

On Constantin Brunner: A Rejoinder to Jesus Myth Critics

By Jacob Aliet
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Table of Contents

Foreword	2
Introduction	2
Criticizing the Critics	3
Mischievous Critics Ignorant of Brunnerian Doctrines	4
Ordinary People Cannot Understand Genius	5
Christ's Miracles: Ontological Proof of His Existence	6
The Inventors Were Too Stupid to Have Invented Jesus.....	8
Ambiguous Pedigree and Messiahship.....	9
Polemics Too Unique to Have Been Invented	11
Argument from Silence: Christ was too much of a Genius to be Noticed	11
Christians Were Not Interested in Proving Historicity	12
Christ was Considered Illegitimate By his Enemies	14
Christ Was Too Jewish To Have Been Invented.....	15
The Manifold Views of Christ are Proof of his Historicity	16
Apagogical Proof: the Alternative is too Absurd.....	17
Christ Was Too Sublime To Have Been Invented.....	18
The Evangelists Couldn't Have Been so Sly.....	19
The Quadrilemma	20
Jesus' Wisdom Was So Sharp, it Must Be Original	21
Conclusion	23
Notes.....	23

Foreword

Some Jesus Myth critics [1] have in the recent past presented Constantin Brunner's criticism in [Appendix on Criticism](#) as a disproof of the Jesus Myth hypothesis. This article is an examination of Brunner's critique and it is pursuant to Earl Doherty's response to [Alleged Scholarly Refutations of Jesus Mythicism](#).

Introduction

Constantin Brunner is a pen name for the German Jewish philosopher called Leopold Wertheimer (1862-1937). He started off as a journalist and later changed his name and proceeded to devote himself to Philosophy, a field in which he became a moderately prominent figure. He grew up in a Jewish family in Germany and ended up being split between the two worlds: he never professed a specific religion [2] and embraced German culture and language while at the same time he extolled Jewish prophets, among whom he considered Christ to be the greatest.

His story unfolds like a tragedy before us because he died of chronic heart disease in 1937 just after escaping to Holland from the Nazi scourge and six years after his death, his wife and daughter were gassed by the Nazis at Sobibor concentration camp.

Besides his Philosophical work, he dabbled in theology and religion and published *Our Christ: the Revolt of the Mystical Genius* from his forays into the field of Biblical study. He envisioned Christ as a man, a genius who was born amongst people who could not understand his genius. He believed that the miracles attributed to Christ actually took place as narrated in the Bible. Compared to the "critics" like Albert Schweitzer who he dismissed as incompetent, Brunner was an amateur in Biblical Scholarship.

He often surrendered reason to mysticism whenever the former conflicted with the latter. His tenor indicates that he lacked the mettle to hold back the cloak of mysticism, which pervaded his work like a contagion, choking the insights that threatened to emerge from his efforts. As such, his theology was obscure, and his doctrines were often contradictory and self-aggrandizing. Brunnerians today still ponder the actual meanings Brunner had in mind regarding some of his doctrines.

Baruch Spinoza's metaphysics greatly influenced Brunner's mysticism and spirituality. Like Spinoza, who was also from a Jewish family, Brunner considered the Bible to contain errors and God to be (part of) nature [3]. He criticized Aristotle, Rene Descartes and Immanuel Kant and rejected their Philosophies. On the other hand he embraced the philosophies of Plato and Spinoza. As a Philosopher, it can be said that he did not give the discipline what it demanded of him. His arguments, which demonstrated a lack of commitment to logic, were often poorly constructed and he was given to making *ex cathedra* declarations whenever he was

unable to muster logical arguments to challenges. He often failed to sustain a clear position in the course of lengthy discourses and consequently he often contradicted himself. From our examination of his critique, he comes off as a dilettante in Biblical study since he was out of touch with the works of scholars in that field. We find him often out of his depth when addressing the challenges presented by those he referred to as “the critics”.

Criticizing the Critics

In *Our Christ*, Brunner wrote a critique in the appendix in which he faulted scholars that employed the critical method in the study of Jesus. These scholars included Samuel Lublinski, J.M. Robertson (*A Short History of Jesus*) Arthur Drews (*The Jesus Myth*), Ernest Renan ([*The Life Of Jesus*](#)), Rudolf Bultmann (*Jesus and the Word*) and Albert Schweitzer (*The Quest of the Historical Jesus*). This article is a critical examination of that critique.

Before examining Brunner’s criticism, let us briefly examine the underpinning of Brunner’s beliefs. Brunner developed some theological constructs that he held as fundamental for the understanding the nature of Christ. Among them was a doctrine of genius that separated mankind to two species: *die Geistigen* (the spiritual elite) and *das Volk* (the multitude) [4]. Alongside his doctrines, Brunner also developed a matrix of causally related phenomena that interacted in his holistic worldview. He held that the essence of the universe was absolute thought. He presented the phenomena in a triangle with “Practical Understanding”, “Spirit” and “Superstition” occupying the three corners. He defined “practical understanding” as knowledge based on sense experience, like scientific thought. He defined spiritual thought as recognition that everything is part of a unity. He used “supersyition” to refer to thinking of issues from an individual perspective rather than a unified one. Superstitious thought, he argued, made the ego absolute instead of relativizing it.

Religions, according to Brunner, were superstitious and prophetic Judaism was not a religion because it had the revelatory character of mysticism, which, he asserted, no religion possessed.

Brunner’s doctrines were often self-contradictory. For example his doctrine of genius, which separated the spiritual elite from the multitudes, contradicted the spirit of egalitarianism which he often argued for in what he called his “books on the Jews” (like *Über die notwendige Selbstemanzipation der Juden* - About the necessary self-emancipation of the Jews). He also believed that the Jews were “the highest race.”

On the Biblical field, Brunner rejected Markan priority (which at the time had already gained currency) and believed that John was the earliest gospel. He faulted John for always “trying to put God in the place of the

man” and regarded John’s gospel as “the dogmatic gospel of the ghostly, divinized Christ.” Brunner regarded Matthew as the “chief gospel” that is, “the most significant, most integrated and artistically most powerful gospel.” Mark, he observed, was “the most stupid” gospel.

In his criticisms of the historico-critical scholars, the point of departure between Brunner and them was often his own doctrines and metaphysics, which he used as a basis for his arguments. He was given to arbitrarily redefining concepts that were ill-fitting vis-à-vis his standpoint as we see with respect to ontological arguments and atheism among others. He dismissed atheism as misguided because it denied the existence of an external God yet, he asserted, the cogitant was in us. This arbitrary rejection of established definitions of terms to suit his arguments often made Brunner’s positions unclear.

There is much to be said about Brunner as a Philosopher and as a logician but the purview of this article is the examination of his arguments against “the critics” in the appendix of *Our Christ: the Revolt of the Mystical Genius*, as presented on the internet at the [Appendix on Criticism](#).

Mischievous Critics Ignorant of Brunnerian Doctrines

In *Appendix on Criticism*, Brunner began his critique by dramatically evaluating the competence of the critics, labeling them in derogatory fashion and advertising the importance of his own doctrines in understanding the nature of Christ. He characterised the critics as “clodhoppers” that propagated “the most pernicious nonsense.” Their work, he wrote, was “ultimate buffoonery” with points that were merely “greasy and empty fatuities”. “Scholarly criticism”, according to him, was “egged on by inane slogans,” and was merely “ministering to bestiality.” He regarded their acts as proof that “human beings occupy the lowest animal level.” “Critics learn nothing”, he sighed heavily in his appendix. In his view, they were “empty vessels” who were “beyond help” and whose “pitiful, critically erudite, botched writings... are devoid of all thought and all joy, and destroy anything that has a soul.”

He faulted his opponents, who comprised orthodox theologians [5] and scholarly critics, for being ignorant of his doctrines and possessing ill motives. He claimed, without support, that they were not properly acquainted with Judaism and mysticism and on that basis, asserted that they were not qualified to speak about Christ. He asked rhetorically:

What can we say about Christ if we are not really acquainted with Judaism...what can we say about Christ unless we are aware of the mysticism and genius and the doctrine of the spiritual elite and the multitude (which alone can explain how

the historical Christ has become the dogmatic Christ), unless we ourselves are free from superstition?

In his criticism, Brunner never demonstrated these alleged handicaps on the part of the critics. Upon close inspection though, we find that his doctrines were a conceptual muddle. He claimed, rather incorrectly, that critical method had “contributed nothing”, and claimed that it was a “mischief which falsely claimed to be a study of the Gospels and Christ”.

These void accusations and disparaging remarks comprised the ‘opening’ of Brunner’s criticism against the critics. He generously interspersed his criticism with the dramatic evaluations of the critics. Besides the fact that they were ill-befitting of one that was regarded as a Philosopher, they provide us with a glimpse of the quality of the criticism Brunner employed.

Ordinary People Cannot Understand Genius

Brunner argued, rather loosely, that “common sense” could not grasp genius. Genius, he argued, could only be grasped by “spiritual *eros*”. He asserted that, because Christ was a modified, miraculous human being, he [Christ] could not be understood by the ordinary people.

But Brunner himself was an ordinary man – at least in the sense that he never claimed to belong to the spiritual elite (some dispute this though and they argue that the spiritual elite was a “community” of spiritual-minded people, which Brunner considered himself to be part of). Yet, he not only understood the alleged genius; he also proceeded to construct the doctrine of the spiritual elite and the multitudes, and erected a metaphysics that entailed the mysticism which he alleged, was a fundamental ingredient for the understanding of who Christ was.

This contradiction reminds one of the joke in which one person tells the other, “You know, there are only two kinds of people in this world”. And his curious friend says, “Oh yeah? And who are these?” Then he replies wisely, “Those that claim that there are only two kinds of people in this world, and those that don’t: I don’t.”

Brunner also argued in the same contradictory manner, that on the one hand, the “specifically Jewish character of Christ, in whom nothing of Greek influence can be discerned,” was proof that Christ was not invented through borrowing features from Greco-Roman religions. Yet, when critics presented parallels between Christianity and pagan religions as indications of borrowing, he wrote that “the really great genius cannot manage without borrowing essential constituent elements.” He argued, in an arbitrary manner, that the borrowing across ages and cultures demonstrated that Christ was “one with the essence of the people” and was “always and eternally true.”

This, of course, was self-contradictory but when one evaluates Brunner’s writings, one realizes that he was a man capable of holding contradictory positions at different times without batting an eyelid, and his mindset and reasoning was impervious to the law of non-contradiction.

Christ's Miracles: Ontological Proof of His Existence

Brunner argued that the world-transforming miracles that Christ allegedly performed were “an ontological proof for the existence of the personality of Christ.”

Ontological arguments [6] are *a priori* arguments that assume that the fact that something can be conceived mentally is proof that it exists. Such arguments rely upon thought alone as proof of existence and don't rely on sense experience or observation. Ontological arguments have often been used to argue that because we can imagine a perfect being, *and* because perfection has to entail existence, God therefore exists.

Immanuel Kant rebutted the ontological argument by stating that the concept of God, or perfection, did not necessarily entail existence because existence is not a property of a thing.

We can imagine utopia. But that does not entail that utopia exists [7]. On the flip side of the logic of the ontological argument, it can be argued that since we can imagine that God does not exist, God therefore does not exist. Furthermore, to exist is to have a causal relationship with the rest of the universe. This relationship can only be determined by sense experience or observation. Kant observed that imagined thalers are not real thalers.

To his credit, Brunner admitted that Kant was right but shifted the blame to Christian theologians and faulted Kant for misunderstanding the Ontological proof. He wrote that:

[the ontological proof] was misused in the service of superstition - to prove the existence of the God of superstition, the heavenly personage which men have kneaded out of the Absolute Being - and its being called proof; for there is no question of a proof here. The Spirit can no more be "proved" than the genius. A person experiences the Spirit within him, and genius is experienced as Spirit: the Spirit cannot be demonstrated to those who are devoid of Spirit and genius cannot be proved to the critic. The so-called ontological proof is not concerned with proving anything, but with stating a proposition which makes philosophy aware of its proper theme in the briefest possible formula.

This is obscure and so entangled that it defies unpacking in a coherent form. First, Brunner admitted that Kant was right. Then he accused theologians who used the ontological argument to prove God's existence, of misusing it in the service of superstition. Then he clawed back the credit he gave Kant, dismissed those who did not share his view as lacking the spirit, and then he claimed that there was no need to prove the “spirit”. This is not criticism. By issuing a fiat that there is nothing to discuss, Brunner was unilaterally closing the debate.

What we see above is the ontological proof gaining a new meaning and application at the behest of Brunner. Brunner would have us believe that

everybody else, like Immanuel Kant and Rene Descartes, did not know what ontological proof is and they also did not know the proper theme of Philosophy.

Whereas Brunner accused these eminent Philosophers and great thinkers of misapplying ontological proof, he failed to demonstrate how they misused it. Instead he supplanted the standard ontological arguments with one that he claimed, would “make philosophy aware” of its “proper theme”. Besides latching on an irrelevant matter like “making Philosophy aware” of its place, which was never at issue in the first place, Brunner’s approach was fundamentally wrong. This is explained below.

The determination of the existence of a historical person cannot be done in the same matter as the determination of the existence of a “spirit” or of a supernatural being. To determine whether a person existed historically, recourse to historical sources and historical method is necessary. Indeed, to argue about the existence of a historical person through “ontological proof” is absurd. Brunner’s egregious misapplication of Philosophy on a historical question is a classic illustration of the popular adage that says that “when the only tool you have is a hammer, every problem looks like a nail.” Indeed, oftentimes, his ineffectual efforts evoke sympathy.

Besides, as Richard Carrier so aptly puts it in [Why I Don't Buy The Resurrection Story](#), “No Miracles Today Implies None Then.”

The Influence of Jesus and His Miracles Prove his Existence

Brunner argued that because even fools knew about Christ and we know about his activities, “we are logically constrained to see his concrete, individual, human existence as the cause of the concrete effects we experience, as that which fulfils the conditions for contingency.”

This is a faulty argument that presumes that what is known about a figure, irrespective of who the figure was, is known because it is true. The stories about Mithras were believed by Mithras-worshippers. And their lives were influenced by their beliefs regarding the deeds and sayings of Mithras. But we are not therefore constrained to believe that Mithras existed. We require historical proof for that and the same criterion applies to Jesus.

The story of Jesus is not corroborated outside the New Testament gospels. And the gospels are patently fictional because they narrate about a virgin giving birth, dead people rising from the dead and the authors even narrated the words Jesus spoke even when Jesus was alone (Mark 14:34-36). These are markings of works of fiction because the claims in them are not consistent with human experience.

The laws of science are the same today as they were two thousand years ago so there is no reason to believe the laws of science were selectively suspended to allow people who had been dead for days to come back to life and walk in the streets.

In addition, Biblical scholars like Thomas Brodie (*The Crucial Bridge: The Elijah-Elisha Narrative As An Interpretive Synthesis Of Genesis-Kings And*

A Literary Model For The Gospels) and Randel Helms (*Gospel Fictions*) have demonstrated that most of the miracles attributed to Jesus in the gospels were literary constructions that involved borrowing from the Old Testament. Richard Carrier has also provided a historians perspective in his article [Why I Don't Buy the Resurrection Story](#) that explains why some of the miracles attributed to Jesus, like his resurrection, lack sufficient evidence to justify belief in their veracity [8].

Authors like Dennis McDonald (*The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*) have also cogently argued that through literary borrowing, Mark emulated Homer in the construction of his gospel and borrowed several motifs from Homer, for example, hydropatesis (water-walking) is found in *Odyssey* 1.98 & 5.48 in which Odysseus walked on water. We also find it in Mark 6:45-52 where Jesus walks on water. Odysseus also slept in a boat, a storm started and he woke up and calmed it (*Odyssey* 10.31, 12:169) and Mark also narrated that Jesus slept in the stern of a boat, woke up and calmed it (Mark 4:1-2). There are several other parallels that McDonald illustrates that indicate that most of the miracles in Mark, including the feeding miracles and healing the sick, were borrowed from Homeric epics like *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. We therefore are not constrained to accept the historicity of Jesus based on his miracles alone because by the same reasoning, we would also be constrained to accept the historicity of *Odyssey*.

Some of the events surrounding the alleged miracles were also questionable and their historicity has been rejected by New Testament scholars. For example, in *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*, Reginald H. Fuller remarks on Mark 16:1-8 which narrates how the women find and angel outside the empty tomb:

The angelophany is patently a legendary feature, as is the miraculous rolling away of the stone...The perplexity of the women as to who shall roll away the stone is inexplicable as a historical fact: why did they not think of it earlier? But it is entirely explicable as a legendary feature: it heightens the tension and prepares for the astonishing discovery of verse 5. [9]

We therefore have more reasons to disbelieve in the veracity of the miracles and events attributed to Jesus than we have reasons to believe that they took place. This effectively means that Brunner's argument above has no starting point to proceed from.

The Inventors Were Too Stupid to Have Invented Jesus

Brunner argued that "the Jewish Fishermen, tax Collectors, sinners and harlots" were too "superstitious, stupid and illiterate" to invent the genius that was Christ. He believed, rather incorrectly, that the authors of the gospels obtained oral narratives regarding Jesus' ministry from tax collectors, harlots and Jewish fishermen, which the evangelists then wrote down, resulting in the gospels as we know them today.

Since there were no historical witnesses to Jesus, his story was necessarily fabricated and this has been shown by early form-critical scholars like Martin Dibelius, Hans Conzelman, Julius Wellhausen and Karl Ludwig Schmidt. In *From Tradition to Gospel*, Dibelius writes regarding the New Testament narratives:

The first understanding afforded by the standpoint of form-*geschichte* is that there never was a “purely” historical witness to Jesus. Whatever is told of Jesus’ words and deeds was always a testimony of faith as formulated for preaching and exhortation in order to convert unbelievers and confirm the faithful. [10]

Straightaway, we can see that Brunner’s argument proceeded from a wrong premise because form-critics had already identified the fundamental question regarding the origin of the narratives, which Brunner was either oblivious about or was simply inattentive to. This author believes that the latter applied and that Brunner may have ignored the arguments by form-critics because their ideas presented a challenge to his doctrine of genius and mystical worldview.

To be clear, the first person known to have written about Christ was Paul. And Paul’s Christ was a heavenly, cosmic savior figure who Paul never placed anywhere on earth. Unlike the gospels, Pauline epistles never mention Pilate, Mary, Joseph or other earthly beings we find in the gospels. Neither does Paul mention Capernaum, Bethlehem or other earthly places where Jesus is placed in the gospels. Paul asserted severally that he got his gospel from God through divine revelation, and not from man.

In Galatians 1:11-12, Paul states: “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Brunner was therefore flat out wrong to think that the information regarding Jesus was obtained from prostitutes and other *amme haaretz* (common people).

After Paul, the first evangelist who wrote about Jesus was Mark. Mark relied on the Old Testament and Hellenistic literature to construct the story of Jesus and Randel Helms, Thomas Brodie and other New Testament Scholars have demonstrated this as I explain elsewhere in this article. Textual and form criticism has demonstrated that Matthew, Luke and John relied on Mark [11]. Thus Brunner’s argument above is false at all levels.

Ambiguous Pedigree and Messiahship

Because the messiahship and pedigree of Jesus was so ambiguous in the New Testament, Brunner argued, the story must be authentic because if someone was fabricating the story, such an author would have made Christ have a divine anointment to messiahship and perhaps a royal kinship.

Brunner noted that the Davidic pedigree of Jesus was even denied in Matthew 22:41. On account of these, he argued, these authors should not strike us as novelists fabricating coherent story. He concluded that they must have been therefore recording authentic events.

Jesus's Messiahship was not ambiguous. At least not to the gospel readers or the early congregations to whom the stories may have been read to as liturgy. In Mark, Jesus' messiahship was a literary "secret". Contrary to Brunner's assertions, the disciples and the readers of Mark know that Christ was the messiah. Mark 8:27-29 states:

Now Jesus and his disciples set out for the villages of Caesarea Philippi. Along the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" They said in reply, "John the Baptist, others Elijah, still others one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter said to him in reply, "You are the Messiah." Then he warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Thus, the disciples knew that Christ was the messiah. Jesus' messiahship was clear. What is also clear is that Jesus admitted it but the evangelist has Jesus tell the disciples to keep the secret to themselves. Luke 9:18-20 contains the same passage as above where the Markan theme of messianic secret is preserved.

Further, even the demons are portrayed as aware that Jesus was the messiah. Jesus commands demons in Mark 1:25;1:34 and 3:12 not to reveal his messiahship. He also demands silence regarding his messiahship after performing miracles in Mark 1:43-45 and Mark 5:35-43. Even after the transfiguration in Mark 9:9 and Peter's confession in Mark 8:30, he demands that his messianic status be concealed. Because of its pervasiveness in Mark, the messianic secret has been ruled by form critics like Julius Wellhausen and Karl Ludwig Schmidt as a literary creation by Mark.

Let us now examine Brunner's claim that the Matthean passage above rules out Jesus' Davidic pedigree.

Matthew 22:41-46 states:

While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus questioned them, saying, "What is your opinion about the Messiah? Whose son is he?" They replied, "David's." He said to them, "How, then, does David, inspired by the Spirit, call him 'lord,' saying: 'The Lord said to my lord, "Sit at my right hand until I place your enemies under your feet"'? If David calls him 'lord,' how can he be his son?" No one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Upon reading Psalm 110:2-3, it is clear that Matthew 22:41-46 is based on an incorrect interpretation of Psalm 110:2-3 as referring to the messiah, while it [Psalm] was actually referring to God. More importantly, contrary to

Brunner's argument, which implies that denial of Davidic kinship in Matthew 22:41-46 entailed conferring Jesus a more inferior pedigree, we can see that the passage actually elevates Jesus' lineage to loftier heights – higher than the Davidic pedigree.

As such, Brunner's argument is held up by a wrong set of assumptions that are effectively kicked out from under it upon close examination of Matthew 22:41-46.

Polemics Too Unique to Have Been Invented

Brunner argued that Christ's polemics against the Pharisees were "unique and inimitable as the polemics of Socrates against the Sophists. The portrayal of the genius and his times facing one another as enemies" he argued, showed us that Christ must have existed.

Contrary to Brunner's claims that Jesus' polemics were unique, New Testament Scholars like Burton L. Mack in *Who Wrote the New Testament: the Making of the Christian Myth* (1995) have demonstrated that Mark, for example, employed a Greek style of aphorisms called *chreia*. *Chreia* typically involve anecdotes that have a question or an accusation made by a student or a challenger, followed by a witty response or putdown by the person challenged. The Socratics and cynics used *chreia* in their writings, plays and philosophical discourse. Mack's analysis of Jesus led him to conclude that Jesus was a cynic sage and in *Who Wrote the New Testament*, he illustrates the "Cynic-like challenge in the teachings of Jesus" (p. 40). We find an example of a *chreia* in Mark 2:16, where some scribes and Pharisees question Jesus' conduct and Jesus delivers a putdown in Mark 2:18-19. We also find that a saying like "We have piped unto you and you have not danced..." which is found in Luke 7:32 and Matthew 11:17 are also found in Aesop's fables. A survey indicates that the saying in Mark 3:31-35 is based on Exodus 18:2-26.

Thus, contrary to Brunner's claims, Jesus' polemics were hardly unique and the motifs employed in them can be traced to Greco-Roman literature and the Old Testament [12].

Argument from Silence: Christ was too much of a Genius to be Noticed

Brunner argued that the "literary testimony [about Christ] is slight and uncertain" because Christ was a genius. According to Brunner:

The greater the genius, the less effect he will have directly on his age, the less attention he will attract from those who would be in a position to record interesting details about his life. The genius is invisible to those who surround him.

He attempts to support this argument with an example of Max Stirner, who was a real person but left nothing to discover or describe about him. And argues that even historical people can end up having nothing recorded about them. Of course, that is a false analogy because the character called

Jesus in the Gospels is not portrayed as a common man. Among other acts that marked Jesus as an extraordinary widely known person, it is written in the gospels that he made a triumphal entry into Jerusalem where crowds spread out their clothes on the road for him (Mark 11:8-10) and fed thousands of people miraculously besides healing the sick.

Contrary to Brunner's claims, Albert Einstein was a genius and several generations know and more will know about him. Thus it is incorrect to claim that geniuses have little direct effect on their age.

In fact, contrary to Brunner's line of argument, it ought to be asked – if Christ was such a genius, then how come no extra-biblical writer or historian noticed his mental abilities?

The idea that societies ignore geniuses is contrary to human experience, which informs us that society favors the brave, the brilliant and the charismatic. In fact, by merely being *different*, those that are geniuses attract the attention of the masses.

Thus, *prima facie*, we have no reason to accept Brunner's argument. The abilities of geniuses stand out. If they didn't, we wouldn't know they were geniuses.

To argue that a man was too genius to be noticed, where such a man was not a recluse and where such a man was allegedly astonishing the wisest men in Jerusalem when he was only twelve (Luke 2:42-46) with his answers, and where such a man fed thousands of people miraculously (Mark 6:31-44), is like arguing that such a man was too noticeable to be noticed.

Christ's life, as narrated in the gospels defied being ignored by writers and historians. Brunner's argument is seriously challenged, and even contradicted, by what is known about Jesus from the gospels.

Christians Were Not Interested in Proving Historicity

Brunner also argued that there is no evidence for the historical existence of Jesus because "Christians then would not have been greatly interested in merely providing evidence that Christ really existed; they did not have to prove his existence to the critics – for such sophisticated critics did not exist at the time"

This is not correct. Marcionites, like Valentinians and Basilidians, believed that God was incapable of becoming corruptible flesh and held that Jesus never existed on earth as a flesh-and-blood man. Polycarp and the Book of John also warn and condemn those that do not believe that Christ was on earth as flesh. So, straightaway, we see that there were those who did not believe that Jesus walked on earth as a man. Then there are those who rejected the story of Jesus as fiction because of claims of resurrection and virgin birth. These included Caius, Porphyry, Julian, Celsus and Minucius Felix. So, whereas they did not demand for historical evidence, they rejected the story of Jesus for reasons that struck them as more objectionable than historical questions. In the same way, when one is told that there are black roses in utopia, the fact that one responds by stating

that there are no black roses cannot be used to argue that therefore he or she does not question the existence of utopia.

In fact, early Christians were very much interested in proving the historicity of Jesus to those that held a docetic view of Christ. Instead of using historical evidence, they resorted to using slogans like “born of the virgin Mary” and “suffered under Pontius Pilate” which we find in the apostle’s creed. We can only infer that they resorted to sloganeering because if they had historical evidence, they would have used it.

Another example that illustrates the need for early Christians to prove the historicity of Jesus is Ignatius of Antioch. Ignatius asserts in the Epistle to the Trallians 9:1f that:

[Jesus] was of David’s line. He was the son of Mary who was really born, ate, drank, was really persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was really crucified...

Raymond Brown notes in *The Birth of the Messiah*:

In later Christianity, the creedal slogans “born of the virgin Mary” and “suffered under Pontius Pilate” were employed to refute the docetist claim that Jesus was not really human.

[13]

From the above, we can see that Christians of a historicist bent were indeed interested in proving the historicity of Jesus, contrary to Brunner’s assertions, but were likely constrained by the paucity of historical evidence. So they made the historical existence of Jesus a dogma.

It is also incorrect for Brunner to assume that writers only write about people to prove that the subjects existed as historical persons.

There is no conclusive extra-biblical writing about Jesus as a historical person by writers who lived during the period Jesus allegedly lived [14]. And what is available in the gospels is clearly non-historical and fits the motif of legendary savior figures like Asclepius. There are unusual and public acts that are associated with Jesus, that have Jesus as the central character, which would have drawn mention by observers and writers at the time. The staging of a triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem by an unknown peasant from Galilee occasioned by crowds spreading their clothes before him would have drawn reaction from the sophisticated elite in Jerusalem. Commentators would have mentioned the ruckus created by a lone man whipping moneychangers out of the temple on the eve of the Passover, and the reactions of the Roman soldiers who were regularly stationed nearby to keep the peace.

The wide-eyed-wonder of the thousands who were allegedly fed by this miracle-worker would have drawn reactions from skeptics and writers of the time to comment on the claims. But no writer notes anything remotely connected to the events noted in the NT.

It is worth noting that the fact that commentators criticize an aspect of a character in a text or the texts themselves is not proof that such commentators accept the historicity of the events narrated in such texts because *history is not the only issue that interests people regarding*

written stories as Brunner's argument incorrectly implies. That theological issues or naturalistic grounds underpin the rejection of the story about Jesus does not mean that the historicity of Jesus was therefore accepted as a given.

Christ was Considered Illegitimate By his Enemies

The Mishnah (*Berakhot* 17b) states, "Let us have no son or pupil who burns his food in public like Jesus of Nazareth". Brunner argued that passages like these indicated a polemic aimed at portraying Jesus as one who contradicted the Torah "by his heresy and manner of life".

In the Talmud, Brunner states, Jesus was dismissed as "a *bera desanissa* (the son of a harlot) and even a *mamzer u-ben ha-nida* (the bastard, and son of a menstruating woman)." *Sanhedrin* 67a, *Shabbat* 104 and *Mishna Yevamot* 4:13 also refer to Christ's bastardization.

Brunner also noted that Celsus, through Origen's *Contra Celsum* is said to have claimed that Mary had been unfaithful to the carpenter she had been betrothed to and was made pregnant by Panthera.

These claims of illegitimate birth and opposition to the rabbis, Brunner argued, must be granted a "certain credibility, not dependent on the portrayal found in the gospels, in so far as the moral criticism which was applied to Christ in his time is still alive in the tradition". He concluded: "all these details confirm, of course, the reality of Christ's existence"

First of all, the Talmud was written more than a century after the putative death of Christ. Because of this, the writers were in no better position than Christians to verify the messianic claims than the Christians who read the Gospels. They simply attacked what was in the Bible on theological and cultural grounds without evaluating the historicity of the claims in the gospels because the Jesus in the gospels threatened their theology and culture, not their history.

Secondly, the information in the Talmud regarding Jesus is far-fetched and clearly comprises fabrication of polemics against Christianity. As such it has no historical value regarding Jesus.

It is instructive to note that the critics who wrote the Talmud were not interested in challenging the historicity of Jesus but were more interested in challenging the messianic legitimacy of the figure presented in the gospels and making him lose appeal amongst the Jews. As such, they focused on emotive and theological reasons and not historical reasons.

That they tacitly accepted the existence of Jesus does not constrain us to do the same. The fact that they were distracted with religious issues whilst ignoring historiographical questions does not constrain us to do the same. Critics like Celsus focused on attacking the supernatural claims surrounding the birth of Christ as presented in the gospels, and the resurrection: they were less concerned with historical questions. Others like Athenagoras in *A Plea for the Christians* 15, Theophilus in *To Autolytus* 1:9, 13 and Minucius Felix attacked the concept of a human

being becoming a god because they believed that flesh was corruptible and incapable of possessing divinity. Indeed, there was much that was controversial about Christ including the claim that he had dual natures (both God and man) and his historicity may have been the last item in the list of controversial issues regarding Christ. That is the reason his historicity was not questioned by critics. As we see today, now that the other theological and cultural issues have been addressed, his historicity is being challenged.

Christ Was Too Jewish To Have Been Invented

Brunner argued that the “specifically Jewish character of Christ, in whom nothing of Greek influence can be discerned” dispelled the notion that Christ had been invented through the influence of the dying and rising saviour gods like Adonis, Attis and Asclepius that were deified in the Greco-Roman world.

This is incorrect. We find Greek influence in the figure of Christ as I have argued above. We find it in form of cynic sayings and dialogues that employ *chreia* and miracle scenes borrowed from Homeric epics. Scholars like Burton Mack, as been mentioned above, have argued that the historical Jesus must have been a cynic sage because Jesus’ interests, they argue, show very little interest in Jewish traditions and his teachings do not focus much on Jewish issues and institutions. This is contrary to Brunner’s claims.

In addition, the concept of incarnation that we find in John 1:14 (the word becoming flesh), was already present among the Greeks. Tatian writes in *Address to the Greeks*, 21, that God’s incarnation was similar to that of the Greek gods.

Even the *logos* concept was borrowed from Greek religions to make Christianity more appealing to the pagans. Hellenistic Jews such as Philo and Greek thinkers alike believed God to be transcendent and too spiritual and pure to come in contact with the material and impure world. Stoics, for example, believed that humans possessed the reasoning principle that governed the universe as per the mind of God [15]. They called this the *logos*. Among Platonists, the *logos* varied between being God’s creative forces and being a divine entity. Philonic thought entailed a “heavenly man” who had the qualities of the *logos* [16].

Brunner’s attempts at appropriating Jesus as a Jewish figure also runs counter the analysis in Burton Mack’s *The Lost Gospel*. Mack remarks: 'As remembered by the Jesus people, Jesus was much more like the Cynic-teacher than either a Christ savior or a messiah with a program for the reformation of second-Temple Jewish society and religion' [17]. Even though Brunner believed the *logos* concept was added to John later on, that is not enough to disabuse Jesus of the argument that he has the

markings of being a composite figure crafted using Greco-Roman religions and Judaism as the raw materials.

In addition, Brunner contradicted his own argument above when he admitted to the fact that there were common features between Christianity and pagan religions as a result of the former borrowing from the latter. Brunner admitted “the really great genius cannot manage without borrowing essential constituent elements.” So the purely-Jewish Christ argument was in fact refuted by Brunner himself.

The Manifold Views of Christ are Proof of his Historicity

Brunner wrote:

The Jacobite, Petrine, Synoptic, Pauline, Johannine approaches, different as they are from one another, all guarantee and cause us to discern the One Christ. So that is enough of historical proofs! – which we do not need, though we must not forget we have them.

The fluid nature of the character of Christ, contrary to Brunner’s argument, is one reason to question the historicity of Jesus and whether the gospels can be regarded as historical documents. The evangelists molded the character of Christ according to the different theological agendas they each had. Mack, *ibid.* p.6 noted that “each writing has a different view of Jesus.” The differences and contradictions in the narratives we find in the gospels work against them being viewed as historical documents. Richard Carrier explains why either Luke or Matthew is wrong about the date of the nativity in [Date of the Nativity in Luke](#) (Online) [18]. It has long been observed that Luke 2:1-2 places Jesus’ birth at 6CE while Matthew 2:1-3 dates it to around 6BCE. Either one of the evangelists is not recording history, or both are not.

To account for the different treatments the figure of Christ has undergone under various pens in the New Testament, Earl Doherty has argued in *The Jesus Puzzle* Christ was an intermediary savior figure in Paul that was later historicized in the gospels.

Brunner cited Robertson (*A Short History of Jesus*) as arguing that the pictures of Christ are contradictory and that Christ was “the most self-contradictory product of a hundred hands working against each other, a mixture of voices that never could, and never did, belong to one and the same personality”

He first responded by admitting that Robertson was right then in his took an about-turn and clawed back that concession arguing that Christ was so impossible that he must have been real.

This is nonsense. It is like arguing that something is so negative that it must be positive. Brunner attempted to support that argument with arbitrary constructs like “Genius shows itself in the unity of contradictions”. “Unity of contradictions” is a contradiction in terms because contradictions imply a lack of consistency, or unity. This quality of the genius of

embodying contradictions, it can be said, was erected by Brunner to specifically deal with the criticism presented Robertson. Thus genius was as Brunner made genius to be. It renders the notion of genius an arbitrary and meaningless expression that took whatever meaning Brunner thought befitting depending on the weather and the matter at hand.

In a remarkable departure from the tenets of logic, which demand consistency and lack of contradiction, Brunner argued by that by questioning the existence of Christ based on the lack of consistency in the narratives about him, the critics were seeking to dissolve Christ and his works “in their lack of contradiction.” He maintained that by being logical, the critics were mistakenly “imagining the genius to be like them.” According to Brunner, the genius could embody contradiction and still be a genius and their minds were simply too inadequate and superstitious to help them understand the genius.

This tactic entailed accepting irrefutable arguments and then engulfing them in the malleable, ever-shifting and fluid concept that Brunner labeled “genius”. Of course, in the process, the concept of genius was reduced to nonsense. This black-is-white approach to argumentation shows us that as a logician, Brunner was not committed to the laws of logic as a science of correct reasoning and we see that Brunner often chose the easy, abstruse way out of logical quagmires, rather than face issues rationally. The law of non-contradiction in logic states that a statement cannot be false and true at the same time. Brunner violated this fundamental law of logic. In his defense, he claimed that “the tension generated by opposites is the life of the genius, a life which knows no contradiction.”

He further wrote that the genius dynamically embodied divine nature and human nature, the *cogitant* and the *ideatum*. He called this obscure, non-verifiable notion “co-inherence.” Although he named his concepts and wrote about people achieving the “unity of consciousness” or “the I-Self”, he never provided any evidence of their existence, or how the alleged “co-inherence” could be observed.

These entities remained unobservable, non-verifiable constructs in his mind. He responded to skeptics and critics of his claims by accusing them of knowing nothing of the mystical genius and “lacking an essential predicate – endowment – which would enable them to undertake criticism”. His chosen response to historico-critical scholars was to chug out obscure explanations, one after the other without clarifying anything.

Apagogical Proof: the Alternative is too Absurd

Brunner used the apagogical proof, which he called an “*indirect deduction ad absurdum*”, to show, according to Brunner, “the utter absurdity...of accepting the critic’s premises.”

He exclaimed: “there is no smoke without fire!” and added that the ontological proof in the Gospels and Christ’s words, his “personality’s exalted attitude, his attitude of destiny, reciprocally illuminate and prove

one another” prove that such a man existed. Simply put, Brunner held that Christ’s “spiritual significance” was proof that he existed historically. He asserted that to think that such an exalted figure did not exist was absurd. In the construction of this argument, Brunner confused coming into being for coming into text. The fact that a story is written does not mean the story actually happened as narrated. The fact that people believe a story is proof that a story is believed to be true. It is not proof that the story is indeed true. After all, there was a time people believed that the earth was flat and that mentally ill people were actually possessed by demons.

Even the followers of the cult of Dionysus and Mithras were devoted and thought Dionysus as spiritually significant. The spiritual depth and influence of Christ speaks more about the extent to which human beings can be influenced by their beliefs and what believers have made Christ to be in their minds. It has no bearing whatsoever in the evaluation of the historicity of Christ, which is purely dependent on historical evidence.

The alternative (that Jesus never existed) was absurd to Brunner because he was not considering that Jesus may have initially conceived as an intermediary saviour figure. It is important to remember that there are several plausible alternatives regarding who Christ was and how he became to be influential. There is the possibility that Christ was an intermediary heavenly savior figure who was later historicized, as argued by Earl Doherty. The second is that there was a little-known man who died and whose body disappeared, and who was later apotheosized, legends built around him and was later magnified to a cosmic savior by the devotees.

It would of course be impossible to map such an obscure person to the cosmic savior figure who calmed storms and talked to demons as narrated in the gospels. But it is a more reasonable explanation compared to the idea that a flesh-and-blood man actually walked on water and commanded storms to be still.

So, contrary to Brunner’s argument, the alternative is reasonable and it is his position that is absurd.

Christ Was Too Sublime To Have Been Invented

Brunner argued that other miracle-workers like Apollonius of Tyana were poetic inventions were a pale shade compared to the “unprecedentedly[sic] vivid characterization of Christ.” He argued that Buddha’s picture for example, was “stiff, rigid, and ossified” whereas Christ’s life exhibited vitality, “both manifest and hidden, of its organic structure.” Brunner argued that Buddha’s conversations and disciples were mere categories and did not strike one as real. He wrote that “they do not touch one other, they do not share relationships, they stand like tree-trunks, speak like automatons, and none of them reveals the least trace of individual character.” He also contrasted the teachings of Buddha, which he regarded as “nothing but logical repetitions” that are insipid

throughout, with what he called “the gripping vitality of Christ’s authentically spoken words.”

These are dramatic comparisons, not arguments. In any event, vivid descriptions and fluid narratives are evidence of good authorship, not proof of historicity of the characters described in a text. According to Brunner’s thinking, the abiding friendship between Robin Hood and little John, and the deep joy they brought to the dispossessed, would make Robin Hood a historical person.

As far as Brunner’s personal reaction to Christ’s words, they are subjective and not useful in determining the historicity of the Jesus in the New Testament.

The Evangelists Couldn’t Have Been so Sly

Here again, we find a contradiction. Brunner argued that the evangelists were averagely literate writers who recorded stories they were told by harlots, fishermen and taxpayers who, he believed, saw Jesus (see “Jesus’ Wisdom Was So Sharp, it Must Be Original” below). In constructing the present argument, Brunner had forgotten his other argument and was assuming instead that the evangelists were Jesus’ disciples. These are two inconsistent views of who the evangelists were. Having noted that, let us proceed to the present argument.

Based on the incorrect assumption that the evangelists were actual disciples of Jesus, Brunner argued that they could not have proceeded to write gospels that portrayed them (the evangelists) as idiots. He wrote:

“And what sly foxes these evangelists were! With their stupendous erudition, they pretended to be such blockheads that they did not even understand the words, “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees” and replied, “It is because we took no bread” (Mt. 16:7). When their master was sorrowful unto death, they slept, and when in mortal danger, they ran away. Thus they give themselves the comic roles in their novel, they play the part of the unwitting comic fool, pretending they do not understand a word of Christ’s spoken wisdom...Such rogues, pulling the wool over our eyes like this?...they must have been quite mad...”

Biblical Scholarship had shown that the evangelists were never the disciples of Jesus so Brunner’s premise is incorrect hence the entire argument is false.

Furthermore, "portrayal of the disciples as ignorant, self-aggrandizing clods" [19] has been identified as a Markan theme of irony by several scholars. Narrative criticism informs us that irony is a rhetorical device meant to help the reader understand the narrative.

In fact, contrary to Brunner’s tenor, the resounding portrayal of the disciples as dumb is a feature that has buttressed the argument that Mark

is a work of fiction. Perrin remarks regarding the manner in which throughout the gospel of Mark, the disciples are presented as misunderstanding several aspects of Jesus and his ministry, “this is a theme which runs throughout Mark.” [20]. Authors write stories to inform the readers or entertain through and about certain themes. Several studies by early scholars demolished the idea that Mark was a historical document. Referring to books that objectively examined the messianic secret in the gospels like David Friedrich Strauss’ *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1846) and Wilhelm Wrede’s *The Messianic Secret in the Gospels* (1901), Perrin notes that the messianic secret (a theme) in the gospels “sounded the death knell for the view [that Mark was a historical document] by demonstrating that a major aspect of Markan narratives was precisely mythic” [21]

Themes that appear to be creations of an evangelist impair historicity and narrative. Narrative and form criticism seek to discern the literary principles that an implied author follows in organizing their work and it is through these methods, among others, that scholars have come to identify themes in the gospels. Portrayal of the disciples as blockheads has been identified by scholars as a literary device. Hence Mark’s intended effect was lost on Brunner, who, being unschooled in the field of narrative criticism, was instead taken aback at the profundity with which those he had misidentified as the authors debased themselves.

The Quadrilemma

In a construction similar to C.S. Lewis’ Trilemma [22], Brunner argued:

I could believe in Christianity without Christ but I cannot believe in Christ without Christ. I must believe in the reality of Christ; he was either a God or a fool or a Charlatan – Julian calls him the greatest trickster and mountebank who ever lived (Cyril, *Contr. Jul* 11) – or else the perfect mystical genius.

A trilemma is a logical fallacy that presents three choices, which typically comprise a choice between two unacceptable options and a more reasonable one. An argument that falsely constructs only four options, out of an infinite set of options can be regarded as a quadrilemma. Brunner constructed such an argument above. He claimed that Christ was either a God, a fool, a charlatan or a perfect mystical genius. Then he chose the last option, claiming that Christ was too human to be a god and too exalted to be a fool or charlatan.

Note that another option that Brunner excluded from his four options is that Jesus could have been a fictional construction like Moses, Noah or Robin Hood. Jesus may also have been misquoted or misunderstood. Jesus may also have been slightly deluded yet not fully insane. Or he could have been honestly mistaken about his nature. Or Jesus may have been a faith-healer and apocalyptic preacher whose actions were later exaggerated after his death [23]. Jesus may also have been a mythical

figure that was later transformed by later believers to a flesh and blood man as has been argued by Earl Doherty (*ibid*).

All these possibilities indicate to us that Brunner made a choice from an incomplete set of options. It is also clear that it was not valid for Brunner to present only four options as the only ones available and then misleadingly choose one.

Brunner was indeed aware that there were other possibilities because he lambasted other scholars in his writings for their rejection of a historical Jesus. Amongst Brunner's contemporaries was David Friedrich Strauss who wrote *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* (1860), P.L. Couchoud who wrote *The Creation of Christ* (1939), Albert Kalthoff who wrote *The Rise of Christianity* (1907) and Arthur Drews, who wrote *The Christ Myth* (1910). He therefore knowingly limited his set of possibilities to lead the readers to seeing his preferred option as the most reasonable one, while staying silent on the other options by other authors.

His quadrilemma was therefore false then as it is false today.

Jesus' Wisdom Was So Sharp, it Must Be Original

Brunner argued that the sayings of Jesus as handed down through the ignorant and intellectually limited *amme haaretz* (common people) are so magnificent and so potent and in harmony that their quality only survived adulteration and dilution because they must have been dominical. If the sayings were not derived straight from Christ, Brunner asserted, those sayings would not exist as we know them today.

He argued that the Gospels were written when some people (Mark, Matthew, Luke and John), who were no more gifted intellectually than the fishermen and prostitutes that Christ kept company, wrote down what they received through oral transmission from the tax collectors and fishermen, who Brunner believed, memorized what Christ said. (Note that this identity of who the evangelists were, directly contradicts the one Brunner presented above, that treated the evangelists as Jesus' disciples).

By belittling, without a clear basis, the putative transmitters of presumed oral traditions, Brunner sought to magnify the alleged wisdom that these people ended up recording.

But against Brunner's assumptions, New Testament scholarship has shown that writers like the author of Mark were conversant with the works of Homer and Greek writers and they indeed employed cynic sayings to make interesting dialogues full of witty exchanges and constructed the miracles of Jesus based on the miracles of Odysseus as argued elsewhere in this article..

Brunner's argument also incorrectly presumes a historical person behind the sayings. Yet Scholarship has indicated that sayings do not have to have a historical person behind them. The gospel of Thomas and Q are sayings sources among other sources that the evangelists used to derive the sayings they placed on the lips of Jesus.

Contrary to Brunner's enraptured admiration of this wisdom, a close examination of Jesus' alleged wisdom shows that some of the sayings were commonplace and even upon close examination, were not universally applicable as moral rules.

For example, Mark 12:30-31 exhorts readers to love their neighbors as themselves. This saying is also found in Leviticus 19:18 and is sometimes phrased as "do unto others as you would like to be done unto you" as it appears in Luke 6:31 and Luke 10:27. A similar saying was attributed to Confucius (ca. 551–479 BCE) who said "What you do not wish upon yourself, extend not to others" and Hillel (ca. 50 BCE-10 CE) who said "What is hateful to you; do not to your fellow man." Straightaway, we can see that the saying was not original to Jesus.

The sayings in the New Testament are generally regarded as good. Some even maintain that they are beautiful. But can you love your neighbor as yourself yet your neighbor is not *yourself*? What you consider *loving* may be revolting to your neighbor. You may feel, for example, that people should live in environments with the latest communication and transport technology, yet your neighbors' sentiments may be the exact opposite of that. In any case, the saying incorrectly presumes that people know what loving their *selves* entails. Does a smoker who is risking cancer love himself? Does a convicted murderer who wants to escape jail love himself? Should he release fellow prisoners because he loves them? What would be the consequence of that?

Daniel June argues in [*Beauty Is Not an Argument: The Three Moral Commands of the Gospels*](#) that the fact that a saying is beautiful does not mean that the saying is morally correct, or even practical. He writes:

Why should I do unto others as I would they did to me? Are they me? I expect treatment as Daniel, you as Mike, Jill as Jill: *Do unto others as deserved!* ...The criminal wants a break from the law, but does not deserve it. He probably does not need it either. Jail may be the best thing for him. The fact is, we do not always know what we want. Perhaps you need slaps, insults, criticism, sooner than kisses and forgiveness. Perhaps the criminal deserves justice, but not from me the bystander. I am not the judge or the police. I do not deserve to have to punish. In the same manner, I deserve to give gifts and be kind because I am a lover, not because they deserved love.

There are other sayings of Jesus are illogical or absurd when examined closely, for example the saying, "Love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, with all your strength" (Luke 10:27), which is also examined by Daniel June in the above article.

However a detailed examination of the wisdom of Jesus alleged sayings is beyond the scope of this paper. It is sufficient to note, as indicated above,

that most of the sayings attributed to Jesus can be traced back to the Old Testament, Q and other Hellenistic sources. And they are not particularly penetrating in their vaunted wisdom. That the simple sayings in the New Testament could inspire awe in a Philosopher is puzzling.

Another point against the argument regarding the authenticity of dominical sayings is the fact that form and redaction critics have demonstrated that the words Jesus allegedly spoke were fabricated whole cloth by the evangelists.

For Example, In Mark 9:1, Jesus states: "I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come in power."

Norman Perrin writes in *What is Redaction Criticism?* Regarding Mark 9:1, "...it is a Markan product" (p. 48). [24]

Even Mark 8:27-29 where Jesus asks the people of Caesarea Philippi "Who do you say I am", which is followed by him telling them not to tell anyone that he is the messiah, has been shown to be consistent with the Markan theme of messianic secret and has therefore been judged by scholars to be a Markan creation.

Hence literary and form criticism have indicated that Brunner was wrong to judge the sayings in the New Testament, as originally spoken by Jesus. At least, we can be sure some were borrowed from earlier sources and some were fabricated by evangelists to serve their different themes and theological agendas.

Conclusion

Brunner's criticisms fail to demonstrate that the Jesus Myth theory is without merit. Instead, we see that Brunner was a Philosopher who was ill-equipped at handling a historical question. This incompetence led him to make irrelevant arguments based on incorrect assumptions and made him impervious to legitimate challenges regarding the historical Jesus, which scholars like Bultmann and Schweitzer, Brunner's contemporaries, were grappling with.

As such, his efforts were completely ineffectual with respect to the Jesus Myth Hypothesis and his criticism merely showed how much dogmatic assumptions dominated Brunner compared to the facts and consistent logic.

Notes

[1] One of the foremost proponents of Constantin Brunner's ideologies today is Barret Pashak who maintains a [website](#) on Constantin Brunner. Jesus Myth critics regularly refer to earlier critics of the hypothesis, including Brunner, for support.

[2] Some of his devotees claim that Brunner was an atheist. This can only be correct if Brunner's redefinition of atheism (as being idol-less) is

accepted. Those that claim he was an atheist rely on a passage from *Hear O, Israel and Hear O, Non-Israel - The witches* (1931) where Brunner wrote:

I make the distinction between God and idols; for I am fundamentally godless only in your meaning of God, because I think of God as nothing other than that which alone can be thought of at all, God as Beingness—I cannot think of my life, something relative and negative, alone: my life is wonderful to me only because with it I think God. And thus I am certainly no atheist, but an adaemonist, not godless, but idol-less. Yet gladly I will call myself an atheist, in that by atheism I understand nothing but idol-lessness.

But in this paper, Brunner is cited as declaring atheism to be mistaken. It is not logical to believe that he believed atheism was mistaken while at the same time was an atheist.

[3] This is a form of pantheism called naturalistic pantheism. Proponents see nature as God, but in an impersonal sense. Pantheism is the view that God and the world are one.

Brunner was clearly a Pansychist: he held that the mind (thinking) is a fundamental feature, or essence, of the world. He argued that materialism was “thing-quackery”.

[4] The exact meanings of these terms are still debated among Brunnerians.

[5] Brunner accused Orthodox Christianity of taking from the Gospel of John and Paul epistles “a great deal of Pharisaism and religious idiocy instead of mystical depth” He thought them guilty of introducing the trinity and pagan concepts into the Bible.

[6] The Ontological argument has two versions. The first form is associated with Anselm (*Proslogion*, 2 & 3) which goes back to Diogenes of Babylon and Sextus Empiricus, *Adversus Mathematicus*, Bk.9. The second form is to be found in Descartes (*Meditations*, V) and has antecedents in Bonaventure, *de Mysteriorum Trinitatis*, 11, ll.21-24), and was the one famously criticised in Kant’s *The Critique of Pure Reason*, A592/B620–A603/B631.ll.133-136) and by Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 1a, 1.

[7] See [Ontological Arguments](#) for more on the Ontological Argument.

[8. For further arguments regarding the historicity of the resurrection, see [Is There Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus? - A Debate between William Lane Craig and Bart D. Ehrman](#)

[9] Reginald H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*, 1972, p.51

[10] Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, 1935, p.295

[11] See Peter Kirby’s summary on [The Priority of Mark](#)

[12] It has been shown by scholars like Brodie that Mark structured his narrative using the Old Testament’s Elijah-Elisha narratives. For example, Mark 1:12-13 is based on 1 Kings 19, Mark 1:14-20 is based on 1 Kings

19:19-21 [Galilee is from Isaiah 9:1], Mark 1:40-45 is based on 2 Kings 5, Nm 5:1-2, Mark 2:1-12 is based on 2 Kings 1:2-17, Mark 2:13-17 is based on 1 Kings 19:19-21, Mark 3:1-6 is based on 1 Kings 13:4-6, Mark 3:13-19 is based on Exodus 18:2-26 and so on. See the discussion [How much of Mark is from OT?](#) In which some of the parallels above are discussed.

See also Arnold A. T. Ehrhardt, *Greek Proverbs in the Gospel*, *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 46, No. 2 (Apr., 1953), pp. 59-77

[13] Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 1978, p.28

[14] Doherty E., *The Jesus Puzzle*, p.8

[15] Doherty E, *ibid*, p.200-224 discusses several authors who mention Jesus but what they mention is either inconclusive because it is information obtained from Christians themselves, or they simply do not refer to the Jesus presented in the gospels. Doherty examines references to Pliny the elder, Tacitus, Lucian, Justus of Tiberias, Seutonius, Philo of Alexandria and Flavius Josephus among others.

[16] Brunner argues that he is "quite certain that the whole Logos preface was tacked on" and does not "in any way fit in with the gospel of John, and naturally enough the latter makes no use of it"

[17] B, L, Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1993), p, 245,

As far as Q is concerned, Mack thinks that the early layer, was Cynic,

[18] Carrier lays the basic problem as follows: "The Gospel of Luke claims (2.1-2) that Jesus was born during a census that we know from the historian Josephus took place after Herod the Great died, and after his successor, Archelaus, was deposed. But Matthew claims (2.1-3) that Jesus was born when Herod the Great was still alive--possibly two years before he died (2:7-16). Other elements of their stories also contradict each other. Since Josephus precisely dates the census to 6 A.D. and Herod's death to 4 B.C., and the sequence is indisputable, Luke and Matthew contradict each other."

[19] Michael A. Turton identifies irony as a Markan theme in [Historical Commentary on the Gospel of Mark](#).

See also Donahue, John R., and Harrington, Daniel J. 2002. *The Gospel of Mark*. Sacra Pagina Commentary Series (Harrington, Daniel J. ed). Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, p.184, Wills, Lawrence M. 1997. *The Quest Of The Historical Gospel: Mark, John And The Origins Of The Gospel Genre*. New York: Routledge, p117.

[20] *ibid*, p.8

[21] *ibid*, p.7

[22] In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis argued regarding Jesus' teachings that either he was telling people lies, and if so, he was a liar, or he was telling people lies but did not know it, hence a lunatic, or he was full of deep wisdom, hence lord. The Christian apologist Josh McDowell used this same argument to argue that Jesus was a divine being in his books *More than a Carpenter* and *The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*.

[23] This is argued by Brian Holtz in [Turkel Rebutted on Trilemma](#). He writes that the fourth possibility is “that Jesus was a faith-healer and apocalyptic preacher whose deluded belief in his importance was strengthened in the months leading up to his anticipated martyrdom and was misinterpreted and exaggerated afterwards.”

[24] Norman Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* , 1970, p.62.

Perrin argues that Mark 9:1 has distinctively Markan characteristics and is related in form to Mark 13:30 and in content, it is related to Mark 3:38.