

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 is demonstrably 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 so because the answers that have been proposed by Christian thinkers to the question of why God became Incarnate are all 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 relationship, 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 demonstrably invalid, then the doctrine of the Incarnation is likewise 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? Do Christians really believe that the combined efforts of their three divine persons could not come up with a better plan for creation than this? The answer is of course that God would not and did not do anything of the sort 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 Christians. 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 a divine redeemer, 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 (literally 'three-one') God. If the three divine persons did not cause God-the-son to be Incarnated, because it would be farcical if they did, then Christianity would be exposed as comprehensive nonsense, and so they are damned if they did and damned if they didn't.

However, although we have barely begun the story of Christian Redemption, there is yet another 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 (also known as the Word and the Son) “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being*” (John 1:1-3). 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 God-the-father’s alone. It was a joint decision of all three persons of the triune God, and so God-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 God-the-son in the body of Jesus 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 inquiry to its obvious conclusion, allow me first to 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 before finishing with the doctrine of Incarnation, there is a related doctrine that rewards careful attention. It addresses the question of who suffered and died in the torture and crucifixion of Jesus? Having already refuted the doctrine of Incarnation, we could answer this question very simply by saying that it was the fully human man Jesus who suffered and died, but I will instead consider this doctrine on its own merits as an example of Christian doctrinal incoherence.

It is clearly alleged in Christian dogma that it was the person of God-the-son (or Word) who suffered and died in the crucifixion and not the human person Jesus. Indeed, according to Christian dogma, there was no human person Jesus. There was a man who was “*like us in all things except sin*” (Council of Chalcedon 451) but he was somehow not a human 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 Christian doctrine contends is that the person in the man Jesus was the second divine person of the Trinity who was thus, somehow, enabled to suffer and die as humankind does. However, Christianity also contends, along with Judaism and Islam, that God is impassible (i.e. that He cannot suffer) and so their doctrine of the suffering of God-the-son 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 Christian apologists responded to these evident contradictions? One way they have responded is that 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 earliest 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.

However, in recent times you will easily find Christian apologists who recognise the incoherence of the orthodox Christian position and so maintain that it was not God-the-son who suffered and died but only the human part of Jesus that did so. But we have already learned that there was no human person Jesus, and so, according to this theory, all that was sacrificed to the Christian triune God was the husk of a man minus a person, and because suffering is in the person, what was sacrificed was the husk of a human body that experienced pain and death but no suffering. That was not much of a sacrifice to make to the triune God to

accomplish the wholesale redemption of humankind! Once again the incoherence and foolishness of this doctrine rears its head no matter how they try to make sense of it.

A third approach that apologists have taken in recent times is to brazenly embrace the contention that God-the-son, and even God-the-father, suffered, and that God-the-son died, thereby rejecting the divine attributes of impassibility and immortality. They presumably do so because they feel that they have no other choice. So it is that these Christians are prepared to believe that the actions of humankind can cause suffering in God, and that we can kill God! The words that come to mind are hubris and foolishness. Of course we cannot kill or cause suffering to God. If like me you reject the incoherence, hubris and foolishness of this doctrine, and the various attempts to make sense of it, then you are not a Christian. 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 divine persons but that there is only one God (see e.g. The Athanasian creed). The idea is that there is only one undivided divine essence and it is this that Christian thinkers designate as God (see e.g. Aquinas, *Summa I, 13, 8*). They go on to contend that each one of the three divine persons is identical to the single undivided divine essence while being absolutely distinct from the other two persons. The question for 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* in Part II of www.exodus-314.com 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. Denziger, *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 Denziger p.111; (D.286)

¹⁰ Ott, p.184. See also Denziger 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>).