**Critical Notes on the Movie *The God Who Wasn't There* Researched and Compiled by Richard C. Carrier in 2005.**

**(1) If he "had" been on earth he would not be a priest:** an *ei...an* phrase using the imperfect tense is always a present contrafactual (a past contrafactual would call for the aorist). In other words: "So, then, if he were on earth, he would not be a priest..." is the only correct translation. So this is consistent with both interpretations, but present contrafactuals can imply a past-to-present contrafactual, and Doherty's interpretation is still more plausible in context (and I do believe there are some genuine translations on the market that use "had been").

**(2) Did Jesus Order His Enemies Killed in Luke 19:27?** Jesus says Zacchaeus (19:8-10) will be saved because he gives his money to the poor and cheats no one, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." Then:

"As they heard these things, he added and spake a parable...because they supposed that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear. He said therefore, 'A certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called ten servants of his, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, "Trade with this till I come." But his citizens hated him, and sent an embassy after him, saying, "We do not want this man to reign over us."'" (19:11-14)

The servant who did not earn interest on what he was given is cast into darkness at the king's command, at which the "king" (obviously meaning Jesus) says:

"I say unto you, that unto every one that has shall be given; but from him that has not, even that which he has shall be taken away from him. But these mine enemies, that did not want me to reign over them, bring them here, and slay them before me" (19:26-27). The implication is clearly that when he returns Jesus intends to kill those who reject him.

**(3) Gospels "Clearly Derive from Mark":** Some scholars dispute whether John is "clearly" derived from Mark, but many scholars do believe it does derive from Mark indirectly (probably through Luke--as I believe is the case, and offer some reasons why in my chapter on "The Spiritual Body" in the book *The Empty Tomb*). Moreover, all scholars agree John was written later than Mark (even the ancient Christians were agreed about this).

**(4) Jesus Under King Jannaeus (104-78 BC):** b.Talmud, *Sanhedrin* folio 107 face b contains several references to Jesus of Nazareth existing at this time as a student of Rabbi Joshua ben Perahyah (repeated in *Sotah* 43a). Jesus is then more clearly discussed in b.Talmud, *Sanhedrin* folio 43a, but no datable context is given. The tradition of an early Jesus was also known to Epiphanius as a belief held by some early Jewish Christians:

"The priesthood in the holy church is David's throne and kingly seat, for the Lord

joined together and gave to his holy church both the kingly and the high-priestly dignity, transferring to it the never-failing [*mh dialeiponta eis ton aiwna*] throne of David. For David's throne endured in line of succession until the time of Christ himself, rulers from Judah not failing until he came 'to whom the things kept in reserve belonged, and he was the expectation of the gentiles'. With the advent of the Christ the rulers in line of succession from Judah, reigning until the time of the Christ himself, ceased. For the line fell away and stopped from the time when he was born in Bethlehem of Judea under Alexander, who was of priestly and royal race. From Alexander onward this office ceased--from the days of Alexander and Salina, who is also called Alexandra, to the days of Herod the king and Augustus the Roman emperor." (Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29.3)

[This quote appears in his section that discusses the Christian sect called the "Nazoraeans, who confess that Christ Jesus is Son of God, but all of whose customs are in accordance with the Law," i.e. early Jewish Christians--in fact, this would appear to be a remnant of the pre-Pauline sect at Jerusalem, as even Acts attests the original Christians were called Nazareans, and Galatians attests that it was the Jerusalem sect under Peter and James that continued to abide by Jewish law and only Paul came up with the innovation of doing away with that.]

**(5) Jesus Executed by Herod:** Price himself is vague, but the graphics depict him as speaking of Herod the Great. Actually, the Gospel of Peter says "Herod the King" which could mean Herod Antipas who was contemporary of Pilate, even though he was not a king (instead he was a tetrarch--indeed, he was actually deposed by Caligula when he asked for the title of king). Normally "Herod the King" would denote Herod the Great, but the Gospel of Peter still has Pilate in the picture, so this could simply have been a mistake by the Gospel's author (not knowing the correct title for Antipas). The discrepancy Price wanted to convey, I think, was that the Gospel of Peter has Herod execute Jesus rather than Pilate, which indeed is a completely different story than we get in the Gospels, even if this was Antipas and so the same historical period. Nevertheless, it is still possible that the "error" made was in thinking Herod the Great and Pilate were contemporaries, so the graphic is not completely out of order. And such a thought would explain why Herod was the one doing the executing, since the land then was not yet under Roman law, even though Roman procurators (like Pilate) would still have been there attending to Caesar's property and cash.

**(6) "Paul never heard of" the Last Supper:** That is perhaps misleading. Paul has heard of it, and describes it in 1 Cor. 11:23-26, but he says he "received" this story "from the Lord" which he elsewhere says was a revelation (Gal. 1:11-12; Epj. 3:3; Rom. 16:25; 2 Cor. 12:1, 12:7). So this is a somewhat problematic part of the narrative. Nevertheless, one can honestly say Paul never appears to have heard of a historical event of a last supper taking place in Jerusalem with, e.g., Peter and Judas in attendance. Rather, he only appears to have heard of a revealed event. In fact, Paul does not mention Jesus or anyone actually eating or drinking anything--all Jesus does, in Paul's words, is break bread and lift a cup and command that

there be eating and drinking, to symbolize his communal presence among his believers. And the fact that the bread and wine represented his body and blood supports (though does not prove) the thesis that he had no other body or blood on earth. Doherty also notes that the Greek does not exactly say "in the night he was betrayed" (1 Cor. 11:23) but "in the night he was delivered up" which can mean betrayed *or* handed over to the demons of the air to be crucified, so this can still be a reference to the visions of the celestial Christ; and when Jesus here says "until he comes" and not "until he comes *again*," this supports (but does not prove) the view that he had not come to earth yet.

**(7) "Paul never quotes anything Jesus is supposed to have said":** As above, Paul does quote "the Lord" several times (not just in that one case), but, again as noted above, this always appears to be from revelation, not tradition, and what he does quote rarely coincides with what we have in the Gospels, nor does it contain anything distinctive of the supposedly historical discourse of Jesus (for example, Paul never quotes a parable or any statement that refers to anyone by name or definitely contains historical context, etc.) nor any reference to a human tradition by which Paul learned it (e.g. he never says "Peter told me Jesus once said...").

**(8) "Paul never heard of" Jesus before Pilate and "never mentions Pontius Pilate":** One can debate this, but the debate would not look good for the Christian. 1 Timothy 6:13 does say "Christ Jesus, who testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate." But scholars disagree whether 1 Tim. was actually written by Paul. In fact, most scholars conclude it was not, but was written after him--many scholars arguing for a date as late as the dawn of the second century. Furthermore, the phrase "testified the good confession before Pontius Pilate" does not match the Gospels (where Jesus gives no testimony to Pilate at all, much less does he witness the gospel to him). Instead, the phrase can mean that Jesus delivered his revelation during the administration of Pontius Pilate. From the Greek (χριστου ιησου του μαρτυρησαντος επι ποντιου πιλατου την καλην ομολογιαν) the verb *martyreô* is to give evidence or testimony and a *kalên homologia* is a "beautiful agreement," in other words a testament or covenant--and in fact in the preceding verse this is exactly what a convert does "before many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6:12), and the "Apostle and High Priest" of the Christian *homologia* is Jesus (Heb. 3:1), and we are exhorted to keep this agreement (Heb. 4:14, 10:23). Thus, this phrase does not appear to be speaking about any testimony Jesus gave to Pilate, but of the fact that Jesus revealed this covenant to Christians *under* Pilate (*epi* with genitive can mean either "in the time of" or "in the presence of").

**(9) "Paul doesn't believe that Jesus was ever a human being--he's not even aware of the idea":** This depends on what one means by "human being." Paul does call Jesus a "man" (Rom. 5:15; also: Ps.-Paul's 1 Tim. 2:5) and says he "came into being from the seed of David" and "from a woman" (Rom. 1:3 and Gal 4:4), but Paul also says Jesus was "no man" (Gal. 1:1) and that in fact he came into being as a "spirit" (1 Cor. 15:45; also: Ps.-Paul's Heb. 8:2). There are other passages that suggest Paul had in mind a celestial being who either became flesh or took on the

"likeness" of flesh, so whether Paul had "heard" of the idea of Jesus being a human being *in the sense of living on earth* is still debatable, but if you take "human being" to mean merely "incarnated in a body of flesh" in the heavens, then Paul certainly did hear of Jesus being a human being in that obscure sense, which does seem to stretch the meaning of the phrase "human being" a bit much.

**(10) Sanhedrin Holding Court on Passover Eve:** This was definitely illegal and unnecessary. Mishnah, *Sanhedrin* 4.1k says a conviction can only be given a day *after* the trial in capital cases (also 5.5a), and for this reason it specifically says no trial of a capital case can occur on the eve of a Sabbath or a Festival (because court cannot go back in session on such a day). Likewise, 4.1j explicitly says that capital cases can only be tried during the day (in explicit contrast with property cases which must begin during the day but can end at night).

**(11) First Easter in 2400 B.C.:** The date I imagine is approximate, and I think must refer to the dawn of the resurrection cult of Inanna and Tammuz, wherein a resurrection of either or both was celebrated at the Spring Equinox (precisely the same calendar date as Passover and Easter) as an agricultural ritual for the death and resurrection of life in the grain harvest. The word "Easter" itself, of course, is of later European origin, which some scholars theorize relates to a Germanic fertility myth of only a vaguely similar kind.

**The Raglan scoring scene is problematic for a number of reasons. I think perhaps some of the X's and Dings have been misplaced, though the final result remains the same (Jesus does score at least 17 and does appear to win third place). Here the most direct concerns, mixed with some points where a critic might quibble but where the film is correct:**

**(12) Was His Father (Joseph) a King?** This is acceptable, but one might quibble. Joseph was said to be the heir of David, which did entail that he was king by right. Accordingly, Luke 1:32 says the father of Jesus is in fact David and he thus shall inherit the throne. See also Mt. 1:20 (angel calls Joseph a son of David) and Mt. 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30-31, 21:9, 21:15, 22:42, etc. (Jesus is called son of David). Jesus came from the seed of David (John 7:42; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8). So it certainly seems his father was a king in some sense. This deserves its Ding.

**(13) Was Mary a "Royal Virgin"?** She was certainly a virgin, so a Ding is deserved on that point alone. And according to Luke 1:5 and 1:36 Mary was a relative of Elisabeth who was a descendant of Aaron the first High Priest, which connects her tangentially to royal blood (several high priests also were king of Judaea), but she is also betrothed to Joseph, who is the heir of David and so technically an uncrowned king, which makes her a royal virgin by legal connection. The Gospel of James also has Mary the daughter of Joachim (aka Jechoniah) and Saint Anne, and the father's name here is perhaps an allusion to King Joachim of Judah, so Mary is a descendant of David, too.

**(14) Was Joseph a "near relative" of Mary:** Possibly. Per above, both Joseph and Mary are of Davidic descent if Mary's father was not only named but also related to Jechoniah (this king is even mentioned in the genealogy of Jesus in Matthew). And of course, as Jews both are descendants of Jacob and so count as kin. Yet the rank of 17 given in the movie excludes this. The film doesn't put up an X or a Ding for this (so it seems to ignore it), but it does put up a Ding for father as king, since Dundes quickly states both together, even though these are separate points (and arguably Jesus should get a Ding for both). The film then puts up an X for "reared by foster parents in a foreign country" yet I think this should be a Ding: Joseph is not his real father, and Jesus is raised in Egypt. I am not sure where the confusion lies here. It is hard to sort out what should be X'd and Dinged over the actual words of Dundes. The definite X's I think are battle with dragon (though in different contexts and ways Jesus was said to have battled, and defeated, Satan or Death) and marriage (though some scholars argue that the Wedding at Cana was in fact Christ's wedding), but where should the remaining three X's go? I'm not sure.

**(15) Was an Attempt Made on Christ's Life by his Father?** Not literally, but Herod was sitting in his father's throne and thus acts in place of his father in the same way the Pharaoh does in the story of Moses. And since the criterion only says "often by his father" it is not necessary that it be his father to award a Ding here.

**(16) Was Body of Jesus Not Buried?** I think the act of burial is not meant, but the presence of an interred corpse: i.e. Jesus scores here because his tomb is empty. This criterion in other words includes the concept of the hero as resurrected or ascended and hence living as a god in heaven. One could also note that Mark and Luke clearly depict the burial as incomplete (anointing never completed) and thus not formally a burial before he vanishes. Nevertheless, the earliest tradition (per Paul) is that he was buried (and then rose), so the Ding here is awarded for the tomb being empty and hence the body not *remaining* buried, not for there never being any burial act itself

**That's it. The only thing I did not double check was the list of "traits" of prior savior figures, since none were assigned to any particular gods nor was it mentioned when the traits were attested in our sources. Several of those might be debatable as reverse influence (Christianity affecting Paganism), but again the debate does not come out in anyone's definite favor, so the list is not outright false. However, if you have citations for each of them, I will gladly double check them all.**

* Unrelated to the Jesus question: in the extras, there is an interview with me in which I cite a maternal mortality rate that may be too high for the context described. I have a fuller discussion of the evidence and ensuing argument at http://richardcarrier.blogspot.com/2007/11/god-still-kills-mommy.html