

Conspiracies and the Cross

Conspiracies and the Cross by Timothy Paul Jones is one of the best Christian answers to the theories of Dan Brown and Barbara Thiering and others who seek to undermine the Christian story of Jesus. The unbeliever can learn a lot from this book - if only learn how not to refute Christianity!

Conspiracies and the Cross, Timothy Paul Jones, Front Line, A Strang Company, Florida, 2008

Page 5, the statement some make that they have experienced the feeling of Jesus being alive and that is why they believe is a rotten reason to believe in Jesus.

MY COMMENT: True. It is also a sectarian reason. For example, to be able to say that experience verifies the Christian faith, you would have to say that those who have experienced the power and presence of other religions and gods are lying. If they are not lying then your experience proves nothing or gives no justification for your belief. It is possible the apostles however believed Jesus rose from the dead because they could feel he did. However, Christians do claim to experience God's love and the power of the resurrection of Jesus which changes their hearts and lives. This is more important to them than any evidence.

Page 5 and 6 maintains that people saying they believe just because the Bible says so are giving a rotten reason for believing for the Muslim can say they believe just because the Quran says so

MY COMMENT: True. This is a sectarian reason too. For example it is like, "My Bible is better than yours. I want to listen to my Bible not yours whether it is true or not. I don't care if I am doing wrong and giving a misleading example to the world." Page 11 says that there is a great joy in moving from a blind faith in Jesus to a thinking trust, a trust based on facing the facts

MY COMMENT: Blind faith only makes people insecure in their faith and makes them sectarian and defensive.

Page 94, 95 gives incredible logic to answer that the objection that the early Christians would not have remembered Jesus that well and oral tradition is unreliable.

MY COMMENT: The logic is based on the assumption that the early Christians learned off the Jesus story and the oral traditions in the methodical and strict manner of the Jews. There is no evidence at all that they did. They were persecuted and were a very small sect and might not have felt the desire or had the time. They believed strongly in the presence of Christ in his Church guiding it and making it strong. The Jews did not believe God communicated with them like that. Christians then might have felt no inclination to emulate the Jews. Plus the Christians did not regard their New Testament as scripture at that time. They preferred to hear the apostles than learn books off. The objection that the gospels are unreliable for they come from oral tradition is secure.

Page 113, Josephus should have mentioned Jesus and it seems he did. Josephus silences those who say nobody mentioned Jesus in the first century and so he probably never existed.

MY COMMENT: I like the word seems. The book admits that the writing of Josephus about Jesus was embellished or tampered with. Who is to know if any of it was written by this man?

Page 113 Josephus mentioned James the brother of Jesus called Christ

MY COMMENT: James was well known and popular among the Jews. Jesus was not. Josephus did not need to say brother of Jesus the so called Christ to identify James. Jesus was less well known. The reference to Jesus may be an insertion by a faker. Josephus would have been unlikely to have written such a thing for if James really was the brother of Jesus and Jesus was dead or presumed dead that would make James the new Messiah. Josephus would have agreed with Rome that threats to its rule should be destroyed. He did not like messianic contenders or anybody who had the potential to be one. The Christians went to a lot of trouble to put Jesus into the writings of Josephus. They acted like top liars who were faking evidence for their idol's existence either because it was weak or there was none.

Page 124 exposes the errors and absurdities of scholar Barbara Thiering who says that mello the Greek word for about to in the gospel code means three. Her Jesus never went to Jerusalem or Galilee. The book objects that nobody saw these codes

before her.

MY COMMENT: It is even more important how hardly any scholars agree with her nonsense. Her method supposes that the authors of the gospels rather than using codes to apply scriptural texts to their own day, were using the codes to hide recent history. The codes, called peshers, were never used like that. Also the New Testament was written in Greek while the peshers were written in Hebrew and Aramaic (page 130). Had the gospels being written with peshers in mind Greek would not have been deployed. Thiering presents no challenge to those who deny that Jesus existed. Page 148, the Gospel of Philip has been translated to say that Jesus loved Mary more than his disciples and used to kiss her often on the mouth and she was called his companion from the world koinonos which means spouse but can also mean fellow worker towards a goal. There is a hole in the text so we don't know where Jesus kissed Mary. Jesus great love for Mary does not imply anything more than a close friendship.

MY COMMENT: The evidence for Jesus' homosexuality is stronger than the evidence for Jesus' marriage. But it is a problem for Christians how first century Judaism said that a man who doesn't marry and produce children is like a man who sheds blood and that it was a man's unconditional duty to marry (page 139). Judaism would not have taken an unmarried man seriously.

Page 147 speaks of celibacy among the Jews. It says that the Essenes didn't marry. But they were heretics not proper Jews. Jesus claiming to be the Son of David or Messiah would mean Jesus would have to marry to keep the bloodline up. The Jews could not accept a celibate man as the Messiah. The book admits that celibacy among descendants of David was not accepted. Jesus mentioned celibates at Matthew 19:12. But he called them eunuchs. This suggests people who avoided all sexual desire rather than just celibates. The Jews would not have accepted such people. And Jesus speaks as if he is not one of them! The context is about his strict rule forbidding divorce so it seems he was referring to people whose marriages had broken down and who turned their backs on sexual relationships. He was not advocating celibacy but chastity.

There is no gospel evidence for an unmarried Jesus. If Jesus was not married then the gospels are lying about his popularity.

Chapter 8 gives a good refutation of the claims of the Jesus Family Tomb in which it is claimed that the burial boxes of Jesus and his family have been found

MY COMMENT: When people were crucified, most were not buried (page 154) . They were left on the crosses for birds and animals and wild dogs to feast on. This was the norm (page 154). There is much archaeological evidence and evidence from texts that this was so. The epitaph for a person murdered in the second century says that the murderer was hung from a tree while alive for the feeding of the beasts and the birds. It is impossible to find the bodies of crucified people because all that is left is what was dragged away the dogs. Only one heel bone from a crucified man has been found, the bone of a Jew called John. This was found in an ossuary.

MY COMMENT: In relation to John, his heel bone being found in an ossuary does not indicate that he was buried but only that pieces of him may have been gathered up and put into the tomb. That he is all that can be found shows that it was very unlikely for Jesus to have been buried. The bodies of crucified men were guarded until death and then left on their crosses for scavengers as a warning to those who would break Roman law (page 155). Jesus committed a very serious breach - even more serious than any other crucified man. He claimed to be king and rode into Jerusalem in kingly style to the acclaim of the people - major treason. The claim of the book that the Jews insisted on burial is very weak for the Jews hated Jesus and wanted him nailed to show he was cursed. The assertion of Josephus that the Jews got crucified men buried before sunset is not backed up by the evidence. Joseph of Arimathea is supposed to have gone in secret to get the body of Jesus to bury it. The Jews did not want to bury Jesus and they were not exactly queuing up to do it.

The book says that Pilate allowed Jesus to be buried for he was crucified outside of war time. It says it was only during war that the burial of crucifixion victims did not take place. Philo wrote of cases where burials were allowed by the Romans. In those cases the family wanted the body buried before the religious feasts and their wish was granted. For all Rome knew, it could have been wartime with the death of a descendant of David at their hands.

The book with typical Christian illogic, provides texts from Roman law that speak only of releasing the body to relative to support the gospel claim that Joseph of Arimathea received the body of Jesus. This law would in fact prove different for Joseph and Jesus were not related. It is also foolish how the book says that Pilate gave the body to Joseph because he wanted to keep the peace with the Jews (page 157). This contradicts the gospels in which Jesus is hated so much by the Jews that they didn't care what they did to get rid of him and the more he was mistreated the happier they were. The Roman law text says that bodies of people guilty of high treason were not to be given for burial. Jesus' treason was extremely high - he claimed to have supernatural powers and be protected in a way the godlike Roman emperor was not and to be the true King of Israel.

There is no reason at all to believe that if Jesus died on the cross that he was buried after.

Page 242, suggests that it is indeed possible that Mary the Mother of Jesus married another man after her husband Joseph died. This would require fixing John 19.25 to read, "His mother Mary the Wife of Clophas and his mother's sister and Mary Magdalene". The verse doesn't make much sense the way it is in our current Bibles. Clophas means replacement which could mean that this was his title for replacing Joseph.

MY COMMENT: This if true would demolish the Roman Catholic claims for the mother of Jesus. If she didn't have sex with her first husband she would certainly have to have sex with her second!