

WAS JUSTIN MARTYR RELIABLE OR A PROPAGANDIST?

Jesus Christ reputedly died and rose again in the thirties of the first century. A Christian, called Justin Martyr wrote in defence of the Christian religion in the century after. Justin's writings are used in defence of the Christian claim that Jesus really existed and lived as the four gospels say.

In his Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter XVII, we find Justin accusing the Jews of sending missionaries all over the world just to make trouble for Christians and slander them. This is impossible to believe for the Jews did not care what non-Jews thought. Why did the Jews pick on Christians and not Christ? The passage gives no hint that they went about slandering Jesus and saying the resurrection was a hoax which indicates that the Jews knew Jesus never existed. Justin wants to forget the Jews believed that. He says the Jews still persecute Christ but Christians hold that to persecute Christians is to persecute Christ.

When Justin claimed that the Old Testament had been altered, he lost any right to say that the Bible had no contradictions (Chapter LXV) and that it proved Christ was born and was the saviour. Trypho would certainly have pointed that out to him but Justin left that point out. Trypho would also have objected that had Jesus been the Christ Jesus would have restored the Bible. Justin quoted some allegedly missing scriptures (Chapter LXXII). One from Esdras merely says that there is a saviour and if the people turn away from him they shall be laughed at. Another from Jeremiah says that somebody is like a lamb for the slaughter and the Jews will say they should kill him. Another says the Lord came down to raise his people from the dead. A line about God reigning from the wood has supposedly been cut out of a psalm. Not one of these lost scriptures necessarily proves that God became man or anything about Jesus.

Chapter XXIX says that anybody baptised in the Holy Spirit does not need the other "baptism" of circumcision. Jesus would always have had the Holy Spirit and was still circumcised. Justin is contradicting the gospels that Jesus was circumcised.

Chapter XXXIV denies that a Psalm is about Solomon and says it is about Christ for it is about somebody who is adored by all kings and who rules the world. Quoting this Psalm would have been useless for Trypho would say it proved nothing for Christ did not achieve these things yet. So Justin is saying that all kings adored the man Christ some time in the past and that Christ was emperor of the world meaning that Jesus lived long long before the time period the gospels give. This is a clear contradiction of the New Testament and proves it was censored or not regarded as infallible at the time. Trypho never replied to this for it was so silly and impossible to disprove.

In Chapter XXXIX we read, "Trypho said, 'prove to us that the man who according to you was crucified and rose into Heaven is the Messiah of God. For you have proved by the scriptures you have recited before that the scriptures say the Christ must suffer and return to rule all nations. Show us that your Christ is the Christ'. Justin replies, "It has been proved to us. It has been proven to those who hear and who have heard what you have heard and accepted by you. But I return to what I was discussing and will give the other proof later to you in case you say I cannot prove".

Trypho says that the Christians are SAYING Jesus was nailed to the cross indicating that there was no evidence for it but their word. Justin, in reply, tells the Jews that the prophecies are proof enough. In other words, the prophecies must have been fulfilled so even if there is no evidence for Christ we know from the prophecies that the Christ story is true and can work out the details of the story. In other words, the prophecies are the only real record of Christ. In other words, if the interpretation is wrong then Jesus Christ never existed.

Later in Chapter XLVIII Trypho challenges Justin to prove Christ as he promises and he complained that it was "all very paradoxical and no proof is possible. It is when you say that this Messiah existed as God before the origin of time and then that he agreed to be born and become a man and yet that is not just a man this is more than paradoxical but foolish – that is how I see it". If you analyse this you see that the traditional claim of the Church that Trypho was disputing the idea of a God waiting for a long time to become man is false for Trypho as a Jew would have known that the same complaint could be made about God being so slow in sending the Messiah be he God or not. There is no absurdity in God waiting for the right time. As a scholar, Trypho would have known that the similar thought that it is too silly to believe that God would have waited so long before making the world was flawed. He is rejecting the idea that the Messiah was born as a man and could be a divine being for a God made man would only be a God pretending to be a vulnerable man. He is implicitly denying that Jesus could do miracles and rise from the dead. Justin replies, "I am unable to prove that he existed before his birth as a son of the creator of all things and that he was God and born man of a virgin. But I have proved that he is the Christ". Justin means only the Old Testament proves Christ to have been the Messiah and Justin is denying that there are

any books or proofs that Jesus was a God and existed before he was born which is a challenge to the traditional interpretation of the gospel of John which appears at first glance to support the traditional theology that there are three persons in God and the second person the Word or Son became man. Justin even says that Christ is the Christ whoever he is. He does not know Jesus at all or anything about him. He has to learn about the mysterious Jesus from Old Testament prophecy.

Justin cannot use the resurrection to prove that Jesus is God even on the basis that if Jesus said he was God and God would prove it by raising him then Jesus was proven to be God by the resurrection. Justin did not have the uncensored gospels. And even without them he should still have been able to formulate an argument for the resurrection by arguing on the basis of history and the integrity of the alleged witnesses to the resurrection.

And Justin was not thinking about proving that Christ was born of a virgin but that Christ was born for born is the whole point of what he said. It's the main point. He meant, "I cannot prove that he was born – it just happened to be from a virgin". Trypho's request for proof that Jesus really fulfilled the prophecies is not given and in chapter XLIX Justin goes back to proving from prophecy that Elijah in John anointed Jesus but never uses history to prove the event really happened as prophesied. Trypho answers that the prophecy used to prove this is ambiguous and Justin argues that there was nobody else but John and Jesus to fulfil the prophecy. He does not use facts to prove Jesus fulfilled prophecy but uses prophecy to work out the alleged facts. The fact that he indicates that John and Jesus were the only candidates implies that his view was that the baptism in the Jordan was more than just a dip in the water and John hearing a voice and seeing a dove light on Jesus. It seems to imply that there was a coronation and something that nobody else could imitate. It was some kind of grand public event and was unique for anybody could go for a dip and say the man who baptised them was Elijah and that the Holy Spirit came down. Justin rejected and did not know or accept the story of what happened at the Jordan that we have in the gospels.

Chapter LXIX says that the Devil created the legend of Hercules with his divine origin from Jove and his world travels and magic strength, ascension into Heaven to create a counterfeit of the life of Christ so that Hercules seems to imitate Christ. But Jesus did not travel the world or have great physical strength according to the Gospels so Justin is eliminating the gospels whether he knew them or not as reliable records of the life of Jesus. This would be strong evidence that Jesus may not have existed for the gospels are the only things that stand between belief in Jesus as a person and denial of his reality. The reason Justin brings all these parallels between Jesus and the gods up is because he wants to convince Trypho that the Devil and his legions know the prophecies of the Old Testament mean what Justin says they mean. So to ruin things for Jesus, Satan and his minions invent other Jesus's such as Hercules.

The outrageously ridiculous thesis in Chapter LXX that the mystery religion of Mithras was based on the true interpretation of Daniel and Isaiah but distorted is a sure sign that Justin was extremely embarrassed by the similarity between Christ and Mithras. He wanted to deflect Trypho from going into the charge that Christians used pagan myths when inventing their Jesus. And it worked. Trypho did not use this line of argument. Trypho would have known to a certain extent that Christianity was a copy of paganism but would have found it difficult to answer Justin's hint that it was independent. The pagans did not esteem Daniel and Isaiah that much and their legends all came from nature myths - for example, the sun setting and rising suggested dying and rising gods.

Justin devoted Chapters CVI and CVII to proving that the end of Psalm 22 and the story of Jonah showed that Jesus would rise again. Neither prove any such thing. Justin wrote in Chapter CVIII that though Jesus had told the Jews that he would perform the sign of Jonah meaning the resurrection they would not believe the resurrection report and maintained that the body had been stolen and the apostles were lying. Justin made no effort to prove that the resurrection happened. His logic was if the Old Testament said the Messiah would rise then Jesus must have risen and it is on this logic that he tries to persuade Trypho. That is why Trypho does not bother answering the objection. The objection could only be answered on the basis that the gospel stories were verifiable and convincing and this was not done so both Justin and Trypho did not regard the gospels as wholly important if they existed. It seems more probable that they did not know the historical parts of the gospels at all. Justin denied the gospel evidence when he said that prophecy proves the resurrection when what he should have been doing was proving the resurrection and then that it was prophesied.

Justin claims to prove that the Old Testament predicted that the Gentiles would be more open to the gospel than the Jews who would mostly turn away. There is something very dodgy going on when the people who would have known Jesus best were so dead set against him. The Jews were a lot less addicted to material pleasures than the Gentiles and had a rigid moralistic religion so psychology tells us that they should have been easier to convert. But the case may be that they knew too much about Justin's non-existing Jesus to be converted.

Justin showed he did not have the Book of Acts when he told Trypho that you could not be a Jew and a Christian at the one time. It wasn't likely then that he had Luke's gospel either for one goes with the other and the end of Luke says the apostles never left the Temple for they were so busy worshipping after Jesus departed from them into Heaven.

In Chapter CXLII, Trypho tells Justin that it was not the intention of his or Justin's companions to discuss what they discussed. Trypho says he is pleased with the conversation and that more discussions like that would be of service in understanding the Old Testament scriptures. Before they left Justin told them he hoped they would come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah of God. So he had failed to convince them. Evidently, Trypho was impressed only by the ingenuity but not the conclusions of Justin's Old Testament exegesis.

Justin says the apostles wrote memoirs of the life of Jesus but he never tells us what was in them or if he used them in his research into the life of Jesus. Justin was dishonest because he said that when God said that he gives nobody his glory but keeps it for himself for he is the only God and that when he gave Christ his glory the solution to the contradiction is a mystery (Chapter LXV). When he sees or thinks he sees a contradiction he pretends it is not there. Justin seriously contradicted the gospels when he said this for had Christ been God there would have been no contradiction. But Justin believed that Christ was not God but was another God. This is plain. His attitude shows that the early Church had no scriptures but the Old Testament and anything else was just a book, useful, but just a book that could be right or wrong and had no binding authority on the Church. This shows that early Christianity was not based on evidence but on Old Testament interpretation and opinion.

Justin backed up Trypho's unbelief in the reality of Christ without meaning to. Justin was the Christian's first real apologist. This individual is eulogised by Christians and his eccentricities and fanaticism are conveniently papered over.

