul. They wish to differentiate clearly between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, an attitude and approach not unfamiliar to those who are *au fait* with recent NT scholarship. Hagner sums up this aspect of Jewish scholarship in the following way:

> This Christ – indeed, Christianity itself – is regarded as largely the creation of the apostle Paul, who, by importing Hellenistic ideas, subverted the message of Jesus, and so brought a new religion into existence.[54]

This kind of wedge can be seen consistently in the relevant works by Jewish scholars, for example, Klausner, Buber, Sandmel and Vermes.[55] Indeed, the very title of one of Hyam Maccoby's books tells the story well: *The Myth-Maker. Paul and the Invention of Christianity.*[56] Is Jesus to be reclaimed at the expense of Paul? Few issues can have more serious implications for Jewish–Christian relations than this.

(e) Appreciation of the Jewish agenda

Jewish people are pursuing their own agenda. The status and role of Jesus is an issue for them from within their own context of concerns and perspectives. Judaism's engagement with Jesus is in fact part of the movement towards its own self-confident taking of a rightful place in the modern world as a major world religion in its own right. Rabbi Alan Mittleman has put it this way:

> The 'homecoming of Jesus', therefore, is an aspect of the modern Jew's act of historically oriented self-discovery, or of self-recovery. It is an aspect of the modern Jew's search for essence and definition.[57]

To this way of thinking, Christianity has been guilty of deifying and institutionalizing a loyal son of Judaism, and consequently condemning Judaism as it has developed without Jesus to, at best, the status of a failed, unfulfilled and barren religion, and, at worst, a sentence of death and destruction. And so Christians must accept that Jewish people are working from a quite different agenda to themselves.

Is the church secure enough and humble enough to acknowledge the help it needs from Jewish scholarship, and, what is more, to accept it on the Jewish community's terms? Hagner comments:

> Jewish scholars are in a particularly advantageous situation to understand the teaching of Jesus. Familiar with the Old Testament, the development of early Judaism, the Jewish background of the Gospels, and often learned in the difficult world of rabbinic literature, they are often able not only to place Jesus in historical context, but also to enter the mental world of Jesus, and to capture every Jewish nuance in his words. . . . For this, Christian scholars, though sensing an incompleteness in the Jewish approach, continue to be grateful.[58]

Perhaps the issue is most controversially presented by the Roman Catholic theologian, Clemens Thoma, who argues that, in fact, Christians positively need to hear Jewish theological critiques of the church's Christology. In 1980 he wrote:

> Christian theologians would be well advised . . . to consider Jewish exceptions to their theological and Christological statements. Taken altogether, Jewish ideas are not mere negations, opposition for opposition's sake, but warnings of potential perversions of faith in the God of Israel.[59]

Can the church accept such a perspective on contemporary Jewish–Christian relations?

(f) Identification with Jewish believers in Jesus

As far as I am concerned, the most tragic aspect of modern Jewish–Christian relations is the total marginalization of those Jewish people who are our brothers and sisters in the faith. Down the centuries, the synagogue has told Jewish believers that they are no longer Jewish, having betrayed the Jewish people to join the Gentiles and their religion. This was all based on the presumption that Jewish people could not come to faith in Jesus from conviction alone, reflecting also the Jewish community's terrible treatment at the hands of Christians. For its part, the church has also demanded that Jews reject their Jewishness if and when they become baptised members of the church. Its agenda has been dominated by varieties of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism.

However, can Christians today do other than affirm Jewish faith in the Jesus of history, faith that he is indeed Israel's Messiah and the Saviour of the world? The Jewish scholarship which we are examining here denies the possibility, viability and integrity of such faith. Will the church compromise its commitment to these brothers and sisters to save the dialogue? This must be a major issue when we are discussing Jewish reclamation of Jesus.

These, then, are some of the major issues facing the church in the current phase of the modern quest for the historical Jesus. There is so much to be grateful for. The questions before us, in the light of the concerns of Hagner and others, are whether there are hidden costs involved in terms of Jewish–Christian relations, and if so, whether they are worth the price.

[1]Donald A. Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus. An Analysis and Critique of the Modern Jewish Study of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Academie Books, 1984).

[2]Charles H. Talbert edited an English translation called *Reimarus: Fragments* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970).

[3]Craig A. Evans, 'Jesus of Nazareth: Who Do Scholars Say That He Is?', *Crux* Vol. 23 No. 4 (1987), pp. 15-19.

[4]Albert Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte des Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1906). The English translation of 1910, by James M. Robinson, was entitled *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (London: A. & C. Black, 1910). Within the middle period, Evans cites, as an exponent of the 'No Quest', Rudolf Bultmann's *Jesus* (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1926; ET. *Jesus and the Word*, N.Y.: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1958). Ernst Käsemann's 1953 paper was entitled 'Das Problem des historischen Jesus', later published in 1954 in *ZTK* 51, pp. 125-153. Its ET, 'The Problem of the Historical Jesus', was published in Käsemann's book, *Essays on New Testament Themes* (London: SCM, 1964), pp. 15-47. James M. Robinson's famous review of the whole movement was called *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM, 1959). Further criticism of this 'new quest' is given by the Jewish scholar B.F. Meyer, in *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979).

[5]N.T. Wright, 'Constraints and the Jesus of History', *Scottish Journal of Theology* Vol. 39 No. 2 (1986), pp. 189-210. He cites as examples of this new phase, Ben F. Meyer, *op. cit.*; M.J. Borg, *Conflict, Holiness and Politics in the Teachings of Jesus* (N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 1984); E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (London: SCM, 1985); Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew* (London: Collins, 1973); John K. Riches, *Jesus and the Transformation of Judaism* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1980).

[6]Representative examples are: S.G.F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots: A Study of the Political Factor in Primitive Christianity* (N.Y.: Scribners', 1967); G.R. Edwards, *Jesus and the Politics of Violence* (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1972); Elbert Hubbard, *Jesus Was An Anarchist* (N.Y.: Revisionist Press, 1974); Luise Schottroff and Wolfgang Stegemen, *Jesus von Nazareth – Hoffnung der Armen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1978); Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator: A Critical Christology for Our Time* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1978); Jane Schaberg, *The Illegitimacy of Jesus: A Feminist Theological Interpretation* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985); E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*; Morton Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1978).

[7]See, respectively, Hyam Maccoby, *Revolution in Judaea. Jesus and the Jewish Resistance* (London: Orbach and Chambers, 1973); Harvey Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee. A New Look at the Jewishness of Jesus* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1985); Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew. A Historian's Reading of the Gospels, op. cit.*

[8]Julius Wellhausen, *Einleitung in die drei ersten Evangelien* (Berlin: 1905), p. 113.

[9]James H. Charlesworth, *Jesus Within Judaism. New Light from Exciting Archaeological Discoveries* (London: SPCK, 1989), pp. 5 and *passim.*

[10]Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times and Teaching* (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1925), p. 414.

[11]Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith* (ET, N.Y.: Macmillan, 1961), p. 81.

[12]Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew, op. cit.*, p. 224.

[13]Pinchas Lapide and Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul. Rabbi and Apostle* (ET, Minneapolis: Augsberg Publishing House, 1984, from a 1981 original), p. 31.

[14]Of immediate interest in the Talmudic material are the following passages: Yeb. 4:13; Yeb. 49b; Sanh. 43a, 106a, 107b; Gitt. 56b, 57a. Basic research work has been done by Gustav Dalman, *Jesus Christ in Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, and the Liturgy of the Synagogue* (ET, Cambridge: CUP, 1893; reprinted N.Y.: Arno Press, 1973); R. Travers Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1903; reprinted Clifton, N.J.: Reference Book Publishers, 1966); Johann Maier, *Jesus von Nazareth in der Talmudischen Uberlieferung* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978).

[15]An English translation of Toldot Yeshu is readily available in H.J. Schonfield's book, *According To The Hebrews* (London: Duckworth, 1937).

[16]*Op. cit.*, p. 53.

[17]Quoted in David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue. A Jewish Justification* (Oxford: OUP, 1989), p. 78.

[18]See Novak, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

[19]*Op. cit.*, p. 84.

[20]*Op. cit.*, p. 198.

[21]James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *Jews and Christians. Exploring the Past,*

Present, and Future (N.Y.: Crossroad, 1990), p. 46.

[22]Indeed, in 1966 an eminent Orthodox Jewish philosopher, Eliezer Berkovits, wrote an extremely influential article called 'Judaism in the Post-Christian Era', in which he listed five clusters of reasons why Jewish people should not become involved in dialogue with Christians. These reasons came under the headings Emotional, Philosophical, Theological, Practical and Ethical. See *Judaism* 15 (1966), pp. 76-84.

[23]This is quoted in Novak, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

[24]Samuel Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus* (N.Y.: OUP, 1965), p. 111. See also pp. 44, 46f.

[25]Isaac Mayer Wise, *The Martyrdom of Jesus of Nazareth* (N.Y.: 1888), p. 132.

[26]*Op. cit.*, p. 16. He closes the book by summing it up as a 'first step in what seems to be the direction of the real man' (p. 224).

[27]Clemens Thoma, *A Christian Theology of Judaism* (N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1980), p. 107.

[28]Jacob Neusner, *Jews and Christians. The Myth of a Common Tradition* (London: SCM, 1991), p. 21.

[29]Daniel J. Harrington, 'The Jewishness of Jesus. Facing Some Problems', *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 49 (1987), p. 7.

[30]Trude Weiss-Rosmarin (ed.), *Jewish Expressions on Jesus. An Anthology* (N.Y.: Ktav, 1977), p. ix.

[31]*Op. cit.*, p. 235, n. 1.

[32]Geza Vermes, *The Gospel of Jesus the Jew* (Newcastle: University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1981), p. 4.

[33]David Flusser, *Jesus* (N.Y.: Herder & Herder, 1969), p. 7.

[34]E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism, op. cit.*, p. 2.

[35]Sandmel, *We Jews and Jesus, op. cit.*, p. 124.

[36]As quoted by Shalom Ben-Chorin in 'The Image of Jesus in Modern Judaism', *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, Vol. 11 No. 3, Summer 1974, p. 408.

[37]Wise wrote in the 7 June edition of the magazine, *The Outlook*.

[38]*Op. cit.*, p. 39.

[39]Ernst Käsemann, *Exegetische Versuche und Besinnungen* (Göttingen, 1965), pp. 206f.

[40]'Jésus devant la Pensée Juive Contemporaine', in *Les Grands Religions* (1978), p. 36.

[41]Lapide and Stuhlmacher, *Paul. Rabbi and Apostle, op. cit.*, p. 50.

[42]*Jesus of Nazareth, op. cit.*, p. 363.

[43]William B. Silverman, *Judaism and Christianity: What We Believe* (1968), p. 93; Milton G. Miller, *Our Religion and Our Neighbours* (rev. ed., 1971), p. 59.

[44]Craig Evans, *art. cit.*, p. 18.

[45]Rabbi Roland B. Gittelson, 'Jews for Jesus — Are They Real?', in Gary D. Eisenberg (ed.), *Smashing The Idols* (London: Jason Aronson Inc., 1988), p. 167; C.G. Montefiore, 'Jewish Conceptions of Christianity', in *The Hibbert Journal* 28 (1929-30), p. 249. See also Gerald Friedlander, *The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount* (N.Y.: Ktav, 1969), pp. 226-238, esp. pp. 237f.; Klausner, *op. cit.*, p. 127; David Flusser, 'Jesus', in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Vol. 10, 1972, p. 10; Rabbi Randall M. Falk in the recently published *Jews and Christians. A Troubled Family*, by Walter Harrelson and Randall M. Falk (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), p. 103.

[46]*Op. cit.*, p. 355. Klausner deals with the NT account of the resurrection in only 4 pages.

[47]Flusser, *Jesus, op. cit.*, p. 132.

[48]*Art. cit.*, p. 427.

[49]For Lapide's views, see Hans Küng and Pinchas Lapide, 'Is Jesus a Bond or Barrier?: A Jewish-Christian Dialogue', in the *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 14 (1977); Pinchas Lapide, *Auferstehung. Ein judisches Glaubensverlebnis* (2nd edn, Stuttgart and Munich, 1978). See also Randall Falk, *op. cit.*, pp. 111f.

[50]Neusner, *op. cit.*, p. 1 (and *passim*).

[51]*Op. cit.*, pp. 18, 94.

[52]*Op. cit.*, p. 120. For other contemporary rejections of this simplistic model, see Charlesworth, *Jews and Christians, op. cit.*, pp. 36-43; A.F. Segal, *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (London: Harvard University Press, 1986), pp. 1f., 179ff.; Norman Solomon, *Division and Reconciliation* (London: The London Diocesan Council for Christian-Jewish Understanding, 1980), pp. 2f.

[53]*Ibid.*

[54]*Op. cit.*, p. 26.

[55]Joseph Klausner, *From Jesus to Paul* (ET by W.F. Stinespring, N.Y.: Macmillan, 1943, of the 1939 original), pp. 580f.; Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith, op. cit.*, p. 55; Samuel Sandmel, *Anti-Semitism in the New Testament?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), p. 161; Geza Vermes, *The Gospel of Jesus the Jew, op. cit.*, p. 45.

[56]Hyam Maccoby, *The Myth-Maker. Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1986).

[57]Quoted in Harvey Cox, *Many Mansions. A Christian's Encounter with Other Faiths* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988), p. 111.

[58]*Op. cit.*, p. 27.

[59]Clemens Thoma, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

The social work of the Clapham Sect: an assessment

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The Clapham Sect was a small group of upper-class, influential, evangelical men and women who congregated in Clapham, which was then a small village just a few miles south of Westminster, in the late eighteenth century. There was little that was sectarian about them. They were all members of the Anglican church and enjoyed the ministry and counsel of John Venn (1759-1813), who became Rector of Clapham in 1793. The designation 'sect' may possibly have derived from a verbal jibe by the literary critic and wit, Sydney Smith (1771-1845).[1]

The group's origins seem to follow the acquisition of a mansion on Clapham Common by Henry Thornton (1760-1815), MP for Southwark. William Pitt designed a beautiful oval library for the house and Sir James Stephen, in his *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography*, suggests that this became the headquarters for Clapham social action. He wrote:

> ... the Chamber he had thus projected became the scene which, amidst his proudest triumphs, he might well have envied and witnessed the growth of projects more majestic than any which ever engaged the deliberations of his cabinet.[2]

The central figure of the group was William Wilberforce (1759-1833), who experienced his evangelical conversion in 1785. Another prominent figure was the banker Henry Thornton. They became close friends and the 'sect' began to form around them. There were several other prominent members of the group. Granville Sharp (1735-1813), a scholar and pamphleteer whose work resulted in the 1772 decision to fight slavery in England, became Chairman of the Anti-Slavery Society and was active in the work of Sierra Leone Project and the British and Foreign Bible Society. James Stephen (1789-1859) had seen the evils of the slave trade first-hand, and on his return to England he made contact with Wilberforce and the Claphamites. Zachary Macauley (1768-1838) had gone to work as an estate overseer in the West Indies at the age of 16. He returned to England obsessed by the evils of the slave trade and threw in his lot with the 'saints'. Charles Grant (1746-