

# Critical Analysis of Language Bias on the Historicism vs Mysticism of Jesus

by Sven Nilsen, 2023

*In this paper, I suggest that language bias of Seshatism vs Platonism plays an important role in how people argue in the debate of Historicism vs Mythicism of Jesus. I also point out other perspectives that seems to be entirely missing from the debate, which are ignored despite scientific evidence. My conclusions is that the debate is scientifically worthless or irrelevant to the origin of Christianity.*

There is an ongoing debate about Historicism vs Mythicism of Jesus, which represents two different hypotheses about the origin of Christianity. Neither side argues in favor of Christian dogma, but portrays different interpretations of historical evidence. It is a debate in which the focus is not about Theism vs Atheism, but obviously, most theists are in favor of Historicism, since it aligns more with traditional Christian doctrines.

The evidence of a historical Jesus itself is very bad, on the edge of non-existence, which should suggest making room for doubt. However, the debate is more or less like a shit-show where people are throwing arguments back and forth without putting too much effort into making the debate moderated and respectful to both sides.

As a person observing this debate from the sideline, I try to come up with ways to describe the various positions in terms of language bias. My hypothesis is that what most people are doing in this debate, is to commit themselves to some language bias and proceed by attacking the other side in order to defend their own biases. The situation resembles a kind of metaphorical trench war where people put their entire careers on stake in order to gain a few inches of territory. While this is going on, there are large “Elephants in the room” around this debate which are avoided or ignored.

On one side, there are the people who argue in favor of Historicism, which clearly is Seshatic biased (from a perspective of Seshatism). Their way of arguing is based on the idea of crediting knowledge by causality, where Early Christianity evolves from one natural event, causing new natural events, taking place in the context of history. The emphasis is on the authenticity (in sense of Heidegger) and originality of Jesus, which is viewed as some sort of brilliant ancient game designer, laying out some basic rules of spirituality, out of which the sandboxed playground of Christianity evolves, kind of like a massive multi-player role playing game.

On the other side, there are people who argue in favor of Mysticism, which clearly is Platonic biased (from a perspective of Platonism). Their way of arguing is based on the idea of crediting knowledge by abstraction, where Early Christianity evolves from spiritual experiences, seen as taking place in a Jewish cosmological perspective of the universe. The emphasis is on the inauthenticity (in sense of Heidegger) and mythological aspect of Jesus, which is viewed as some sort of savior deity, used as a literary vehicle to transition from Bronze Age religious practices into new religious movements, who primarily sought spiritual enlightenment over needless animal sacrifices and superstitious beliefs in blood magic.

The missing side of this debate is, like it always has been in the past 2 millennia when people try to interpret history, ignoring how people through the ages used religion to advance their own political and social goals, or personal agendas. With other words, all evidence points in favor of people using religion (as a tool) as much as relating to it in a spiritual way (as a dogma).

For example, among ways people used religion that are mostly ignored by people in the debate:

- The demographics in Early Christianity consisted of mostly women, which indicates that the religious movement was attempting to advance pro-social goals, such as undermining the power of the state to perform religious persecution, saving abandoned babies, who often were female, feeding the poor and increasing the social mobility and rights of women etc.
- The Jewish origin might be explained as an attempt to form a new religion in order to unite the Jewish people, in constructing a long term empire, advancing the construction done by Herod the Great, centered on the prophecy of a Messianic figure signifying a new era.
- The demand for a new religion was to unite the elitist monotheism with popular polytheism. This is a point that is often overlooked due to the popular belief that Jewish religion was mostly monotheistic at the time, contrary to archeological evidence. Thus the role of polytheism might be more influential when shaping new religions, viewed as attempts to build bridges between multi-cultural belief systems.

Something that is important for people to learn, looking at the history from this era through a modern mindset, is that there were external social pressures that became a huge influence in how people shaped their beliefs over time. Individual spiritual experiences and personal communication, might not be used as the primary evidence of how beliefs are shaped, since both interpretation of spiritual experiences and decisions of personal communication are highly influenced by external social pressures.

For example, the idea of borrowing from other cultures and religions is a common practice when people use religion to advance their own social status. The reason for this is that external pressure from authority does not leave room for much experimentation on personal level. When people presented their stories to other people, they would naturally build on common knowledge instead of introducing too many new ideas.

This means that e.g. Greek and Egyptian influences on Early Christianity should not be ruled out, despite that the historical claims point to Israel as the geographical origin. Not even the people living at the time would object to taking ideas and inspiration from other places, as long it helped to advance their shared political, social and economic agenda as a group of believers. Using ideas from elsewhere was also a common tactic to reduce suspicion from authority, since people generally thought of these ideas as popular folklore, hence not worth being taken seriously.

There is a demand for new religious movements that undermine existing authority to present itself as harmless. The “Elephant in the room” here is that people from multiple nations were willing to take on ideas coming from, Jerusalem, a geographically outpost of the Roman empire at the time, located in-between two geographical centers of the empire, Syria and Egypt. Such a dynamical social process, taking place in multiple places at the same time, would probably not happen on a larger scale unless people taking on such beliefs shared a common underlying demographical cause, knowing that other people from similar demographics also shared these beliefs.

There is little benefit on taking ideas and inspiration from elsewhere unless it advances a hidden social and political agenda, which was evidently the situation during the spread of Christianity. The same rule applies to internal shaping of beliefs in the origin of Christianity itself, which might have taken ideas and inspiration from other religions and cultures. So, there is a possibility that Christianity in its origin took ideas from other places in the Roman empire and in turn the rest of the Roman empire took ideas from Christianity and adding their own ideas.

One can not rule out the possibility that Jesus was a savior deity inspired by other cultures and religions. This character could have been developed, as a tool, to unite groups of people who were struggling socially. Most people who lived in the complex political environment at the time would be able to predict the benefits of developing a common Messianic figure. This figure represented the Apocalypse, which meant the end of Roman authority in the region. It also represented the start of a new era, The Kingdom of Heaven, promising social stability. The latter is sometimes forgotten, since it emphasizes the hopes of socially vulnerable people, who were not motivated by demonstrating their scholarly knowledge in front of an audience, but to actually increase their quality of life through religious and political means. This demographics is consistently rewritten out of history, placed on the sideline, seen as insignificant of influence, since the people who write history almost universally come from a privileged social background.

The reason for masquerading this activity with social goals as a new religious movement, is to avoid suspicion from authority. It benefits the in-group when the authority views them as stupid and superstitious people. This enables greater social control of the in-group while shaping desired social boundaries to the outside world that enables religious conversion and zealotry. However, it also opens up the possibility of conspiracies and behind-the-scenes social manipulation. There are many examples in history where poor people revolting against authority while the power ends in the hands of a few individuals who manipulate the movement politically.

For example, the single most debated point in Historicism vs Mythicism consists of determining whether Paul believed James was the biological brother of Jesus, or a “brother” meaning fellow believer in Jesus as savior, as distinct from an “apostle”, a higher title reserved for the leadership of the sect. Notice, Paul was the person who contributed most to the inter-national spread of Early Christianity, in which role he took up as an apostle. One could also read the letters of Paul as a social tension between James and Paul where he deliberately avoids calling James an apostle, instead calling him by a lesser title, in order to increase his own social status to the readers. Such petty behavior is not unknown to mankind and Paul might not have in mind at the time that people would read his letters 2 millennia later. There are other places where Paul engages in similar behavior, emphasizing his own status as an apostle, for example, when he claims that even an angel appearing to people is not evidence he is wrong.

On the other hand, if James himself invented the Jesus character based on a personal agenda, or belonged to a group which held a dogma of Jesus as a savior deity, not a biological being, then there is none or little reason to believe that Paul refers to an actual historical figure.

Other explanations of Paul’s beliefs, that Jesus was the biological brother of James, are that Jesus was either was made to play the Messianic figure in public as part of a conspiracy of ancient feminism, political propaganda, or actually believed himself incorrectly to be a Messianic figure, e.g. by suffering from something like untreated bipolar disorder. Neither of these explanations have gained mainstream support among scholars.

The consensus among scholars on the New Testament is that Jesus was an apocalyptic preacher which was crucified by order of the Roman prefect Pontus Pilates. With other words, the most boring explanation possible, reassuringly scholarly sounding, that is still somewhat consistent with mainstream dogma of Christianity, while sweeping the role and influence of the demographics in this sect under the historical carpet. All attempts to portray this sect as consisting of mentally unstable people, possible radical feminists or ambitious conspiring political agents, are dismissed, despite evidence of this happening in new religious movements all over the world. There is a massively invested motivation to keep Christianity historically grounded in an authentic language bias (in sense of Heidegger).

Contrary to today's popular beliefs, archeological evidence suggest that polytheism was still widely spread within Judea and Galilee at Jesus' time. Asherah worship was mentioned multiple times in the old testament, sometimes dismissively as some form of religious prostitution, instead of a more likely historical religious movement to empower women. This propaganda effect might not be as large on the population (as popularly believed among people of today's cultural mindset), since most people were illiterate (98%) and most likely never visited Jerusalem. It is very likely that Asherah worship continued for centuries despite attempts to persecute it.

Here are more "Elephants in the room":

- While we lack significant evidence of Jesus' existence, which has gained a lot of attention due to the popularity of this character, the case is much worse for establishing consensus around demographics and trends in gender depending beliefs.
- Hathor symbols were found in Jewish female tombs in Jerusalem from Jesus' time, which indicates that Egyptian mythology might have an influence in the popular religion.
- It is possible that the distinction between monotheism and polytheism was more blurry at the time, than what is commonly assumed when debating the historicity of Jesus.
- There was also a lot of political instability, due to the previous assassination of Julius Caesar, which ended the Roman republic, and following murder of Cleopatra, which ended the Ptolemaic dynasty.
- There are also very few sources on the role of ancient spy networks (such as the one established by Herod the Great), their effort to spread religious or political propaganda and possible influence in shaping new religions to obtain political goals.

So, there are multiple external factors which could have influenced what people believed.

None of these points are even debated in Historicism vs Mythicism.

The impression I have is that the debate focuses on talking points which are not grounded in scientific evidence, but subject to interpretation and confirmation bias. The situation also serves as a gardened economic niche of book publishing on the topic, trying to present itself as a serious scholarly discipline, while ignoring the absurd nature of social struggle throughout history using religion as a tool for advancing social, political and economic goals, not merely as a doctrine.

I therefore conclude that the debate is scientifically worthless or irrelevant to the origin of Christianity. There is no new evidence to present and what evidence is at hand is not living up to the standards of scientific inquiry. Most of the books being published on the topic are targeting an audience who finds the origin of Christianity interesting from a perspective of Theism or Atheism, a place where people are socially vulnerable about their beliefs, unprepared to receive actual scientific evidence. So, the entire debate has boiled down to a few talking points in which nobody can make further progress beyond name-calling. In the process, the origin of Christianity itself is not debated scientifically, but merely to have a debate format that makes people engaged while staying comfortable.

The world has never historically been acting, on a scientific basis, as clean tapestry of patterns confirming to dogmas or simplified philosophical positions. There is no reason to believe that myth did not play a role in the life of some, potentially possible, historical Jesus, or that there were no claims about biological relationships to savior deities, considering that gifted individuals at the time were often referred to as offspring of deities by the general public. The historical and cosmological views that people had in this era, blended into each other and was used both as personal spiritual beliefs and for advancing social, economic and political goals. To assign the little evidence present to either interpretation just confirms to existing language biases and subjective assumptions.