

The unmentioned Jesus

By [Steve Thorngate](#)

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I'm the web editor in these here parts, and my morning routine includes checking a variety of sources for hits on the phrase "Christian century." This works better for us than it does for *Time* but worse than it does for *Timothy McSweeney's Quarterly Concern*: most of the links are indeed about us, but not all of them.

Sometimes people are talking about not the magazine but the concept for which it was named. Occasionally they're saying something like "I'm a Christian. Century 21 is my favorite real estate company [or [defunct Andorran political party](#)]."

And lately, a lot of them are speaking of not the 20th century but the first. They're quoting Bart Ehrman:

In the entire first Christian century Jesus is not mentioned by a single Greek or Roman historian, religion scholar, politician, philosopher or poet. His name never occurs in a single inscription, and it is never found in a single piece of private correspondence. Zero! Zip references.

Or rather, *misquoting* him. I can't seem to get away from [tweets](#) that truncate Ehrman (he isn't pithy enough already?) to "In the entire first Christian century, Jesus is never mentioned." Which is, of course, ridiculous and false. (Though [coming from someone](#) named "There are no gods" and Twitter-handled "@god_sucks," it certainly *seems* credible.)

And even if they got the quote right, it lacks context: Ehrman's not arguing against the existence of Jesus. (He's been [fairly clear](#) about that.) He's arguing that the earliest sources are all Christian sources and are unreliable in terms of historical detail. And [he says this after stating](#) that "there's no doubt that the historical Jesus is the most important person in the history of western civilization."

Oh, internets. The series of connected tubes has been good to Jesus mythicists. For more on this, see [CCblogger James McGrath](#), both [at his blog](#) and [in his Century article on the subject](#). I won't wade any deeper into this one myself—mostly I'm just amused that I can't seem to escape these silly tweets.