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On Richard Carrier's Doubts

A Response to Richard Carrier's On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt

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Abstract

The Jesus Myth theory is the view that the person known as Jesus of Nazareth had no historical existence. Throughout the centuries this view has had a few but notable adherents such as Bruno Bauer, Arthur Drews, G.A. Wells, and Robert M. Price. Recently, Richard Carrier's work *On the Historicity of Jesus* (Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014) has attempted to reexamine the question in a rigorous academic fashion. According to Carrier, within the earliest days of Christianity, Jesus was not understood as a historic-human figure, but rather as a celestial-angelic being, akin to Gabriel in Islam or to Moroni in Mormonism, and only came to be understood as a historical person later. While Carrier's hypothesis is problematic and unpersuasive, there are several key points related to his work that this article specifically challenges and critiques.

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Keywords

historical Jesus – Jesus Myth theory – Christ Myth theory – historicity of Jesus – Jesus' existence – Christian origins

The Quest for the Mythical Jesus

In recent years, a growing number of laypeople have developed an interest into the question of whether or not Jesus of Nazareth existed as a historical person.[1] In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Constantin-François Volney, Charles François Dupuis, and Bruno Bauer all advocated for the theory that Jesus did not exist as a historical person. While their arguments failed to convince the academy, their questions have persisted and inspired a new movement within North America, which also argues that Jesus did not exist.[2] Originally known as the 'Christ Myth theory,' this school of thought has more recently adopted the moniker 'Jesus Myth theory' or 'mythicism'. Those who support this theory call themselves 'mythicists' and label those who maintain the view that Jesus did exist as a historical human person as 'historicists'.

1 For a brief popular history of the Jesus Myth theory up until the present, see Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (New York: HarperOne, 2012), pp. 14–30. For an in-depth review of mythicism up until Arthur Drews, see Shirley Jackson Case, 'The Historicity of Jesus: An Estimate of a Negative Argument', *The American Journal of Theology* 15.1 (1911), pp. 20–42; Maurice Goguel, 'Recent French Discussion of the Historical Existence of Jesus Christ', *Harvard Theological Review* 19.2 (1926), pp. 115–142; Walter P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century: 1900–1950* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), pp. 45–71; B.A. Gerrish, *The Old Protestantism and the New: Essays on Reformation Heritage* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), pp. 230–247. For the history of mythicism within nineteenth-century Germany, see Roland Boer, 'The German Pestilence: Re-assessing Feuerbach, Strauss and Bauer', in Thomas L. Thompson and Thomas S. Verenna (eds.), *Is this Not the Carpenter?: The Question of the Historicity of the Figure of Jesus* (London: Routledge, 2014), pp. 33–56; Albert Schweitzer, in John Bodwen (ed.), *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: First Complete Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), pp. 391–436. For a survey of the 'Dutch Radical' school of thought and their version of the Jesus Myth theory, see Hermann Detering, 'The Dutch Radical Approach to the Pauline Epistles', *Journal of Higher Criticism* 3.2 (1996), pp. 163–193.

2 See Constantin François de Chassebœuf, *Les Ruines, ou Méditations sur les révolutions des empires* (Paris: Desenne, 1791); Charles François Dupuis, *Origine de tous les Cultes, ou la Réligion Universelle* (Paris: Chasseriau, 1794); Bruno Bauer, *Kritik der Evangelien und Geschichte ihres Ursprungs* (4 vols.; Berlin: Hempel, 1850–1851).

Much like the various reconstructions of the historical Jesus, it must be stressed that there is no single Jesus Myth theory. As Bart D. Ehrman rightly emphasizes, 'Some of them rival *The Da Vinci Code* in their passion for conspiracy and the shallowness of their historical knowledge, not just of the New Testament and early Christianity, but of ancient religions generally and, even more broadly, the ancient world.'[3] In the tradition of Volney and Dupuis, authors such as D.M. Murdock (aka Acharya S.) and Tom Harpur hypothesize that the fictional life of Jesus was completely influenced by Greco-Roman mystery cults and mythological figures such as Horus, Osiris, Hercules, Attis, and Mithras.[4] Similarly, Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy argue that the Jesus story was a Jewish version of the so-called perennial myth of the dying and resurrecting 'godman'.[5] Joseph Atwill promotes the idea of a conspiracy theory in which Jesus was a literary invention created by the Flavians with the aid of Josephus, designed to pacify the Jewish population so as to prevent further rebellion after the siege of Jerusalem.[6] These are but a sampling of the various theories that have been promoted. Though different, what unites these Jesus Myth theories is the view that Jesus, as a historical person within human history, did not exist.

Given the fringe status of these theories, the vast majority have remained unnoticed and unaddressed within scholarly circles. In the rare instances where these theories have been addressed, they are predominantly countered by self-confessed (and typically evangelical) Christian apologists and scholars.[7]

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3 Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?*, p. 3.

4 See Acharya S., *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold* (Kempton: Adventures Unlimited Press, 1999); Tom Harpur, *The Pagan Christ: Recovering the Lost Light* (Toronto: Thomas Allen Publishers, 2004).

5 See Timothy Freke and Peter Gandy, *The Jesus Mysteries: Was the 'Original Jesus' a Pagan God?* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001).

6 See Joseph Atwill, *Caesar's Messiah: The Roman Conspiracy to Invent Jesus* (Self Published: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011).

7 For examples, see Frederick C. Conybeare, *The Historical Christ* (London: Watts, 1914); Herbert G. Wood, *Did Christ Really Live?* (London: SCM, 1938); Gary R. Habermas, *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ* (Joplin: College Press, 1996); Stanley E. Porter and Stephen J. Bedard, *Unmasking the Pagan Christ: An Evangelical Response to the Cosmic Christ Idea* (Toronto: Clements Publishing, 2006); Paul Rhodes Eddy and Gregory A. Boyd, *The Jesus Legend: A Case for the Historical Reliability of the Synoptic Jesus Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007); Gregory A. Body and Paul Rhodes Eddy, *Lord or Legend?: Wrestling with the Jesus Dilemma* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007); James Patrick Holding, *Shattering the Christ Myth: Did Jesus Not Exist?* (Salem: Xulon Press, 2008); Gregory Monette, *The Wrong Jesus: Fact, Belief, Legend, Truth… Making Sense of What You've Heard* (Carol Stream: NavPress,

Some of the more popular versions of the Jesus Myth theory have been directly challenged by New Testament scholars such as Maurice Goguel, Shirley Jackson Case, James D.G. Dunn, Morton Smith, R.T. France, Robert E. Van Voorst, Susan M. Elliot, and most recently, Maurice Casey, Bart D. Ehrman, James F. McGrath, Candida Moss, and Joel Baden.[8]

Despite the fact that most professional academics reject mythicism, interest into the theory has not subsided. Casey and Ehrman ascribe this to some atheist activists' disdain for organized religion (especially the Christian tradition) and the increase of online and independent publishing platforms.[9] Interest in mythicism has also been amplified by internet conspiracy culture, pseudoscience, and media sensationalism related to the historical Jesus and

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2014), pp. 27–36; David Marshall, *Jesus is No Myth: The Fingerprints of God on the Gospels* (Self Published: Kuai Mu Press, 2016).

8 Maurice Goguel, *Jesus the Nazarene: Myth or History?* (New York: Prometheus Books, [1926] 2006); Case, 'The Historicity of Jesus', pp. 20–42; James D.G. Dunn, *The Evidence for Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1985); Morton Smith, 'The Historical Jesus', in R. Joseph Hoffmann and Gerald A. Larue (eds.), *Jesus in Myth and History* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1986), pp. 47–48; Robert E. Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), pp. 6–15; R.T. France, *The Evidence for Jesus* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2006); Susan M. Elliott, 'Pseudo-Scholarship Illustrated: Was the "Original Jesus" a Pagan God?', *The Fourth R* 24.3 (2011), pp. 9–14; Maurice Casey, *Jesus: Evidence and Argument or Mythicist Myths?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist*?; James F. McGrath, 'Mythicism and the Mainstream: The Rhetoric and Realities of Academic Freedom', *The Bible and Interpretation* (2014), para. 1–32. Online: http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/2014/03/mcg388024.shtml [accessed ca. 2015]; Candida Moss and Joel Baden, 'So-Called 'Biblical Scholar' Says Jesus A Made-Up Myth', *The Daily Beast* (2014), para. 1–20. Online: http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/10/05/so-called-biblical-scholar-says-jesus-a-made-up-myth.html [accessed ca. 2015]. Also see Samuel Byrskog, 'The Historicity of Jesus: How Do We Know That Jesus Existed?', in Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter (eds.), *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus, Vol. 3* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 2181–2211.

9 Casey, *Jesus: Evidence and Argument or Mythicist Myths?*, pp. 1–10; Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?*, pp. 332–339. Also see Bart Ehrman, 'Did Jesus Exist?' *The Huffington Post* (2012), par 1–13. Online: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bart-d-ehrman/did-jesus-exist_b_1349544.html [accessed ca. 2015]. Also see James G. Crossley, *Jesus in an Age of Neoliberalism: Quests, Scholarship and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 133–168. It should be noted, however, that the 'New Atheists', the 'atheist movement', and the 'atheist community' within the United States is incredibly diverse and difficult to define. See Richard Cimino and Christopher Smith, *Atheist Awakening: Secular Activism and Community in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Christian origins.[10] In short, the majority of mythicist literature is composed of wild theories, which are poorly researched, historically inaccurate, and written with a sensationalist bent for popular audiences.

Yet not all mythicists are amateurs; some are professionally trained historians who hold degrees in relevant fields, such as biblical studies, ancient history, and classics.[11] Even Ehrman concedes that there are 'a couple of bona fide scholars—not professors teaching religious studies in universities but scholars nonetheless … Their books may not be known to most of the general public interested in questions related to Jesus, the Gospels, or the early Christian church, but they do occupy a noteworthy niche as a (very) small but (often) loud minority voice'.[12] These more noteworthy individuals include the late G.A. Wells, Earl Doherty, Robert M. Price, Thomas L. Brodie, Raphael Lataster, and Richard C. Carrier.[13] Out of this group, Carrier's voice is currently the most

10 Daniel N. Gullotta, 'O Ye of Little Faith: The Jesus Myth Theory, Its Proponents, and Culture' (paper presented at the Bible, Myth, and Myth Theory panel at the Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting, San Antonio, TX, November 21, 2016). For more on the sociology of internet conspiracy culture, scepticism, and pseudoscience, see Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2013), pp. 1–38. Perhaps the best-known example of media sensationalism related to the historical Jesus and Christian origins in recent years would be the marital status of Jesus, see Anthony Le Donne, *The Wife of Jesus: Ancient Texts and Modern Scandals* (London: Oneworld Publications, 2013); Gesine Schenke Robinson, 'How a Papyrus Fragment Became a Sensation', *New Testament Studies* 61.3 (2015), pp. 379–394.

11 It should be noted that while this group is distinctive because of the pedigree held by some of its individuals, some of the more popular-sensualist mythicists do have degrees in related fields. For example, Murdock had a Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree in Classics from Franklin and Marshall College and Hurpar has a Bachelor of Arts in Classics from University College at the University of Toronto, a Masters of Arts in Classics from the University of Oxford, and served as a scholar of Greek and New Testament at Wycliffe College and Toronto School of Theology.

12 Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?*, p. 3.

13 See G.A. Wells, *Did Jesus Exist?* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1992); G.A. Wells, *The Jesus Myth* (Chicago: Open Court, 1999); Earl Doherty, *The Jesus Puzzle: Did Christianity Begin with a Mythical Christ?* (Ottawa: Canadian Humanity Press, 1999); Earl Doherty, *Jesus: Neither God nor Man —The Case for the Mythical Jesus* (Ottawa: Age of Reason Publications, 2009); Robert M. Price, *The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man: How Reliable is the Gospel Tradition?* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2003); Robert M. Price, *The Christ Myth Theory and Its Problems* (Cranford: American Atheist Press, 2011); Thomas L. Brodie, *Beyond the Quest for the Historical Jesus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2012); Raphael Lataster, *There Was No Jesus, There is No God: A Scholarly Examination of the Scientific, Historical, and Philosophical Evidence & Arguments for Monotheism* (Self Published: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2013); Richard C. Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus:*

prominent, due to his book *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt*, published by Sheffield Phoenix Press in 2014.

Who is Richard Carrier?

Richard Carrier is an independent scholar and describes himself as 'a professional historian, published philosopher, and prominent defender of the American freethought movement'.[14] Carrier received his Bachelor of Arts with a major in history and a minor in classical civilization from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1997, and went onto graduate studies at Columbia University, receiving his Master of Arts in 1998 and Master of Philosophy in 2000, both in Ancient History. As an atheist activist and online writer, Carrier gained a significant following on *The Secular Web* (eventually serving as its editor-in-chief) and as a public speaker and debater within the then growing atheist community.

Carrier claims that, while he knew about the Jesus Myth theory prior to his academic undertaking related to Jesus' historicity, he had normally ignored it for similar reasons that mainstream scholars disregard it.[15] The turning point

Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014); Raphael Lataster, 'Questioning the Plausibility of Jesus Ahistoricity Theories—A Brief Pseudo-Bayesian Metacritique of the Sources', *Intermountain West Journal of Religious Studies* 6.1 (2015), pp. 64–96; Raphael Lataster with Richard C. Carrier, *Jesus Did Not Exist: A Debate Among Atheists* (Self Published: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015); Raphael Lataster 'It's Official: We Can Now Doubt Jesus' Historical Existence', *Think* 14.43 (2016), pp. 65–79. Wells was an Emeritus Professor of German at Birkbeck University of London, Doherty claims to have a bachelor's degree in Ancient History and Classical Languages, Price holds doctorates in theology and New Testament from Drew University, Brodie has a S.T.D. from the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, Lataster has a M.A. and is currently a teaching fellow and Ph.D. candidate at the University of Sydney's Department of Studies in Religion, and Carrier received a Ph.D. in Ancient History from Columbia University. Due to his activism and popularity among atheist activists, David Fitzgerald is another mythicist of note, although most of his views about Christian origins are almost identical to Carrier's. See David Fitzgerald, *Nailed: Ten Christian Myths That Show Jesus Never Existed at All* (Self Published: Lulu.com, 2010); David Fitzgerald *Jesus: Mything in Action* (3 vols.; Self Published: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017).

14 Richard C. Carrier, 'About Dr. Carrier', Richard Carrier Blogs (2016), Online: http://www.richardcarrier.info/about [accessed ca. 2016].

15 Carrier has publicly criticized other forms of the Jesus Myth theory, such as those of Atwill and Murdock, and has gone to great lengths to distinguish his form of mythicism

for Carrier was his encounter with Earl Doherty's *The Jesus Puzzle: Did Christianity Begin with a Mythical Christ?* (later revised and retitled as *Jesus: Neither God nor Man—The Case for the Mythical Jesus* in 2009).[16] As summarized by Doherty himself, the book's central thesis is that 'Paul's Christ Jesus was an entirely supernatural figure, crucified in the lower heavens at the hands of the demon spirits'.[17] Carrier was enthralled with Doherty's 'celestial Jesus' theory, and it made him more open to the Jesus Myth theory. After reading Doherty, Carrier concluded in 2002 that 'we must entertain the plausible possibility that Jesus didn't exist'.[18]

After completing his doctoral thesis on the intellectual history and role of the scientist within the early Roman Empire in 2008, Carrier received his doctorate in Ancient History from Columbia University.[19] With limited academic jobs available following the outbreak of the global financial crisis in 2007, he turned to his fan base and proposed a research project investigating the historicity of Jesus in order to help pay off his student debt.[20] Carrier's appeal was answered and he received a total of $20,000 in donations, administrated by Atheists United as a charitable research grant. This resulted in the publication of two works: *Proving History: Bayes's Theorem and the Quest for the Historical Jesus* (Prometheus Books, 2012), and *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt* (Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014), as well as two related journal articles.[21]

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in comparison to others. See Richard C. Carrier, 'That Luxor Thing', Richard Carrier Blogs (2012), para. 1–13. Online: http://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/294 [accessed ca. 2015]; Richard C. Carrier 'That Luxor Thing Again' Richard Carrier Blogs (2012), para. 1–31. Online: http://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/580 [accessed ca. 2015]; Richard C. Carrier, 'Atwill's Cranked Up Jesus', Richard Carrier Blogs (2013), para. 1–174. Online: http://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/4664 [accessed ca. 2015].

16 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, pp. 2–3.

17 Doherty, *Jesus: Neither God nor Man*, p. 101.

18 Richard C. Carrier, 'Did Jesus Exist? Earl Doherty and the Argument to Ahistorcity', The Secular Web (2002). Online: http://infidels.org/library/modern/richard_carrier/jesuspuzzle.html [accessed ca. 2015].
Carrier also reflects on his personal encounter with Doherty's book in *On the Historicity of Jesus*. See Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 3.

19 This thesis was eventually adapted into two books. See Richard C. Carrier, *Science Education in the Early Roman Empire* (Durham: Pitchstone Publishing, 2016); Richard C. Carrier, *The Scientist in the Early Roman Empire* (Durham: Pitchstone Publishing, 2017).

20 See Richard C. Carrier, 'Calling All Benefactors', Richard Carrier Blogs (2008), para. 1–12. Online: http://richardcarrier.blogspot.com/2008/04/calling-all-benefactors.html [accessed ca. 2015].

21 See Richard C. Carrier, *Proving History: Bayes's Theorem and the Quest for the Historical Jesus* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2012); Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*. Also see

In 2008, Carrier was invited to partake as a fellow in the now defunct 'Jesus Project' chaired by R. Joseph Hoffmann. At its inaugural meeting, Carrier presented his criticism of the current criteria used within historical Jesus research, along with his case for the use of Bayes' theorem (a methodology he would further advocate in 2012 with *Proving History* and then later apply in *On the Historicity of Jesus* in 2014).[22] In brief, Bayes' theorem is a probability calculation that involves assessing the likelihood of an event, based on conditions that might relate to said event.

$$P(h \mid e \,.\, b) \;=\; \frac{P(h \mid b) \times P(e \mid h \,.\, b)}{[P(h \mid b) \times P(e \mid h \,.\, b)] + [P(\sim h \mid b) \times P(e \mid \sim h \,.\, b)]}$$

Broken down, the mathematical symbols signify different components of the formula: ***P*** for probability, ***h*** for the hypothesis being tested, ***e*** for all the pertinent evidence, and ***b*** for the total background knowledge.[23] The goal of applying Bayes' theorem is to test the likelihood of a historical claim and produce a statistical result. In Carrier's case, the historical claims tested are Jesus' existence as a historical figure and as a mythical one.

Carrier has also clashed with several biblical scholars, particularly on the internet. Following the publication of Ehrman's *Did Jesus Exist?* in 2012, Carrier released a scathing online review of the book, bringing the two into conflict with one another over several blog posts.[24] In April 2013, Carrier revamped and expanded his criticism of Ehrman's *Did Jesus Exist* for a response book compiled by mythicists, *Bart Ehrman and the Quest of the Historical Jesus of Nazareth: An Evaluation of Ehrman's Did Jesus Exist?*[25] Moreover, Carrier received

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Richard C. Carrier, 'Origen, Eusebius, and the Accidental Interpolation in Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 20.200', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 20.4 (2012), pp. 489–514; Richard C. Carrier, 'The Prospect of a Christian Interpolation in Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44', *Vigiliae Christianae* 68 (2014), pp. 264–83.

22 Richard C. Carrier, 'Bayes's Theorem for Beginners: Formal Logic and Its Relevance to Historical Method', in R. Joseph Hoffman (ed.), *Sources of the Jesus Tradition: Separating History from Myth* (Amherst: Prometheus, 2010), pp. 81–108. Also see Richard C. Carrier, 'Amherst Conference', Richard Carrier Blogs (2009), para. 1–44. Online: http://richardcarrier.blogspot.com/2009/01/amherst-conference.html [accessed ca. 2015].

23 See Carrier, 'Bayes's Theorem for Beginners', pp. 97–99.

24 For Carrier's review and response to Ehrman's *Did Jesus Exist?*, see Richard C. Carrier, 'Ehrman on Historicity Recap', Richard Carrier Blogs (2012), para. 1–202. Online: http://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/1794 [accessed ca. 2015]. For Ehrman's reply, see Bart D. Ehrman, 'Fuller Reply to Richard Carrier', The Bart Ehrman Blog (2012), para. 1–64. Online: http://ehrmanblog.org/fuller-reply-to-richard-carrier/ [accessed ca. 2015].

25 Richard C. Carrier, 'How Not to Defend Historicity', in Frank Zindler and Robert M. Price (eds.), *Bart Ehrman and the Quest of the Historical Jesus of Nazareth: An Evaluation of Ehrman's Did Jesus Exist?* (Cranford: American Atheist Press 2013), pp. 15–62.

criticism from the late Maurice Casey in Casey's work critiquing mythicism, *Jesus: Evidence and Argument or Mythicist Myths* (2014).[26] Within the realm of biblical studies blogging (or bibloblogging), Carrier has also been criticized and challenged online by R. Joseph Hoffmann, James McGrath, and Matthew Baldwin.[27] Many of Carrier's online debates, particularly those with McGrath and Ehrman, have continued up to the present across numerous blog posts.[28]

In March of 2015, following the publication of *On the Historicity of Jesus*, Carrier presented his hypothesis at the SBL Pacific Coast regional meeting, and Kenneth L. Waters gave the response.[29] Later that same month, he presented

26 Casey, *Jesus: Evidence and Argument or Mythicist Myths?*, pp. 14–16, 230–231. For Carrier's response and review of Casey's book, see Richard Carrier, 'Critical Review of Maurice Casey's Defense of the Historicity of Jesus', Richard Carrier Blogs (2014), para. 1–173. Online: http://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/4282 [accessed ca. 2015].

27 See R. Joseph Hoffmann, 'Π-Ness Envy? The Irrelevance of Bayes's Theorem', The New Oxonian (2011), para. 1–24. Online: https://rjosephhoffmann.wordpress.com/2011/06/06/%CF%80-ness-envy-the-irrelevance-of-bayess-theorem/ [accessed ca. 2015]; James F. McGrath, 'Review of Richard C. Carrier, Proving History', Religion Prof. (2012), para. 1–26. Online: http://www.patheos.com/blogs/religionprof/2012/08/review-of-richard-c-carrier-proving-history.html [accessed ca. 2015]; R. Joseph Hoffmann, 'Mythic Pizza and Cold-Cocked Scholars', The New Oxonian (2012), para. 1–25. Online: https://rjosephhoffmann.wordpress.com/2012/04/23/mythtic-pizza-and-cold-cocked-scholars [accessed ca. 2015]; James F. McGrath, 'Did Jesus Die in Outer Space?: Evaluating a Key Claim in Richard Carrier's *On the Historicity of Jesus*', Bible and Interpretation (2014), para. 1–25. Online: http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/2014/10/mcg388028.shtml [accessed ca. 2015]; James F. McGrath, 'Rankled by Wrangling over Rank-Raglan Rankings: Jesus and the Mythic Hero Archetype', Bible and Interpretation (2014), para.1–14. Online: http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/2014/12/mcg388023.shtml [accessed ca. 2015]; James F. McGrath, 'Mythicism and the Making of Mark', Bible and Interpretation (2015), para. 1–19. Online: http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/2015/08/mcg398026.shtml [accessed ca. 2015]; Matthew Baldwin, 'A Short Note on Carrier's "Minimal Historicism"', Eschata (2015), para. 1–18. Online: http://eschata.apocryphum.com/2015/04/21/a-short-note-on-carriers-minimal-historicism [accessed ca. 2015].

28 The responses are too numerous to cite for a single footnote, but searching their various blogs will show the history and the ongoing conflict between Carrier and McGrath and Ehrman.

29 Richard C. Carrier, 'The Historicity of Jesus: Revisiting the Question' (paper presented at the Pacific Coast Regional Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Azusa, CA, March 9, 2015); Kenneth L. Waters, 'The Historicity of Jesus: A Response to Richard Carrier' (paper presented at the Pacific Coast Regional Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Azusa, CA, March 9, 2015). Also see Simon J. Joseph, 'The Mythical Jesus – An SBL Report' (2015), para. 1–10. Online: http://simonjjoseph.blogspot.com/2015/03/the-mythical-jesus-sbl-regional-report.html [accessed ca. 2015].

the final results of his research before Atheists United.[30] Additionally, Carrier has formally debated his theories with several prominent New Testament scholars: Mark Goodacre on the Premier Christian Radio program *Unbelievable?* in 2012; Zeba A. Crook at the Centre for Inquiry in Ottawa in 2014; and Craig A. Evans at Kennesaw State University at a joint Ratio-Christie and Atheists, Humanists, and Agnostics at KSU event in 2016.[31] Carrier became a Fellow of the Westar Institute in October 2014. Thus far, *On the Historicity of Jesus* has been positively reviewed by fellow mythicist Raphael Lataster in the *Journal of Religious History* and criticized by Christina Petterson in *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception*.[32]

Carrier continues to present his case for the Jesus Myth theory through various secular, atheist, and freethought conferences, gatherings, and podcasts.[33] He has also appeared in two independent documentaries that advocate the Jesus Myth theory, *The God Who Wasn't There* (2005) and *Jesus & Batman* (2017). 11th Story, a group of multi-media artists from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, has developed a short interview-documentary entitled *The Gospel According to*

30 Atheists United, 'Did Jesus Even Exist?', Filmed March, 2015, YouTube video, 1:09:58. Online: https://youtu.be/WUYRoYl7i6U [accessed ca. 2015].

31 'Did Jesus Exist? Richard Carrier vs Mark Goodacre —Unbelievable?', Premier Christian Radio (Podcast audio: December 15, 2012). Online: https://www.premierchristianradio.com/Shows/Saturday/Unbelievable/Episodes/Did-Jesus-Exist-Richard-Carrier-vs-Mark-Goodacre-Unbelievable [accessed ca. 2015]; 'Jesus of Nazareth: Man or Myth? A discussion with Zeba Crook and Richard Carrier', Center for Inquiry Canada (2014). Online: http://centreforinquiry.ca/jesus-of-nazareth-man-or-myth/ [accessed ca. 2015]; 'Ratio Christi Debate: Did Jesus Exist?', Filmed April 13, 2016, KSUTV video, 2:45:48. Online: http://ksutv.kennesaw.edu/play.php?v=00030027 [accessed ca. 2016].

32 Raphael Lataster, 'Review of Richard Carrier's *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt*', *Journal of Religious History* 38.4 (2014), pp. 614–616; Christina Petterson, 'Review of Richard Carrier's *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt*', *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception* 5.2 (2015), pp. 253–258. Also see, Aviezer Tucker, 'The Reverend Bayes vs. Jesus Christ', *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy* 55.1 (2016), pp. 129–140.

33 On the subject of Jesus' existence, Carrier has spoken at the Southwest Secular Student Conference, the Pennsylvania State Atheist/Human Conference, Skepticon, Zeteticon, Sunday Assembly Los Angeles, the Atheist Community of Austin, and ReasonCon in North Carolina, just to name a few. He has also appeared on podcasts such as Dogma Debate, the Atheist Experience, the Humanist Hour, the Thinking Atheist, the New Skeptics, and so on. As of June 2016, however, Carrier has been banned from Skepticon and the Secular Student Alliance, and suspended from FreeThoughtBlogs.

Carrier.[34] Additionally, Carrier's name and work has been mentioned on several popular news sites, with mythicism being the headline of the article.[35] So while Carrier remains an obscure figure among New Testament scholars, he appears to have garnered the attention of laypeople and formulated a strong group of supporters online.[36] Carrier has also shown interest in writing a popular and more accessible version of *On the Historicity of Jesus* for mass-market consumption.[37]

Carrier's *On the Historicity of Jesus*

Carrier's *On the Historicity of Jesus* is broken into twelve chapters and, with the bibliography included, stands at a colossal 712 pages. He lays out his thesis as follows, 'the Jesus we know originated as a mythical character, in tales symbolically narrating the salvific acts of a divine being who never walked the earth (and probably never existed at all). Later, this myth was mistaken for history (or deliberately repackaged that way), and then embellished overtime … Jesus Christ was born in myth, not history.'[38]

Chapter 1 introduces the question of Jesus' existence, describes the aims of Carrier's work, and summarizes his methodological approach (referring the reader to his earlier *Proving History*), reaffirming his appeal for the validity of Bayes' theorem to the question at hand. Chapters 2 and 3 establish the 'minimal

34 'The Gospel According to Carrier', Filmed November 24, 2017, Youtube video, 29:20. Online: https://youtu.be/lDpEeHD54Mo [accessed 11/25/2017].

35 For examples, see Raphael Lataster, 'Did historical Jesus really exist? The evidence just doesn't add up', *The Washington Post* (2014), para. 1–11. Online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/12/18/did-historical-jesus-exist-the-traditional-evidence-doesnt-hold-up/?utm_term=.6b4597109f19 [accessed ca. 2015]; Valerie Tarico, '5 good reasons to think Jesus never existed', *Salon* (2015), para. 1–19. Online: http://www.salon.com/2015/07/06/5_good_reasons_to_think_jesus_never_existed/ [accessed ca. 2015]; Brian Bethune, 'Did Jesus really exist?' *MacLean's* (2016), para. 1–25. Online: http://www.macleans.ca/society/life/did-jesus-really-exist-2/ [accessed ca. 2016]; Nigel Barber, 'Jesus Never Existed, After All', *The Huffington Post* (2016), para. 1–17. Online: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nigel-barber/jesus-never-existed-after_b_9848702.html [accessed ca. 2016]; Philip Perry, 'A Growing Number of Scholars Are Questioning the Historic Existence of Jesus', *Big Think* (2016), para. 1–13. Online: http://bigthink.com/philip-perry/a-growing-number-of-scholars-are-questioning-the-existence-of-jesus [accessed ca. 2016].

36 Especially on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Reddit, various blogs, and other online forums.

37 Richard C. Carrier, 'Looking for a Literary Agent', Richard Carrier Blogs (2015), para. 1–9. Online: http://www.richardcarrier.info/archives/8320 [accessed ca. 2015].

38 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus,* p. xi.

theory of historicity' and 'the minimal theory of myth', which are tested against one another through Carrier's Bayesian analysis. Simply put, the main objective of Carrier's work is to test the 'historicity hypothesis' against the 'myth hypothesis', and after calculating the background knowledge, prior probability, as well as the evidence from the primary and secondary sources related to Jesus' historicity, see which one seems more probable:

Carrier's Minimal Hypothesis of Historicity[39]

1. An actual man, at some point, named Jesus acquired followers in life who continued as an identifiable movement after his death.
2. This is the same Jesus who was claimed by some of the followers to have been executed by the Jewish or Roman authorities.
3. This is the same Jesus some of whose followers soon began worshiping as a living god (or demigod).

Carrier's Minimal Hypothesis of Myth[40]

1. At the origin of Christianity, Jesus Christ was thought to be a celestial deity much like any other.
2. Like many other celestial deities, this Jesus 'communicated' with his subjects only through dreams, visions, and other forms of divine inspiration (such as prophecy, past and present).
3. Like some other celestial deities, this Jesus was originally believed to have endured an ordeal of incarnation, death, burial, and resurrection in a supernatural realm.
4. As with many other celestial deities, an allegorical story of this same Jesus was then composed and told within the sacred community, which placed him on earth, in history, as a divine man, with an earthly family, companions, and enemies, complete with deeds and sayings, and an earthly depiction of his ordeals.
5. Subsequent communities of worshippers believed (or were at least taught) that this invented sacred story was real (and either not allegorical or only 'additionally' allegorical).

39 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 34.

40 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 53.

Later, in assessing the sources for and against the historicity of Jesus, Carrier then determines the 'best' and 'worst' odds for and against the 'minimal theory of historicity' and the 'minimal theory of myth' to bring forth a calculation that clearly states the statistical likelihood that Jesus existed.

In Chapter 4, Carrier establishes a list of twenty-two 'background elements' within early Christianity, related to its origins, development, and practice. Some of Carrier's most striking 'background elements' include the notion that the early Christians were a Judeo-Hellenistic mystery cult, that there is evidence to suspect there was an archangel named 'Jesus' prior to Christianity, that there is an indication that some Jews believed in a pre-Christian Jewish Dying Messiah tradition, and that early Christianity centered on schizotypal personalities.

Chapter 5 continues establishing 'background elements', adding a further twenty-six elements broken up into categories concerned with the political, religious, and philosophical, as well as literary contexts of early Christianity. Here Carrier brings forth arguments related to ancient cosmology. He argues that people living in the first century CE believed the universe was divided into several layers with numerous divinities dwelling there. Carrier contends that this concept would have been important to the minds of the first Christians. In Chapter 6, Carrier engages the question of 'Prior Probability' and uses the archetypal Rank-Raglan reference class system (a list of common characteristics attributed to mythological heroes) to determine the likelihood of a figure like Jesus existing.

The following chapters deal with the sources themselves, with Chapter 7 briefly reviewing all the primary sources from the epistles of Paul, the canonical Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, as well as the extra-biblical evidence. Chapter 8 focuses on the value of extra-biblical sources from authors such as Josephus, Tacitus, Pliny, as well as the patristic writings of the early second century CE, all of which Carrier views as inadequate evidence to validate the existence of a historical Jesus. The ninth chapter centers on the Acts of the Apostles. Carrier argues that Acts is evidence against the historicity of Jesus due to its alleged employment of invented material, its apologetically crafted history of Christian origins, and its purported use of Josephus as a source. Chapter 10 begins with a short treatise on the goal of 'myth making,' followed by a study of the 'mythology' of each of the four canonical Gospels (Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John, respectively). Carrier argues that because the Gospels were produced by Christian faith communities for the purpose of 'preaching, teaching, and propaganda, and not as disinterested or even *interested* biographical inquiry', they cannot be used as sources for the life of the historical

Jesus.[41] Carrier admits the possibility of historical realities being contained within the Gospels but questions the current methodological practices employed by academics to discern and determine authentic from inauthentic Jesus material. Carrier concludes that the Gospels neither verify the historicity of Jesus, nor do they prove his non-existence.

For Carrier, the most important sources we have for determining the historicity of Jesus are the seven authentic letters of the apostle Paul, which is the focus of Chapter 11. But Carrier argues it is more likely that Paul viewed Jesus only as a celestial/angelic being, not as a man rooted in history. He contends that Paul would have believed that this Jesus did indeed exist, but had his existence only in a supernatural realm. Thus, the term 'historical Jesus' ultimately becomes meaningless. Carrier comes to this conclusion by emphasizing Paul's lack of details about the life of the historical Jesus, the ambiguous language of Christian kinship in light of Paul's reference to James the brother of Jesus, the mythological and theological language used to describe Jesus, and the way in which the early Christians are said to have learned about and communicated with Jesus (which, per Carrier's interpretation, was through revelations and the reading of scripture only). According to Carrier, instead of preaching the death and resurrection of a human messiah named Jesus, Paul's *kerygma* involved a celestial Jesus who descended to the lower heavens, taking on an incarnation made of Davidic flesh that was manufactured from a 'cosmic sperm-bank'.[42] This celestial Jesus was then crucified by Satan and his demons in the lower heavens, buried, and resurrected in glory, thus offering the forgiveness of sins.[43]

In Chapter 12, Carrier assesses the odds for the existence and non-existence of Jesus. Putting the evidence presented in the previous chapters through Bayesian analysis, Carrier states that 'There is only a 0% to 33% chance that Jesus existed.'[44] Carrier concludes with a paradigm-shifting reconstruction of Christian origins:

> Before the 20s, the Jesus that Christians would later worship was known by some Jews as a celestial being, God's agent of creation … Sometime between the 20s and 40s a small fringe sect of Jews, probably at the time led by a man named (or subsequently renamed) Cephas, came to believe

41 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus,* pp. 508–509.

42 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 576.

43 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 576.

44 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus,* p. 606.

that this Jesus figure had undergone a salvific incarnation, death and resurrection in outer space, thus negating the cultic role of the Jerusalem temple, freeing them from it politically, spiritually and physically … This cult began as a Torah-observant Jewish sect that abandoned their reliance on Levitical temple cult, and was likely preaching the imminent end of the world, in accordance with the scriptures, signs and revelations of the celestial Jesus. In the 30s or 40s an active enemy of the cult, named Paul, had (or claimed to have) his own revelation from this Jesus and became an apostle spreading rather than attacking the faith. Over the next twenty years he converts many, preaches widely, and writes a body of letters. During this time the original sect driven by Cephas fragmented. There are many church schisms, and many alternative versions of the original gospel arise … Between the 30s and 70s some Christian congregations gradually mythicize the story of their celestial Jesus Lord, just as other mystery cults had done for their gods, eventually representing him rhetorically and symbolically in overtly historical narratives, during which time much of the more esoteric truth of the matter is reserved in secret for the upper levels of initiation … Right in the middle of this process the Jewish War of 66–70 destroyed the original church in Jerusalem, leaving us with no evidence that any of the original apostles lived beyond it … Before that, persecutions from Jewish authorities and famines throughout the empire (and if it really happened, the Neronian persecution of 64, which would have devastated the church in Rome) further exacerbated the effect, which was to leave a thirty-year dark age in the history of the church (from the 60s to the 90s), a whole generation in which we have no idea what happened or who was in charge … It's during this dark age that the canonical Gospels most likely came to be written, by persons unknown … and at least one Christian sect started to believe the myths they contain were real, and thus began to believe (or for convenience claim) that Jesus was a real person, and then preached and embellished this view. Because having a historical founder represented in controlled documents was a significant advantage … this 'historicizing' sect gradually gained political and social superiority, declared itself 'orthodox' while condemning all others are 'heretics' … and preserved only texts that agreed with its view, and forged and altered countless texts in support. As a result, almost all evidence of the original Christians sects and what they believed has been lost or doctored out of the record …[45]

45 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, pp. 607–608.

With this new paradigm for Christian origins, Carrier offers three ways forward: either the Jesus Myth theory presented by Carrier will eventually become the consensus of all scholarship besides Christian apologists; Carrier's myth theory can be discounted and facts about the historical Jesus can be confidently known; or, in a more diplomatic fashion, both historicist and mythicist theories will be viable, unless further evidence leads to one being discredited. In the end, Carrier concludes his book with an invitation and a challenge: 'I have confirmed our intuitions in the study of Jesus are wrong. He did not exist. I have made my case. To all objective and qualified scholars, I appeal to you all as a community: the ball is now in your court.'[46]

To his credit, Carrier has provided his audience and his benefactors with exactly what they were promised: a rigorous and thorough academic treatise that will no doubt be held up as the standard by which the Jesus Myth theory can be measured. But despite his call for historians to write with 'a style more attractive and intelligible to ordinary people', many, myself included, will find Carrier's Bayesian analysis unnecessarily complicated and uninviting.[47] I would echo Petterson's critique that at the 'worst of times it felt like I had stepped into a Jesus Seminar, a seminar armed with a reversed agenda and TI-89 Titanium calculators'.[48] Yet I cannot help but compare Carrier's approach to the work of Richard Swinburne, who likewise uses Bayes' theorem to demonstrate the high probability of Jesus' resurrection, and wonder if it is not fatally telling that Bayes' theorem can be used to both prove the reality of Jesus' physical resurrection and prove that he had no existence as a historical person.[49]

Bayesian analysis aside, I will demonstrate that Carrier's thesis is unconvincing because of its lack of evidence, strained readings, and troublesome assumptions. The focus of my response will center on Carrier's claim that a pre-Christian angel named Jesus existed, his understanding of Jesus as a nonhuman and celestial figure within the Pauline corpus, his argument that Paul understood Jesus to be crucified by demons and not by earthly forces, his claim that James, the brother of the Lord, was not a relative of Jesus but just a generic Christian within the Jerusalem community, his assertion that the Gospels represent Homeric myths, and his employment of the Rank-Raglan heroic archetype as a means of comparison.

46 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 618.

47 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. xiii.

48 Petterson, 'Review of Richard Carrier's *On the Historicity of Jesus,*' 254.

49 Richard Swinburne, *The Resurrection of God Incarnate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

A Pre-Christian Celestial Jesus?

Inspired by the central idea of Doherty's work, Carrier's foundational argument is that Jesus was not understood within the earliest days of Christianity as a human-historic figure but rather as a celestial-angelic being, akin to Gabriel in Islam or to Moroni in Mormonism.[50] According to Carrier, 'some [pre-Christian] Jews already believed there was a supernatural son of God named Jesus—because Paul's contemporary Philo interprets the messianic prophecy of Zech 6.12 in just such a way'.[51] Carrier draws this conclusion from Philo of Alexandria's *On the Confusion of Tongues* 63, which evokes the story of the high priest Joshua, son of Jehozadak, in Zech 6. He then compares the common language used by Philo to describe the logos with the language used by Paul to describe Christ as evidence of their shared belief in this heavenly being named Jesus. He concludes that this 'proves that some Jews already believed that God had a firstborn son in heaven, a preexistent being through whom God created the universe, the very image of God, the supreme of all beings next to God, whose name could already be identified as Jesus, and who advocates on our behalf to procure forgiveness of sins, and that all earthly priests were but a copy of him'.[52]

The most damning argument against Carrier's claim is that there is no literary or archeological evidence within the entirety of the Mediterranean world and Second Temple period that validates the existence of this pre-Christian celestial Jesus. Scholars have long noted that Second Temple Judaism marks a pivotal shift in how some Jews began to understand angels, and one of these changes is the use of distinctive names when they are addressed or referenced. In surveying references to angels during this time, one of the most common features in the names of angels is the appearance of the element of *'el'*.[53]

50 Richard C. Carrier, 'Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt: Should We Still Be Looking for a Historical Jesus?', The Bible and Interpretation (2014), para. 5. Online: http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/2014/08/car388028.shtml [accessed ca. 2015]. It should be noted that Carrier's correlation between Jesus and Moroni is not accurate. Moroni is thought by Latter-day Saint tradition to be the same person as a Book of Mormon's prophet-warrior named Moroni, who was the last to write upon the golden plates of Nephi, and was, therefore, believed to be a historical person prior to his exaltation as an angelic being, see Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture that Launched a New World Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 11–12.

51 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 200.

52 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, 201.

53 For example, of the nineteen rebel angels in *1 Enoch* 6.7, sixteen of them and all seven names of archangels in 20.1-8 are compounds with *'el'*. For more on the development

This survey reveals that the most common angelic characters of this period were named Michael, Gabriel, Sariel/Uriel, and Raphael.[54] In other words, a prosopographical analysis of the names of the particular angels known to Jews in the Second Temple period shows that the name Jesus does not conform to the way angelic beings were designated as such. Because the name Jesus is never associated with an angelic figure, nor does the name conform to tropes of celestial beings within Judaism, Carrier's assertions are unconvincing.[55]

Furthermore, studies of Second Temple names found in Jewish texts, ossuaries, and inscriptions only associate the name Jesus with human figures. The name Jesus was so common and widespread it was one of the six most popular names for Jewish males.[56] This commonality is particularly on display when Josephus distinguishes between the different Jesus figures of the period, such as Jesus, son of Gamaliel, who served as high priest during the Maccabean period, as well as Jesus, son of Daminos, who served as high priest in 62–63 CE, only to be succeeded by Jesus, son of Sapphias, who served from 64–65 CE.

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on angelology in Second Temple Judaism, see R.M.M. Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy: A Study in their Development in Syria and Palestine from the Qumran Texts to Ephrem the Syrian* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), pp. 14–27.

54 Dan 10.13; 4 Ezra 4.38; Tobit 12.15; 1QM 17.6; Luke 1.19; *1 Enoch* 20.1-8; *Apocalypse of Moses* 40.1; *3 Baruch*; *Epistula Apostolorum* 13. The names of Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Uriel have also been uncovered on the wall of the protective corner tower of Umm al-Jimal. See Howard Crosby Butler and Enno Littmann (eds.), *Publications of the Princeton University, Archaeological Expedition to Syria to 1904–1905* (Leiden: Brill, 1914), pp. 143–145. For more on named angels and appearances of Michael, Gabriel, Sariel/Uriel, and Raphael, see Aleksander R. Michalak, *Angels as Warriors in Late Second Temple Jewish Literature* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), pp. 56–81.

55 For a study of angelic names, see Saul M. Olyan, *A Thousand Thousands Served Him: Exegesis and the Name of Angels in Ancient Judaism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993).

56 Rachel Hachlili, 'Hebrew Names, Personal Names, Family Names, and Nicknames of Jews in the Second Temple Period', in J.W. van Henten and A. Brenner (eds.), *Families and Family Relations as Represented in Early Judaisms and Early Christianities: Texts and Fictions* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 83–115; Rachel Hachlili, *Jewish Funerary Customs, Practices and Rites in The Second Temple Period* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 193–234; Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), pp. 67–92. It is also striking that angelic names are not employed as names for Jewish males, which suggests a reluctance (or perhaps aversion) to name children after celestial beings, thus making the existence of an angel named Jesus and the popularity of the name unlikely. This, however, is but a theoretical observation, as it is also interesting how few Jewish males were named Moses, David, or Solomon during this period. I am not sure what this suggests about Jewish naming practices during the Second Temple period but I believe these statistics do need to be noted.

Similarly, within early Christian literature, Jesus' name and the power associated with it is presented as 'Jesus the Christ (Ιησούς Χριστός)', likewise distinguishing him from the other Jesus figures of the time.[57] Carrier's argument does not adequately explain why an angelic figure would have a name so commonly associated with human beings, let alone one which does not conform to typical angelic naming conventions. At no point does an angel or celestial being called Jesus appear within Second Temple Judaism, and 'Jesus' exhibits all the signs of a mundane name given to a human Jewish male within the period.

Paul on Jesus' Birth and Humanity

Carrier accurately states that, when referring to Jesus' birth, Paul never mentions Jesus having a father (besides God) and does not name Jesus' mother. Carrier's argument that this somehow indicates that Jesus was not believed to be a human being, however, is at best an argument from silence. Additionally, he makes an unlikely claim that Paul in Galatians 3.29-4.7 is 'speaking from beginning to end about being born to allegorical women', and thus Paul meant that Jesus was born, in an allegorical sense, to Hagar.[58] Carrier mistakenly links Paul's usage of the story of Abraham and the birth of his sons by different women to Christ, claiming 'Jesus was momentarily born to the allegorical Hagar, the slave woman, which is the Torah law (the old testament), which holds sway in the earthly Jerusalem, so that he could kill off that law with his own death, making it possible for us to be born of the free woman at last.'[59]

This, however, is not validated by the text, as Paul clearly focuses on his audience: 'Now you, my brothers, are the children of the promise, like Isaac' (Gal 4.28-31). Given the appeal to his audience, the use of Hagar and Sarah here is

57 Cf. Matt 1.1; 7.22; Mark 1.1; 16.17; John 14.13-14; Acts 3.6; 4.10, 14; 16.18; 1 Cor 1.10; 2 Thess 3.6; Eph 5.20. Also see, Graham H. Twelftree, *In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), pp. 51–52, 126–12; Larry Hurtado, 'Homage to the Historical Jesus and Early Christian Devotion', *Journal for the Historical Jesus* 1.2 (2003), pp. 131–146; Lars Hartman, *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus: Baptism in the Early* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), pp. 37–50; J.A. Ziesler, 'The Name of Jesus in the Acts of Apostles', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 2.4 (1979), pp. 28–41; James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit: A Study of the Religious and Charismatic Experience of Jesus and the First Christians as Reflected in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1975), pp. 164–177.; Lars Hartman, 'Into the Name of Jesus': A Suggestion Concerning the Earliest Meaning of the Phrase', *New Testament Studies* 20 (1974), pp. 432–440.

58 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 578.

59 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 578.

undoubtedly about the relationship between Jews, Gentiles, and the God of Israel, not about the birth of Jesus. Paul's main purpose by his allegory is not to provide genealogical information but rather is to discourage Gentile Galatians from adopting Jewish customs and the Torah. There is no direct connection between the woman in Gal 4.4 and the women who bear the sons of Abraham in Gal 4.22-24. Paul's statement that 'this is an allegory' appears in Gal 4.24, well after his earlier proclamation that 'when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children' (Gal 4.4.-5). Additionally, Paul claims that Jesus was 'descended from David according to the flesh' (Rom 1.3), and thus, contra Carrier, this would mean that Jesus, for Paul, was a descendant of Sarah, and not Hagar.[60]

Furthermore, while Paul does use the word γενόμενον (to be made/to become) instead of the typical γεννάω (to be born), γενόμενον does appear in relation to human births in other pieces of ancient literature, such as Plato's *Republic* and Josephus' *Antiquities*.[61] It is also noteworthy that the similarly worded phrase 'born of a woman' is also found within the Book of Job, the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Gospel of Matthew, and the Gospel of Thomas, as well as in other early Christian texts, each time indicating a human birth.[62] With this convention in mind then, Paul's expression, 'born of a woman', is fitting and certainly not exceptional. Thus, when Paul writes of Jesus' coming into the world (Gal 4.4-6; cf. Phil 2.5-8; 2 Cor 8.9; Rom 8.3-4), it is apparent that it should be taken at face value to indicate Jesus being born like any other ordinary Jewish human being, that is, 'born of a woman, born under the law.'[63] One need only survey early Christian commentaries on Gal 4.4 as soon as the second and third centuries CE to observe evidence of this plain interpretation being drawn from the text as well as the problems it created for their developing exalted Christologies.[64]

60 Rom 9.4-5, 15.12.

61 Josephus *Ant.*, 1.303; 7.154; Plato, *Rep.*, 8.553.

62 Cf. Job 14.1; 15.14; 25.4; 1 QS 11.20-21; 1 QH 13.14; 18.12-13; Matt 11.11; GThom 15; Origen, *Against Celsus* 1.70; Ps.-Clem., *Homily* 3.52.

63 See Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2003), pp. 323–324; James D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), pp. 203–204. Also see Ernest De Witt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921), p. 171.

64 For a sampling of the patristic reception of Gal 4.4, see Mark J. Edwards, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VIII: Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), p. 53.

All this means that the Pauline corpus supposes Paul knew that Jesus was born of a human mother. Carrier wonders why Paul would report this, given that, surely, 'aren't all men born to a woman'.[65] Why, he seems to say, would Paul state the obvious? But Paul is perfectly capable of stating the obvious elsewhere. It would be equally superfluous for Paul to state, as he does, that he was 'circumcised on the eighth day' (Phil 3:5), given that this was a near universal male Jewish experience.[66] Additionally, language of predestination or preordination concerning Jesus does not rule out historic claims, as Paul himself, evoking echoes of Isa 49.1-6 and Jer. 1.5, is also able to describe his own being as 'set apart' (Gal 1.15; cf. Rom 1.1) because of God's divine plan.

The clearest declaration of Jesus' earthly humanity, as articulated by Paul, appears in his letter to the Romans, where he declares 'just as sin came into the world through one man [ἀνθρώπου] … much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man [ἀνθρώπου], Jesus Christ, abounded for the many' (Rom 5.12,15). Simply put, Jesus was a man like Adam was. This is seen throughout the Pauline corpus, as Paul consistently links the human figure of Adam to humans, as well as human nature in general, and relates Jesus in a similar manner by describing him as an ἄνθρωπος (Phil 2.5-11; 1 Cor 15.47-9; 2 Cor 4.16; Rom 6.6). As Joseph J. Simon explains, 'Paul uses an Adam-Christ typology in a double parallelism, stating that just as death came through *a man* (Adam), so resurrection also came through *a man* (Christ).'[67] While Paul uses biblical figures for the purpose of allegories and similes, it must be clarified that every person he names (Adam, Abraham, Hagar, Jesse, David, etc.) was understood as and believed to be a historical figure who lived upon the earth.[68] Though it is certainly disappointing that Paul did not record more about the life of the historical Jesus, Paul reports and assumes that Jesus was a human being.

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65 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 580.

66 'On the eighth day the boy is to be circumcised' (Lev 12.3).

67 Simon J. Joseph, *The Nonviolent Messiah: Jesus, Q, and the Enochic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), p. 186.

68 Case in point, Josephus' historiographical work, *Antiquity of the Jews*, begins with the creation of Adam at the start of human history upon the earth. See Josephus *Ant*., 1.1–3.3. Also see Detlev Dormeyer, 'The Hellenistic Biographic History of King Saul: Josephus, *A.J.* 6.45-378 and 1 Samuel 9:1–31031:13', in Joseph Sievers and Gaia Lembi (eds.), *Josephus And Jewish History in Flavian Rome And Beyond* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 147–158; N.T. Wright, 'Romans', *NIB 10* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), p. 542; Louis H. Feldman, *Josephus's Interpretation of the Bible* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1998); John R. Levison, *Portraits of Adam in Early Judaism: From Sirach to 2 Baurch* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1988).

Who Crucified Jesus?

Rather than believing that Jesus was crucified at the hands of Romans, Carrier claims that Paul and the first Christians believed that 'Jesus was celestially crucified by the 'rulers of this world', by which Carrier means 'Satan and his demons.'[69] Most of Carrier's evidence relies heavily upon 1 Cor 2.8 and Paul's reference to 'the rulers of this age'. According to Carrier, these rulers 'cannot mean the Jewish elite, or the Romans, or any human authority' but rather 'Satan and his demons'.[70] But this assessment is inaccurate because it places an artificial distinction between earthly and other-earthly powers that does not exist in Second Temple texts, particularly of the apocalyptic variety. Demonic possession and influence upon political actors and groups are common tropes and abound in the texts.[71] Much of Second Temple apocalyptic literature conveys a worldview in which the invisible power of the demonic and the reality of Roman rule are intimately linked with one another. Beyond texts like the *War Scroll*, the *Testament of Solomon*, and 1 *Enoch*, this understanding is apparent when examining the reception of 1 Cor 2.8 within Christian commentaries from the second and third centuries CE, as early Christian readers interpreted Paul to mean earthly powers in league with Satan.[72]

69 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 329.

70 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 564.

71 For examples see 1QM 1.15, 15.1-3, 17.4-9; *T. Sol.* 4.5, 9.1-2, 11.2, 13.3-4, 17.1-3, 18.5-11; *1 Enoch* 10.4-8, 8.1-4, 10.9-10; Rev 12.1-17. Also see Emma Wasserman, 'Gentile Gods at the Eschaton: A Reconsideration of Paul's 'Principalities and Powers' in 1 Corinthians 15', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 136.3 (2017), pp. 727–746; Elizabeth E. Shively, *Apocalyptic Imagination in the Gospel of Mark: The Literary and Theological Role of Mark 3:22–30* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2012); Cheryl S. Pero, *Liberation from Empire: Demonic Possession and Exorcism in the Gospel of Mark* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013); Christopher Forbes, 'Paul's Principalities and Powers: Demythologizing Apocalyptic?', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 82 (2001), pp. 61–88; N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), pp. 193–197; Mary E. Millis, *Human Agents of Cosmic Power in Hellenistic Judaism and the Synoptic Tradition* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990); Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), pp. 191–194; Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence: Popular Jewish Resistance in Roman Palestine* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1987), pp. 170–184; Samson Eitrem, *Some Notes on the Demonology in the New Testament* (Oslo: Universitesforlaget, 1966).

72 For a sampling of the patristic reception of 1 Cor 2:8, see Gerald Bray, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VII: 1–2 Corinthians* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), pp. 20–23. For an overview of the scholarly literature and debate, see Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *The Myth of Rebellious Angels: Studies in Second Temple Judaism and New Testament Texts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), pp. 240–256.

Given Paul's Second Temple, Mediterranean, and apocalyptic contexts, his reference to Jesus' crucifixion by the 'rulers of this age' would have unambiguously meant the Roman Empire. Moreover, Paul's usage of ἄρχοντες (rulers) within Romans 13.3-6 overtly links to Roman imperial authority. Paul connects these 'rulers' with positions of authority, as they are the ones who 'bear the sword' and to whom the payment of taxes is rendered. As Emma Wasserman rightly notes, 'The fact that so many ancient writers imagine relations of reciprocity between human and divine rulers (and their respective subjects) makes it virtually certain that Paul envisions the defeat of gentile gods as entailing the political-military subjection of their rulers and peoples.'[73] Paul's assertion that neither 'ἄγγελοι, οὔτε ἀρχαὶ (angels nor rulers) … will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom 8.38-39) further signifies the interwoven relationship between the forces that would attempt to disconnect Christians from union with God. Paul's comprehensive proclamation that 'at the name of Jesus every [πᾶν] knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth' and that 'every [πᾶσα] tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord' (Phil 2.10-11), likewise establishes the absurdity of separating the relationship between earthly authority and heavenly power.[74]

There is also Paul's observation that proclaiming 'Christ crucified' was a 'stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles'.[75] While Carrier compares Jesus' crucifixion to other supposedly embarrassing stories about Greco-Roman gods, such as Attis' castration, he does not reckon with the normality of crucifixion within ancient Palestine.[76] Josephus' works about Palestine and other ancient writers portrays crucifixion as a horrifically common feature of Roman punishment for Jewish rebels.[77] With the Roman occupation of Palestine and its tense atmosphere of messianic hopefuls within the first century CE, the horrors of crucifixion were a real and ever present reality for messianic claimants like Jesus. A reality of which Paul and the first Christians would

73 Wasserman, 'Gentile Gods at the Eschaton', p. 745.

74 See Seyoon Kim, *Christ and Caesar: The Gospel and the Roman Empire in the Writings of Paul and Luke* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2008), p. 24.

75 Cf. 1 Cor 1:23.

76 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, pp. 614–615.

77 On the crucifixion of Jews during the Roman period, including those living in Palestine and Alexandria, see David W. Chapman, *Ancient Jewish and Christian Perceptions of Crucifixion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), pp. 69–96. Also see, Gunnar Samuelsson, *Crucifixion in Antiquity: An Inquiry into the Background and Significance of the New Testament Terminology of Crucifixion* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), pp. 95–110; Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (London: Fotress Press, 1977).

have been all too aware. Simply put, Carrier inadvertently depoliticizes early Christianity.

In conjunction with the fact that Jesus' crucifixion by Romans is depicted in every one of the earliest narrations of his death, one can also examine the reaction to early Christianity by Greco-Roman critics to see a widespread reception of Jesus as a crucified man.[78] Lucian called Jesus a 'crucified sophist'; Suetonius describes Jesus as 'the man who was crucified in Palestine'; Celsus depicts Jesus' death as a 'punishment seen by all'; and Marcus Cornelius Fronto scoffed at how Christians could 'worship a crucified man, and even the instrument itself of his punishment'.[79] One of the earliest visual representations of Jesus carved into a wall near the Palatine Hill in Rome (ca. late second century CE), the Alexamenos graffito, is one of mockery, depicting the Christian Alexamenos paying homage to a naked figure on a cross with the head of a donkey, scrawled with the words: 'Alexamenos, worship [your] God!'[80] Likewise, Justin Martyr claims that Jewish challengers of Christianity used the shame of crucifixion as a central reason for disregarding Jesus' messianic claims (*Dial.* 32.1). Despite Christianity's growth across the Roman empire, even as late as the early third century CE, Marcus Minucius Felix was all too aware he worshipped 'a crucified criminal' (*Oct.* 29). While Hebrews 12.2 claims that Jesus disregarded

78 For surveys of the developing Passion traditions and narratives, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: Commentary on the Passion Narrative in the Four Gospels* (New York: Doubleday, 1999); John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green, *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995); Adela Yarbro Collins, 'From Noble Death to Crucified Messiah', *New Testament Studies* 40.4 (1994), pp. 481–503; Adela Yarbro Collins, 'The Genre of the Passion Narrative', *Studia Theologica* 47 (1993), pp. 2–28; Joel B. Green, *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity: Tradition and Interpretation in the Passion Narrative* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988).

79 See William Horbury, 'Christ as Brigand in Ancient Anti-Christian Polemic', in Ernst Bammel and C.F.D. Moule (eds.), *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 183–195. Also see David W. Chapman and Eckhard J. Schabel, *The Trial and Crucifixion of Jesus: Texts and Commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015); Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament*, pp. 19–74; Craig A. Evans, 'Jesus in Non-Christian Sources', in Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (eds.) *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 443–478.

80 See Felicity Harley-McGowan, 'The Constanza Carnelian and the Development of Crucifixion Iconography in Late Antiquity', in Chris Entwhistle and Noël Adams (eds.) *Gems of Heaven: Recent Research on Engraved Gemstones in Late Antiquity* (London: British Museum, 2011), pp. 214–220; Peter Keegan, 'Reading the "Pages" of the Domus Caesaris: Pueri Delicati, Slave Education, and the Graffiti of the Palatine Paedagogium', in Michele George (ed.), *Roman Slavery and Roman Material Culture* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), pp. 69–98.

the αἰσχύνης (shame) of the cross, evidently his earliest followers, despite their best apologetic strategies, had a difficult time doing so due to its connections with criminality, Roman capital punishment, and shameful burial. Given our sources concerning Jesus' death and knowledge about his executed contemporaries, the reality of a crucified Jesus as another failed messianic pretender from Palestine is remarkably more likely than a demonic crucifixion in outer space.

James, the Brother of the Lord

It has been claimed that if there is an Achilles' heel to the Jesus Myth theory, it would be the reference to 'James, the brother of the Lord' (Gal 1.19).[81] Typically, historical Jesus scholars take James to be one of Jesus' many biological siblings; however, Carrier and other mythicists have argued that the familial language used throughout the Pauline letters is reason enough to doubt that James is Jesus' biological brother.[82] Carrier contends that 'Paul is unaware of any need here to distinguish biological from adoptive brothers. Since all baptized Christians were the brothers of the Lord, and all Christians knew this, Paul would need to be more specific when using this phrase of actual biological kin.'[83] While kinship language is used in the Pauline literature, as well as

81 Price himself admits, 'The most powerful argument against the Christ-Myth theory, in my judgment, is the plausibility of what Ethelbert Stauffer called "the Caliphate of James"'. See Price, *The Christ Myth Theory and Its Problems*, p. 333.

82 For a survey of the literature regarding James and the relatives of Jesus see, John Painter, 'What James Was, His More Famous Brother Was Also', in Alan Avery-Peck, Craig A. Evans, and Jacob Neusner (eds.), *Earliest Christianity within the Boundaries of Judaism: Essays in Honor of Bruce Chilton* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), pp. 218–240; David C. Sim, 'The Family of Jesus and the Disciples of Jesus in Paul and Mark: Taking Sides in the Early Church's Factional Dispute', in Oda Wischmeyer, David C. Sim, and Ian J. Elmer (eds.), *Paul and Mark: Comparative Essays, Part 1: Two Authors at the Beginnings of Christianity* (Göttingen: De Gruyter, 2014), pp. 73–102; John Painter, *Just James: The Brother of Jesus in History and Tradition* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004); John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus, Vol. 1: The Roots of the Problem* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), pp. 318–332; Richard Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990); John Dominic Crossan, 'Mark and the Relatives of Jesus', *Novum Testamentum* 15.2 (1973), pp. 81–113; Price, *The Christ Myth Theory and Its Problems*, pp. 333–351.

83 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus,* p. 584. Carrier is primarily influenced by L. Paul Trudinger, '"ΕΤΕΡΟΝ ΔΕ ΤΩΝ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΩΝ ΟΥΚ ΕΙΔΟΝ, ΕΙ ΜΗ ΙΑΚΩΒΟΝ: A Note on Galatians I 19', *Novum Testamentum* 17.3 (1975), pp. 200–202.

the rest of the New Testament, there is solid evidence to affirm James was the biological brother of Jesus.

By examining the introductions and conclusions of Paul's various letters, we find no one else, besides James, being singled out as 'the brother of the Lord [τὸν ἀδελφὸν τοῦ Κυρίου]'. Names that do appear across multiple letters, such as Cephas [Peter], Barnabas, Titus, or anyone else, are more typically singled out as a 'fellow worker in Christ' or 'worker in the Lord' or as other apostles.[84] Furthermore, in the examples that we do have of Christians being labeled as brothers, namely, Timothy (2 Cor 1.1; Phil 1.1; Col 1:1), Sosthenes (1 Cor 1.1.), Apollos (1 Col 16.12), and Quartus (Rom 16.23), they are never given a title so pronounced as 'the brother of the Lord'. It is also important to note James' significance within Paul's letters. In Galatians, the James with whom Paul met in Jerusalem carries enough influence to be recognized as a 'pillar' (Gal. 2:9) and commands enough respect to have men 'belong' to him in Antioch (Gal 2.12).[85] Clearly, this evokes a significant authoritative distinction between James and the rest of the Christian brotherhood, a difference easily explained if 'brother of the Lord' signaled his familial ties to Jesus.

More problematic for Carrier's reading is James' ongoing influence within the early church and the legacy of James' authority within the developing early Christian tradition. After all, if James was not the brother of Jesus, why does Paul highlight his encounter with him in Gal 1.19? Moreover, if James was just another common Christian brother, why would Paul give James a special distinction when listing those who have had a Christophany, when Jesus was reported to appear to 'five hundred brothers'?[86] Given James' apparent lack of apostolic status and the fact that he received his Christophany later than other supposed brothers, how does he have the authority or influence to have men represent him in Antioch?[87] Likewise, if Cephas was the first to receive a Christophany, why would James' name appear before his in Paul's account of the Jerusalem Council?[88] If James was 'just another Christian brother', the reason

84 Cf. Rom 16.3, 12, 21; Phil 2:25; Philemon 1:24. Also see Colo 4:11. For an intensive study of the people listed in Paul's letters, as well as their roles and designations as referenced by Paul, see James D.G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem* (Christianity in the Making, vol. 2; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), pp. 563–571.

85 On the Jerusalem Council and the men from James, see Ian J. Elmer, *Paul, Jerusalem and the Judaisers: The Galatian Crisis in Its Broadest Historical Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), pp. 81–116.

86 Cor 15.3-9.

87 Gal 2.12.

88 Gal 2.9.

Paul gives James the respect he does is not adequately explained by Carrier.[89] James being Jesus' kin best solves these questions and makes the most sense of our sources.

Additionally, Carrier's argument fails to justify why early and widely circulated Christian tradition maintained that Jesus had siblings, one of whom was named James.[90] When the evidence for James is considered all together—Paul's reference to James as 'the brother of the Lord', the level of authority he commanded within the Jerusalem church, his distinction from the twelve, the apostles, and the other brethren to whom Christ appeared, as well as the well-established tradition that James was Jesus' brother—it renders Carrier's interpretation inadequate. Given the sources, the most logical explanation is that James was the brother of Jesus and that this familial connection permitted him great status and influence within the early church.

Mark, the Christian Homer? Jesus, the Jewish Odysseus?

According to Carrier, the 'Gospels are primarily and pervasively mythical' and he bases this assessment on the following criteria:

> Characteristics of myth are (1) strong and meaningful emulation of prior myths (or even of real events); (2) the presence of historical improbabilities (which are not limited to 'miracles' but can include natural events that are very improbable, like amazing coincidences or unrealistic behavior); and (3) the absence of external corroboration of key (rather than peripheral) elements (because a myth can incorporate real people and places, but the central character or event will still be fictional). No one of these criteria is sufficient to identify a narrative as mythical. But the

89 On James' authority and influence within the early church, see Elmer, *Paul, Jerusalem and the Judaisers: The Galatian Crisis in Its Broadest Historical Context*, p. 116; Patrick J. Hartin, *James of Jerusalem: Heir to Jesus of Nazareth* (Collegeville: Michael Glazier Book, 2004), pp. 115–154; William R. Farmer, 'James the Lord's Brother, according to Paul', in Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (eds.), *James the Just and Christian Origins* (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 140–142.

90 See Painter, *Just James*; James D.G. Dunn, *Neither Jew nor Greek: A Contested Identity* (Christianity in the Making, vol. 3; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015), pp. 512–523; Bart D. Ehrman, *Peter, Paul, & Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 168–169; Robert E. Van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989).

> presence of all three is conclusive. And the presence of one or two can also be sufficient, when sufficiently telling.[91]

Because of this, Carrier deems the Gospels to be 'allegorical myth, not remembered history'.[92] Carrier's claims that 'Mark updated Homer by recasting the time and place and all the characters to suit Jewish and (newly minted) Christian mythology' is principally based on the work of Dennis R. MacDonald.[93] After heavily citing the work of MacDonald, Carrier claims, '[i]n constructing his Gospel, the first we know to have been written, Mark merged Homeric with biblical mythology to create something new, a mythical syncretism, centered around his cult's savior god, the Lord Jesus Christ, and his revelatory message, the 'gospel' of Peter and (more specifically) Paul.'[94] MacDonald's proposal is that Mark was not written as history, but rather to emulate Homer's epics; thus, the author constructed the life of Jesus to mirror the trials of Odysseus and Hector. In short, 'Mark wrote a prose epic modeled largely after the *Odyssey* and the ending of the *Iliad*'.[95]

According to Carrier via MacDonald, both Jesus and Odysseus face trials and suffering and are accompanied by rather clueless and extremely flawed companions. Odysseus desires to return to his homeland and be reunited with his family, and Jesus also desires to be welcomed in his hometown of Nazareth and later in Jerusalem. Odysseus hides his identity, as does Jesus, who tells the people who do recognize him as the Son of God to 'not tell anyone' who he really is. Odysseus returns home to discover his house in ruin and overtaken by suitors for his wife Penelope, as Jesus discovers that his house, the Temple in Jerusalem, has been turned into 'a den of robbers'.[96] Eventually, Odysseus does battle with the suitors, casting his judgment upon them and their faithlessness, as Jesus warns the disciples of his Second Coming and his impending judgment upon the nations. Because almost every event in Mark has some sort of Homeric counterpart according to MacDonald, many mythicists have taken his work to indicate that the Gospels have no historical value whatsoever. This, however, is not the conclusion MacDonald has come to, and because of the

91 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 394.

92 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 396.

93 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 436.

94 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 437.

95 Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 3. Also see, Dennis R. MacDonald, *The New Testament and Greek Literature, Vol. 1: The Gospels and Homer: Imitations of Greek Epic in Mark and Luke-Acts* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015).

96 Mark 11:17.

popularity of his research among mythicists, he has had to clarify his own confidence in the existence of the historical Jesus.[97]

While MacDonald's mimesis criticism has produced a pioneering and innovative school within biblical studies, his conclusions (relied upon so heavily by Carrier) have been critiqued by his supporters and detractors alike, most notably by Karl Olav Sandnes and Margaret M. Mitchell.[98] Because Carrier's presuppositions about the Gospels' genre, style, and meaning is so indebted to MacDonald's work, much of the criticism applied to MacDonald's claims can be equally applied to Carrier's.[99] The foremost difficulty with MacDonald's thesis is how this so-called Homeric retooling by Mark has been completely overlooked within the entire history of exegesis. If Mark intended his audience to notice and understand his 'Homeric flags', then this would mean that only MacDonald (and his followers like Carrier) have been intelligent enough to spy Mark's original intentions. As Joel L. Watts reasonably notes, 'it is to suggest that Mark was not a very good writer, in that his writing failed to produce mimicry and failed to notify his readers of his epic journey'.[100]

Additionally, MacDonald and Carrier's reasoning for Mark to write such an epic is poorly argued. To be sure, the writings of Homer were certainly the

97 For example, 'A Jewish teacher named Jesus actually existed, but within a short period of time, his followers wrote fictions about him, claiming that his father was none other than the god of the Jews, that he possessed incredible powers to heal and raise from the dead, that he was more powerful than 'bad guys' like the devil and his demons, and that after he was killed, he ascended, alive, into the sky', in Dennis R. MacDonald, *Mythologizing Jesus: From Jewish Teacher to Epic Hero* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015), pp. 1–2. Also see Dennis R. MacDonald, *Two Shipwrecked Gospels: The Logoi of Jesus and Papias's Exposition of Logia about the Lord* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), pp. 543–560.

98 For a sampling of the works emerging in this school of mimesis/mimetic criticism, see Margaret Froelich, Michael Kochenash, Thomas E. Phillips, and Ilseo Park (eds.), *Christian Origins and the New Testament in the Greco-Roman Context: Essays in Honor of Dennis R. MacDonald* (Claremont: Claremont Press, 2016); Joel L. Watts, *Mimetic Criticism and the Gospel of Mark: An Introduction and Commentary* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2013); Adam Winn, *Mark and the Elijah-Elisha Narrative: Considering the Practice of Greco-Roman Imitation in the Search for Markan Source Material* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2010); Octavian D. Baban, *On the Road Encounters in Luke-Acts: Hellenistic Mimesis and Luke's Theology of the Way* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock, 2006); Dennis R. MacDonald (ed.), *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity* (Harrisburg: Trinity International Press, 2001).

99 For detailed criticisms to MacDonald, see Sandnes, 'Imitatio Homeri? An Appraisal of Dennis R. MacDonald's "Mimesis Criticism"', pp. 715–732; Margaret M. Mitchell, 'Homer in the New Testament?' *The Journal of Religion* 83.2 (2003), pp. 244–260.

100 Watts. *Mimetic Criticism and the Gospel of Mark*, p. 13.

cornerstone of Greco-Roman education, but what possible polemical situation which centered on Homer would have motivated Mark to write his gospel? Likewise, Carrier cannot reasonably justify why Mark chose to subvert the image of Odysseus, when other and more logical candidates were available. Christian subversion of imperial and cultural Greco-Roman images, titles, and characteristics is well noted within scholarship, and early Christian employment of this tactic makes sense within their cultural matrix.[101] For example, given how Christians promoted the cosmic lordship of Jesus, it would make sense to challenge the divine titles and stories of Caesar with Christian ones. Yet while Odysseus was an important figure within Greco-Roman culture, Romulus and Aeneas were far more important characters.[102] Within the Roman Empire, Odysseus' wit and humor appealed to the Cynics, but did not have ubiquitous influence.[103] To put this another way, Jesus rivalling Caesar makes sense, but Jesus rivalling Odysseus does not.

Furthermore, although Mark does make use of sources in constructing his gospel, the most obvious source is that of the Jewish scriptures. Given the high esteem the early church held for the Jewish scriptures, along with the numerous references and allusions made by Mark and the other evangelists to them, the Hebrew Bible is obviously the primary source for Christian literary inspiration, whereas no direct quotation or reference to Homer is anywhere to be found within the Gospel of Mark.[104] In examining the role of Homer in the formation of early Christian education, Karl Olav Sandnes notes that there was a strong move within the patristic period to deny students access to the works of Homer and instead focus their learning on the Old and New Testaments.[105] I agree with Adam Winn that the 'Jewish scriptures provide a more likely literary influence for Mark's gospel than Homeric epics'.[106]

101 See M. David Lita, *Iesus Deus: The Early Christian Depiction of Jesus As a Mediterranean God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014); Michael Peppard, *The Son of God in the Roman World: Divine Sonship in its Social and Political Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

102 See Diliana N. Angelova, *Sacred Founders: Women, Men, and Gods in the Discourse of Imperial Founding, Roe through Early Byzantium* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), pp. 9–43.

103 Silvia Montiglio, *From Villain to Hero: Odysseus in Ancient Thought* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), pp. 66–94.

104 Cf. Mark 1.2-3; 4.12; 7.6-7, 10; 9.48; 10.4, 6, 7–8, 19, 34; 11.9, 17; 12.10-11, 19, 26, 29–30, 31; 13.14, 19, 24–25, 26; 14.27, 62; 15.34.

105 Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, pp. 231–244.

106 Winn, *Mark and the Elijah-Elisha Narrative*, p. 38.

Also problematic is that many of MacDonald's comparisons, and in turn Carrier's appeal to them, come across as extremely forced and farfetched at times. For example, MacDonald compares Odysseus' 'untriumphal entry' into the city of the Phaeacians with that of Jesus' into Jerusalem, but these events are not remotely alike and the latter clearly draws its inspiration from Zechariah 9.9. Another example is MacDonald's comparison of the death of Jesus with the death of Hector in the *Iliad,* as Hector dies a hero in combat and Jesus dies a criminal on a cross. But as early Jewish scriptures are openly used in constructing the death of Jesus, the problem for MacDonald is that one simply does not need Hector to shape the death of Jesus.[107] In evaluating MacDonald's reading of the storm at the Sea of Galilee, problems also emerge. In the *Odyssey,* it is the crew who bring about the storm by opening the magic sack, whereas in Mark, it is apparently a natural occurrence. Also, it is Aeolus who masters the winds and the sea, not Odysseus, so how does the Jesus as Odysseus comparison follow through? This list of problematic comparisons also extends to MacDonald's arguments that the young man at the tomb in Mark mirrors Elpenor, that Peter's behavior is modeled on Eurylochus, and that Hector's fleeing from Achilles is mirrored in the fleeing of the disciples. MacDonald's list of unconvincing comparisons goes on and has been noted by numerous critics.[108] Despite MacDonald's worthy call for scholars to reexamine the educational practices of the ancient world, all of the evidence renders his position of Homeric influential dominance untenable. The ultimate shortcoming of MacDonald's thesis, and thus Carrier's use of it, is that it relies too heavily upon procrustean and not on persuasive analysis.

Hero Journeys, Myth Theory, and Jesus Traditions

Developed originally by Otto Rank (1884–1939) and later adapted by Lord Raglan (FitzRoy Somerset, 1885–1964), the Rank-Raglan hero-type is a set of criteria used for classifying a certain type of hero. Expanding upon Rank's original list of twelve, Raglan offered twenty-two events that constitute the archetypical 'heroic life' as follows[109]:

107 John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately After the Execution of Jesus* (New York: HarperOne, 1999), pp. 527–574.

108 Winn, *Mark and the Elijah-Elisha Narrative*, pp. 40–9; Watts, *Mimetic Criticism and the Gospel of Mark*, pp. 11–18; Sandnes, 'Imitatio Homeri? An Appraisal of Dennis R. MacDonald's "Mimesis Criticism"', pp. 715–732.

109 Lord Raglan, 'The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama', in *In Quest of the Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 138.

1. Hero's mother is a royal virgin;
2. His father is a king, and
3. Often a near relative of his mother, but
4. The circumstances of his conception are unusual, and
5. He is also reputed to be the son of a god.
6. At birth an attempt is made, usually by his father or his maternal grandfather to kill him, but
7. he is spirited away, and
8. Reared by foster-parents in a far country.
9. We are told nothing of his childhood, but
10. On reaching manhood he returns or goes to his future Kingdom.
11. After a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon, or wild beast,
12. He marries a princess, often the daughter of his predecessor and
13. And becomes king.
14. For a time he reigns uneventfully and
15. Prescribes laws, but
16. Later he loses favor with the gods and/or his subjects, and
17. Is driven from the throne and city, after which
18. He meets with a mysterious death,
19. Often at the top of a hill,
20. His children, if any do not succeed him.
21. His body is not buried, but nevertheless
22. He has one or more holy sepulchres.

While Raglan himself never applied the formula to Jesus, most likely out of fear or embarrassment at the results, later folklorists have argued that Jesus' life, as presented in the canonical gospels, does conform to Raglan's hero-pattern.[110] According to mythicist biblical scholar, Robert M. Price, 'every detail of the [Jesus] story fits the mythic hero archetype, with nothing left over …' and 'it is arbitrary that there must have been a historical figure lying in the back of the myth'.[111]

But the Rank-Raglan hero-type scale is a rather strange device employed by Carrier (and other mythicists), undoubtedly used to further tilt the scale in favor of mythicism.[112] The immediate question that comes to mind in surveying

110 Alan Dundes, 'The Hero Pattern and the Life of Jesus', in Robert A. Segal (ed.), *In Quest of the Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 179–223

111 Robert M. Price, *Deconstructing Jesus* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2000), pp. 259–261.

112 'For we still have to look at all the evidence pertaining to the various hypotheses for how Jesus became a member of both the Rank–Raglan hero class and the set of all other celestial savior deities. And when we do, we could find that the evidence is so improbable, unless

Carrier's reference class for Jesus is why the Rank-Raglan hero-type? Criticized for being Euro-centric and male-centric, these holistic-comparative theories have been almost universally rejected by scholars of folklore and mythology, who instead opt for theories of myth that center on the myths' immediate cultural, political, and social settings. Nevertheless, if a general point of reference for Jesus is required, why does Carrier not use Joseph Campbell's *Hero with a Thousand Faces* as his reference class?[113] Is it because Campbell's system is so general and universal it would fit almost any figure or story (hence the term monomyth)? Why does Carrier preference a hybrid Rank-Raglan's scale of 22 patterns, over Rank's original 12? Could it be because Rank's original list includes the hero's parents having 'difficulty in conception', the hero as an infant being 'suckled by a female animal or humble woman', to eventually grow up and take 'revenge against his father'?[114] Why not Jan De Vries' heroic biographical sequence or Dean A. Miller's characteristics of a Quest Hero?[115] I can deduce that it is because other comparative mythological scales, being either too general or too rigid, would not suit his ends.

Futhermore, Carrier changes Raglan's traditional list and does not inform his readers how and why he is doing this. For example, Carrier changes the specificity of the 'hero's mother is a royal virgin', to the more ambiguous 'the hero's mother is a virgin'.[116] He modifies that the hero's 'father is a king' to

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Jesus really existed, that even a prior probability as low as 1 in 16, or 6.25% (which entails prior odds against *h* of 15 to 1), would be more than overcome', in Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 252. Archetypal studies of ancient heroes in comparison to Jesus abound in mythicist literature. For examples see D.M. Murdock, *Christ in Egypt: The Horus-Jesus Connection* (Seattle: Stellar House Publishing, 2009), pp. 13, 87, 138, 352; Robert M. Price, 'Jesus at the Vanishing Point', in James K. Beilby and Paul Rhodes Eddy (eds.), *The Historical Jesus: Five Views* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009), pp. 77–80; Derek Murphy, *Jesus Potter Harry Christ: The Fascinating Parallels Between Two of the World's Most Popular Literary Characters* (Portland: Holy Blasphemy, 2011); Michael Paulkovich, *No Meek Messiah: Christianity's Lies, Laws and Legacy* (Annapolis: Spillix, 2012), pp. 208, 281; Kenneth Humphreys, *Jesus Never Existed: An Introduction to the Ultimate Heresy* (Charleston: Nine-Banded Books, 2014), pp. 17, 45, 54, 58.

113 Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Novato: New World Library, [1949] 2008).

114 Otto Rank, 'The Myth of the Birth of the Hero', in *In Quest of the Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 57–86

115 Jan De Vries, *Heroic Song and Heroic Legend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 211–216; Dean A Miller, *The Epic Hero* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2000), pp. 163–164. Also see Tomás Ó Cathasaigh, *The Heroic Biography of Cormac Mac Airt* (Dublin: Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1977).

116 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 229.

the far more open 'father is a king or the heir of a king' in order to include Jesus' claimed Davidic lineage.[117] He also excludes from his scale that the attempt on the hero's life at birth is 'usually by his father or his maternal grandfather'. Carrier adds the qualifying 'one or more foster-parents' when the hero is spirited away to a faraway country, while Raglan only states 'foster-parents'.[118] A significant change Carrier makes is that the hero is only 'crowned, hailed or becomes king' whereas Raglan states that the hero 'becomes king'.[119] Another important change made by Carrier is that the hero's 'body turns up missing' whereas Raglan's list has that the 'body is not buried'.[120] After examination, it is clear that Carrier has modified Raglan's qualifications in order to make this archetypal hero model better fit the Jesus tradition.

More problematic is Carrier's exclusion of Paul in his assessment. If one looks at the earliest narrative formula about the life of Christ in Philippians 2.5-11 and other elements of Paul's *kerygma*, Jesus would barely score 4 or 5 out of 22 on Carrier's version of the Rank-Raglan hero-type scale. I come to this ranking because Jesus is called the son of God (Rom 1.4; 2 Cor 1.19; Gal 2.20), but Paul does not mention anything about Jesus' childhood. Jesus is regarded as a king, God's anointed one, and as their lord (Rom 10.9; Phil 2.11; 2 Cor 4.5). He also issued a 'law' against divorce (1 Cor 7.10-11) and a command to preach the gospel (1 Cor 9.14). Lastly, it *could* be argued that 1 Cor 15.4 implies that Jesus' body went missing following its burial and his resurrection.[121] Regardless of how one categorizes Paul's writing in relation to the Rank-Raglan hero-type, it offers dramatically less evidence and contains far fewer heroic features than later Christian texts.

Per Carrier's assessment of the Rank-Raglan hero-type applied to Jesus, Mark's Jesus scores 14 and Matthew's Jesus scores 20. But according to the traditional Raglan heroic archetype, Mark's Jesus scores 7 or 8, and Matthew's Jesus scores 8 or 9, producing a result that is less than 11 (the required result, according to Carrier's methodology, to firmly place Jesus in the same reference class as Oedipus, Moses, Theseus, Dionysus, Romulus, Perseus, Hercules, Zeus, Bellerophon, Jason, Osiris, Pelops, Asclepius, and Joseph, son of Jacob).[122] Even

117 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 229.

118 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 229.

119 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 229.

120 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 230.

121 I italicize 'could' because of the ongoing debate related to the body of Jesus and its relationship to the resurrected Jesus in Paul. For a literature review see Frederick S. Tappenden, *Resurrection in Paul: Cognition, Metaphor, and Transformation* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), pp. 7–32.

122 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 231.

so, Carrier's faulty Rank-Raglan hero-type is most on display when compared to the non-canonical gospels. These texts contain some of the most legendary and extraordinary tales about the life of Jesus and are produced much later than the earliest gospels, and yet they score remarkably low on Carrier's Rank-Raglan hero-type scale.[123]

Even if Jesus' life merited a 20 out of 22 on the Rank-Raglan hero-type list (which it does not, as I have shown), this does not confirm his place amongst other mythological figures of antiquity. As the late folklorist Alan Dundes pointed out, mythicists' employment of this analysis does not have much to do with whether Jesus existed; it is merely an exercise in literary and psychoanalytic comparisons.[124] The traditions of Jesus conforming to these legendary patterns does not negate his historicity any more than the legends connected with Alexander the Great, Augustus Caesar, and Apollonius of Tyana denies theirs.

Carrier and the New Historical Jesus Historiography

After examining numerous fundamental problems with Carrier's overall thesis for Jesus' non-historicity, Carrier's final Bayesian conclusion that 'the odds Jesus existed are less than 1 in 12,000' is untenable and disingenuous.[125] Paradoxically, Carrier's main contribution may wind up being seen not as an advancement of mythicism, but as a criticism of current methodologies employed by scholars of the historical Jesus. Because of this, Carrier's work is an ironic contribution to the quest for the historical Jesus.[126] Put simply, Carrier's

123 For example, by my calculations, GThom's Jesus would score 3, GPhil would score 4, GMary would score 2, GJames would score 4.

124 Alan Dundes, 'The Hero Pattern and the Life of Jesus', in Robert A. Segal (ed.), *In Quest of the Hero* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 179–223. Interestingly, this point is similarly made by Price. See Price, *Deconstructing Jesus*, pp. 260–261. For additional criticism of the application of Raglan's heroic archetype to Jesus, also see Richard A. Horsley, *The Liberation of Christmas: The Infancy Narratives in Social Context* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006), pp. 162–172.

125 Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 600.

126 This is a contribution I believe Carrier would embrace, as 'the point of this book [*On the Historicity of Jesus*] is not to end the debate but to demonstrate that scholars need to take this hypothesis [the Jesus Myth theory] more seriously before dismissing it out of hand, and that they need much better arguments against it than they've heretofore deployed. A better refutation is needed, and a better theory of historicity, which, actually, credibly

methodological complaints represent a long and ongoing trend which other scholars have addressed.[127]

In the post-Jesus Seminar world of historical Jesus studies, newer scholarship is far less invested in determining whether Jesus did or did not say any particular saying or perform any deed attributed to him. Many now argue that historians can only construct 'the gist' of what the historical Jesus may have said and done, and this is to 'heed before all else the general impressions that our primary sources provide'.[128] The confidence that historians once displayed within historical Jesus studies has been eroded due to previous excesses and flaws in older methodologies. New scholarship has been advocating for quite some time that the 'historical Jesus … is ultimately unattainable, but can be hypothesized on the basis of the interpretations of the early Christians, and as part of a larger process of accounting for how and why early Christians came

explains *all* the oddities in the evidence. If this book inspires nothing else, I'll be happy if it's that.' See Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. xi.

127 Many of Carrier's concerns and criticisms have been longed noted and echoed by other historical Jesus scholars. See Chris Keith, 'The Narratives of the Gospels and the Quest for the Historical Jesus: Current Debates, Prior Debates, and the Goal of Historical Jesus Research', *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 38.4 (2016), pp. 426–455; Jonathan Bernier, *The Quest for the Historical Jesus after the Demise of Authenticity: Towards a Critical Realist Philosophy of History in Jesus Studies* (London: T&T Clark, 2016); James G. Crossley, *Jesus and the Chaos of History: Redirecting the Life of the Historical Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); James H. Charlesworth and Brian Rhea (eds.), *Jesus Research: New Methodologies and Perceptions* (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2014); Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne (eds.), *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* (New York: T&T Clark, 2012); Rafael Rodriguez, *Structuring Early Christian Memory: Jesus in Tradition, Performance and Text* (London: T&T Clark, 2010); James H. Charlesworth and Petr Pokorný (eds.), *Jesus Research: An International Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Williams B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009); Anthony Le Donne, *The Historiographical Jesus: Memory, Typology, and the Son of David* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2009); Rafael Rodríguez, 'Authenticating Criteria: The Use and Misuse of a Critical Method', *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 7.2 (2009), pp. 152–167; Bernard Brandon Scott (ed.), *Finding the Historical Jesus: Rules of Evidence* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2008); Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research: Previous Discussion and New Proposals* (London: T&T Clark, 2004); Hyeon Woo Shin, *Textual Criticism and the Synoptic Problem in Historical Jesus Research* (Leuven: Peeters Publishers, 2004); Gerd Theissen and Dagmar Winter, *The Quest for the Plausible Jesus: The Question of Criteria* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2002).

128 Dale C. Allison, *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (London: SPCK, 2010), p. 16.

to view Jesus in the ways that they did'.[129] In other words, Carrier's imagined historical Jesus of the academy has ceased to exist, as contemporary scholarship has advanced beyond such idealistic pursuits.

Scholarship necessarily remains open to the questions Carrier has raised, and yet, the answers he has given to these questions are unconvincing, if not tendentious. Scholars, however, may rightly question whether Carrier's work and those who evangelize it exhibit the necessary level of academic detachment.[130] If David L. Barrett was right, 'That every generation discovers the historical Jesus that it needs', then it is not surprising that a group with a passionate dislike for Jesus (and his ancient and modern associates) has found what they were looking for: a Jesus who conveniently does them the favor of not existing anywhere except in the imagination of deluded fundamentalists in the past and present.[131] Whereas mythicists will accuse scholars of the historical Jesus of being apologists for the theology of historic Christianity, mythicists may in turn be accused of being apologists for a kind of dogmatic atheism. But while some have no doubt found their champion in Richard Carrier and his version of mythicism, like others before him, his quest has been in vain. Despite their hopes, the historical Jesus lives on.

129 Keith, 'The Narratives of the Gospels and the Quest for the Historical Jesus', p. 426.

130 A concern shared by Bart D. Ehrman, Maurice Casey, and also Carrier. See Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?*, pp. 334–339; Casey, *Jesus: Evidence and Argument or Mythicist Myths?*, p. viii; Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus*, p. 14.

131 Quoted from David L. Barrett, 'The Historical Jesus and the Life of Faith', in *The Christian Century* 109 (May 6, 1992), pp. 489–493.