



Jesus Potter Harry Christ: The Astonishing Relationship Between Two of the World's Most Popular Literary Characters: A Historical Investigation Into the Mythology and Literature of Jesus Christ and the Religious Symbolism in Rowling's Magical Series.

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LET'S SKIP THE INTRODUCTIONS. You don't need me to tell you that Jesus Christ and Harry are two of the most famous celebrities in the world, whose stories have been translated into dozens of languages and found international support in diverse cultures. What you may not be aware of, however, is the mysterious, complicated and intriguing relationship between them. For example, did you know that the topics "I read Harry Potter and Jesus still loves me," "Even Jesus reads Harry Potter" and "Harry Potter will return sooner than Jesus" each have their own Facebook group, or that Wikipedia has a page dedicated to "Religious debates over the Harry Potter Series"? Much more remarkable than their respective popularity is the significant tension – and unexpected affinity – between them...

At first glance it may seem that J.K. Rowling's boy wizard and the crucified Jesus prophet who became the Christian savior have absolutely nothing to do with each other – and yet the unease and sometimes outright animosity between the followers of these two figures suggests otherwise. Harry has been banned, burned, and abused by religious fundamentalists for over a decade. At the release of Rowling's final book, however, many readers were surprised to discover parallels between Jesus and Harry that, in such apparently diverse world-views, had no right to be there.

As a result, recent years have witnessed a revolution in Christian responses to Harry, with many groups, writers and religious leaders praising Rowling's young sorcerer as ultimately Christian and a clear metaphor for Jesus Christ. And yet the most spine-tingling question has so far been ignored: Why do these similarities exist at all? Although it is easy to accept that Rowling crafted the literary character of Harry Potter after the figure of Jesus, shouldn't it pique our interest that Jesus – a monumental figure in modern world religion generally believed to have been historical – has so much in common with the obviously fictional fantasy world and character of Harry Potter?

The main distinction, it will be argued, is that Jesus Christ is real: Jesus has traditionally been viewed as a historical figure, while Harry is instantly recognized as fiction. But does this distinction apply to the many seemingly mythical elements in the gospels? Can Jesus' miracles be separated from Harry's magic tricks because they really happened – or will we allow that certain features of the gospels were exaggerated or intended to be literary. And if so, where do we stop? What protects Jesus from the claim that he is, like Harry, a fictional character?

This is the starting point of Jesus Potter Harry Christ; an innovative treatise into religious history, comparative mythology, astrological symbolism and contemporary culture. From ancient mystery religions to modern fairy tales, from fictional Hogwarts to the ruins of Jerusalem, Derek Murphy, PhD in Comparative Literature at one of the world's top universities, narrows in on one crucial question: How do we separate the

obviously mythical literature of Jesus Christ from the historical man himself?

PRAISE FOR JESUS POTTER HARRY CHRIST:

"My initial response to reading the title was that this was a joke of some sort. But I encourage anyone interested in the gospels and Jesus as literature to read the content below and see that it does seek to be a serious contribution to an understanding of the literary and mythical character of Jesus. Neither is this a slur against Christianity. The author rightly explains that the fictional nature of characters does not detract from the positive influence that character can have on those who love them. The author also answers pertinent questions about his rationale for writing such a book, the status, history and grounds of Jesus-mythicism. I particularly like the main idea of this book: Our question then is not whether Jesus Christ existed, but whether the literary character recorded in the New Testament was primarily inspired by a historical figure or previous literary traditions and characters." Neil Godfrey

"Particularly absorbing and highly topical: namely, the idea that nothing substantially separates Jesus of Nazareth from Harry Potter except that most human beings believe in the historical reality of the former. Instead, both figures entertain astonishingly parallel personality traits that derive from universal myths. As part of the continuing debate over the nature of Christ, not only among Christians but between them and today's wave of atheist thinkers, Jesus Potter, Harry Christ is timely. Linking this analysis, moreover, to J. K. Rowling's globally popular character further heightens its relevancy." Jeff Crouse, Ph.D - Parmenides

"This is probably the first time a book encapsulates the works of contemporary mythicists such as G.A. Wells, Timothy Freke, Tom Harpur, Acharya S., Earl Dougherty, and Robert Price. Murphy bares a scalpel intellect in his first scholarly venture, dissecting the figure of Jesus Christ while peeling open the wonderful tales the other rising-dying godmen that once upon a time captivated pagan audiences across western civilization. Murphy never explicitly denies the historicity of Jesus Christ, but indicates that he has been basically swallowed whole by imagination and legendry." Aeon Byte Gnostic Radio

"Absolutely loved it! With so much misinformation being disseminated about Jesus Christ, this book was refreshing. Derek pulls from notable and reliable sources to frame his arguments in a way that is both intriguing and satisfying. His insights into the phenomena that captivate the fans of literary characters like Harry Potter and Jesus Christ are extraordinary. To anyone who enjoys a mystery being unraveled, Harry Potter Jesus Christ is a must read." Andrea Griffith, The Social I.Q. Lady

"I'm impressed. A lot. I figured that "Jesus Potter, Harry Christ" would focus on the commonalities between Jesus Christ and Harry Potter, but Murphy's aims are a lot more ambitious. And interesting. In a highly readable yet semi-scholarly style, he sets out to examine the origins and evolution of Christianity, seeking evidence for a historical Jesus who is akin to the mythical figure revered by believers today. While unreal in an objective sense, Murphy demonstrates that the myths told in the New Testament and the Harry Potter series can point to personal truths that offer comfort, solace, and courage to anyone (which, really, is everyone) seeking to live life more fully, happily, and boldly. "Jesus Potter, Harry Christ" demolishes part of the foundation of Christianity, Jesus' purported uniqueness and godly heritage, but leaves the most important part: our capacity as humans to become more and better than we are now." Brian Hines, author of best-selling book on Plotinus, "Return to the One"

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From Reader Review Jesus Potter Harry Christ: The Astonishing Relationship Between Two of the World's Most Popular Literary Characters: A Historical Investigation Into the Mythology and Literature of Jesus Christ and the Religious Symbolism in Rowling's Magical Series. for online ebook

Mary says

If you're looking for an amusing little 60- or 70-page book on the obvious similarities between Jesus and Harry, you're in for a shock. That's what I was looking for since I'm a fan of both. This book is an extensive research project into the ancient mythologies far beyond the familiar Greek and Roman gods and their parallels in Christianity. Miracle births, resurrections after 3 days, baptisms--they're all there. The author delves into numerology, astrology, geometry (Did you know there is a connection between Jesus and Pythagoras?), and the earliest church history. The author is not Christian, but he is very much a seeker of knowledge. He's not going to persuade Christians away from their faith, and he's not trying to do so, but he will cause Christians and non-Christians to ponder and question. This book is a challenge, but well worth the effort.

The book needs one more editorial read-through to correct some spelling errors and sentence fragments. I could have used a glossary, also!

Duke says

awesome.

Katherine says

(I won this book through GoodReads First Reads)

A little misleading, I was kind of expecting this book to parallel some of the themes similar between the literary characters of Jesus and Harry Potter, or at least those themes and symbols found in both the Gospels and the Harry Potter series. While the author did go, quite in depth, in the Pagan themes and symbolism, he didn't really spend a lot of time talking about Harry Potter. In fact, he hardly seemed to mention him, or the series, at all, other than to use it to support his "primary aim" of increasing awareness of the debate over the idea of a historical Jesus. But the lack of focus on Harry Potter isn't what bothers me, lol, instead it seems to be an over emphasis on Pagan influence on Christianity, and too little application of Jewish understanding to the Christian faith, as well as his assertions of the idea of there being some literal person the idea of Jesus is based on being untrue seemingly merely because it is "unnecessary"....

Now, I'm what many more "traditional" Christians consider "liberal" or "progressive", and so the idea of Jesus – a s he appears in the Bible – not being a literal being isn't something that bothers me. I willingly and sincerely reject such ideas about him including, but not limited to, the virgin birth, his divinity, the miracles

he is believed to have performed, and the idea of the resurrection, to name a few.

So I won't deny his claims that Christianity would have some influence from Paganism in its development. Understanding that the Jews had been under Pagan rule for centuries, having knowledge of the time period, I do understand the influence on both Judaism, and subsequently, Christianity itself. But I think he doesn't put enough attention on the Jewish roots of Christianity (perhaps attention isn't the right word, since I understand that the aim of this book is to show the Pagan side, but I think you may understand what I mean), the Jewish influence. For example, he does a very good job of comparing the symbols and themes in Paganism to those in Christianity, but I'm having difficulty remembering any reference to Jewish influence on lasting Christian tradition. In fact, he seems to emphasize that Christianity is more Pagan than it is/was Jewish, pointing out the Jewish reaction (persecution, etc.) to the early Christians as evidence for the idea. After previously reading about the Jewish environment at that time, I feel he is overlooking important details in this. For example, while I understand that Christianity seems to follow the same astrological pattern of Pagan cults did, I think he forgets that Judaism also follows what we could consider an astrological pattern. Their liturgy and calendar (which I will admit may have been influenced by those cultures around them in this way) is meant, from what I understand, to be read through each year, with the same parts of the text falling around the same times of the year. John Shelby Spong, in his *Jesus for the Nonreligious*, makes a very compelling example of showing how the various Gospels seem to build themselves (each more so as they were written) around this liturgy and calendar, applying those texts that would have been read, and those themes and so forth for each part of the year and text, to the idea of Jesus, claiming that the authors of those texts use the (Jewish) God language available to them to explain their understanding and experience of the person of Jesus. We can't completely ignore this idea while looking at Pagan influences as well. We have to realize it's not just one way or the other, and while Murphy does make interesting comparisons and connections between the Christian religion and those Pagan ways of belief, I do believe that he doesn't do well to look at both sides.

Again, I'm not denying that there would have been Pagan influence on Christianity. Though I tend to think that perhaps what Spong claims in his previously mentioned book could also be considered here... Perhaps we see these symbols and themes in Christianity because those Pagan converts (or even those who were Jews, since they would have had knowledge of the Pagan world) would have used the language available to them at the time to explain what they understood and experienced in the person or message of Jesus. I don't believe that these commonalities in anyway undermine the idea of a literal person being at the foundation of the faith that rose up around him. I don't believe it would make the "real" Jesus a plagiarist... Living in a time of religious syncretism, being exposed to the pluralistic and syncretic environment, what is wrong about thinking that Jesus, too, would have perhaps been willing to apply various, external (Pagan) truths or metaphors to his Jewish faith? Could we not believe that there really was a person who taught love and compassion, who may have been put to death by the state and then had his life and message used as the foundation of this new faith? Especially when we consider, as Brian McLaren shows us in *The Secret Message of Jesus*, the various Jewish responses to Roman rule: the Zealots who wanted to resist or retaliate, the Herodians who wanted to assimilate and cooperate (like the tax collectors), Essenes who preferred to isolate, and the Pharisees who believed what was instead needed was to revitalize the Jewish faith by blaming sin and pushing for more piety. When looking at this, would it really be that unreasonable to think a person – some person, ANY person – came to the conclusion Jesus is seen/claimed to have held in terms of Rome and faith? Can we really neglect to consider these Jewish influences on and understandings they give us of the Christian faith?

Regardless of whether I agree with him or not, though (and while I could continue to present instances where and reasons why I disagree with him on this Jesus issue, as well as on early Christianity, I'll stop, because it's rather besides the point, lol), Murphy has written a very interesting book. The insight into the Pagan beliefs

and cults – the symbolism and themes present within them – was very rewarding for me. I enjoyed that part of the book thoroughly. Aside from a little in the first couple of chapters, it wasn't even really until nearing the end of the book that I started disagreeing with him. I do not deny that he seems to have a very thorough understanding of the Pagan beliefs of that era (and I do believe this book is a good reference for those beliefs, and will most likely continue to return to those sections as needed in my continued readings and discussions), and I reiterate that the section of the book devoted to sharing those beliefs and things was absolutely wonderful. I just disagree with him in what that means for the idea of Jesus (and of Paul and his writings, etc. lol). Even though I do disagree with him, and even though my lengthy display of that disagreement may make it seem otherwise, this book really was an enjoyable read, and I am glad to have read it. It's not something I would recommend to the more "traditional" Christians, but for those of us who are already willing to consider that Jesus didn't exist as we see him portrayed in the texts.

Tracy Black says

Hands down, this is the most interesting book I've read so far in 2011. Murphy made a very strong case for a literary Jesus. An incredible amount of research must have gone into the writing. I'm impressed.

Gioia says

I won this book as a first read winner...
and honestly this is not at all what I expected. Murphy has indeed done a lot of research in both Christ and HP.
just keep your mind open and i think you will truly enjoy this book like I did!

Paul says

The parallels between Jesus Christ and Harry Potter are actually closer than most people may realize. The book also looks at where Jesus in the Bible came from, an actual person, or a collection of stories?

When the first Harry Potter book was released, does anyone remember the uproar from the religious community? The lawsuits and book burnings came about because the book supposedly promoted witchcraft. By the time the last book was released, the attitude was very different because of the Christ-like images and things that happened to Harry. Many people considered Harry as a Christ-like figure (which J.K. Rowling freely acknowledges).

The assertion that Jesus, as a historical figure, never existed is hardly new; the claim has been made all through out history. A central question to ask is: Which Jesus are we seeking? Are we looking for someone who was born of a virgin, died, rose again and ascended to Heaven? Are we looking for a rebel leader during a time of occupation?

From time to time, an archaeological discovery is made which references a person or place mentioned in the Bible. That would seem to increase the possibility that the Bible is true, since there is now independent

evidence that the person or place referenced really existed. Right? Using that line of reasoning, books like The DaVinci Code or the Harry Potter books are just as real as the Bible, because they also mention places that really exist. Another assertion is that Jesus invented ethics and morality; before Him, there was nothing. Really? The various civilizations that existed before Christianity, ranging from Sumeria to Egypt to China, might have something to say about that.

The life of Jesus has supposedly been thoroughly discussed and analyzed in the writings of other historians, including Pliny, Tacitus, and especially Flavius Josephus. The problem is that the total analysis of Jesus amounts to just a couple of paragraphs per author. There has been much controversy over the centuries as to whether or not those paragraphs are real or fakes. The similarities between the life of Jesus and those of people like Dionysus, Asclepius, Mithras and Pythagoras (who was known for a lot more than just his mathematical Theorem) are more than just coincidence.

Large parts of the Bible were taken, or otherwise re-interpreted, from ancient pagan myths and stories. The Great Flood, for instance, came from the Epic of Gilgamesh. The idea of a flood that covered the whole world will mean a lot more to a people who live between two great rivers, like the Tigris and Euphrates, than to residents of an arid place like Palestine.

Why did all the ancient religions, including Christianity, seem to use the same images and shapes? Observations of the constellations in the sky led people to construct myths about them, which turned into stories and eventually became religion.

This is a very fascinating and eye-opening book. It is full of footnotes, so this is more than just some anti-Catholic rant. Those who treat the Bible as a group of stories and parables about the right way to live should not have their faith damaged by this book. It is very much worth the reader's time.

Shon Carter says

A very interesting read. I don't want to spoil it, but it's well worth the buy ! Will definitely elaborate more as soon as I'm done reading !

Jc says

There is no doubt that HP is choke full of religious symbolism, mythological references and relationships to even older mystery cults. This book brings forth the idea of a relationship between JC and HP in a unique thought=provoking manner.

Alysha DeShaé says

Wow... This was wonderful. Definitely a must read for those interested in the topic of whether the character of Jesus is pure fiction or truly existed as a human.

Bettie? says

As Jerelyn says, "Someone is going directly to hell! LOL"

Ems Dawson says

Gosh where to start?... An impressively heavy tome, it reads like an academic paper. Its divided into three parts, then subdivided. The subdivisions work as part of a cohesive narrative, but also allow you to pick and choose the parts you're most interested in. As a result it is easy to follow Murphy's logic and makes for fuss free reading.

A lot of research and effort have obviously been expended in writing this book, but at no point does it feel laboured or like Murphy has an axe to grind (an impressive achievement considering the subject matter). In fact Murphy presents the evidence and leaves the conclusions to the reader. Having said this there are points at which you do hear Murphy's own voice, in little asides to the main narrative. I should add however that these are delivered with such brilliant sarcastic wit that they only add to the experience, rather than detracting from his academic credibility. For example:

In response to the Biblical story of Genesis (1:1-31) "Everything was made perfectly in accordance to [God's] plan, and he announced that it was all very good. In the world He created, there was no death and no suffering, which suggests that the time and the basic laws of physics hadn't yet been installed" (226)

This was not the book I was expecting. From the title I thought there would be more about the similarities between Jesus and Harry, with some interesting facts about both thrown in for good measure. It is not, although the first chapter Sacrificial Half Breed Warlocks: Harry Potter as a Christ Figure does (obviously) focus on the two characters similarities, the rest of the book is a fairly detailed look at the roots, and development, of Christianity.

There are some fascinating tit-bits to be gleaned, and Murphy makes much of the pre christian ear and its belief systems, in particular Sun-myths which, if Murphy is to be believed, forms the basis of all alter religions, not to mention literature. He makes a very persuasive argument.

The titles of each chapter allude to popular culture enough that you can join the dots up yourself, without having to have things spelled out (Jesus, the Lion King: Astrological Foundations). This also allows you to muse on things uninterrupted, and go off in your own direction of thought. Conversely the subject matter of some, Meeting Satan Again: Draco and Creation Myth, appear predictable and yet will totally surprise you (although there are some familiar names that Potter fans will pick up on).

An understanding of classical culture helps whilst reading some of the more academically meaty bits, or maybe its just that those who have an understanding of Classics clearly have an interest in the subject, and will get more enjoyment from these bits... who knows?! Either way I thought it was a brilliant book, and highly recommend it.

If nothing else it makes for interesting dinner table debating, and is most certainly thought provoking.

Laurie Gray says

I reviewed this book for ReadersFavorites.com.

Jesus Potter Harry Christ by Derek Murphy is a scholarly journey through ancient mythology, cosmology, astrology, early church history and modern metaphor to demonstrate how our spiritual beliefs spring from the stories we tell ourselves—and have always told ourselves—about life, the physical world we observe, and the nature of humankind. Murphy posits that Jesus of Nazareth, like Harry Potter, is a purely literary character. He examines Harry Potter as a Christ figure and then goes on to examine Christ as an assimilation of Gilgamesh, Dionysus, Pythagoras, Orpheus, Asclepius, Osiris, Adonis, Attis, and Mithras into an incoherent story of a supposedly real person. Murphy finds insufficient historical evidence to either prove or disprove his theory conclusively. Instead, he calls modern Christianity to task for its unwillingness to consider the supposition that Jesus is the only purported savior to have truly lived in human form. The book includes an extensive bibliography, index and endnotes.

The emphasis on Christian theology may disappoint the average Harry Potter fan, and the premise itself is enough to offend most Christians. Nevertheless, those who enjoy the writing of Joseph Campbell, Richard Dawkins and Robert Pirsig will find the book fascinating. Murphy writes clearly and objectively, summarizing extensive materials from western civilization. In a postscript entitled “Spread the Word,” Murphy explicitly states, “This book is meant to generate discussion.” There is certainly ample substance to discuss and debate for those willing to question some of our culture’s underlying assumptions. I highly recommend this book to anyone who is interested in exploring the role of mythology in modern literature and belief.

Evie says

So! This was quite a surprise!

I knew this book was written to spotlight the parallels between Harry Potter and Jesus Christ, but I did not at all expect it to be so interesting and amazingly written! I was so impressed with the amount of work the author of this book has put into it. The research was very thorough. Derek Murphy talked about things that have never even crossed my mind. I think this book makes a fascinating read for any Harry Potter fan, regardless of your religion beliefs.

I actually lent my copy to one of my friends, who happens to be a hard-core Harry Potter fan. She LOVED it! She was absolutely fascinated by it. I think she appreciated this book far more than I ever could, me not being a HP fan (not yet at least!).

Jesus Potter Harry Christ is in my opinion a book that every Harry Potter fan should have on his/her shelf. It's worth checking out.

Thanks to Goodreads Giveaways and Derek Murphy for sending me a copy!

Lee Harmon says

Was Harry Potter molded in the form of Jesus Christ? This book touches on the similarities between Jesus and Harry, but only as a surface introduction and running theme floating above a much deeper topic. The meat of the book is in its serious research into Jesus as a nonhistoric figure, a developed myth. Like our favorite little wizard.

This idea of a nonhistorical Jesus greatly disturbs most Christians. Murphy takes a stab at explaining our unease: “If Jesus was not historical, he would have been no different from other myths and fables … he would be meaningless, and it is impossible for him to be meaningless, because he is meaningful to me. Therefore he is historical.” He’s right, the idea of Christ as a myth is more than a bit disconcerting; it hits at the very heart of many of us.

Yet Murphy’s intent is not to demote Jesus to the role of an ordinary fictional being, or even an ordinary god. Jesus was never meant to be the same as other contemporary figures of mythology; to his storytellers, he was the epitome of such. “Jesus would be something entirely new simply by virtue of his being an assimilation of the best features of each. Jesus is the culmination and combination of all other religious traditions of his time.”

Murphy sifts through various mystery religions and myths of a dying and resurrecting god, and their possible influence upon the Gospel story. For once, it’s done tastefully and without sensationalism. Maybe you’ve read works by Freke, Dougherty, and Harpur. While I don’t want to take anything away from those researchers—their books are interesting in their own right—I found Murphy’s tempered treatment much more to my taste. Without trying to foist a Gnostic version of Christianity on me, and without succumbing to overzealous scholarship, Murphy gently yet forcefully introduces the strong similarities between Christianity and other first-century religious philosophies and mystery cults, concluding in the strong likelihood that Jesus was a mythical savior.

I cannot help but add my two cents. Part of Murphy’s argument seems to be that it’s unreasonable to expect first-century writers to knowingly attribute mythical qualities and stories to a historical person. Ergo, Jesus must have been understood mythically. I must confess that my area of research biases me in favor of a historical Jesus. I’m a hard sell, because for years I immersed myself in the topic of divine attributions awarded to real, historical persons in the Imperial Cult (the cult of the Caesars) and I recognize much of the New Testament as a response on the same playing field; Christians lifting up their guy in the same manner. I find nothing strange about honoring a man such as Jesus in supernatural story and find it a quite plausible explanation for the plethora of Jesus’ similarities to pagan gods and heroes.

Additionally, in order for Murphy to prove Jesus was never a real person, so much hinges on Paul, our earliest Christian writer, and Paul is an enigma. Murphy points out many interesting similarities between the teachings of Paul and the mystery religions, where the central rite, it appears, was a symbolic death of the initiate, followed by rebirth into a new life. Sounds a lot like Paul, doesn’t it? Murphy argues that Paul recognized Jesus’ crucifixion metaphorically, and expected his converts to experience the same death. Unquestionably, Gnostic strands of Christianity did worship Jesus in the form of a mystery religion, and such groups did embrace the writings of Paul. But would such an understanding of Jesus drive Paul to such great suffering and imprisonment? Would it leave him absolutely convinced that the world was ending—quite literally and quite rapidly—and that believers in Christ would be swept up to heaven? Remember, Paul was so convinced the end of the world drew near that he even encouraged abstinence, telling his readers that the time grew so short that they needn’t bother marrying.

So, even though it's hard for me to fully embrace Murphy's conclusion, I loved the book, and found it to be a fascinating and scholarly contribution to a very hot debate. It should be welcomed as such.

Ron Fritsch says

Derek Murphy's *Jesus Potter Harry Christ* opened my eyes.

Murphy begins his adventure by noting that the first Harry Potter novels drew scorn from some Christians for seeming to endorse witchcraft and magic. And since those books appeared to be written for children, they were especially malign. Murphy further notes, though, that the later Harry Potter novels silenced some of the criticism when it was alleged that J. K. Rowling was writing an allegory of the Jesus Christ story in the manner of *The Chronicles of Narnia* of C. S. Lewis.

Murphy then asks the huge question that his book answers, in this reader's opinion: Is the Harry Potter story more fictional than the Jesus Christ story?

Although I was raised as a Christian, I began doubting in my early teens that the virginal birth, miracles, raising of the dead, fulfilling of the prophecies of the Old Testament, and resurrection were true. I assumed that 2,000 years ago the Romans had indeed crucified or otherwise executed a Jewish rebel whom the ordinary, non-ruling people of the time loved.

I also assumed that the supernatural aspects of the story were later add-ons, meant to persuade credulous believers that Jesus Christ was more than just an appealing renegade, by introducing the claim that he was also divine. For example, the loaves-and-fishes story could've depended upon nothing more than the miracle of Adam Smith's capitalism. Jesus Christ drew crowds—who drew entrepreneurs who could profitably cater to a hungry market when they saw one.

Jesus Potter Harry Christ, however, convinced me that there probably was no historical Jesus Christ. He was undoubtedly a cleverly wrought amalgam of pagan gods, especially the sun gods. His birth to a human mother and a god father at the winter solstice, as well as his death and return at the spring equinox, are clearly religious stories revised and retold in the centuries before the establishment of Christianity.

The early Christians, though, needed to insist that there had been a historical, in-the-flesh Jesus who lived, died, and rose to heaven. Otherwise, he was nothing more than yet another pagan myth or allegory.

Murphy explains something else. Why did the Christians succeed while their competing cults, notably the Gnostics, failed? Because the Christian message was simplicity itself. In order to gain immortality, one had only to state one's belief in a historical Christ who died and rose to heaven.

The intolerance, based upon the idea that there was no other worthy idea, began then. The wars and genocides would come later. Would a mythical, allegorical Jesus Christ have served the world and his followers better? Murphy implies yes—asserting that a non-historical Jesus could still be "profoundly meaningful."

Regardless of one's opinion on this matter, *Jesus Potter Harry Christ* is a thoroughly enjoyable read.
