JOURNAL OF RELIGIOUS HISTORY
Published on Behalf of the Religious History Association



Clearly the "shadow" of Brown's title hides the fleeing from reason into the mythic shades made all too willingly by Australians and their leaders. Brown is a provocative correction to the religiously emotive reactions and mythic readings of Australia, and as such provides some substantial beacons by which historians and citizens alike can guide themselves back to the light. Brown shows that many aspects of Australian civil religion, left unquestioned in their silent sacral mire are bad for its citizens, but perhaps as it is 2014, few Australians are ready just yet to accommodate this author's experiences and his sagacity.

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RICHARD CARRIER: *On the Historicity of Jesus: Why We Might Have Reason for Doubt*. Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014; pp. xiv + 696.

This is the latest in a recent spate of books discussing the controversial question of Jesus' historicity. Following Ehrman and Casey's sub-standard books for the affirmative, and my own work advocating Historical Jesus agnosticism, independent historian Richard Carrier presents a case for outright mythicism (the view that Jesus is ahistorical) that has the potential to genuinely shake up the research field, and contribute to the by now seemingly inevitable shift away from the consensus view that Jesus actually existed. Carrier's case began with his earlier *Proving History* (2012), which outlines his approach to the sources and method. Like many historians, analytic philosophers, and Religious Studies scholars before him, Carrier advocated a Bayesian approach, and stated his intention to use such an approach to illuminate questions over Jesus' historical status. He effectively begins this book (Chapters 2 and 3) by meticulously explaining the hypotheses of "minimal historicity" and "minimal mythicism." The latter position, highly influenced by the work of Earl Doherty, states that Jesus was initially believed to be a celestial figure, who came to be historicised over time. Chapters 4 and 5 see Carrier masterfully outline crucial "elements" of background knowledge supporting this position that are so forceful that the sceptically inclined may already incline to be convinced. These include the great diversity of Jewish faiths (Element 2), the early Christian practice of concealing secret doctrines within myths and allegories (Element 13), the Jewish predisposition toward positing an otherworldly victory (Element 28), and the ancient beliefs — Jewish and Christian included — in "celestial" realms (Element 34).

Chapter 6 deals with prior probabilities. Carrier employs the "Rank-Raglan hero" reference class, which Jesus fits almost perfectly (according to certain parts of the Gospels, which are rightly no longer used in further evidential analyses). Notably, there is not a single confirmed historical figure that conforms to most of the characteristics of the "Rank-Raglan hero." Being generous to Judaeo-Christianity, and to alternative religions (he intends to argue *a fortiori*), he pretends that several of these obviously mythical figures (such as Zeus and Moses) were historical, granting a prior probability of the truth of the historicity theory to be 33 per cent. In methodical fashion, the rest of the chapters then examine the remaining evidence, so as to estimate the consequent probabilities (how the theories fit the evidence), which, when combined with the prior probabilities, will yield the answer as a single figure (the posterior probability).

As can be expected by any critical scholar of early Christianity, most of the extra-biblical sources are discarded for being too late, derivative, and for likely not being truly independent (Chapter 8). In Chapters 9 and 10, the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles are largely omitted also, as they are unreliable, and these relatively late mixtures of myth and (at least what purports to be) history would be expected if a celestial/mythical Jesus was later historicised *and* if a historical Jesus later became mythicised. This may surprise Gospel proponents, but the logic is sound. The mythicist theory is not simply "Jesus did not exist," which the Gospels would seemingly contradict (if they were reliable), but that Christians originally believed in a celestial Jesus, and later attempted to place him in a historical setting. As such, the Gospels pose no problem to the mythicist theory. Chapter 11 discusses the Epistles, with Carrier finding much that is surprising if Jesus existed (such as Paul's silence on Jesus' ministry, miracles, and earthly life in general), and curious passages that expectedly (traditionalists see the Epistles as depicting events after those of the Gospels) and unexpectedly indicate that Jesus is a celestial — and not an earthly — figure.

One such passage is 1 Corinthians 2:6–10, which could indicate that Jesus was killed by non-earthly and malign beings. After all, had human authorities known who Jesus was and what his death would accomplish (their own salvation), they would have even more reason to kill Jesus, not less, as Paul asserts. It would only be Satan and his followers, who would be defeated by Jesus' sacrifice, who would have refused to kill Jesus, had they known who he truly was. As Carrier recognises, this interpretation coheres well with the celestial Jesus' death and resurrection portrayed in the early and non-canonical Christian document, the *Ascension of Isaiah* (p. 565). The latter interpretation fits minimal mythicism perfectly, while the former would at least be less expected (if not completely outrageous) on minimal historicity. In formal expression, less expected means less probable.

Though in effect unnecessary due to the nature of the sources, the damning prior probability, and the carefully constructed theory of minimal mythicism (which all the evidence seems to support), Carrier nevertheless mathematically argues that the probability of Jesus' historical existence is 33 per cent at best, and far less than 1 per cent at worst. He concludes that Jesus did not exist. Though I have no great desire to deny some form of historical Jesus, I am inclined to agree, and applaud his careful and methodological approach, particularly given the underwhelming recent efforts of Casey and Ehrman (whose key arguments revolved around non-existing sources and illogically derived and questionable early source dates). The most significant aspect of Carrier's book — as much of his source-criticism is already well-known — is that he seems to be the first to examine the issue of Jesus' historicity by incorporating a direct (and logically exhaustive) comparison of the plausible hypotheses.

As a result, this work far outdoes anything the typically amateurish mythicists have produced to date, but is also methodologically superior to the work of more respected and mainstream historicist scholars. My only real criticism is that the minimal mythicist theory fits the evidence so perfectly that some may see it as suspicious. This could be because the theory is simply true, or because it has been carefully crafted for this purpose, and suffers from a lower prior probability as a result (compare apologists who inadvertently damage their hypotheses by inventing evidentially unsupported excuses to counter the evidences of evil and hiddenness, in arguing over God's existence). It is up to historicists, however, to show that this theory is inherently implausible. As Carrier concludes, "the ball is now in your court" (p. 618). *On the Historicity of Jesus* is clearly and convincingly argued, extensively researched, solidly referenced, and is essential

reading for those open to questioning the historical Jesus, and to those who want to learn how historical theorising ought to be done.

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JEREMY GREGORY and HUGH MCLEOD, eds: *International Religious Networks*. Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Ecclesiastical History Society and Boydell Press, 2012; pp. xxi + 292.

As world historians continue to wrestle with how various webs, systems, and transference theories help conceptualise the making of the modern world, those whose research focuses on religious history are likewise engaged in an ongoing effort better to understand how formal and informal networks shaped the global development of religious ideas, practices, institutions, and people. The need for ascertaining how the movement of ideas and practices happened is crucial for making sense of the changes that have occurred in the history of Christianity. This finely edited volume takes up the challenge to further thinking about how networks have worked in the past and how those networks influenced Christians and Christianity. Based on papers given at the second meeting of the British-Scandinavian Conference for Church Historians that was held at Lund University in 2005, this book is the product of an effort to promote collaboration among British and Scandinavian church historians and encourage reflection on the role that networks of all kinds have played in the history of Christianity.

Although no single definition is given for what constitutes a religious network, the editors wisely chose to include a variety of approaches to the theme that shed light on how international religious networks have functioned in different contexts over a wide span of history. Consequently, the book offers a foray into the frontiers of religious exchange that reaches from the medieval period through to the twentieth century and deals with everything from metaphorical networks rooted in hagiography to formal and informal networks based on institutional and personal relationships. Whether Orthodox, Roman Catholic, or Protestant, clergy and laypeople all used networks to their advantage in forwarding ideas and practices that they found important. As the contributors to the volume show, international networks were as important for creating the medieval cult of St Thomas Becket as they were for the recovery of Orthodox monasticism in the Holy Land during the twelfth century. Networks were also crucial to the success of John Knox's reforms in the sixteenth century, the rise of eighteenth-century Methodism, and the development of nineteenth-century Korean Christianity. Religious networks even helped establish the limits of cooperation among ecumenical visionaries in the twentieth century, and reveal quite clearly how idealistic hopes were dulled by the reality of nation-state politics.

What becomes apparent in this volume is that religious networks did not simply occur because Christians or ecclesiastical bodies existed. Rather, there were circumstances that enabled an idea, a movement, or a person to reach beyond familiar borders to a broader audience. Some of these international networks are well known due to a lively historiography that has already traced out some of their contours, such as with the modern ecumenical movement. However, what might not be as commonly known are the networks that developed in a more haphazard manner due to a particular set of circumstances that allowed them to come into being and thrive. The best example of this