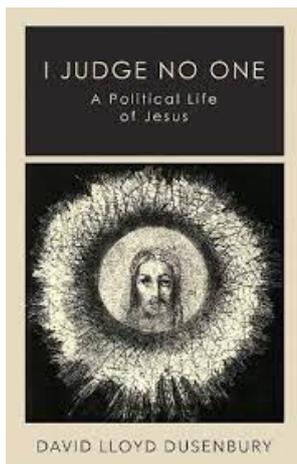


## David Lloyd Dusenbury: I judge no one



David Lloyd Dusenbury is a philosopher and historian of ideas. This book sets Jesus within the context of religious, philosophical and political thinking of his time, seeing similarities and differences with other contemporary voices. It is an attractive book, helpfully split into digestible sections making a complex topic more manageable.

Although he gives a thorough account of the intellectual environment Jesus inhabited, it is some of Dusenbury's asides which are striking: in particular, his comment that Galilee is in the tetrarchy of Herod and thus outside the direct authority of Roman Judea (like being a modern Welshman, perhaps?). So, in John's Gospel, the Greek word '*ioudaion*' ought to be translated as 'the Judaeans' (those down there), not 'the Jews' (people like us). Jesus spent most of his time in the north with Galileans and Herodians, not those in Judaea, more obviously influenced by Romans and Temple cultures. How different the history of the Jews might have been if the translations had been more accurate!

Dusenbury considers whether the key to Jesus' teaching might be the way he splits things between the things of God and the things of the world. Money, power and hypocrisy have no place in a world of love and self-sacrifice. Worldly things are temptations to be resisted not only in the Desert, but throughout his ministry ('Get behind me, Satan') and at the end ('Father, forgive').

This teaching confuses both the Roman and Judean authorities, both of which are essentially Temple-States. The threat to the 'majesty' of Rome, with its semi-divine Caesars was not too dissimilar to the Jewish concept of blasphemy. Both authorities set the legal alongside the theological in the trial scenes. And Jesus treats them both the same: he doesn't resist them or argue against them, he absents himself from the process and says nothing. His is a 'realpolitik' which accepts the brutal facts as he finds them and he is astute enough to know when he is out of the game.

For Dusenbury, Jesus is not a temporal judge but a commentator on the things of the heart. The 'world', as much present in the Temple as it is in Rome and in the family of Herod is to be challenged. Forgiveness and love are the great healers and speak most powerfully of the things of God.