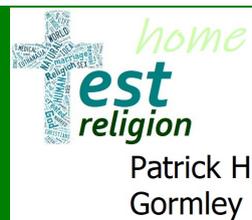




Does challenging superstition or faith protect people?
 Is it mistaken to support organised religion in membership or donations?

If people do good because they are human, not because God prompts them,
 is it right to risk giving God any credit when they alone own their good?



PANTERA - WAS THIS ROMAN SOLDIER JESUS' FATHER?

The Christians remind us that the New Testament teaches that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit so he had no human father. Catholics say that Mary the mother of Jesus was a life-long virgin who never even had sex with her husband Joseph.

Nobody doubts that the gospel writers had to be influenced by supernaturalist biographies from Greece and Rome. Plutarch for example in his life story of Romulus and Alexander the Great felt he should glorify these heroes with two conceptions. They had a magical supernatural one and also a natural one. Or to be clearer, the natural conception was told but then there was a mythological retelling. Some think that with Jesus who may have been fathered by Joseph, we are only getting the supernatural story. The natural version could be lost. It is not clear that Joseph was the father. A strong rumour blamed a Roman soldier called Pantera.

Nothing alters the fact that God would not want us believing in a miracle just because documents written after the alleged event say it happened. That is paradoxically disrespecting the miracle if it really happened. The miracle of God who is master of nature would naturally have to respect nature and evidence which means if all that is left is hearsay or texts then God plainly does not need us or want us to believe in the miracle. God will use evidence and nature and the miracle to teach us. To depend on texts denies their relationship and denies God.

So we have to assume Jesus DID have a biological father.

James Tabor on Pantera - main suspect for fathering Jesus

James Tabor has made many good points about Pantera, the alleged father of Jesus.

Jewish tradition said that Jesus was born of unlawful sex between Mary and a Roman soldier called Pantera. The context of the rumour is that Mary the mother of Jesus had loose sexual morals. There is no indication in the story that she was raped.

Joseph according to the Matthew gospel realised Mary was pregnant and decided to discreetly end his engagement to her in a kind way. She was not properly married yet. In an age where brides were too young to reproduce but had to do it anyway, she was worse than underage. Joseph may have assumed she was raped. Had he been able to show she consented he could not have sent her away without it coming out and ruining her life. If she was a child there would have been no problem.

The absurd story in the Gospel of Luke that Joseph and Mary went to Bethlehem to register in a census is interesting. She was pregnant and the story gives itself away as nonsense by saying people had to migrate to their ancestral towns to register! Why not just count? And who was policing all this migration? Christians say that a registration document from a hundred years later has a lady registering in a census after travelling to her property to do it. A century later? And the document is from Arabia. And did Mary have property? These things do not help at all to clarify that Mary needed to travel with Joseph. Saying she was just accompanying him in her condition makes no sense. She must have had family to stay with instead of travelling. Or was her baby premature? The gospel says her time had come which would mean she was lying.

Celsus in 178 AD provides us with the earliest written version of the Pantera story. He says that Mary had Jesus by a Roman soldier called Pantera and was driven away by her husband for adultery. "Let us return, however, to the words put into the mouth of the Jew, where "the mother of Jesus" is described as having been "turned out by the carpenter who was betrothed to her, as she had been convicted of adultery and had a child by a certain soldier named Panthera".

Tabor observes that Celsus got the story from Jewish circles.

The gospels say that Mary and her husband Joseph did not separate but here we have the detail that they did. Joseph does

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vanish after the time of the pregnancy in the New Testament. The gospel stories that say they stayed married are full of holes. For example, Joseph allegedly took her on a trek when she was heavily pregnant to register in a census. The lies take away any credibility. Jesus was called son of Mary as if there was no known father of any kind not even a step-father.

Joseph if he signed the census may have had to get Jesus added in for Jesus was born at that time. He signed in as Jesus' father no doubt.

Tabor tells us the following. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus who lived at the end of the first century AD spoke of what he learned from a man who followed Jesus. The man was Jacob of Sikkhin from Sepphoris. Jacob passed on Jesus' teaching in the name of Jesus the son of Panteri. There was a dispute mentioned among rabbis if it was allowed to try and miraculously heal snake bites in the name of Jesus the son of Panter. They don't say why Jesus was called the Son of Panteri. It is clear then that the Jews were not using this designation in a nasty way. Tabor says Panteri is not a play on the Greek word for virgin which is parthenos for the words are too different. Adolf Deissmann's research in 1906 verified that the name was used at the alleged time of Jesus and was favoured by Roman soldiers . . .

The gospels reworked traditions about Jesus and could have made slip ups that help support the tradition.

The Gospel of Matthew gives a genealogy of Jesus. Only men should be in the list - that was how such lists were done in those days. Matthew lists women. What is worse he lists only "bad" women. There is Tamar and Rahab. There is Ruth and Bathsheba. Tamar is the lady from Genesis 38 who pretended to be a prostitute to get pregnant. Rahab was a working girl. Ruth was a seductress. Bathsheba was into adultery.

Why just them? They all had sex outside marriage - that was the one thing they had in common. Putting it all together makes us wonder is he hinting that a girl was having sex with men even married men for money and tricking somebody to get "miraculously" pregnant? The Bible seems to be hinting that God did good things despite their sin which makes them important. But why list the women at all? Why Tamar of all people? But Matthew calls Mary a virgin. Probably the best answer is that she was a virgin but not in the physical sense for she was being sexually abused. Or if she was willing she was doing tricks but keeping her hymen.

The list deals with the ancestry of Joseph who is Jesus' legal father. Joseph was Mary's husband. Is Matthew hinting that there is no problem with Joseph getting together with a bad girl in order to be Jesus' father for his ancestors did it anyway? That Matthew seeks to establish a Jewish pedigree for Jesus and draws attention to them is trying to say something about Mary. The genealogy is Joseph's so Joseph like his ancestors married a fallen woman. That is what he has to be driving at. Remember this is a royal bloodline we are talking about. The list of ancestors is an attempt to prove that Jesus was the rightful king of Israel. Nobody mentions fallen women for that could defeat the purpose UNLESS THEY HAVE TO MENTION THEM! Mary's bad morals explains it. It explains why Tamar who had a "miraculous" conception that God used to give Jesus an ancestor is mentioned first!! She should be the last one getting a mention at all!

Just for the record, Tamar and Rahab were Canaanites. Ruth was Moabite. It seems Bathsheba was a Hittite. They were not even Jews!

Arguments for Pantera being the father

The following outlines arguments that Jesus was fathered by a Roman soldier.

The Talmud says that Jesus was a bastard and his father was Pantera, who seems to have been a Roman soldier. Pantera is alleged to have had an adulterous relationship with Mary, the mother of Jesus. Why invent a father for Jesus when branding Mary as a self-confessed adulteress would do? Jesus' mother was a hairdresser who left her husband, Pappas Ben Judah (Joseph never existed), and Jesus learned spells and magic tricks in Egypt and tattoos on his skin (page 47, Jesus the Magician).

If Pantera had been the Messiah not Jesus the Church would have seized on this as evidence for his existence. Because it doesn't suit them they reject his existence and expect us to take the references to Jesus as evidence for Jesus.

The Gospels claim that Christ was accused of being illegitimate and there are also many hints and statements in the gospels that Jesus was considered by some not to have been a real Jew, a half-breed. For example, the Jewish leaders call him a bastard in John's gospel. Jesus could have been a Gentile pretending to be a Jew for all we know.

Christians say that Pantera comes from the word virgin. They say that since Christians called Jesus the son of parthenos which is virgin in Greek that a mistake in the naming led to many thinking that Pantera was Jesus' father! But Jesus was not called the son of the virgin until the fourth century (Josh McDowell's Evidence for Jesus: Is it reliable?). But Pantera was a proper name and the Christian arguments are weak speculation.

If Jesus were accused of illegitimacy because of the virgin birth this origin would not have been broadcast in his mother's lifetime to protect her and his own reputation. But if he did not look like a proper Jew the rumour would have been inevitable that his father was a Gentile. That would be the most likely explanation for the rumour.

Rabbi Eliezar some time before 100 AD said it was illegal to tattoo yourself on the Sabbath day even though Jesus had had done it. Eliezar was converted to Jesus by a Galilean who called Jesus, son of Pantera (page 43, Jesus the Magician). When an educated man goes to somebody that says that Jesus was born out of wedlock by a man Pantera it shows that what is now called Christianity was not believed then. There is a name called Pantera so Christians are saying that it was a corruption of the Greek parthenos for virgin is unlikely and just typical of the unfair and stupid speculation Christians use against intellectual critics. The rabbis used Hebrew not Greek. The fatherless birth was not invented until the second century and is not in the New Testament. Jesus was not given the title, Son of the Virgin, in the first two centuries (page 47, Jesus the Magician) so there was no such corruption.

So when the Christian and the Christian Rabbi believed Jesus was Pantera's offspring it shows that this came from the Church of the time. If Jesus existed he must have looked like a cross between a Roman and a Jewess if not a non-Jew.

There is a story of the impudent one from Jewish tradition that was reported by R. Akikba who died in 135 AD. He Walked Among Us (page 63) repeats the tradition that there was some important and unnamed man whose mother confessed that a man, the groomsman, fathered him on her wedding night making him a son of uncleanness. Akikba found her sitting in the market selling peas and broke his promise to be discreet about her confession. It seems that this baby was believed to be Jesus. Jesus was called the impudent one or the son of impurity. That Akikba had this interview with his mother suggests that there might have been more Jesuses, Sons of God than one thinks. That must have been confusing! The book says the passage has been interfered with but when it is not clear on Jesus Christ the interference can't be serious. Why would anybody want to corrupt it to blacken somebody that was not clearly mentioned? Perhaps something happened the record and it had to be pieced together again. The story makes no sense apart from being a reference to a Jesus of some description even though McDowell likes to quote a version of the bit where Jesus is apparently quoted by Akikba as saying that if from a hire of a harlot they have come to the same they shall go that is rejected by scholars and which harks back to some dubious nineteenth century book (Josh McDowell's Evidence for Jesus: Is it reliable?).

Lie?

Jewish tradition said that Jesus was born of unlawful sex between Mary and a Roman soldier called Pantera.

It is said this could have been made up in response to the Christian doctrine of the virgin birth. There were sex-mad Christian-based sects complained about in the New Testament who we might blame. It is wrong to say that it implies that there was something odd as in supernatural about the way Jesus entered the world. It implies nothing except what it says - Jesus was the son of a soldier.

Nobody would have made up these things for spite. Being illegitimate would not have stopped Jesus being a prophet of God. Illegitimates were barred from priestly duty but Jesus never claimed to be a Levitical priest. David was a prophet despite the terrible things he did. God thought that people married to adulteresses were dirtier than normal and yet he encouraged the prophet Hosea to wed one. It is surmised that when Mary said Jesus was not her husband's son that it started the rumour of his illegitimacy. But the rumour would be more likely to start if it were true. It would have been easier to blame her husband. And the Jews could not accuse Mary of adultery without stoning her. Pantera must have been a famous person when his name comes up so much as if he were well known. They believed they were telling the truth when they said that he was Jesus' daddy when he was well-known.

Is Pantera real?

Maybe!

In Germany, there is a tombstone of a Roman soldier who went to Germany from Palestine. It goes Tiberius Julius Abdes Pantera of Sidon aged 62 - a soldier of 40 years service of the first cohort of archers lies here. This man died in the middle of the first century AD and could well have been Jesus' father.

Tabor states that Abdes is a given name. It was given in honour. It is a latinized version of ebed an Aramaic word meaning servant of God. Thus Pantera could have been a Jew by religion and/or ancestry.

In Mark 7:24 Jesus goes to a house in Sidon and makes every effort for nobody to know he was there. It is thought that he was so careful as his father had been based there. There was something going on. He had places to retreat to. He even turned nasty when a pagan woman begged him there to help her daughter and called them dogs. The racist abuse is

interesting. He did not like it if his father was a pagan Roman. Was he meeting his father or his relatives? Was Pantera the reason if Jesus was going about making the Romans worry that he was going to be another troublesome Messiah? The tolerance would be too remarkable. Romans slaughtered would-be Messiahs and potential messiahs without any fuss.

Finally

Jesus was fathered by a Roman soldier if he had a father at all - ie existed! If the father was the Holy Spirit then clearly Jesus existed as much as the Holy Spirit does! Joseph would have pretended to be the baby's father. The fact remains that the rumour got strong enough for Epiphanius and other Church researchers and fathers to worry about it. There was more to it than it being a slur. Loads of slurs were ignored but this one had to be explained away by depending on hearsay which amounts to not explaining it all

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