

understood to have been largely a misnomer based on imaginative reconstructions and exceedingly late or highly ambiguous texts. . . . All the deities that have been identified as belonging to the class of dying and rising deities can be subsumed under the two larger classes of disappearing deities or dying deities. In the first case the deities return but have not died; in the second case the gods die but do not return. There is no unambiguous instance in the history of religions of a dying and rising deity.”

Tips for Dialogue

In order to effectively dialogue with those who claim that Jesus is just a spin-off of a pagan God, consider these suggestions:

1. Ask them where they are getting their information. If they point you to a particular website or movie, ask them where that website or movie got their information.
2. Take the parallels one at a time. It's easy for someone to rattle off a list of alleged parallels making it appear that the evidence is overwhelming, but if you take the time to examine each supposed parallel, you'll find, as we found above, that they are not very similar at all.
3. Study the alleged parallels from authoritative sources yourself. You could purchase *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* put out by Oxford University Press, or for a shorter treatment I'd suggest conducting an Internet search for "Refuting Zeitgeist the Movie" by Professor of philosophy and religion, Mark W. Foreman.

Written by: Matt Fradd

After experiencing a profound conversion at World Youth Day in Rome in 2000, Matt Fradd committed himself to inviting others to know Jesus Christ and the Church He founded. Matt has been a missionary in Canada and Ireland, proclaiming the Gospel to over ten thousand teens and young adults, and has been a guest on the BBC, EWTN, ABC and Catholic Answers Live. Matt currently lives (and surfs) in Southern California with his wife and three children where he currently works as an Apologist and Speaker with Catholic Answers. Learn more about Matt by visiting his website at www.mattfradd.com.

About St. Paul Street Evangelization

St. Paul Street Evangelization (SPSE) is a grassroots, non-profit organization, dedicated to responding to the mandate of Jesus to preach the Gospel to all nations by taking the Catholic Faith to the streets. Christ's call to evangelize was made to every Catholic Christian, and the Second Vatican Council reiterated this need, urging each of the baptized to bring the Gospel, found fully in the Catholic Church, to a culture that has largely reverted to paganism.

As an on-the-street Catholic evangelization organization, St. Paul Street Evangelization provides an avenue for people to share the Person of Jesus Christ and the truth and beauty of the Catholic Faith with a hungry culture.

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Prayer of consecration to Jesus

God our Father, I believe that out of Your infinite love You have created me. In a thousand ways I have shunned Your love. I repent of each and every one of my sins. Please forgive me.

Thank you for sending your Son to die for me, to save me from eternal death. I choose this day to renew my covenant with you and to place Jesus at the center of my heart. I surrender to him as Lord over my whole life and over all things.

I ask you now to flood my heart and soul with the Gift of Your Holy Spirit and to grant me the gift of new life. Give me the grace and courage to live as a missionary disciple for the rest of my days. Amen.

Jesus Christ

...Spin-off of Pagan Gods?



St. Paul
Street Evangelization

Introduction

How should one respond to those who say that Jesus is just a spin-off of pagan deities?

Before we look at some of these alleged parallels between Christianity and paganism (and why they're false), it's important to note that similarity does not imply dependence. That is, even if Christianity did have beliefs and practices similar to those of earlier religions, it doesn't follow that there must be a causal connection between them.

Similarities among religions shouldn't surprise us. Most religions, after all, try to answer the same fundamental questions in life: "Where did we come from?", "Is there an afterlife?", "How should we live?" Most religions have rituals, sacred stories, and moral codes. It would be surprising if there *weren't* some similarities among them. In fact, you might say that the similarities are a sign that God does exist—you might expect different religions in different eras and cultures to reach many similar conclusions about what he's like and how to relate to him.

Claims that Christian beliefs about Jesus are adapted from pagan cults may be popular today, but they're nothing new. A school of nineteenth-century German theologians sought to interpret Jesus against a pagan background rather than a Jewish one, perhaps due to the anti-Semitic desire for an Aryan Jesus. The movement continued into the early twentieth century with writers such as J. M. Robertson, William Benjamin Smith, Arthur Drews, and others who sought to deny the historicity of Christ by drawing upon the work of liberal theologians who tended to deny the value to the sources for Jesus outside of the New Testament.

Unfortunately for these critics, their arguments were not taken seriously by mainstream critics and their work fell into relative obscurity. It

was not until a British professor of German named G.A. Wells rediscovered and translated this German scholarship in the 1970's that the myth argument rose to prominence again. However, it is still a fringe movement and even Wells has abandoned it and admits there is a real historical basis for the stories about Jesus.

The fact is, there is no serious debate among the vast majority of scholars in the fields related to the question of the historicity of Jesus. Even agnostics such as Bart Ehrman who has become popular for his arguments against the reliability of the New Testament admit that Jesus was a real historical figure. He writes, "The view that Jesus existed is held by virtually every expert on the planet"

Among the many ancient pagan deities of which Christ is said to be a copy, the Egyptian god Horus seems to get the most attention. Although much could be said about each of the alleged parallels between Jesus and Horus, due to our limited space we will examine three: 1) Horus's virgin birth, 2) his crucifixion, and 3) his resurrection.

1) Horus was born to a virgin mother.

Several different (and contradictory) stories about Horus have developed gradually over the last 3,000 years, but the most common story of his conception espoused by mythicists today involves his father, Osiris, and mother, Isis.

It goes like this: When Osiris was murdered and his body cut up into fourteen pieces, his wife Isis journeyed throughout Egypt collecting them. She was able to find all pieces except his genitals (not making this up), which had been eaten by catfish at the bottom of the Nile. Isis then makes a prosthetic phallus, gets impregnated by it, and along comes Horus. [For an authoritative and thorough reference to

this ancient Egyptian myth, see *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*. Oxford University Press, 2003]

A virgin birth? Not exactly.

2) Horus was crucified.

How did Horus die? Well, again, that depends on which account you go by. Horus either a) did not die, b) died as a child after having being poisoned by a scorpion, or c) died the same way Osiris did (recounted above). Meanwhile, the popular mythicist film *Zeitgeist* claims he was "crucified."

Now, crucifixion was a Roman invention; there was no Egyptian equivalent. So what is the justification for this belief? There are images of Horus standing with outstretched arms. That's it. As the film's study guide explains, "The issue at hand is not a man being thrown to the ground and nailed to a cross, as Jesus is depicted to have been, but the portrayal of gods and goddesses in cruciform, where by the divine figure appears with arms outstretched in a symbolic context."

By this line of reasoning we should conclude that Barney the dinosaur was also crucified, since there are many images of him standing with outstretched arms!

3) Horus rose from the dead.

The fact is that the dying and revivification of Horus is vastly dissimilar to the death and resurrection of Christ. Indeed the view that ancient pagan religions were filled with dying and rising gods which the New Testament authors borrowed from in order to concoct the story of Christ was put to rest by Jonathan Z. Smith in the late 1980s, in his article "Dying-Rising Gods" in the scholarly and authoritative *Encyclopedia of Religion*. He writes,

"The category of dying and rising gods, once a major topic of scholarly investigation, must be

