

ANSWERING THE CHRIST MYTH THEORY

By "True Realistic Thinking" (A pseudonym).

Before anyone jumps to the conclusion about who I am and what my motives are, they should first know that I am not a Christian. I was merely curious about the claims often purported by Mythicists (those that hold to the Christ Myth theory) and wanted to see if they bore any truth. This is the results of my initial investigation:

The claim often heard goes something like this: *"Jesus is just a made up savior who was a copy-cat from pagan gods,"*

This ill-founded comment comes from a thread on /Christianity/ from an atheist and Christ Mythicist who was debating the existence of Jesus.

We've all heard this assertion before, the claim is Jesus is copied from pagan gods and religions. It's the classic "Christ myth theory" where the proposition is that Jesus is just an invented literary character inspired by numerous Pagan gods who apparently have alleged similarities to Jesus. The common most frequently cited gods being Horus, Adonis, Mithras and Dionysus. The claims made follow as such:

<<These gods all had virgin births, performed the same miracles as Jesus and ended up dying (some by crucifixion) before resurrecting.>>

When we read the stories of these gods however, we find these claims to be unfounded.

One particular claim of similarity comes from Bill Maher who made this claim of Horus in his Religious documentary:

Written in 1280 B.C., the Book of the Dead describes a God, Horus. Horus is the son of the god Osiris, born to a virgin mother. He was baptized in a river by Anup the Baptizer who was later beheaded. Like Jesus, Horus was tempted while alone in the desert, healed the sick, the blind, cast out demons, and walked on water. He raised Asar from the dead. "Asar" translates to "Lazarus." Oh, yeah, he also had twelve disciples. Yes, Horus was crucified first, and after three days, two women announced Horus, the savior of humanity, had been resurrected.

These claims all come from the discredited source of Gerald Massey [Egyptologists Kenneth Kitchen of the University of Liverpool and Ron Leprohan of the University of Toronto in Canada have thoroughly examined the claims of Massey and arrived at dismissing them as pure nonsense, also for several other references on this, put in your search engine: "Gerald Massey" +claims +discredited] and his claims are not mentioned in any Egyptian document or record.

In actuality Horus was not born by a virgin birth but rather by the union of Osiris and Isis. He did not perform the same miracles as Jesus, Anup the Baptizer is a fabricated character based on Anubis who did not baptize people, Horus was not tempted in the desert (he battles Set in the desert), he did not raise anyone from the dead, he was not crucified, he did not have twelve disciples and he was not considered the savior of humanity.

Sources:

<http://www.laits.utexas.edu/cairo/teachers/osiris.pdf>

<http://www.touregypt.net/featurestories/horus.htm>

New York Folklore Quarterly, Volume 29

<http://www.jonsorensen.net/2012/10/25/horus-manure-debunking-the-jesushorus-connection/>

The same is often claimed of Adonis.

In actuality, Adonis was born either from Phoenix and Aephesiboea, or Cinyras and Metharme, another legend says he was born from an incestuous relationship between Myrrha and her father. Either way not a virgin birth and certainly not a god. Adonis was not crucified and his "resurrection" is annually. He would spend six months in Hell (Hades) with Persephone and then the other six months Aphrodite on Earth. Technically he was torn between two lovers. He was not the savior of humanity and did not die for humanity (he was killed by a wild boar sent by Artemis).

Sources:

<http://www.pantheon.org/articles/a/adonis.html>

<http://www.greekmyths-greekmythology.com/myth-aphrodite-adonis/>

Mithras and Dionysus are the same here too. Mithras was not born of a virgin (he was born from a rock), was not considered a savior, was not crucified and if anything, the Mithras cult began stealing from Christianity (this is what the 2nd century Christian writer Justin Martyr claimed). Dionysus was born between the relationship between Zeus and Semele, she died during sexual intercourse forcing Zeus to take the unborn god and put him into his thigh where he grew as a baby. He was not crucified and did not resurrect. He was brought back to life at one point but that was by when Zeus (or Rhea in other legends) had to assemble all the dismembered parts of Dionysus to bring him back to life.

Sources:

http://www.greekmythology.com/Other_Gods/Dionysus/dionysus.html

<http://www.theoi.com/Olympios/DionysosMyths.html>

<http://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/mithras/>

In a last desperate attempt to disprove Jesus, we have two other comments in the Reddit thread, considering Richard Carrier a legit source on Jesus and the pagan gods.

Richard Carrier argues this:

"The only pre-Christian man to be buried and resurrected and deified in his own lifetime, that I know of, is the Thracian god Zalmoxis (also called Salmoxis or Gebele'izis), who is described in the mid-5th-century B.C.E. by Herodotus (4.94-96), and also mentioned in Plato's Charmides (156d-158b) in the early-4th-century B.C.E. According to the hostile account of Greek informants, Zalmoxis buried himself alive, telling his followers he would be resurrected in three years, but he merely resided in a hidden dwelling all that time. His inevitable "resurrection" led to his deification, and a religion surrounding him, which preached heavenly immortality for believers,

persisted for centuries.

The only case, that I know, of a pre-Christian god actually being crucified and then resurrected is Inanna (also known as Ishtar), a Sumerian goddess whose crucifixion, resurrection and escape from the underworld is told in cuneiform tablets inscribed c. 1500 B.C.E., attesting to a very old tradition. The best account and translation of the text is to be found in Samuel Kramer's History Begins at Sumer, pp. 154ff., but be sure to use the third revised edition (1981), since the text was significantly revised after new discoveries were made. For instance, the tablet was once believed to describe the resurrection of Inanna's lover, Tammuz (also known as Dumuzi). Graves thus mistakenly lists Tammuz as one of his "Sixteen Crucified Saviors." Of course, Graves cannot be discredited for this particular error, since in his day scholars still thought the tablet referred to that god (Kramer explains how this mistake happened)."

Zalmoxis is not born of a virgin, he was not crucified and he fakes his death so never actually resurrected.

<http://www.mircea-eliade.com/from-primitives-to-zen/036.html>

According to the Greek historian and writer Herodotus:

"Zalmoxis (Saitnoxis) was the Supreme God of the Getae (or Dacians), a Thracian people inhabiting a territory including today's Romania, but also extending farther east and northeast. Our only important information concerning this rather enigmatic deity is the text of Herodotus quoted below. The scholars have interpreted Zalmoxis as a Sky-god, a god of the dead, a Mystery-god, etc.

But before he came to the Ister, he first subdued the Getae, who pretend to be immortal. The Thracians of Salmydessus and of the country above the towns of Apollonia and Mesambria, who are called Cyrmaianae and Nipsaei, surrendered themselves unresisting to Darius; but the Getae, who are the bravest and most law-abiding of all Thracians, resisted with obstinacy, and were enslaved forthwith.

As to their claim to be immortal, this is how they show it: they believe that they do not die, but that he who perishes goes to the god Salmoxis of Gebelexis, as some of them call him. Once in every five years they choose by lot one of their people and send him as a messenger to Salmoxis, charged to tell of their needs; and this is their manner of sending: Three lances are held by men thereto appointed; others seize the messenger to Salmoxis by his hands and feet, and swing and hurl him aloft on to the spear-point. If he be killed by the cast, they believe that the gods regard them with favour; but if he be not killed, they blame the messenger himself, deeming him a bad man, and send another messenger in place of him whom they blame. It is while the man yet lives that they charge him with the message. Moreover when there is thunder and lightning these same Thracians shoot arrows skyward as a threat to the god, believing in no other god but their own.

For myself, I have been told by the Greeks who dwell beside the Hellespont and Pontus that this Salmoxis was a man who was once a slave in Samos, his master being Pythagoras, son of Mnesarchus; presently, after being freed and gaining great wealth, he returned to his own country. Now the Thracians were a meanly-living and simple witted folk, but this Salmoxis knew Ionian usages and a fuller way of life than the Thracian; for he had consorted with Greeks, and

moreover with one of the greatest Greek teachers, Pythagoras; wherefore he made himself a hall, where he entertained and feasted the chief among his countrymen, and taught them that neither he nor his guests nor any of their descendants should ever die, but that they should go to a place where they would live for ever and have all good things. While he was doing as I have said and teaching this doctrine, he was all the while making him an underground chamber. When this was finished, he vanished from the sight of the Thracians, and descended into the underground chamber, where he lived for three years, the Thracians wishing him back and mourning him for dead; then in the fourth year he appeared to the Thracians, and thus they came to believe what Salmoxis had told them. Such is the Greek story about him.

For myself, I neither disbelieve nor fully believe the tale about Salmoxis and his underground chamber; but I think that he lived many years before Pythagoras; and whether there was a man called Salmoxis, or this be the name the Getae for a god of their country, I have done with him." ~ (Herodotus, 'History.' IV, 93-6)

Inanna isn't crucified at all. She is struck down and has her corpse hung "from a hook" according to the story. She was resurrected when two beings named gala-tura and the kur-jara were sent to rescue her, bringing her back by a "life giving plant" and "life giving water." This is according to the poem of her death and resurrection itself:

164-172 After she had crouched down and had her clothes removed, they were carried away. Then she made her sister Erec-ki-gala rise from her throne, and instead she sat on her throne. The Anuna, the seven judges, rendered their decision against her. They looked at her -- it was the look of death. They spoke to her -- it was the speech of anger. They shouted at her -- it was the shout of heavy guilt. The afflicted woman was turned into a corpse. And the corpse was hung on a hook.

273-281 They were offered a river with its water -- they did not accept it. They were offered a field with its grain -- they did not accept it. They said to her: "Give us the corpse hanging on the hook." Holy Erec-ki-gala answered the gala-tura and the kur-jara: "The corpse is that of your queen." They said to her: "Whether it is that of our king or that of our queen, give it to us." They were given the corpse hanging on the hook. One of them sprinkled on it the life-giving plant and the other the life-giving water. And thus Inana arose.

<http://www.ancient.eu/article/215/>
<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/section1/tr141.htm>

So the truth we arrive at here is that Richard Carrier's is completely wrong and shows he's a bad researcher.

It seems all these connections to Jesus focus on the resurrection of these pagan gods (which in no way match the resurrection of Jesus or why he resurrected). The proponents of this theory seem to ignore details as they desperately try to link Jesus as being a literary invention inspired by these Gods. Their logic is if a god performs a miracle, it doesn't matter if the miracle isn't the same as the miracles of Jesus, it's a miracle nonetheless and Jesus performed miracles ergo Jesus is a copy. It's terrible reasoning.

As a deist, I obviously do not believe in the resurrection or virgin birth but to claim that because other gods resurrected, that Jesus was a copy cat

character, is to simply misrepresent facts. The virgin birth of Jesus and resurrection stand as unique events and from my deist perspective, the resurrection doesn't have a pagan origin but a practical one to rally the fleeing followers of Jesus who disbanded after his death.

There is simply no historical basis behind the idea that Jesus is a literary character inspired by pagan gods, that he was an invention of the Jews who at the time were predicting a Messiah during a period where several other self-declared Messiahs wandered around prophesying. Did pagan religions later influence portrayals of Jesus in early Christianity? Probable. Mary holding the child Jesus is similar to the iconography between Horus and his mother. However this doesn't validate the claim that Jesus was a copy-cat of these pagan gods.

After examining the real story of these gods, we see the alleged similarities aren't similarities at all.

Finally, after doing away with all these alleged similarities, we arrive at the extra-Biblical evidences for the existence of Jesus from several sources:

- Josephus
- Tacitus
- Suetonius
- Julius Africanus
- Origen
- Pliny the Younger

Josephus (A.D. 37 - c. A.D. 100)

Josephus' Antiquities (early 2nd century A.D.) refers to Jesus in two separate passages. The common translation of the first passage, Book 18, Ch. 3, part 3, is disputed and is most likely from an altered source. F. F. Bruce has provided a more likely translation:

Now there arose at this time a source of further trouble in one Jesus, a wise man who performed surprising works, a teacher of men who gladly welcome strange things. He led away many Jews, and also many of the Gentiles. He was the so-called Christ. When Pilate, acting on information supplied by the chief men around us, condemned him to the cross, those who had attached themselves to him at first did not cease to cause trouble, and the tribe of Christians, which has taken this name from him is not extinct even today.

The translations of this passage are discussed in Josephus: Testimonium Flavianum from <http://Jesus.com.au>

The second passage is from Book 20, Ch. 9, part 1:

...so he assembled the Sanhedrin of judges, and brought before them the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ, whose name was James, and some others, [or, some of his companions]; and when he had formed an accusation against them as breakers of the law, he delivered them to be stoned...

Many critics say Josephus is forged but the only proven tampering was an alteration in the first passage to make it read as follows:

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him

a man. For he was one who performed surprising deeds and was a teacher of such people as accept the truth gladly. He won over many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. And when, upon the accusation of the principal men among us, Pilate had condemned him to a cross, those who had first come to love him did not cease. He appeared to them spending a third day restored to life, for the prophets of God had foretold these things and a thousand other marvels about him. And the tribe of the Christians, so called after him, has still to this day not disappeared.

The alteration was to make certain that Jesus was the Christ but the passage overall is still considered authentic.

The second passage shows no signs of tampering at all and is considered fully authentic.

Tacitus (c. A.D. 55 - c. A.D. 117)

Annals, book XV:

Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.

Suetonius (c. A.D. 69 - c. A.D. 140)

Lives of the Caesars - Claudius, sec. 25:

Since the Jews constantly made disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus, he expelled them from Rome.

Lives of the Caesars - Nero, sec. 16

Punishment was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition.

In Acts of the Apostles (18:2) the writer makes the following parallel commentary:

"And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, a man of Pontus by race, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome: and he came unto them"

To agree with the reasoning of Robert E. Van Voorst on this, it's not plausible that a later Christian interpolator would have called Jesus "Chrestus", placed him in Rome in 49, or called him a "troublemaker" this has thus led to the overwhelming majority of scholars to conclude that the passage is authentic.

Julius Africanus (c. 160 - c. 240)

Chronography, XVIII refers to writings by Thallus and Phlegon concerning the darkness during the Crucifixion:

On the whole world there pressed a most fearful darkness; and the rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down. This darkness Thallus, in the third book of his History, calls, as appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun...Phlegon records that, in the time of Tiberius Caesar, at full moon, there was a full eclipse of the sun from the sixth hour to the ninth - manifestly that one of which we speak.

Thallus was a first century historian, his work was mostly lost but what we do know on what he said here comes from Julius Africanus above and can be considered authentic too.

Origen (c. 185 - c. 254)

In *Against Celsus*, Origen quotes Celsus, a second-century skeptic, on Jesus. Celsus' view of Christians and Christianity, an article from Bluffton College, contains relevant excerpts.

Pliny the Younger (c. 62 - c. 113)

Letters, 10.96-97 records Pliny's dealings with Christians.

These mentions of Jesus and the early Christian followers, specifically the references to Jesus as a real person are enough to validate Jesus as a real historical person who preached in Judea, was tried by Pontius Pilate and later crucified.