

Resurrection of Jesus comes from a social and religious context lacking credibility

The gospel of John admits to being selective and it's obvious the other gospels are. They don't pretend to be telling it all. That is a warning sign. It could be about creating a false impression of credibility. What are we not told? We do not know.

Miracle stories are diminished in credibility if they rise in social contexts that tended to make up such stuff. The return of Jesus from the dead is not as unique as it is made out.

John the Baptist was beheaded during Jesus' ministry. The gospels say King Herod heard about Jesus and then stated that Jesus is John raised from the dead.

It is thought by some that when Herod said John has been raised from the dead that he meant that Jesus raised him as a demon with which to do miracles. Occult lore at the time thought holy men could be raised by magicians to be used by them to do wonders. Is Herod suggesting that John is now possessing Jesus and that was how he came back from the dead? Herod in Mark is clear that it is John and no other prophet. There are even traditions about murderers killing victims just so that they could steal their souls and use them to do magic. Simon Magus allegedly did that according to the Clementine Homilies. He murdered a boy to get his soul to do his evil work which could appear as anything he wished.

Christians have been collecting relics and wanting to be close to the corpses of "saints" for nearly 2000 years. The time Polycarp was martyred, his relics were sought and it is clear that the tradition was already well established then. One form of respect for relics was believers wanting to sleep in or stay overnight in the tomb of a saint or miracleworker.

We read,

They settled these monks at Canopus also, and thus they fettered the human race to the worship of slaves, and those not even honest slaves, instead of the true gods. For they collected the bones and skulls of criminals who had been put to death for numerous crimes, men whom the law courts of the city had condemned to punishment, made them out to be gods, haunted their sepulchres, and thought that they became better by defiling themselves at their graves. "Martyrs" the dead men were called, and "ministers" of a sort, and "ambassadors" from the gods to carry men's prayers,----these slaves in vile servitude, who had been consumed by stripes and carried on their phantom forms the scars of their villainy. However these are the gods that earth produces! This, then, greatly increased the reputation of Antoninus also for foresight, in that he had foretold to all that the temples would become tombs. Likewise the famous Iamblichus, as I have handed down in my account of his life, when a certain Egyptian invoked Apollo, and to the great amazement of those who saw the vision, Apollo came: "My friends," said he, "cease to wonder; this is only the ghost of a gladiator." So great a difference does it make whether one beholds a thing with the intelligence or with the deceitful eyes of the flesh. But Iamblichus saw through marvels that were present, whereas Antoninus foresaw future events. This fact of itself argues his superior powers. His end came painlessly, when he had attained to a ripe old age free from sickness. And to all intelligent men the end of the temples which he had prognosticated was painful indeed. Eunapius, Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists, W C Wright.

This text shows that people were liable to seeing ghosts and thinking they were resurrected men. There was a culture for stealing the bodies of condemned men regarded as holy people. It was so prevalent that there must have been people in Palestine who would have stolen Jesus' body and thought they saw him raised from the dead.

Jesus's contemporary, Simon Magus promised to die and rise on the third day and ordered that his burial be prepared. That is as far as his resurrection got. He did not rise. Origen in his Against Celsus wrote, v. 62. Then pouring out a quantity of our names, he (Celsus) says he knows certain Simonians who are called Heleniani, because they worship Helen or a teacher Helenus. But Celsus is ignorant that the Simonians in no way confess that Jesus is the Son of God, but they say that Simon is the Power of God, telling some marvellous stories about the fellow, who thought that if he laid claim to like powers as those which he thought Jesus laid claim to, he also would be as powerful among men as Jesus is with many.

vi. ii. For the former (Simon) pretended he was the Power of God, which is called Great, and the latter (Dositheus) that he too was the Son of God. For nowhere in the world do the Simonians any longer exist. Moreover by getting many under his influence Simon took away from his disciples the danger of death, which Christians were taught was taken away, teaching them that there was no difference between it and idolatry. And yet in the beginning the Simonians were not plotted against. For the evil daemon who plots against the teaching of Jesus, knew that no counsel of his own would be undone by the disciples of Simon.

It is implied that Simon was using resurrection tricks to take away the fear of death from his followers. How else? Simon

did not recognise Jesus as a prophet of God or his son which amounts to a denial that Jesus rose from the dead. There is no hint that Simon was copying the Jesus story where Jesus died and rose again three days later. There was a magical culture at that time about religious figures returning from the dead.

Simon Magus told his close friends Nicetas and Aquila that he killed a boy to take the boy's soul to use in magical rites. The rite was resurrection. He explained how that worked, "First of all the spirit of the man having been turned into the nature of heat draws in and absorbs, like a cupping-glass, the surrounding air; next he turns the air which comes within the envelope of spirit into water. And the air in it not being able to escape owing to the confining force of the spirit, he changed it into the nature of blood, and the blood solidifying made flesh; and so when the flesh is solidified he exhibited a man made of air and not of earth. And thus having persuaded himself of his ability to make a new man of air, he reversed the transmutations, he said, and returned him to the air."

Magicians claimed to be able to raise spirits in tangible form. This was enough to prompt the notion of a man rising but not as a normal man but as a man who comes and goes from this world and who no longer needs a house or bed etc. Its a good story if you have to explain how a man rose from the dead but nobody can find him.

The whole point of the occult is using hidden powers but not saying what they are or how to tap into them. It is only today that magic techniques are no longer hidden though in many cases they still are. Christians stole the ideas of men rising in bodies with special powers and who were in a sense no longer of this earth and appeared here and there from occult tradition. The resurrection story is essentially an occult tale. The gospels do not detail how Jesus rose - they do not claim to know what happened when Jesus was alone in the tomb. Were rituals happening? The story is condemned by the Jewish Bible as occultism. That is certain.