

## "CHRIST IS GOD" TORN APART

The Christian Church claims it is rational to believe that Jesus Christ though a true man was also truly God. The worship that is due to God is due to Jesus. Most scholars and researchers in the world disagree with Christianity in this thing. Who is right?

The Roman Catholic Augustine Publishing Company re-published in 1987, the book by the Rev J. P. Arendzen, D.D. called, Christ is God. Its purpose was to defend belief in the Roman Catholic doctrine that Jesus Christ is God. The book is excellent and is a must. But as excellent as it is it is seriously flawed.

The first chapter explores the biblical evidence for Jesus being divine. On pages 1 and 2 we are given four reasons why any reasonable person could subscribe to the Catholic doctrine of Jesus if Jesus claimed to be God.

The first is that Jesus was perfect morally and so his claim to be divine must be true. But Jesus was written about by people who had no real respect for or grasp of the true right and wrong. So this proves nothing for if he was good that made him an easy target to turn into a God. The pagans deified good men all the time. Worse for the Christians, Jesus did do wrong – all of the time in fact though it may not always have looked wrong. Jesus might have been sinless but that is no guarantee that Jesus was infallible. He might have been wrong about being God. To use the argument is to say, “Jesus fits my ideas of good and bad so he was good.” But people disagree on moral matters. Some see the pope as good for opposing birth control and others see him as eccentric and others see him as just bad. What believers in the argument are saying is that, “We are so proud of ourselves that Jesus matches our virtues and idea of it. It is more about our pride than about Jesus.”

The second reason for believing Jesus’ claim to divinity was his miracles. But when Jesus regarded the miracles of a horrid fraud like Moses as divine that does not fare well for his own. He performed them to back up the wily and vile Moses too and him even more than himself for he said that Moses gave evidence that the saviour and Son of God would come and was on about him. Jesus was solidly based on the work of Moses and the scriptures of Moses and those that followed were his foundation. Jesus did miracles to verify the foundation or to draw attention to its validity so that it could validate him.

The third reason is that since Jesus’ message was so true and right he had to be trustworthy so if he had said he was God then that is who he was. But maybe he was just clever. The professional fraud uses the truth to support himself. Arindzen is only able to boast about Jesus’ immaculate integrity because he refuses to see the lies Jesus told. He gives no evidence that the gossellers were not unduly biased or that those who charged Jesus with being untruthful were wrong. Few agree on how to interpret Jesus’ moral teaching so it is zany to put down his wisdom as a credential.

The fourth reason is astonishing. It is that the Catholic Church is so holy that it would be impossible for it to have been founded on the lie that Jesus was God. But if God exists then sincerity not truth makes you holy. The Catholic Church has always said that it notices that error can produce holiness. The holiness of the Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant Churches is superficial and hypocritical for they say that a sinner can do good works for God. But to adhere to sin and then to do good instead of repenting first is to insult God and to try and flatter him. You never can tell if anybody is really holy.

Page 4 admits what we already know that there is no direct and categorical statement in the gospels made by Jesus that he is God incarnate. He never says, “I am the Lord God.”

The explanation for this the author gives is that Jesus was not on earth to get adored as God but to atone for sinners and to show us a good example of human living. He wanted to wait to be called God and adored after the resurrection. Now, atoning for sins did not mean he could not publicise his divinity.

And if Jesus hid his divinity to give us good example, then the priest contradicts his own assertion that Jesus revealed his deity while on earth in an indirect way and he says that when Jesus claimed to be the I AM, God’s name, he was directly claiming to be God. If Jesus claimed to be God once he could have done it more often. If Jesus claimed to be God at all he would have been tortured by demands to prove it. The people would have been obsessed with it. We would be reading about his disputes with them in the gospels about it a lot more. There is no way a gosseller would not stress that Jesus was God if that was what he believed. The gossellers would present the post-resurrection Jesus as saying he was divine if he had.

Let us assume as Christians do that Jesus being God doesn’t detract from the reality of his temptations to sin. Then Jesus’ good example could be seen without him hiding his godhead for it would be God showing us what to do and telling us we can do it. So nobody can say a man known to be God incarnate would not serve as a good example for us on the grounds that it is easy for God to be perfect.

But the truth is that whether he hides his divinity or not, if Jesus is God, then his temptations were not real for he couldn't sin for God cannot change and is perfectly good and so will never sin. Jesus' struggle with sin wouldn't be a real struggle for he can't sin. And the people had plenty of other good examples meaning that if they did not see Jesus as an example it did not matter. But they would have seen right and wrong from him. They had to. And if Jesus revealing his deity would ruin the example then he would have to hide it even after the resurrection. Also Jesus would have to scrupulously avoid any act that looked bad even if it was not. But in the gospels he is rude and insults people and attacked a poor mother with racist abuse. He cursed the fig tree though it was not its fault that it didn't have any figs on it for it was not the season.

Jesus then did not hide his divinity because he wanted to be an example and atone for sinners. He hid his divinity for he never claimed to be God.

The author argues that since Jesus said he would tell sinners to depart from him on the day of judgment and that he was telling them how to live in the Sermon on the Mount that he must have been God. But God could have given his non-divine son the authority to command. Moses gave orders on divine authority without being God.

When Jesus healed he demanded faith in himself that he could do it first. The priest argues that if Jesus were not God, it would not be Jesus doing the miracles but God doing them through him. But to believe that a man can do miracles is to believe that God can do them through him. This fails to prove that Jesus was God.

When the Jews expressed their conviction that nobody could forgive sins but God Jesus did not answer them, did not tell them they were wrong, but worked a miracle to prove that he could forgive sins and then told a man that his sins were forgiven. The priest says that this indicated that Jesus is God. But Jesus told them he wanted them to know that he had the authority to do this which could be taken to mean that God does not reserve the power to forgive to himself alone in which case Jesus would not be God. To forgive is to stop treating a person as an offender. Jesus could have claimed to use the power to do this on God's behalf like Catholic priests do.

When Jesus claimed at his trial that he was destined for the right hand of God and was the Son of God the Jews accused him of blasphemy. It is argued that Jesus meant the term Son of God in the Trinitarian sense for there was no blasphemy in the Jewish understanding of what he called himself. Wrong. If Jesus were a sinner it would be blasphemy to make such claims even under the Jewish understanding of the Son of God which had no trace of divinity in it. If it is not blasphemy to call yourself the Son of God it is when you are clearly not the Son of God. You would be calling God unholy.

Why should we listen to people who say Jesus was God when most scholars including Professor Denis Nineham hold that the New Testament does not even say that (Priestland's Progress, page 40). Even those scholars who consider Jesus to be God deny that he knew he was God or claimed to be God when he was alive (page 125, The Metaphor of God Incarnate). They even deny that the I AM references mean he claimed to be God (page 28, *ibid*).

The book cannot convince anybody that Jesus was God.

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