

The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Revisionist History through the Lens of Jewish-Christian Relations*

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Abstract

This essay challenges the standard paradigm for the intellectual history of 'Jesus Quests' popularized by Albert Schweitzer and mimicked by almost every survey since. I argue that historical reconstruction begins at least with Augustine (perhaps sooner) and with an eye to Jewish-Christian relations. By analyzing key moments in the intellectual history of Jesus studies, I argue that a common thread has been Jewish-Christian relations. This thread suggests that an important (perhaps seminal) impetus for study of the historical Jesus before the Enlightenment and through to the modern period has been largely neglected by the standard 'Jesus Quests' paradigm.

Keywords

Albert Schweitzer; anti-Judaism; antisemitism; German National Socialism; historical Jesus; Jewish-Christian dialogue; Jewish-Christian relations; Jesus Quests

It is quite common for new studies on the historical Jesus to begin with the story of Jesus 'Quests'. This intellectual history typically begins with Reimarus or Lessing, discusses the impacts of Schweitzer, Kähler, Bultmann (the 'No Quest' years), and Käsemann (the 'New Quest'), and eventually leads to the so-called 'Third Quest'. After reading a couple dozen of these cookie-cutter surveys, one gets the impression that

*) I offer my gratitude to Michael J. Cook and Gerd Theissen for critiquing an earlier form of this essay. Of course, any deficiencies herein are my own.

there is little more to say on the topic.¹ However this survey looks dramatically different when seen through the eyes of Jewish-Christian relations. By revisiting the intellectual history from this vantage point, I will provide an alternative survey of Jesus historians. I will suggest that critical interest in the Jesus of history begins, not just in the Enlightenment, or in secular intelligentsia, but also in Jewish-Christian dialogue and debate over the centuries.

I have been persuaded that the tripartite divisions of the ‘Quests’ is problematic and often misleading. Indeed, even within the confines of the English Deists-to-present timeframe, these divisions are problematic.² This essay will focus less on the major shifts from the Deists to the present. Rather, I will follow a particular pre-modern thread of Jewish-Christian relations that manifests historical concerns for Jesus to and through the Enlightenment.

Where does the Story of Historical Jesus Questing Begin?

The ‘historical Jesus’ is properly defined as a scholarly construct that incorporates but is not limited to the multiple biblical portraits of Jesus. While many now use the moniker as shorthand for the ‘real Jesus’, or Jesus as he existed independent of historical memory, this simply confuses what history (any history) is and does.³ The historical Jesus is the varying Jesuses of

¹ For a recent survey of this intellectual history see J.K. Beilby and P.R. Eddy (eds.), *The Historical Jesus: Five Views* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2009), pp. 9–54. The editors take their lead from N.T. Wright in exposing the roots of the ‘First Quest’ in English Deism. However, as is typical in most Jesus books, there is little more than a paragraph on the period before Lessing and Reimarus (pp. 11–12).

² Among the growing number of caveats and nuances of the tripartite division, see the compelling studies of Fernando Bermejo Rubio, ‘The Fiction of the “Three Quests”: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Historiographical Paradigm’, *JSHJ* 7 (2009): 211–53; Dale C. Allison, *Resurrecting Jesus: The Earliest Christian Tradition and Its Interpreters* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), pp. 1–18; Cf. also Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (JSNTSup 191; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), pp. 28–62.

³ See Anthony Le Donne, *Historiographical Jesus: Memory, Typology, and the Son of David* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009).

multiple perceptions, memories, interpretations, social contexts, and historiographical rigor. When defined as such, it is quite tempting to begin with the Enlightenment, namely Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768).⁴ Most surveys do, following the lead of Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965).

According to Schweitzer, ‘Before Reimarus, no one had attempted to form a historical conception of the life of Jesus.’⁵ Schweitzer immediately qualifies this statement by offering two possible exceptions (Hieronymus Xavier and Johann Jakob Hess), but neither of these warrants more than a mention. Reimarus’s ‘Aims of Jesus and His Disciples,’⁶ is called by Schweitzer ‘not only one of the greatest events in the history of criticism, it is also a masterpiece of general literature.’⁷ Clearly, Schweitzer was so enamored with Reimarus that all other historical pursuits of the life of Jesus were eclipsed. It is also clear that Schweitzer’s praise of Reimarus was part and parcel of his belief in German intellectual and spiritual superiority. Indeed, he began his book with these words:

When, at some future day, our period of civilisation shall lie, closed and completed, before the eyes of later generations, German theology will stand out as a great, a unique phenomenon in the mental and spiritual life of our time. For nowhere save in the German temperament can there be found in the same perfection the living complex of conditions and factors—of philosophic thought, critical acumen, historical insight, and religious feeling—without which no deep theology is possible.⁸

It is this ‘perfection’ in conditions and temperaments that results in the ‘master-stroke’ that ‘the spirit of the time was preparing.’⁹ According to Schweitzer, this master-stroke found its incarnation in the ‘Fragments’.

⁴) There can be no doubt that the ‘Historicism’ that emerged from the Enlightenment focused Jesus research in an unprecedented way. There is some danger in setting pre-modern historiography on same playing field with the beneficiaries of Giambattista Vico, R.G. Collingwood, and Pierre Nora. However, it is more dangerous to be ignorant of all critical thought on the Jesus of history before the sixteenth century.

⁵) Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (trans. W. Montgomery and F. C. Burkitt; Mineola, NY: Dover, 2005), p. 13.

⁶) Reimarus’s portrait of Jesus was published posthumously by Gotthold Ephraim Lessing among the group of publications between 1774 and 1778 titled ‘Fragments’.

⁷) Schweitzer, *Quest*, p. 15.

⁸) Schweitzer, *Quest*, p. 1.

⁹) Schweitzer, *Quest*, p. 14.

There can be no doubt that German theology from the Enlightenment to the present has shown a vast array of brilliant beams both intellectually and spiritually. Schweitzer himself must be counted among the very brightest. But let us not be blind to ethnocentric presuppositions when we see them.¹⁰ While we ought to be cautious to judge Schweitzer too harshly for the prejudices of his time, we do have an obligation to judge ourselves by our own standards. It simply will not do to blindly follow Schweitzer's lead when doing so runs contrary to our (the Academy's) recent critiques of almost all forms of nationalism.¹¹

Of course, it should come as no surprise to us that critical evaluations of the Jesus tradition began long before Reimarus. Indeed we might begin with the Jewish historian Josephus (ca. 37–100 CE). While it is extremely difficult to reconstruct his words due to the insertion of Christian theology into his primary mention of Jesus,¹² it is likely that the core of his statement about Jesus does indeed provide an early historical summary. John Meier reconstructs: 'At this time there appeared Jesus, a wise man. For he was a doer of startling deeds, a teacher of people who receive the truth with pleasure. And he gained a following among many Jews and among many

¹⁰) One is tempted to see Schweitzer's comments in terms of race here, although such an association would be hasty at this point. I will discuss the concept of 'race' as an Enlightenment preoccupation below. It is also noteworthy that Schweitzer attempts to qualify his enthusiastic *enkomion* of German theology in the preface to his 6th edition.

¹¹) To add further perspective, Reimarus was less of an innovator than Schweitzer supposed. Much of his portrait of Jesus was taken from deists like Thomas Chubb (1679–1746) and Matthew Tindal (1657–1733). My gratitude to Dale Allison for this reminder.

¹²) *Antiquities* 18.63–64: 'Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day' (trans. from William Whiston, *The New Complete Works of Josephus* [Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 1999], p. 662).

of Gentile origin.”¹³ Graham Stanton suggests: ‘Jesus was a doer of strange deeds, and a deluder of the simple-minded. He led astray many Jews and Greeks.’¹⁴

Of interest for my thesis, scholars are agreed that Josephus was keenly interested in presenting a favorable view of Judaism for a Gentile audience. As I will discuss below, Josephus’ ‘testimony’ to Jesus became useful in Jewish-Christian debate much later, but not in a way that was favorable to Jews. However, if Josephus’ statement is deemed dubious due to our inability to arrive at a pre-Christian core, we will need to find a less contentious starting point.

Perhaps we might begin with Origen (185–254 CE) who doubted the literal interpretation of the temptation narratives as early as the third century (*De Principiis* 4.16). Or we might begin with the rabbis who offered a demythologized account of Jesus’ atypical conception (*Shab* 104b; cf. *Sanh* 67a). Origen’s doubt of the historicity of the temptation narratives is hermeneutically relevant in that he opens the possibility that many episodes in the canonical Gospels should not be admitted to the historical record. However, Origen’s comments have less to do with his aim to define history and more to do with his affinity for allegorical interpretation. Origen is not trying to set the record straight (if I may use this modern phrase); rather, he is arguing that the significance of Scripture must be found on a deeper, spiritual level.

The rabbis, on the other hand, are indeed interested in setting the record straight, even if polemically motivated. In contrast to the figure of Christian veneration, Jesus was either a fool or a false teacher who studied magic in Egypt.¹⁵ However, it is notoriously difficult to pull together a coherent portrait of Jesus from this literature. Various statements from various rabbis

¹³) John Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (4 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1991), vol. 1, p. 64.

¹⁴) Graham Stanton, ‘Jesus of Nazareth: A Magician and False Prophet who Deceived God’s People?’ in *Jesus of Nazareth Lord and Christ: Essays on the Historical Jesus* (eds. J. Green and M. Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 164–80, here 169–71.

¹⁵) In *b. Sanh.* 107b, Jesus is accused of being a false teacher, ‘and the master said: Yeshu practiced magic [כישוף] and deceived and led Israel astray’. Similarly *b. Sanh.* 43a recounts an execution where Yeshu [ישו] ‘is going to be stoned for practicing magic [כישוף] and leading Israel astray’. The designation ‘magician’ should be understood as a polemic in this context; cf. the much later *Athanasius and Zacchaeus* 79.1.

from various generations give us little more than disparate puzzle pieces associated with several different names.¹⁶ And to further complicate matters, ‘some passages that were not originally about Jesus became misconstrued as such, leading rabbis further astray. Above all, the Jesus to whom the rabbis reacted was not the historical man but the Gospels’ reconfiguration of him’.¹⁷

Following the lead of Jesus’ accusers and Matthew’s apologetic in the Gospels, Jesus’ miracles are explained as foreign sorcery. On this basis a mythological construct developed. Jesus embedded (tattooed?) what he learned in Egypt into his flesh. The Talmud also creates confusion about whether Jesus was the son of Stada or Pandera. Noteworthy here is that Mary’s identity is also confused. Was her name Stada? Or was she Mary Magdalene? Peter Schäfer’s recent treatment of these texts rightly concludes that despite this confusion, the varying Talmudic traditions presuppose that the mother of this historically reconstructed figure had both a husband and a lover.¹⁸

I will revisit these traditions below, but the trouble with the Talmudic passages is twofold: When do we date the tradition that this text represents? And is Jesus of Nazareth really the object of this polemic? I am inclined to see this tradition akin to (but not dependent upon) the second-century indictment of Celsus against Jesus (Origen, *Cels.* 1.28).¹⁹ If this is so, the critical evaluation of Jesus over and against the biblical witnesses begins with polemic, perhaps with Jewish-Christian polemic.

¹⁶ *T. Shab* 11.15; *T. Sanh* 10.11; *M. Yeb* 4.13; *T. Yeb* 3.3, 4; *Yeb* 49ab; *Yom* 66b; *Sanh* 43a; *Ket* 51b; *Sanh* 106ab; *Shab* 104b; *J. Shab* 13d; *Sanh* 107b; *Sot* 47a; *Git* 90a; *Sanh* 43a; cf. *M. Abot* 2.8; *Sanh* 14a; *A.Z.* 8b; *T. Sanh* 9.7; *T. Hul* 2.22–24; *Shab* 116ab; *Sanh* 43a, 67a, 103a, 107b; *Sot* 47a; *A.Z.* 16b–17a. *Sanh* 43a; cf. *T. Sanh* 10.11; *J. Sanh* 25cd.

¹⁷ Michael J. Cook, *Modern Jews Engage the New Testament: Enhancing Jewish Well-Being in a Christian Environment* (Woodstock: Jewish Lights, 2008), p. 15.

¹⁸ Peter Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 15–19. As mentioned, Cook is much less optimistic about reconstructions of Jesus based on the Talmud.

¹⁹ Both traditions presuppose Jesus’ identity as a magician who studied in Egypt. However, these traditions are sufficiently different in both content and proper nouns so that direct dependence is unlikely. Also worth noting is the neo-Platonist philosopher Porphyry (ca. 234–305 ce). Porphyry criticized the reliability of the historical accounts given in the Gospels. Porphyry is clearly dependent on Celsus’ earlier criticism but praises Christ’s wisdom rather than accusing him of magic (Augustine,

But before moving on, it should be pointed out that, while we may doubt the methods and conclusions of such early ‘quests’, they are undoubtedly attempts at historical reconstruction.

Overlooked by quest surveys is the seminal contribution of Augustine of Hippo (354–430 CE). Augustine’s *Against Faustus* provides a very early critical evaluation of the Jesus tradition. Recently Paula Fredriksen has shown that Augustine discusses Jesus’ Jewishness with an eye toward Jewish-Christian relations.²⁰ Augustine conveys a debate between himself and Faustus on the subject of Manichaeism. Whether or not *Against Faustus* is an account from memory or wholesale invention or a combination of both is not quite so relevant as the fact that it represents a critical evaluation of both Jesus and Judaism from a Christian perspective.²¹ Faustus may well be a straw-man, but there can be no doubt that Augustine is using this occasion to ‘set the record straight’ concerning the Jesus of history. What Fredriksen points out that warrants repeating is that the violently anti-Jewish argument of Faustus and the ‘less’ anti-Jewish argument of Augustine are *both* Christian perspectives. While the Church

De Civ. 19.22–23). Cf. Robert L. Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), pp. 126–63, here 130, 145, 159–60. What is further interesting for my thesis is that Porphyry questions Christian particularity of salvation through Christ and acknowledges that this particularity stems from Jewish particularity via Jewish law. Augustine reflects Porphyry’s objection that salvation through Christ would naturally be of little use for those who died before Christ was born. Assuming that Christians might point to Jewish salvation via law, Porphyry argues that this is equally problematic in that this law was never extended to Italians, Romans, or Latins. Thus Christians have no recourse to appeal to the ancient Jewish means of salvation to validate their own. He suggests that the innumerable souls of the non-Jews who died before the coming of Christ are not accounted for within Christian soteriology (Augustine, *Ep.* 102.8). Thus, for Porphyry, Christianity was an unreasonable system of belief for both historical and theological deficiencies.

²⁰) Paula Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews* (New York: Doubleday, 2008), esp. pp. 213–34, 290–352.

²¹) No doubt, there are other notable Christian writers who have the topic of Jewish-Christian debate in mind (e.g. Justin’s *Dialogue with Trypho* and Tertullian’s *Adversus Iudaeos*—the authorship of the latter is disputed). Normally these take the form of Christian apologetic against (perceived) Jewish objections to Christianity. See the helpful treatment of this literature in William Horbury, *Jews and Christians in Contact and Controversy* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), esp. pp. 180–99.

commemorates one as orthodoxy and the other as heresy, both represented segments of Christianity in the fourth century (and early fifth).

The guiding hermeneutic of Faustus was the lens on the New Testament left behind by Mani (216–276 CE), Gnostic founder of Manichaeism. Mani's wholesale condemnation of Judaism (*à la* Marcion) resulted in the subtraction of Jewish Scripture from the Christian canon. When this lens of anti-Judaism was focused on the New Testament, certain portions of it had to go too. What could easily be construed as anti-Jewish statements by Matthew, John, Paul, etc. were deemed authentic; i.e. the anti-Jewish portions were deemed historical. Conversely, Faustus was able to diagnose textual corruptions by finding the many passages that he thought sounded far too Jewish.

These must have been added to the New Testament by the 'Judaizers', purportedly scribes with Jewish agendas and enemies to the truth of Christianity, the truth perfected in the prophecies of Mani. Thus anti-Judaism was among the very first hermeneutics used to evaluate the Jesus of history.

Augustine maintained the value of Jewish Scripture, most often through Christological allegory. He was also unwilling to scalpel out 'Jewish sounding' portions of the New Testament. No doubt, Augustine propelled Paul's supersessionism (if we may call it that) with damaging influence toward Christian anti-Judaism.²² In Augustine's estimation, Jews were 'unwilling witnesses' to Christology.²³ In light of his hermeneutical agenda, one could argue that Augustine's anti-Judaism was more subtle and thus ultimately more insidious.

But given the alternative versions of anti-Judaism during his time, his small steps toward religious tolerance should not be belittled. More than once, Augustine's condemnation of violence against Jews was remembered and likely saved synagogues, Scriptures, and Jewish lives.²⁴

Given Augustine's complicated and unique place in the history of Jewish-Christian relations, his representation of Faustus provides an important

²²) Because my focus is on Jesus and not Paul, I cannot treat this subject with any depth. However, I would argue that Paul never intended his polemic to be parroted by non-Jews (Rom. 11.17–22).

²³) St. Augustine, *The City of God* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), XVIII, chs. 46, 47; my gratitude to Steve Cone for looking over this portion of my chapter.

²⁴) Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, pp. xi–xx.

touchstone for Jesus historians. In reaction to Faustus' hermeneutic of anti-Judaism, Augustine became something of an apologist for 'New Testament Judaism'. For Augustine, Jesus' Jewish heritage was not only historically factual; it was foundational for the theologian's vision of salvation history. Jesus was not a spiritual phantom who left no footprints when he walked. For Augustine, Jesus Christ was the Jewish messiah, which made him Jewish. Moreover, Christ was the key to 'spiritualize' Jewish Scripture, which made it valuable for him. Thus the move to situate Jesus within Judaism (however nominally) resulted in a move toward religious tolerance. In retrospect, neither move eclipses Augustine's anti-Jewish supersessionism. But against the backdrop of Manichaeism, these steps might reflect the seeds of both historical-Jesus research and Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Before moving on, it is important to note that neither Faustus nor Augustine considered the possibility that the New Testament itself was a collection of works concerning Jewish theology adapted by and for Christianity. This possibility would not be considered until much later (see my discussion of Rabbi Emden below).

What precedes and follows Augustine is a long and dark history of religious misgivings and polemics punctuated by violence, forced displacement, pogroms, and attempts at genocide. At the risk of oversimplification, it must be said that the vast majority of this violence was anti-Jewish in nature and perpetrated with ecclesial support and theological impetus.²⁵ While it is possible to overstate the ecclesial nature of this history, there is a much larger danger of secularizing this history. Most of political history is religious history. There is little gained by blaming inherited prejudice or political expedience as if these were not married to Christianity over the course of European history. Moreover, we must also recall episodes where political officials spoke in more humane tones than the clergy. For example, Charlemagne (768–814) created the office *magister Judaeorum* (or 'Master of the Jews') to serve as an advocate for otherwise disenfranchised Jews in the Roman Empire. He did so to provide a state-appointed stalwart

²⁵) The history of Jewish and Christian relationship is complex and cannot be dealt with adequately here. For a recent attempt to emphasize the commonalities and inter-relational dynamics of these evolving identities, see Leo Duprée Sandgren, *Vines Intertwined: A History of Jews and Christians from the Babylonian Exile to the Advent of Islam* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2010).

against ecclesial violence.²⁶ In short, during the medieval period, violence against Jews was most often perpetrated by Christians and supported by the Church.

Surviving from the first centuries of Christianity and medieval Christendom is a genre referred to as the *contra Iudaeos* writings (Christian polemics against Jews). These writings generally include idealized portraits of Christian apologists deconstructing Jewish straw-men. These debates usually appeal to Jewish Scripture as proof-texts to support Christological claims and they often conclude with stories of Jewish conversions to Christianity (baptisms). In this way, some of this literature gives us a window into the hopes of many medieval Christians concerning Jewish conversion to Christianity. It is also possible that some of these texts give us a general picture of talking points of Jewish-Christian debate and perhaps reflect historical memories of such debates.

It is uncertain whether these writings were used to train Christians for debates, catechism, or whether they were written with Jewish audiences in mind. Perhaps it was a combination of all of these.²⁷ Many modern Christians and Jews will recognize right away the problems that such caricatures create for authentic and constructive dialogue, not to mention the overt agenda to deconstruct Judaism.

These debates generally discuss Jesus' virgin birth and/or preexistence. They are generally *not* interested in Jesus' historical teachings, his vocation as a healer/exorcist, his travels, conflicts, relationships, etc. Jesus' historical context, including his Jewishness, is rarely a topic of conversation. However, one such text suggests that, on some occasions, these debates included conversations about the Jesus of history.

In a story preserved in Old Slavonic and Greek²⁸ and claiming to recount late fifth-century events, a Persian king called for a debate among Christian

²⁶) John Rousmaniere, *A Bridge to Dialogue* (New York: A Stimulus Book, 1991), p. 54.

²⁷) For a recent introduction to this literature see Lawrence Lahey, 'Evidence for Jewish Believers in Christian-Jewish Dialogues through the Sixth Century (excluding Justin)', in *Jewish Believers in Jesus*, ed. O. Skarsaune and R. Hvalvik (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2007), pp. 581-639. I am also grateful for Lahey's personal correspondence on this topic.

²⁸) The Greek text can be found in Eduard Bratke, *Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch am Hof der Sasaniden* (TUGAL 4.3; Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1899), pp. 1-45. Bratke simply calls this story 'Das sogenannte Religionsgespräch am Hof der Sasaniden'; Lahey shortens this unwieldy title to 'EP' (from: The Explanation of the Events in Persia).

bishops, Jewish rabbis, and ‘pagans’ represented by a philosopher named ‘Aphroditianus’.²⁹ The Persian king’s name is disputed, but he is called ‘Arrinatus’ in some accounts. In this story, the three sides (Christians, Jews, and pagans) take turns debating. The first three parts of this story purport arguments between the bishops and Aphroditianus while the rabbis moderate. In the fourth part, the pagan philosopher moderates a debate between two rabbis named ‘Jacob and Pharas’ and the bishops. These exchanges are, for the most part, mutually respectful. When the arguments become too heated, the king reminds all parties to conduct themselves appropriately.³⁰

In this context, the bishops appeal to the brief account of the life of Jesus by the first-century Jewish historian Josephus (mentioned above). The bishops are most likely using a Christian version of this passage, one that inserts Christian faith affirmations into the original account. But what is most interesting is *why* the bishops appeal to Josephus at all. The most probable impetus for doing so was that the bishops were looking for a decidedly Jewish source for the life of Jesus outside the New Testament. In the same way that the Jewish prophets of the Old Testament were valued by Christian apologists, Josephus’ Jewishness was useful for their agenda. Josephus, as a Jewish witness to history, provided something that Christian historians could not: a credible voice for a fifth-century Jewish audience.

Notice again, that the topic of the ‘historical Jesus’ emerges in Jewish-Christian dialogue. Even if we were to conclude that this story of the events in Persia is fiction representing Christian pedagogy,³¹ the story itself suggests that the Jesus of history became a live topic among Christians when the topic of Judaism was in view.

As one would expect in such a climate, medieval Jews reacted against such proselytizing and overt acts of hostility by Christians. With their culture and general welfare at stake, rabbis had need for a counter-narrative—one that could combat the narratives presented to Jews by Christians.

²⁹) Andreas Külzer suggest that this story was authored during the reign of Justinian, in the mid-sixth century (*Disputationes graecae contra Judaeos: Untersuchungen zur byzantinischen antijüdischen Dialogliteratur und ihrem Judenbild*; Byzantinisches Archiv. Bd. XVIII [Stuttgart-Leipzig: Teubner, 1999], pp. 142–47).

³⁰) Lahey also discusses parallel accounts of formal debates that included third-party moderators in Persia during this period (‘Evidence’, p. 608).

³¹) I agree with Lahey that this story should not be summarily dismissed as fiction (‘Evidence’, p. 607).

Thus emerged a tract called (*Sefer*) *Toledot Yeshe* ('[The Book of] the History of Jesus'). This tract was first mentioned by two ninth-century French archbishops but it was most likely in circulation long before it came to their attention.³² Cook calls this tract a 'parody' of the life of Jesus found in the Gospels by incorporating elements from earlier Jewish polemics: (1) Mary (Miriam of Bethlehem) was raped by Joseph Pandera. (2) Jesus fled to Galilee in shame but later returned to Judea. (3) Jesus managed to write down the divine name engraved upon the foundation stone of the Jerusalem temple. (4) This allowed him to perform 'magic' and by this charge he was arrested. (5) Jesus' body was stolen by his disciples to purport his resurrection.

There can be no doubt that this counter-narrative was constructed of polemic and further propels historical anachronisms and inconsistencies. However, and of special interest to this essay, there can also be no doubt that it was an attempt to reframe the discussion of the 'Jesus of history' and that Jewish-Christian relations was the motive for doing so.

At this point in my survey, I face two dangers: First, if I move forward too quickly, I risk understating centuries of bloody persecution. Forgetting this history has had dire consequences for Jewish-Christian relations and for the telling of our histories together. The second risk I face is skipping over exceptional relationships between Jews and Christians like that of Rabbi Ephraim of Bonn and Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux.³³ Authentic dialogue is not helped by monochrome portraits of heroes and villains in history.³⁴ For the sake of space and focus I will leave much unsaid, but regrettably so.

Martin Luther and Contemporaries

Without fail, when I lecture on Martin Luther (1483–1546) to undergraduates or church groups, there is a common refrain of horror and embarrassment. The complete ignorance of Luther's anti-Judaism among Christians

³²) Cook, *Modern Jews*, p. 16.

³³) Shlomo Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders: The Hebrew Chronicles of the First and Second Crusades* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), pp. 121–22; Fredriksen, *Augustine and the Jews*, p. xi.

³⁴) On this point, see my 'Jesus and Jewish Leadership', in *Jesus among Friends and Enemies* (ed. L.W. Hurtado and C. Keith; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), forthcoming.

(even Lutherans) causes a jaw-dropping experience for most. When his exhortations to burn Jewish holy books and synagogues, to disallow rabbis from teaching on pain of death, and to round Jews up for forced labor is brought to light, most Christians are shocked. When Luther's words are juxtaposed with the events of *Kristallnacht* (10 November 1938 – in celebration of Luther's birthday), most Christians are dumbfounded and sickened.³⁵ Most readily see the connection between Luther's venom and historical events of a largely Lutheran Germany culminating in the Holocaust/Shoah.³⁶ Luther's relationship with Judaism, of course, is well-trod ground for academics. As is well known, earlier in his life (1523), Luther wrote:

When we are inclined to boast of our position, we should remember that we are but Gentiles, while the Jews are of the lineage of Christ. We are aliens and in-laws; they are blood relatives, cousins, and brothers of our Lord. Therefore, if one is to boast of flesh and blood the Jews are actually nearer to Christ than we are... If we really want to help them, we must be guided in our dealings with them not by papal law but by the law of Christian love.³⁷

Here the 'early' Luther uses this essay to condemn the abuse of Jews by the 'papists' and offer advice for proselytizing (as opposed to forced baptism). He even goes so far as to call the Jews the first elect of God with the particular privileges associated with that status. While Luther intends to move Christianity away from religious persecution, I would argue that we witness here the seeds of Luther's eventual venom. He believed that earnest Christian kindness and doctrine would bring about the conversion of many Jews. However, Luther never saw his hope realized. Like many Christians before and after him, Luther's desire to show respect and kindness was

³⁵ See Luther's *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543); on Luther's antisemitic legacy see Robert Michael, *Holy Hatred: Christianity, Antisemitism, and the Holocaust* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 105–154.

³⁶ On the relationship between Nazism and the so-called 'German Christians' see the magnificent work by Susannah Heschel, *The Aryan Jesus* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Heschel (p. 7) translates this summary statement by Wolf Meyer-Erlach: 'In the Nazi treatment of the Jews and its ideological stance, Luther's intentions, after centuries, are being fulfilled' (*Juden, Mönche und Luther* [Weimar: Deutsche Christen, 1937], p. 60). See also the treatment of this topic in Gerd Theissen, 'Jesus within Judaism', in *Sounding in the Religion of Jesus* (ed. B. Chilton, A. Le Donne and J. Neusner; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), forthcoming.

³⁷ Martin Luther, 'That Jesus Christ was Born a Jew', trans. W.I. Brandt, in *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1962), pp. 201, 229.

linked with his desire to proselytize. Later in life, when this ulterior motive proved unfulfilled, his superficial respect and kindness soured. Christians have a long history of failing to realize that motives to proselytize are most offensive to Jewish sensibilities; Luther is the parade example.

What often goes unnoticed here is that this early essay is the nearest Luther comes to showing an interest in the Jesus of history. Much like Augustine, Luther finds in the discussion of Jesus' Jewishness an occasion to become an advocate for Jews. It seems, however, that both his interest in Jesus' Jewishness and his sympathy for Judaism disappear in his later works. As we will see shortly, this shift sets the stage for the so-called 'No Quest' years of Jesus research. Of course, Luther was a product of his context in this respect. One could point to numerous parallel episodes of anti-Judaism. I will highlight only one.

In sixteenth-century Poland, a group of Shabbateans led by Jacob Frank were excommunicated by the Polish rabbinate. Out of spite, the 'Frankists' complained to multiple Catholic bishops that they were being persecuted because they had 'confessed the Trinity'. Knowing that the Catholic hostility against Jews was easily stirred, the Frankists provoked the Church toward a predictable end. The result was a command by the bishop to burn all copies of the Talmud in the bishopric of Podolias. As a show of solidarity, the Frankists agreed to be baptized.³⁸

Rabbi Jacob Emden (1697–1776) was called upon for advice. Optimistic that Polish clergy would be reasonable, Emden advised a direct appeal to them for help. Emden believed that the religion founded by Jesus and Paul was a moral institution at its roots. Moreover, Emden suggested that the local Catholic community might be willing to dialogue. After all, the Frankists were thought to be 'sexual deviants' (they had incorporated sexually ecstatic rituals into their worship), and thus could not possibly be good Catholics.

Rabbi Emden used this occasion to offer his interpretation of Christian beginnings. In his estimation, both Jesus and Paul were well within the bounds of Halakha, establishing a religion for Gentiles based on the

³⁸) This segment is indebted to Harvey Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1985), esp. pp. 13–23. Falk's still useful work had an unfortunate deficiency of timing. Had the Dead Sea Scrolls been more available in 1985, Falk's work might have avoided several debilitating pitfalls. However, his treatment of Emden and the Shabbateans is valuable.

Noahide commandments.³⁹ Emden navigates several New Testament passages arguing that Jesus and Paul sought to uphold the Torah for Jews and observed it fully. Emden suggested that their Gentile followers found the yoke too burdensome and eventually departed from the Noahide commandments. Emden's short letter should be seen as a forerunner to modern Jewish-Christian dialogue and historical-Jesus research. At about the time Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729–1781) was experiencing a crisis of Christian faith because historical truth could never provide certainty about Jesus, Jacob Emden's optimistic reconstruction of a Jewish Jesus provides a fascinating contrast. Every Jesus historian is familiar with Lessing's short essay; very few are familiar with Emden's. Again, we see Jewish-Christian relations provide the parameters of a historical reconstruction of Jesus.

To and Through the Enlightenment⁴⁰

As mentioned above, most Quest surveys begin with the philosophical frameworks of the Enlightenment, particularly with Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768). Reimarus remains an epochal figure for historical-Jesus research, but I see little reason to call him the 'father' of the discipline as most do. When the Talmud, Augustine, Luther, Emden, *et al.* are taken seriously, we already see the seeds of historical-Jesus research in Jewish-Christian polemic, apology, and dialogue. Unless this half of the story is told first, the impact of the Enlightenment is misunderstood. When 'Quest' surveys begin with the Enlightenment, historical-Jesus research is described in terms of skepticism, ecclesial pressure, and the eventual victory of honest intellectual secularism. I contend that this is only half the story and thus ultimately misleading.

Reimarus's anti-Judaism is well known, but what is acknowledged very little is the opposite stance of Lessing who published the 'Fragments' of Reimarus. Before publishing what Schweitzer called the 'master-stroke' of Reimarus's genius, Lessing agonized over this decision. Worried about the impact that Reimarus's portrait might have, Lessing sought

³⁹) Falk, *Jesus the Pharisee*, pp. 13–15.

⁴⁰) So not to duplicate previous studies, I will not recount the 'liberal lives of Jesus' movement in this section. To fill out this portrait, see Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 127–61.

the advice of his great friend, the most influential Jewish thinker of the day, Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786).⁴¹ Part and parcel with his great respect for Mendelssohn, Lessing was opposed to all forms of anti-Judaism. Lessing debated publicly and published against fellow Christian (Lutheran theologian) Johann Melchior Goeze on the topic.⁴²

It became clear in these debates that the impetus of Lessing's questions about revelation and reason stemmed from his comparison of the 'revealed religions' of Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Goeze eventually appealed to the Duke of Brunswick about his unorthodox opponent and Lessing lost his academic freedom concerning matters of theology in 1778. Lessing, whom many consider the man who provided the impetus to launch the so-called 'First Quest' in 1774, discontinued his theological publications in 1778. Having been stifled in this way, Lessing found an outlet for his theological leanings by writing the play *Nathan der Weise* (subsequently, *Nathan the Wise*) in 1779. Lessing's 'Nathan' was modeled after his friend Mendelssohn and many consider the play to be a plea for religious tolerance. It is worth asking whether Lessing might have published the 'Fragments' during this period because he hoped to find in Jesus a way past the differences between Christians, Muslims, and Jews.⁴³ I am inclined to think that Lessing's challenge to traditional understandings of Jesus was (at least in part) motivated by his interest in inter-faith dialogue.

There can be no doubt that Reimarus's portrait of Jesus and Lessing's theological program marked a momentous shift in the history of research.⁴⁴ However, I do not consider either the 'father' of historical-Jesus research. Both of these children of the Enlightenment are preceded by Benedict (Baruch) Spinoza (1632–1677).

⁴¹ See H.B. Nisbet, *Lessing: Eine Biographie* (München: Beck, 2008), p. 708. For a general account of this friendship see V. Forester, *Lessing und Moses Mendelssohn: Geschichte einer Freundschaft* (Darmstadt: Schneider, 2010).

⁴² See description in Arno Schilson, 'Lessing and Theology', in *A Companion to the Works of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing* (ed. B. Fischer and T.C. Fox; Rochester: Camden House, 2005), pp. 157–84 (170–74).

⁴³ I am grateful to Gerd Theissen for suggesting that this question might be an important one.

⁴⁴ As hundreds of other works have discussed Reimarus's portrait of Jesus, I will not repeat it here. For a recent and succinct introduction to Reimarus's Jesus, see J.D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making, Vol. 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 29–32.

Although underappreciated in biblical studies, Spinoza represents a paradigm shift in hermeneutics. Not only does he plant the seeds of modern historical-Jesus research, but his relationship with Judaism is a window into the perception of Jewish excommunication (*herem*) at that time. Years after his parting with the ‘Nation of Israel’, he began work on a book he would publish anonymously in 1670. In his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Spinoza intended to combat the abuse of Scripture by the Catholic Church. Within this program, he argued that the Bible should be divided into two genres: revelation and history. ‘Revelation’ was filtered through the temperaments, dispositions and beliefs of the prophets, while history has much more of a plain sense. According to Spinoza, history could be studied objectively and without prejudice. The notable caveat to this latter category was the supernatural. In Spinoza’s words:

We have now more than sufficiently proved our point, that God adapted revelations to the understanding and opinions of the prophets (2:125)... We can come to no different conclusion with respect to the reasonings of Christ, by which He convicted the Pharisees of pride and ignorance, and exhorted His disciples to lead the true life. He adapted them to each man’s opinions and principles (2.133–34).

In a similar vein, Spinoza held that Christ did not himself believe in angels and demons, but spoke of these in order to be intelligible to his ancient audience (2.135–37). Concerning the Gospels (which he considered history), he wrote:

[T]he narratives generally contain miracles—that is, as we have shown in the last chapter, relations of extraordinary natural occurrences adapted to the opinions and judgment of the historians who recorded them (7.12).

So, in Spinoza’s view, the Gospels were processed through at least two filters: the human minds of the disciples as they witnessed Jesus and the human minds of the evangelists as they recounted Jesus. I have argued elsewhere that we see here the very birth of the modern historical critical method.⁴⁵ If so, it is noteworthy that Spinoza must do so in safe distance

⁴⁵) See Le Donne, *Historiographical Jesus*, pp. 18–22.

from both Judaism and Christianity; yet he remains conversant with both religions occupying something of a liminal ground between the two.

Spinoza's legacy is often (and correctly) described in secular terms. There is much in his program that prefigures the naturalist Bible offered by Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826)⁴⁶ and skepticism of the supernatural by Lessing. Therefore I would argue that Spinoza provides a bridge between medieval Jewish-Christian debate and the Enlightenment's belief in a closed universe. Standing at this threshold, his description of an 'enlightened' Jesus (however anachronistic) marks the emergence of modern historical-Jesus research.⁴⁷ But Spinoza was so far ahead of his time, we must say that he 'prefigures' modern research.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Christian European scholars began to revisit Jewish literature from Ancient Judaism and the Second Temple period. Thus there was a need for experts in Semitic languages and an occasion to enlist the help of Jewish scholarship.⁴⁸ Shortly after the so-called 'First [Old] Quest' began, this Jewish-Christian interaction spurred publications from Jewish scholars on the topic of Christian origins.⁴⁹ Abraham Geiger (1810–74), best known for his impact on Reform Judaism, emerged as a Jewish theologian/historian of the Second Temple period.⁵⁰ Geiger had a keen interest in both the historical Jesus and modern tensions between Jews and Christians in Europe. Much like Emden, Geiger argued that Jesus was a Pharisee who emphasized Jewish liberty over and against the draconian stances of the temple-based Sadducees. Eventually, argued Geiger, Jesus' following was overrun by Sadducees and Gentiles who departed from Jesus' original aims. Susannah Heschel writes:

Geiger's counterhistory constituted a transvaluation of Christian arguments against Judaism and functioned as a passionate defense of Judaism.

⁴⁶) The so-called *Jefferson Bible* was first published in 1895 (posthumously) by Jefferson's grandson, although earlier drafts circulated during his lifetime.

⁴⁷) Via personal correspondence, Gerd Theissen has suggested that Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) should be mentioned alongside Spinoza as a parallel voice in early critical study.

⁴⁸) Cook, *Modern Jews*, p. 17.

⁴⁹) E.g. Abraham Geiger, *Das Judentum und seine Geschichte* (Breslau: Schletter, 1864); Heinrich Graetz, *Sinai et Golgotha* (Paris: Michael Lévy frères, 1867).

⁵⁰) A fuller discussion of Jewish scholarship on Jesus would have to include the following: Isaac of Troki (c.1533–1594), Leon of Modena (1571–1648), Joseph Klausner (1874–1958), C.G. Montefiore (1858–1938), and Robert Eisler (1882–1949). For a brief survey

His scholarship was not an effort to Christianize Judaism; it was an effort to Judaize Christianity. It is not surprising that Christian reactions were marked by outrage.⁵¹

Heschel compellingly argues that Geiger's interest in Jesus' Jewishness stemmed from his interest in Jewish-Christian relations, with the specific aim to undermine the traditional Christian narratives of Western Europe. In this way, we might see a parallel to Lessing's agenda from the Jewish side. However, his agenda to 'Judaize Christianity' was met with hostility by both Christians and Jews.

We now find ourselves firmly within the modern period of Western Europe. One of the most influential effects of the Enlightenment on this period was the (pseudo)science of race.⁵² Joseph Arthur Comte de Gobineau (1816–1882) was a French aristocrat and amateur scientist who promised to accurately predict the characteristics of people groups by measuring the shape and size of their skulls.⁵³ His pseudoscientific projections and their popular acceptance demonstrate the marriage of two social currents in Europe: (1) Scientific optimism—children of the Enlightenment were anxious to believe that scientific rigor was the silver bullet for social problems. (2) Anti-Judaism—the common European caricatures of Jews were so firmly entrenched that the emerging field of racial science simply reinforced them. The result of this marriage was scientifically sanctioned anti-semitism, one of the key platforms of National Socialism in Germany.

French Catholic scholar, Ernest Renan (1823–1892), was keenly interested in these ideas about race. In fact, Gobineau accused Renan of

see G. Theissen and A. Merz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), pp. 8–10. Attention to D.F. Strauss's influence on Leopold Zunz is also warranted; cf. Luitpold Wallach, *Liberty and Letters: The Thoughts of Leopold Zunz* (London: Leo Baeck Institute, 1959), p. 65.

⁵¹) Heschel, *Abraham Geiger*, p. 4.

⁵²) There is a prominent thread in the field of ethnic studies that argues that the very idea of race is an invention of the Enlightenment, e.g. Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States* (New York: Routledge, 1986); this field is heavily influenced by Stuart Hall (e.g. 'Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms', *Media, Culture and Society* 2 [1980]: 57–72). However, one does not need to be convinced of this thesis to acknowledge that the *science of race* was an Enlightenment construct.

⁵³) Rousmaniere, *Bridge to Dialogue*, pp. 108–109.

plagiarizing his research.⁵⁴ Renan believed that racial identity was crucial to understanding collective identities.⁵⁵ This agenda would eventually have dire consequences for his portrait of Jesus. Renan would eventually become an important figure in what previous studies have called the ‘First [Old] Quest’. While Renan did not deny that Jesus was from Jewish lineage, he claimed that Jesus was able to cleanse himself of Judaism⁵⁶ and eventually became, not a Jew, but rather the ‘destroyer of Judaism’.⁵⁷ This line of thought became a guiding hermeneutic for the ‘Institute for the study of Jewish influence on the life of the German churches and the removal of this influence’ as antisemitism reached a tipping point in Nazi Germany.⁵⁸

Students of Jewish-Christian relations know well that theological anti-Judaism runs in conjoining parallel to secular antisemitism in this context. Indeed, many argue that making a significant distinction between these two threads is dangerous. In contrast, very few historical-Jesus scholars acknowledge the influence of antisemitism on the so-called ‘No Quest’ years in German scholarship.⁵⁹

Martin Kähler (1835–1912) appealed to Martin Luther’s disinterest in the Jesus of history in order to undermine biographies of Jesus. Instead

⁵⁴) Heschel, *Aryan Jesus*, p. 37.

⁵⁵) To be fair, Renan saw well the consequences of using racial identity to impose nationhood at the expense of external provincial identities. In an essay published in 1882, Renan describes what he understands as a theoretical error: ‘The Germanic family, according to the theory I am expounding here [of Renan’s opponents], has the right to reassemble the scattered limbs of the Germanic order... The right of the Germanic order over such-and-such a province is stronger than the right of the inhabitants of that province over themselves.’ Renan thus sees the problems that the elevation of racial identity creates and argues that if this theory is taken too far, it might ‘destroy European civilization’ (Ernest Renan, ‘What is a Nation?’ in *The Collective Memory Reader*, eds. J. Olick, V. Vinitzky-Seroussi and D. Levy [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011], pp. 80–83, here 81).

⁵⁶) Cf. Heschel, *Aryan Jesus*, p. 32.

⁵⁷) Ernest Renan, *The Life of Jesus* (trans. C.E. Wilbour; London: Trübner & Co., Paternoster Row, 1864), p. 168.

⁵⁸) It might be worth noting here that Renan’s idea was also echoed by Jewish historian Joseph Klausner (Theissen, ‘Jesus within Judaism’, forthcoming).

⁵⁹) Indeed, perhaps we should follow Allison’s suggestion that we call this period in German Jesus research the ‘no biography’ years (*Resurrecting Jesus*, p. 5; cf. Bermejo Rubio, ‘Fiction’, p. 244). I will further qualify this problematic moniker below.

Kähler moves the discussion toward a ‘supra-historical Savior’.⁶⁰ By supra-historical, he meant that Christ’s real significance transcends his historical context, making him a universal reality connected with every historical context. Kähler’s Christ was thus untethered from his first-century context. Whether intended or not, Jesus’ connection to Judaism was made altogether incidental in a climate where the topic of Judaism was most controversial.

We have now entered what previous surveys have (perhaps misleadingly) called the ‘No Quest’ years. This brings us to one of the brightest stars on the stage of Jesus research, Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976). There might be no theologian so influential and at the same time so caricatured. It has become commonplace to reduce Bultmann to a selection of sound-bites. His most famous statement has made him the poster-child for the so-called No Quests years:

I do indeed think that we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus, since the early Christian sources show no interest in either, are moreover fragmentary and often legendary; and other sources about Jesus do not exist.⁶¹

The extent to which this statement is misconstrued is unfortunate. When read in context, Bultmann is chafing against the attempts to conjecture Jesus’ personality, which he later contrasts with a person’s works. He argues that the latter is available for historical reconstruction while the former is not.

Moreover, with this statement, Bultmann is simply offering delimitation for a book he has written on the topic of the historical Jesus.⁶² The truth is that Bultmann is a much more complicated thinker and influence than is normally credited. For my present interests, it is noteworthy that Bultmann was a critic of the Nazi Party in a time when this was hazardous. Bultmann’s emphasis on Jesus’ Jewishness was contrary to

⁶⁰) Martin Kähler, ‘Against the Life-of-Jesus Movement’, in *The Historical Jesus in Recent Research: Sources for Biblical Research and Theological Study*, Vol. 10 (ed. S. McKnight and J.D.G. Dunn; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2005), pp. 67–86; Kähler credits Schweitzer for this observation of Luther (pp. 67–68).

⁶¹) R. Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word* (New York: Scribner’s, 1934 [1926]), p. 8.

⁶²) My thanks to John Barclay for this insight.

the tendencies of that time. Moreover, Bultmann was outspoken against all forms of antisemitism and against the specific program of ‘dejudaization’.⁶³

However, it is of crucial importance to recognize that Bultmann’s Christ of existential encounter all but eclipsed his portrait of Jesus as a Jew. For Bultmann, the historical Jesus was an important precursor to Christian theology. But it cannot be denied that the supra-historical Jesus was the *telos* of his program. Whether or not the supra-historical Jesus was propelled forward with good intentions, this program diminished Jesus’ historical value in a context that wielded the name of Christ as a bludgeon against Judaism. As seen with Renan above, Bultmann’s statements against political aggression should not go unnoticed. But both Renan and Bultmann (perhaps, to an extent, unwittingly) contributed to a series of historiographical missteps that made the Jewishness of Jesus irrelevant.

Only recently have Jews and Christians been able to begin to make sense of the incomprehensible events of World War II Europe. As the field of biblical studies catches up with other fields in the humanities, it will be necessary to reassess the so-called No Quest years in Germany more thoroughly. I suggest that we are obligated to take seriously the social/political climate of these few years—and not only these, but the decades framing these years.

Famously, Bultmann’s pupil Ernst Käsemann (1906–1998) publicly challenged the place (or lack thereof) that the historical Jesus played in Bultmann’s program.⁶⁴ As Käsemann’s launch of the so-called ‘New Quest’ is discussed extensively elsewhere, I will leave much unsaid here. However, I should point out that the paradigm of No Quest (or ‘no biography’) and New Quest is perhaps only helpful when thinking about the phases of German scholarship. While Bultmann’s program was eventually global in impact, Jesus studies did not come to a halt globally. It should also be pointed out that Käsemann’s suggested way forward for historical-Jesus research served to emphasize that in Jesus which was ‘dissimilar’ to both Judaism and Christianity. However, Käsemann’s program seemed to push Jesus closer to Christianity and further away from Judaism.⁶⁵

⁶³ Cf. also Konrad Hammann, *Rudolf Bultmann: Eine Biographie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), pp. 255–74.

⁶⁴ Ernst Käsemann, ‘Das Problem des historischen Jesus’, *ZThK* 51 (1954): 125–53.

⁶⁵ Dagmar Winter, ‘The Dissimilar Jesus: Anti-Semitism, Hero-Worship and Protestantism’, in *Soundings in the Religion of Jesus* (eds. Bruce Chilton, Anthony Le Donne and Jacob Neusner; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2012), forthcoming.

There are several currents that characterize the past few decades of Jesus research (what has been commonly called the ‘Third Quest’).⁶⁶ One might point to the standardization of ‘authenticity criteria,’⁶⁷ or the reconsideration of the relationship between Jesus and imperial politics.⁶⁸ But by all accounts, Jesus’ relationship to the varied particularities of Second Temple Judaism has been the dominant impetus of Jesus research since the mid-1970s. The nuance and sophistication of this discussion has proved enormously beneficial for historical-Jesus research.⁶⁹ Moreover, it has invited prominent voices from both Jewish and Christian perspectives. As I round out this essay, I will only quote this description by James Dunn:

In the closing decades of the twentieth century the most helpful advance in life of Jesus research was the recognition that the quest must primarily have in view *Jesus the Jew* and a clearer and firmer grasp of the consequences. What distinguishes this ‘third quest of the historical Jesus’ is

⁶⁶) Theissen and Merz, *Comprehensive Guide*, pp. 6–11. As suggested already, I am persuaded that we must move away from the tripartite division of most Quest surveys. For lack of better terminology, ‘Third Quest’ is used here to provide continuity with the block quotation of Dunn in what follows.

⁶⁷) For the development of the traditional criteria see A. Le Donne, ‘The Rise of the Quest for an Authentic Jesus: An Introduction to the Crumbling Foundations of Jesus Studies’, in *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity: The 2012 Lincoln Christian University Conference* (New York: Continuum, 2012), forthcoming.

⁶⁸) E.g. Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003); William Herzog II, *Jesus, Justice and the Reign of God: A Ministry of Liberation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999); John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2009).

⁶⁹) However, see e.g. Donald Hagner, *The Jewish Reclamation of Jesus: Analysis and Critique of the Modern Jewish Study of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), pp. 23–39; Michael J. Cook, ‘How Credible is Jewish Scholarship on Jesus?’ in *The Jewish Jesus: Revelation, Reflect, Reclamation* (ed. Zev Garber; West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2011), pp. 251–70. Hagner argues that Jewish scholarship has tended to emphasize Jesus’ Jewishness at the expense of the Gospel’s witness concerning Jesus and his relationship to Christianity in general. However, within particular Gospel episodes that betray ancient Jewish culture, Jewish scholarship has tended to ascribe more historical reliability (Hagner, *Reclamation*, p. 67). Cook has recently suggested that Jewish scholarship has tended to accept the historicity of the Gospels, bordering on uncritical appraisal. He argues that much of Jewish scholarship has tended toward ignorance of Christian scholarship by Gospel specialists.

the conviction that any attempt to build up a historical picture of Jesus of Nazareth should and must begin from the fact that he was a first-century Jew operating in a first-century milieu... What more natural, one might think, what more inevitable than to pursue a quest of the historical Jesus the Jew?⁷⁰

Dunn goes on to demonstrate that while such a premise seems ‘natural’ and ‘inevitable’ to contemporary historians, the extent to which previous eras were either disinterested or adversarial to this premise is remarkable.⁷¹ What this survey has attempted to show is that amidst this vast sea of indifference and hostility to Jesus’ Jewishness, there have been remarkable exceptions to this rule. Moreover, it seems that the common thread running throughout these exceptions is that they generally occur as Jews and Christians interfaced in polemic, apologetic, and sometimes genuine dialogue.

By tracing this thread, I have suggested that the intellectual heritage of Jesus research begins long before the Enlightenment. I have also suggested that Jewish-Christian relations is a foundational, perhaps *the* foundational, component of this intellectual history. This brief survey only points the way forward to more detailed work beyond the now outmoded, tripartite survey of historical-Jesus research.

⁷⁰) Dunn, *Jesus Remembered*, p. 86.

⁷¹) Dunn writes, ‘Schweitzer’s own account of the quest simply failed to take account of the substantial debate between Jewish and Christian scholarship on the theme of Jesus the Jew’ (*Jesus Remembered*, p. 87; cf. Heschel, *Abraham Geiger*, p. 127).

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