

# REVIEW ESSAY

## Bart Ehrman and the Elusive Historical Jesus

### Raphael Lataster

Bart Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist?: The Historical Argument for Jesus of Nazareth* (New York, HarperOne, 2012); pp. 368; ISBN: 978-0-06-220460-8.

Bart Ehrman, *How Jesus Became God: The Exaltation of a Jewish Preacher from Galilee* (New York, HarperOne, 2015); pp. 416; ISBN: 978-0-06-177818-6.

Bart Ehrman, *Jesus Before the Gospels: How the Earliest Christians Remembered, Changed, and Invented Their Stories of the Savior* (New York, HarperOne, 2016); pp. 336; ISBN: 978-0-06-228520-1.

#### **Ehrman on Jesus' Historicity**

In 2012 Bart Ehrman sought to put an end to the increasing scepticism about Jesus' historical existence by publishing *Did Jesus Exist?*, which I earlier reviewed in this journal. He has since published two more books on the Historical Jesus (henceforth HJ) in this HarperOne series, which has prompted me, as one of the few scholars to seriously consider Jesus' possible ahistoricity, to consider all three books in relation to the issue of Jesus' alleged historical existence.<sup>1</sup> In the second and third chapters of *Did Jesus Exist?*, Ehrman described what sources historians prefer, and focussing on Christian sources by way of necessity, he acknowledged that the Gospels are very much unlike these sources, being filled with non-

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<sup>1</sup> For example, see Raphael Lataster, 'It's Official: We Can Now Doubt Jesus' Historical Existence', *Think*, vol. 15, no. 43 (2016), pp. 65-79.

historical information and contradictions. To make the challenge of discovering the Historical – and indeed the historicity of – Jesus even more difficult, I often point out that the earliest Christian documents come from Paul, who knows little to nothing about a recent and Earthly Jesus, who constantly refers to the Jewish sacred texts and divine revelations from a Celestial Jesus (who seems eerily similar to pre-Christian Jewish – and non-existent – figures like the Son of Man and the Logos) as his sources of this crucial information, and who explicitly rules out human sources.<sup>2</sup>

Ehrman's solution is dubious. Throughout *Did Jesus Exist?* Ehrman asserts that the highly questionable, fiction-filled, and relatively late Gospel accounts can generally be trusted, because of the written and oral sources underlying them that "obviously" existed, though they do not anymore (for example, see pp. 75-79). Not once does Ehrman explain the rationality and widespread endorsement of this 'method'. Nor does he explain how his approach can provide information about the content, genre, and so forth, of these hypothetical sources. Finding this approach to be illogical, idiosyncratic, and inconsistent, I note that all of Ehrman's critics can do likewise. Fellow secular proponents of the HJ might use such non-existing sources to argue against Ehrman's favoured apocalyptic interpretation. Christian scholars might (and do!) appeal to such sources to prove that, contra Ehrman, the resurrection is historically probable. Those few that deny or at least question Jesus' historical existence could similarly claim that there were sources in which Peter or some other early Christian admitted to fabricating the story whole cloth. Unfortunately, Ehrman provides no reliable way to restrict this 'hypothetical source' approach, so that one theory is as good as another.

In other words, Ehrman had not achieved his aim. He had not proven that Jesus was certainly a historical character, and had not convincingly argued that that such scepticism is futile. In fact, he achieved the opposite; scholars like myself have become suspicious that this almost universal and long-held paradigm should rest on hypothetical sources. His book actually aids the case of Jesus Mythicism (henceforth JM), and its more measured sibling, Historical Jesus Agnosticism (which I subscribe to). Appropriately, Ehrman's next two books with HarperOne further aid the sceptics.

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<sup>2</sup> Galatians 1:12.

### **Ehrman on Angelic/Angelomorphic Christology**

Content that he had proven Jesus' historical existence, Ehrman's *How Jesus Became God* aims to explain how the merely human Jesus was exalted as God. In the first chapter, Ehrman explains that "Jesus was not the only 'saviour-God' known to the ancient world" (p. 34). He acknowledges that the Greco-Roman Pagans believed in different grades of divinity and divine reality; there was no great natural-supernatural divide. In other words, scholars should not just assume that the HJ was suddenly elevated as the one true God – a gradual process took place. In between the two extremes, Jesus was divine, but was not God. The second chapter has Ehrman admitting to the great diversity of ancient Judaism. This startled me since in the previous book Ehrman had somewhat of a monolithic view of Judaism, strongly asserting that Jews would not have imagined a suffering Messiah. He then correctly notes that some of the Ancient Israelites were polytheists and that even monotheists would have, like the Pagans, held varying beliefs about the divine. Ehrman even goes as far as linking the heavenly powers and principalities in the Christian Epistles to these earlier Jewish beliefs about the beings in the heavenly realms.

Most interestingly, Ehrman argues that since there are Jewish texts that outlaw angel worship, there must have been Jews worshipping 'non-God' divine beings. Sounding very much like those who deny the HJ, Ehrman explains that there were Jews who called angels gods, who believed in angels that warred and brought peace in Heaven, and who perceived Enoch as an angelic being. Ehrman even refers to the Son of Man of 1 Enoch as the "cosmic judge of the earth", and acknowledges that some considered him to be the Messiah, and worshipped him (pp. 66-68). He also gives a nod to 'Wisdom' and 'Logos', and admits that Philo of Alexandria describes his Logos as divine, as God's first born. Ehrman even realises that the Tanakh made it very easy for Jews to incorporate similar ideas from the Ancient Greeks (such as the Wisdom figure appearing in Proverbs 8, and Genesis 1's 'creative Logos').

All this only bolsters the claims made by myself, and my sometime collaborator Richard Carrier, who assert that all the elements needed to create Christianity, without a HJ, were already present in Judaism.<sup>3</sup> To such

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<sup>3</sup> The most comprehensive case for mythicism can be found in Richard Carrier, *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason For Doubt* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014). We have since published a popular book together. See Raphael

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scholars, Paul's Christ just is that cosmic Son of Man, who was later allegorised in the Gospels. In fact, in *Jesus Did Not Exist* I intimated that there is a rather unfortunate (for historicists) asymmetry concerning the evidence supporting the HJ theory and the Celestial Messiah theory. The Gospels portray neither; they describe the Christ of Faith. Historicists and mythicists both posit a different form of Jesus that preceded the Gospel's version of Jesus. Unfortunately for the historicist, there is not a single piece of evidence, pre-New Testament, for the mundane Historical Jesus. This is not the case with the Celestial Messiah, who some pre-Christian Jews did honour, as even Ehrman now acknowledges. Furthermore, when analysing Paul's writings with both these theories in consideration, it becomes clear that Paul's Jesus sounds very much like the Celestial Messiah, and it becomes apparent that some Pauline (and other early, pre-Gospel) passages are better explained by the Celestial Messiah theory and that the supposedly pro-HJ passages in Paul's Epistles are ambiguous and/or interpolated.

The third chapter has Ehrman acknowledging that the Gospel authors were from a later generation of Christians, "writing in different parts of the world, in a different language, and at a later time", and who "probably wrote after Jesus' disciples had all, or almost all, died" (p. 90). He opines that this time gap between Jesus' life and the Gospels' compilation is very significant, but again refers to his hypothetical sources. As if anticipating my torrent of criticism, Ehrman says that the many contradictions and fictions in the Gospels are because of this; the Gospel authors relied on hypothetical sources and were not intending to write histories. He even notes how anthropological evidence reveals the fallaciousness of the myth that oral cultures perfectly transmitted historical facts. It is almost as if Ehrman had abandoned his earlier book, and is becoming a dreaded mythicist. Nevertheless, Ehrman continues to endorse the increasingly irrelevant Criteria of Authenticity and the importance of his non-existing sources.<sup>4</sup> More interestingly, Ehrman describes Jewish Apocalyptic thought: good/evil dualism; the cosmic battle; the world being

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Lataster and Richard Carrier, *Jesus Did Not Exist: A Debate Among Atheists* (Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> For some critiques of the Criteria, see Chris Keith and Anthony Le Donne (eds), *Jesus, Criteria, and the Demise of Authenticity* (London: T&T Clark, 2012) and Raphael Lataster, 'Bayesian Reasoning: Criticising the 'Criteria of Authenticity' and Calling for a Review of Biblical Criticism', *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2013), pp. 271-293.

controlled by the demonic beings (as in Paul's writings); the link to the messianic Son of Man in 1 Enoch. To Ehrman, there are many hints of Jewish Apocalypticism in the Christian texts, too. Unfortunately, despite realising the great diversity of Ancient Judaism, and having access to the Dead Sea Scrolls, Ehrman ends the chapter by reiterating his baseless – and incorrect – claim that Jews could not have imagined a suffering Messiah.

There are several highlights in the fourth chapter on Jesus' resurrection. As expected, Ehrman rightly overlooks the miraculous claims in the Gospels, rejecting the charge that this is anti-supernatural bias, since History concerns what is probable about the past, and he further implies that any naturalistic explanation of the evidence is preferable to the supernatural one (though he later, as is his custom, plays the 'non-judgemental agnostic' who says that we critical scholars cannot comment on such theological matters). He also points to an inconsistency between the Epistles and the Gospels: Paul says that Jesus rose on the third day, but the Gospels only mention when Jesus' tomb was found empty. Just like the Jesus mythicists/agnostics, Ehrman thinks that Paul refers not to the Gospels (or even the stories behind them) but to the Tanakh, specifically Jonah or Hosea (p. 141). In fact, Ehrman no longer accepts it as fact that Jesus was given an elaborate burial by Joseph of Arimathea. Utilising the Christian and non-Christian sources, Ehrman thinks that Joseph was on the council that condemned Jesus to death, that Jesus – like so many other criminals – was thrown into a common grave, and that Pilate was a brutal ruler who cared not for Jewish sensitivities (p. 161). He is no longer convinced by the notion that it was embarrassing (as is appropriate for those who endorse the Criteria, as Ehrman still does) that it was women who found the tomb empty, since they were the ones that prepared the body, and women were quite prominent in the early faith.

Continuing with Jesus' alleged resurrection, the fifth chapter begins with an interesting discussion about how many conservative and fundamentalist Christians now value evidence; Ehrman notes how hardly anyone speaks about objectivity anymore, apart from the evidentialist Christian scholars that need to (p. 172). This aligns well with my own work in the Philosophy of Religion, where I argue that far from needing to uphold 'hard naturalism', the atheist or non-believer can be quite

comfortable with agnosticism.<sup>5</sup> The believer tends not to be. Returning to the Epistles, Ehrman realises that Paul believes in Jesus' resurrection not because of an empty tomb, but because of a vision. This again coheres with the Jesus mythicists who assert that the early Christians knew about Jesus and his sacrifice because of the clues left behind in the earlier Jewish texts and because of direct revelations from the Celestial Christ. Ehrman continues on to argue for scepticism regarding the religious explanation, citing much research on the commonness of visions and indicates that even mass hallucinations do occur.

Chapter six is concerned with Christology. Ehrman invokes New Testament scholar Larry Hurtado in recognising the problem that Jesus was considered divine so soon after his death (p. 235). The mythicists have a ready answer: an originally angelomorphic Christology; Jesus was always (considered to be) divine, and this is obvious in Paul's (the earliest Christian author) writings. This is also very simple. Ehrman engages in academic acrobatics to prop up his favoured low (adoptionist) Christology, despite recognising that the sources differ, with (the earliest Christian author) Paul advocating a high Christology. Ehrman's solution is that different Christianities developed differently and at different times; an opinion he shares with the mythicists. Ehrman further discusses Paul's high Christology in the seventh chapter, where he agrees with Susan Garrett about Paul declaring Jesus to be an angel in Galatians 4:14 (pp. 250-253). Effectively admitting that high Christologies go back further than he originally thought, Ehrman realises that Romans 9:5 might equate Jesus with God. Strangely, Ehrman is of the belief that Paul's 'Philippian poem' is pre-Pauline, which would make it earlier than our earliest extant sources, and yet he does not – unlike the mythicists – entertain the notion that the high Christology found therein is the earliest one. Thanks to Ehrman's penchant for hypothetical sources, it simply does not matter which extant source is older; any scholars can invent sources to bolster her theory. It is not insignificant that the theory favored by JMs is supported by the sources that exist, and the mainstream composition dates surmised by their critics.

The remainder of *How Jesus Became God* describes the later Christological battles, councils, and schisms. In chapter eight, Ehrman

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<sup>5</sup> See Raphael Lataster and Herman Philipse, 'The Problem of Polytheisms: A Serious Challenge to Theism', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, DOI: 10.1007/s11153-015-9554-x(2015).

mentions the Christian hobby of altering the sacred texts, the torture of heretics, and that most Christians eventually came to believe that Jesus was both man and God; that is ‘capital g’ God, not just some divine being. Chapter nine has Ehrman unwisely trying to explain the mystery of the Trinity, which should have his Christian critics wondering why God did not save us all the hassle and just explain it all, unequivocally. The epilogue is very interesting, with Ehrman claiming that there were times after the Council of Nicaea where ‘heretical’ Arians outnumbered more conventional Christians. He also notes that the rise in status of Christians from “a persecuted minority” to “the persecuting majority” spelled bad news for the Jews; after all, they were widely perceived as being guilty of killing the one true God (p. 360).

Though it does not aim to be, *How Jesus Became God* is an interesting book in the continuing debate over Jesus’ historicity. Much of the book inadvertently renders the ‘Celestial Jesus’ theory of the JMs and their agnostic sympathisers very plausible. Where Ehrman’s HJ theory is supported, it is only by way of his fallacious appeal to non-existing sources. This, combined with the mythicist’s habit of using sources that actually exist, makes for an intriguing and ongoing scholarly disagreement. And so we turn to the next book in the series.

### **Ehrman on His Hypothetical Sources**

I distil the entirety of the case for the Historical Jesus down to the hypothetical sources employed by Ehrman and his fellow historicists, because the extra-biblical sources concerning Jesus are scant, late, derivative, and fraudulent and/or ambiguous.<sup>6</sup> Hence, the discussion is effectively limited to the texts of the New Testament, primarily the Epistles and the Gospels. The earlier Epistles, especially those of Paul, make no unambiguous mention of a Historical Jesus that was recently on Earth. Nothing is said of his earthly teachings and miracles. Some of these writings even indicate that Jesus was killed in some heavenly realm. The Epistles discuss a Celestial Messiah, eerily reminiscent of the Celestial Messiah that apocalypticist (and possibly other) Jews, before and around

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<sup>6</sup> This approach was well received at a History conference in Sydney. See Raphael Lataster, ‘The Gospel According to Bart: The Folly of Ehrman’s Hypothetical Sources’ (paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Australian Historical Association, Sydney, 7th July 2015).

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the time of nascent Christianity, already believed in. The sources of the Epistles' authors are very suspect, with appeals made to supernatural revelations, and reinterpretations of older Jewish texts. In other words, the little these authors may know about a Historical Jesus comes not from proper historical sources, but from supernatural experiences and theological exegesis.

The case for the Historical Jesus then must rest on the Gospels, which are later compositions. Matthew, Luke-Acts, and John, effectively build on the Gospel of Mark. Curiously, scholars are increasingly supposing that Mark is essentially allegorising Paul's teachings, and even life, which obviously raises major questions. This issue aside, the Gospels are notoriously unreliable, prompting vocal historicists like Bart Ehrman to appeal to hypothetical foundational sources, which are simply assumed as being numerous and historically accurate. Without these hypothetical sources, it appears that the case for the Historical Jesus is virtually non-existent, like, possibly, himself. Curiously, no scholar has properly defended the unfettered use of such sources. However, Ehrman's recently published *Jesus Before the Gospels* constitutes somewhat of a defence, though it is quite late. The justification of his method should have preceded his arrival at strong conclusions regarding the existence and character of the Historical Jesus, and his harsh polemic against those that dare to ask the question.

Nevertheless, those hoping for Ehrman's proof of the existence of – and the reliability of – hypothetical sources will be disappointed. In the introductory comments of *Jesus Before the Gospels*, Ehrman simply assumes that there were (pre-Gospel) oral stories about a (also assumed) Historical Jesus circulating via eyewitnesses and 'earwitnesses'. However, his scepticism regarding the reliability of such sources seems promising. Ehrman explains that he has spent several years researching about memory and wonders – perhaps unfairly, given the work of many biblical scholars he does not cite – why more New Testament scholars are not doing likewise. The first chapter proper has Ehrman explaining that memories are often wrong, and can even stem from imagination. Critics might wonder why this applies to the Acts of Peter and not to the Gospel of Mark, and why the Historical Jesus could not be one such imagination, but I digress. Ehrman also downplays, as does Jacob Neusner, the anachronistic



argument that early Christians perfected information transmission as did the later Rabbinical Jews.<sup>7</sup>

In the second chapter, Ehrman says that pre-Gospel stories about Jesus were invented and changed, sometimes to convey non-literal truths (p. 50). He cites much interesting research about how memories are often inaccurate, and how the vast majority of oral tradents are not eyewitnesses. I find it interesting that the historicists like Ehrman and the JMs or HJ agnostics such as myself agree on so much here; we only disagree on how much of the material can be trusted, and to what extent. I would want to know how, in light of all this, Ehrman knows that there is a genuinely historical core. An apt example is to be found in Moses. There are books about – and allegedly by! – him, and he is the subject of many oral traditions, yet mainstream scholarship now accepts that he plausibly did not exist as a historical person. Moving on, Ehrman ends uncompromisingly: “Anyone who thinks the stories don’t get changed, and changed radically, and even invented in the process of telling and retelling, simply does not know, or has never thought about, what happens to stories in oral circulation, as they are handed down by word of mouth, day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, and decade after decade” (p. 86).

Ehrman throws further doubt on eyewitness testimony in Chapter three. Citing more research, he concludes “eyewitnesses are notoriously inaccurate” and that people remember, even vividly, things that “never happened at all” (pp. 88-91). Interestingly, most critical scholars do not believe that the Gospels were written by eyewitnesses, so the problems multiply. When Ehrman then cites a study on how simply imagining something can produce a false memory, and wonders if Christians imagined the HJ saying and doing things he did not, I wonder if Paul and those ‘Jewish Christians’ that preceded him imagined or wished that the cosmic Son of Man would communicate to them some ‘good news’. Interestingly, if pre-Christian Apocalypticist Jews did do this, we would expect them to come up with something that appears very Pauline. Of further note, Ehrman criticises Bauckham’s work on such hypothetical sources for simply assuming that these are accurate. Of course, Ehrman is guilty of the same crime, though to a lesser extent.

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<sup>7</sup> See Jacob Neusner, *Rabbinic Literature and the New Testament: What We Cannot Show, We Do Not Know* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004).

Ehrman goes on to claim that the canonical Gospels are anonymous, with Clement, Justin Martyr, and Tatian not naming the gospels they quote, and Papias' accounts being untrustworthy. Despite all this wonderful critical work, Ehrman occasionally slips back into his party-line and presuppositionalist eisegesis, finding Jesus' ministry to the Jews in Romans 15:8, which says nothing of the sort (p. 104). However, on Paul, Ehrman does dare to ask, "How could he not know much more? These are genuine questions that, at the end of the day, are not very easy to resolve" (p. 105). Unless you are a mythicist, of course. Ehrman then seems to track back some from the grand claims made in *Did Jesus Exist?*, stating that while the authors of the Gospels definitely used oral sources, they *might* have used written sources. He also entertains the notion that the Gospel authors fabricated their stories, but plays this down since there are often multiple accounts. This should not be so decisive, however, since we know that the multiple accounts are not independent, with Matthew and Luke copying Mark, Mark allegorising from Paul, and so forth, and that many of these 'multiple accounts' are hypothetical.

In the fourth chapter, Ehrman further cites research on the unreliability of memories, noting how humans are adept at "filling in the gaps", and that "remembering appears to be far more decisively an affair of construction rather than one of mere reproduction" (p. 135). Chapter five has Ehrman recognising the evidence against the reliability of oral traditions, revealing a preference for literary traditions. He rightly asserts that "traditions in oral cultures do not remain the same over time, but change rapidly, repeatedly, and extensively" (p. 183). In this and the previous chapter, Ehrman does a good job in ruling out Gospel pericopes as ahistorical but too often appeals to the criterion of multiple attestation to support the pericopes he thinks are genuinely historical. Recall that the extant sources are not independent, and the alleged foundational sources are hypothetical. As in his earlier work, Ehrman correctly states that "Supernatural miracles can never be established as probable. By definition they are utterly improbable" (p. 221). Interestingly, Ehrman thought thusly even as a Christian; a phenomenon I often encounter when similarly arguing for the improbability of miraculous claims.

The sixth chapter has Ehrman explaining that "collective memories can be feeble, frail, or even false" (p. 229) and that collective memories might tell us more about the author than the subject (p. 241). He points to the Masada myths, in order to show that such memories are products of

social construction; we see in history what we want or need to see. If only Ehrman, remembering Schweitzer's criticisms of the Quest,<sup>8</sup> would apply this principle to his own needs concerning the Historical Jesus. Ehrman does admit, however, that different Jews had differing expectations, including "Jews [who] expected a more cosmic kind of messiah, a heavenly judge who would come to destroy the oppressors of Israel and set up a mighty Kingdom" (p. 244). The seventh chapter is concerned with the great diversity in early Christian thought. Here Ehrman again acknowledges that Paul "says very little at all about Jesus' life on earth" (p. 278). He actually overstates the matter; more sceptical analyses reveal that Paul says nothing about Jesus that unambiguously situates him on Earth in recent history. In the concluding chapter, Ehrman correctly asserts that stories about Jesus need not be true to be valuable. The cynic in me suspects Ehrman of once again playing the 'open-minded agnostic', as I often do. The historical facts clearly are vitally important to many Christians, and to the issue of the first book in this series.

### **Conclusion**

Taken together, these three books form an important part of the contemporary discourse about Jesus' historicity. In the underwhelming *Did Jesus Exist?*, Ehrman states that his two key points for Jesus' historicity are that Paul calls James Jesus' brother, and that the Jews would not have invented a suffering Messiah. The passage the former refers to is ambiguous (and possibly interpolated), while the latter is wrong in principle and in fact. I deduced that Ehrman's third key point, and his most important, is that the extant sources can be trusted on some matters because of the hypothetical foundational sources that allegedly preceded them. Why we ought to trust these sources that cannot now be verified, if they ever existed, is not explained. Why other mainstream critical scholars, Christians, and mythicists, cannot do likewise is also left unexplained.

*How Jesus Became God* is a very surprising effort. In that book Ehrman inadvertently argues that the sort of angelomorphic Christology endorsed by the opposing mythicists is very early, and is to be found in pre-Gospel sources; the earliest extant Christian sources in fact, and even in

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<sup>8</sup> Albert Schweitzer and William B. D. Montgomery, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1910).

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hypothetical sources. *Jesus Before the Gospels* brings us full circle. While oft-unstated, the hypothetical sources Ehrman enjoys played a major role – arguably the major role – in his case for Jesus’ historicity laid out earlier in *Did Jesus Exist?* In this book, Ehrman takes these hypothetical sources to task. His criticism is relentless. Eyewitnesses misremember. We don’t have access to eyewitness. Tradents chop and change the stories, to suit themselves and their communities. Not everything is intended to be taken literally. This leaves us wondering about how it is that Ehrman can be so sure that the bits he likes are truly historical. His appeal to multiple attestation surely cannot assure readers, given that the sources in question are not demonstrably independent, and are often non-existent.

Even in the first of the three books, Ehrman presents nothing convincing regarding Jesus’ historical existence, something which he thinks is a certainty. The first book merely exposes the deficiencies of the case for Jesus’ historicity. If it is so obvious, why is this sub-par book the best that historicists can offer?<sup>9</sup> The second book acknowledges that Paul is seemingly uninterested in the Historical Jesus, that angelomorphic Christology is very old and is to be found in Paul’s writings, and that pre-Christian Jews did believe in angelic and Messianic beings. But then why is the ‘Celestial Jesus theory’ of the mythicists so derided? The third book lays bare the utter vacuousness of appealing to hypothetical sources to prove historical truths. So why can they be used to argue that Jesus certainly existed? For my part, I will no longer refer inquirers solely to my own work contra hypothetical sources; I will also suggest that they read this book.

Unfortunately for Ehrman, these three books do nothing for the case for historicity and instead provide much ammunition to the most sophisticated mythicists and Historical Jesus agnostics. Thanks to Ehrman, who seemingly intended to end it, the debate will rage on.

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<sup>9</sup> It is not the worst book from a critical scholar arguing for Jesus’ historicity. That would be Maurice Casey, *Jesus: Evidence and Argument or Mythicist Myths?* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014).