

A Refutation of Christianity

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According to Jewish belief, God is one in His Person. According to Christian belief, God is three divine persons. God cannot be both one in His Person and three persons and so one of these beliefs is false. I am convinced of the validity of the Jewish understanding of God and I am equally convinced of the invalidity of the Christian understanding. My purpose in this paper is to demonstrate the latter. For a very useful summary of previous attempts to accomplish this I would recommend Daniel Lasker's *Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages*.¹

There is so much wrong with Christian theology that tackling it might at first seem to be a daunting task. However, it is not as daunting as it might first appear, because there is no need to tackle it wholesale in the way that Hasdai Crescas attempted to do.² To complete the task of refutation it is necessary to establish the invalidity of just one indispensable Christian doctrine, because if just one indispensable doctrine is demonstrably invalid, then the whole edifice of Christian thought is without foundation and is likewise invalid. It really is that simple. However, I intend to go two steps further than this by refuting three of the indispensable doctrines of Christianity. The three key doctrines to be refuted are the Incarnation, Redemption and the Trinity. If any of these three can be proven invalid, then the entire edifice of Christianity falls.

To begin with, it is my contention that the doctrine of the Incarnation cannot be directly rationally refuted. However, it is equally my contention that it can be indirectly refuted and decisively so. This is because the answers that have been proposed by Christian thinkers to the question of why God became Incarnate are all, one way or another, related to the doctrine of the Redemption or salvation of mankind and depend for their validity upon that doctrine, and it is decisively refutable. By way of confirming that dependence, here is an extract from the most universally accepted and binding Creed in Christendom, the Nicene (or Niceno-Constantinople) Creed of 381 CE: "*The son of God...for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven...was incarnate...and was crucified for us*";³ and here are the words of one of Christianity's greatest thinkers and most generally respected figures, Augustine of

Hippo: *“If mankind had not fallen, the son of man would not have come...Why did he come into the world? To save sinners. There was no other reason for his coming into the world”*.⁴ Moreover, the Council of Trent (1559-65 CE) declared that: *“The same Lord and our God Jesus Christ did submit to the most cruel death on the cross to redeem us from sins, and to unite us with the Father”*,⁵ and Ott informs us that: *“The testimony of Holy Writ favours the (same) view. In numerous passages it names the redemption of mankind as the motive of the Incarnation. The Church Fathers are unanimous in teaching that the Incarnation of the son of God was solely to redeem mankind”* (Ott, p.176). It is therefore clear that if the doctrine of Redemption is proven invalid, then the doctrine of the Incarnation is likewise proven invalid and the two fall as one. It is therefore my purpose in what follows to demonstrate the invalidity of the Christian doctrine of Redemption.

The narrative of Christian redemption begins in the Garden of Eden with the fall of Adam and Eve. Here is an abbreviated version of the Roman Catholic *Decree on Original sin* declared at the 6th Session of the Council of Trent (1545-63 CE):

“If anyone does not confess that the first man, Adam, when he transgressed the commandment of God in paradise, incurred the wrath and indignation of God, and was changed in body and soul for the worse, let him be anathema. If anyone asserts that the transgression of Adam injured him alone and not his posterity, let him be anathema. If anyone asserts that this sin of Adam is taken away either by the forces of human nature, or by any remedy other than the merit of the one mediator our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema”.⁶

Whether the reader accepts the literal truth of the story of Adam and Eve is irrelevant to what follows. Indeed, even the concept of original sin is not the issue I wish to address. The first point I wish to draw attention to is that according to all Christian theories of Redemption, God created humanity with the capacity to sin against Him but without the capacity to make amends for having sinned against Him. According to Christian doctrine, once humanity had sinned, they were no longer fit to make amends to God precisely because they were now sinners.⁷ Now of course God is our Creator, and that puts beyond doubt not only that He made us capable of sin and incapable of making amends for it, but also that He knew humanity would sin because that was how He made us.

In effect, Christian dogma has cast God in the role of setting a trap into which he knew humanity would fall, and from which he knew it would be unable to escape by its own efforts. And why did he do this evidently cruel thing? According to Christian doctrine, he created this cast of helpless sinners to set the stage for the coming of a Divine redeemer. The

doctrine states that God created humanity in the knowledge that we would need for our salvation a Divine redeemer and in the knowledge that this redeemer would be his only beloved and co-eternal son, the second Divine person of the Trinity, Incarnate in the body of a man. But he knew even more than that, because according to the Christian doctrine of Redemption, God-the-father, who is perfect in love and knowledge and to whom all power belongs, planned His creation in such a way as to make it inevitable that his only beloved son would be tortured and killed in the body of a man in order to redeem humanity, and this would happen only because he had made it impossible for humanity to be redeemed in any other way. The stroke of genius at the heart of this plan was that once God-the-son had been tortured and killed, God-the-father could be reconciled with the transgressors, because you can imagine what a positive impression the crucifixion of his own son made upon him!

This is ridiculous. Ask yourself, why would God-the-father have devised a cosmic plan that involved the inevitability of great suffering on the part of the one he loved most (God-the-son) when he could have done otherwise? Why would he who is perfect in love condemn countless of his creatures to a sinful life lived out of grace with him, and do so even before they are born, when he could have done otherwise? Would God-the-father really demand the torture and sacrifice of his own Divine son, and a human sacrifice to boot, in order to appease his own wrath? The answer is of course that he would not and he did not and that this is nothing but pagan nonsense. It reads like a grotesque farce and yet it is the theological foundation for the beliefs of 2 billion people, but for the Christian perspective on it just keep in mind the importance that is attached to it. Without the doctrine of Redemption, the Incarnation falls. If God did not make humanity a cast of helpless sinners who were unable to achieve salvation without the torture and death of a Divine redeemer, then there would have been no need for an Incarnation, and hence no possible way to make sense of an Incarnation, and hence no possible way to make sense of Jesus as anything but a man, and also no way to make sense of the idea of a triune God. If God-the-father did not cause His son to be Incarnated, because it would be farcical if he did, then Christianity would be exposed as comprehensive nonsense, and so they are damned if he did and damned if he didn't.

However, although we have barely begun the story of Christian Redemption, there is yet another glaring absurdity that needs pointing out, and this one really is quite macabre. You see, the Christian triune-God (i.e. father, son and spirit) was triune *before* creation. We can be certain of this because according to the Christian doctrine of God-the-son, the second person of the Trinity, "*All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing*

came into being” (John.1:3). So the co-eternal God-the-son was with God-the-father when the plan for creation was hatched, and the decision to proceed with this very bizarre plan was not the father’s alone. It was a joint decision of all three persons in the triune God, and so the father’s co-eternal and equally divine son was involved in, and equally responsible for, this decision. The reason this adds a macabre twist to an already nonsensical story is that the torture and death of this God-the-son is understood to have been a sacrifice to God, and not only a sacrifice to God-the-father but to all three persons of the triune God. Before I follow this line of enquiry to its obvious conclusion, allow me to first establish that the torture and death of Jesus/God-the-son has always been understood in Christianity to be a sacrifice.

To begin with, Ott confirms that: “*Christ offered himself on the cross as a true and proper sacrifice*”, and that the Church Fathers “*from the very beginning regarded Christ’s death on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind*”.⁸ Moreover, the Council of Toledo declared the following of the eternal son of God: “*in this form of assumed human nature, we believe that he died (as) a sacrifice for our sin*”,⁹ and the Council of Ephesus 431 left no room for doubt both by whom and to whom the sacrifice was made: “*He (Christ) offered himself for us as a sweet odour (that is, as a pleasing sacrifice) to the God and Father*”,¹⁰ and in his *Dictionary of Dogmatic Theology*, Parente confirms that: “*It is a truth of faith that Christ’s death was a real and proper sacrifice*”.¹¹ And finally, the sacrificial nature of the suffering and death of the eternal son of God is stated over and over again in the New Testament.¹²

And so the bizarre and indeed macabre twist implicit in all of this is that, as Ott informs us, “*Christ as man was at the same time sacrificing priest and sacrificial gift. As God, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, he was also the receiver of the sacrifice*” (*Fundamentals*, p.185). That is to say, God-the-son sacrificed himself not only to God-the-father in order to appease his wrath. He also sacrificed himself to himself to appease his own wrath! Such is the ludicrous but unavoidable logic of Christian dogma, which they hope to conceal by dressing it up in religious robes. If this absurdity, along with those already described above, does not strike you as incontrovertible evidence of the invalidity of the Christian doctrine of Redemption, then you are well on your way to being a Christian. As for me, the Christian doctrine of Redemption falls and with it falls the doctrine of Incarnation.

But there is yet another dimension of this doctrine that rewards careful attention, and that is the question of who or what suffered and died in the torture and crucifixion of Jesus? As already pointed out, it is clearly alleged in Christian dogma that it was the person of the eternal son of God (second person of the Trinity) who suffered and died and not the person of

Jesus. Indeed, according to Christian theology, there was no person Jesus. There was a man who was “*like us in every way but sin*”, but he was somehow not a person!¹³ I’m sure we can all agree that suffering is in the person and pain in the flesh. Pain may be a cause of suffering, but it is not the same thing. What the doctrine of Redemption contends is that the person in Jesus was the second person of the Trinity, who was thus enabled to suffer and die. However, Christianity also contends, along with Judaism and Islam, that God is impassible; i.e. that He cannot suffer or be acted upon by any force or influence, and so their doctrine of Incarnation is blatantly at odds with their own professed Divine attribute of impassibility. Moreover, it is also maintained that the second person of the Trinity died, which is again strikingly at odds with the Divine attribute of immortality, also professed in Christianity. How have Christians responded to these evident contradictions? They have increasingly airbrushed impassibility and immortality out of the Christian list of Divine attributes, where they do belong. If you doubt this, then go to your local university library and search their Christian dictionaries and encyclopaedias from the most ancient to the most modern and observe the process for yourself. The truth is apparently not important to Christian thinkers. All that is important to them is that they should demonstrate and defend the idea that Jesus was Divine, whatever the cost to truth. There thus remains only one of the three original doctrines to be refuted. The doctrine of the Trinity.

The doctrine of the Trinity contends that God is three persons, but that there is only one God. The idea is that there is only one Divine essence and it is this that Christian thinkers designate as God. Up to this point Judaism and Christianity have no argument. However, Christians go on to contend that there are three Divine persons, unlike the One of Judaism, and that each of these three is identical to the Divine essence while being absolutely distinct from the other two persons. The challenge to rationally-minded people is therefore a simple one. Do you accept the contention that three of anything can be at once absolutely distinct from one another and at the same time be absolutely identical with one and the same thing? If you do accept this contention, then you are well on your way to being a Christian. If you do not, then you are not a Christian. Christian thinkers may try as they like to defend the doctrine of the Trinity with layer upon layer of obfuscation, but the doctrine of the Trinity is an insult to reason, and calling it a mystery, as Christians do, does nothing to alter that fact.

And finally it will be recalled that if the *Explanation of the meaning of the Name* is true, then the doctrine of the Trinity is false. This is so because among the most fundamental premises in the *Explanation* is that God is one in His Person, and so if the *Explanation* is true then the doctrine of the Trinity is false and so too is the entire edifice of Christianity. The

reader has therefore only to determine the soundness of the *Explanation* to be able to decisively reject Christian truth claims.

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References and Endnotes

¹ Lasker D., *Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages*, The Litmann Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007.

² Crescas H., *The Refutation of The Christian Principles*, trans. Lasker D., (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992).

³ Olsen R., *The Story of Christian Theology, Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform*, (Leicester: Apollos, 1999) p. 173 – From the Council of Constantinople onwards, where the finishing touches were made to the Nicene Creed, “*denial of the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity as spelled out in the Nicene Creed has been considered by all major branches of Christianity (including most protestants) as heresy and possibly even apostasy.*”

⁴ Ott L., *Fundamentals of Catholic Dogma*, (Rockford: Tan Books and Publishers, 1960), p.176.

⁵ Denziger, P.302. (D.993).

⁶ For full text online: <http://www.ewtn.com/library/COUNCILS/TRENT5.HTM>. See also: Denziger, *The Sources of Catholic Dogma*, NH: Loreto Publications, 2004), p.246-51.

A note on *Denziger Numbers*. Denziger’s *Sources of Catholic Dogma* is a universally accepted and frequently quoted source-book of Catholic dogma. However, when his *Sources* is quoted you will typically be referred to what are known as *Denziger Numbers*, or *D*

Numbers. The *D Numbers* refer to the precise passage where the quote is located in his *Sources* (aka. *Enchiridion*). For example, in the case of the extract I have quoted from the Council of Trent, the *D Numbers* would be D.788-90, D.794 and D.799. When I quote from Denzigers *Sources* I will give the page number followed in brackets by the *D Number*; e.g. Denzinger, *Sources*, p.246 (D.790).

⁷ Here, for example, is what the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Vol.12, p.141) has to say: “*Man’s fallen condition is the result of the sin of disobedience. This goes back to the origin of the human race, in which each individual is inserted and grounded. Only by a new act of perfect obedience in which man would choose God in preference to self could a new beginning be made. Yet, paradoxically, this is precisely what man, wounded as he now was by sin, was not able to effect. Man, in his greatest need, found himself in a state of helplessness. It is at this point that God in His merciful design takes the initiative to rescue man, by means of the Incarnation, from a state in which he cannot rescue himself*”.

⁸ Ott, *Fundamentals*, p.184.

⁹ Denzinger p.111; (D.286)

¹⁰ Ott, p.184. See also Denzinger p.51, (D.122).

¹¹ Parente P., *Dictionary of Dogmatic Theology, Sacrifice of Christ*, (Christian Classics, 1951) p.250.

¹² Here is a selection of New Testament passages that refer to the death of Jesus as a sacrifice, made on behalf of humanity, and of his death as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of humanity. For Greek interlinear version see:

http://www.scripture4all.org/OnlineInterlinear/Greek_Index.htm

Ephesians 5:2 - “*Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God*”. (NRSV)

John 1:29 - “*Here is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*” (NRSV)

1John 2:2 – “*and he himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world*”. (NASB) The Greek *hilasterion* is frequently translated as ‘atonement’ (e.g. NRSV), but atonement has the meaning of bringing together as one without

any implication of the necessity of appeasing or making reparation. It therefore does not convey the full meaning that the Greek *hilasterion* would have done in 1st century Israel, and as it is used in the NT, which is that of propitiation and appeasement. That this is the case is evident from this verse, and from the following three verses quoted below. Confirmation of this can be found in such passages as 1Thessalonians 1:10, where Jesus is referred to as the one “*who rescues us from the wrath to come*”, and 1Thessalonians 5:9-10, where Paul triumphantly declares that “*God has destined us not for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us*”. It was evidently Paul’s understanding that God’s wrath was appeased by the death of Jesus, and not simply that his death effected a reunion of long-lost friends as some modern Christian thinkers would have you believe. Further support is found in *Chapter 2* of the *Decree on Justification*, declared at the Council of Trent (1545-63 CE): “*The heavenly Father sent to men Christ Jesus (whom) God has proposed as a propitiator for our sins*”, for which see: Denziger, p.249. (D.794).

Hebrews 2:17 – “*Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in all things, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest...to make propitiation for the sins of the people*”.

1John 4:10 – “*In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His son to be the propitiation for our sins*”.

Romans 3:24- 25 – “*through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in his blood*”.

Hebrews 9:11-14 – makes reference to the propitiatory sacrifices of goats and bulls vis-à-vis Jesus as the ultimate propitiatory sacrifice, which theme is developed in Hebrews 9:28.

Mark 14:24 – Jesus said to his disciples: “*This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many*”. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Vol.12, p.141) confirms the RC understanding that these words: “*allude both to the blood of the Sinai covenant sacrifice, and to the Servant oracles (Isaiah 52:13-53:12)*”.

1Corinthians 5:7 – “*For our paschal lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed*”.

Mathew 20:28 (Par. Mark 10:45) – “*The son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many*”.

1 Peter 1:18-19 – “*You were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors...with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish*”.

Titus 2:14 - “*He it is who gave himself that he might redeem us from all iniquity*”.

2Corinthians 5:18-19 – “*All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself in Christ...in Christ God was reconciling the world to Himself*”.

Colossians 1:19-20 - "*for in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to Himself all things, by making peace through the blood of his cross*".

Hebrews 10:11-12 – makes reference to the daily Tamid sacrifices vis-à-vis the single ultimate sacrifice of the God-man Jesus.

Jesus was apparently every kind sacrifice rolled into one, all to the effect that humanity was reconciled with God, and so was redeemed. The key sacrificial themes are propitiation / atonement, expiation of sin, ransoming / redeeming from sin / the devil, and the dawning of a new Exodus with Jesus as the Paschal sacrifice.

¹³ See Ott p.146, where he quotes Gregory of Nazanzius as follows: "*To put it briefly, the savior unites in himself two different things, but not two different persons*". (*Letter to Cledonius the Priest Against Appolonarius*; available online at: <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/3103a.htm>).