

IF CHRISTIANITY WAS SOCIALLY DEVIANT DOES THAT LEND IT PLAUSIBILITY?

FROM

The argument for the historicity of Jesus' resurrection is fairly simple:

- a) there are a set of generally agreed upon facts regarding the life and death of Jesus
- b) the best explanation of these facts is the hypothesis that the God of Israel resurrected Jesus.

These facts are:

- a) Jesus was crucified
- b) Jesus was buried in a tomb
- c) the tomb was later found empty
- d) people later saw visions of the risen Jesus. It is argued that the resurrection hypothesis satisfies the criteria for the best explanation. Those criteria being:
 - a) explanatory scope
 - b) explanatory power
 - c) plausibility
 - d) less ad-hoc
 - e) disconfirmed by fewer existing beliefs.

A second argument is that:

- a) Christianity was massively offensive to 1st century socio-cultural values, and got its followers persecuted
- b) despite this massive obstacle, Christianity nonetheless spread and thrived
- c) there therefore had to have been some kind of convincing evidence that Christianity was true to persuade so many people.

A socially-deviant movement such as Christianity would have attracted persecution from the get-go:

"The group would exercise measures designed to shame the transgressor (whether through insult, reproach, physical abuse, confiscation of property - at worst, execution) so that the transgressor would be pressured into returning to the conduct the group approved (if correction were possible) and so that group members would have their aversion to committing such transgressions themselves strongly reinforced." - David A. deSilva, Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity, InterVarsity Press, (2000), p36 "That there was an intrinsic incompatibility between Christianity and classical values was apparent from the time Romans became aware of the presence of the new religion. Christians were criticized on a variety of grounds, but principally because they had rejected the gods of their ancestors and the civic values of the Greco-Roman world. Their religion was new; they had turned away from the traditions of their immediate ancestors, the Jews. In short, they did not fit into the system that had been sanctioned by centuries of classical use." - D. Brendan Nagle and Stanley M. Burstein, The Ancient World: Readings in Social and Cultural History, Third Edition, Pearson, New Jersey (2006), p314-315. Not forgetting, of course, the persecution of Christians by Nero as recorded by the Roman historian Tacitus, or the persecution of Christians at the hands of Pliny the Younger, who stated that those who confessed to being Christians were punished, with the Emperor Trajan commending Pliny for his actions. Thus, to argue that only six martyrdoms in the first 250 years of Christian history can be treated as historically reliable is simply false.

[Dr Hector] Avalos ... claims that the spread of belief in the Marian apparitions at Medjugorje greatly exceeds spread of belief in the risen of Jesus. However, this is ignoring the fact that the millions of pilgrims to Medjugorje were devout

Catholics whereas people were converting to Christianity from belief systems that were hostile to it, and in a society whose socio-cultural values were fundamentally at odds with the central tenets and teachings of the Christian faith.

Avalos also makes the bizarre suggestion that willingness to suffer persecution and death for following Christianity is historically unconfirmed. This flies in the face of everything we know about 1st Century Near East and Mediterranean socio-cultural values.

COMMENTS: Nonsense. Most of the people going to Medjugorje are from a Catholic background but few are devoted Catholics. And some convert at Medjugorje as in taking up their Catholic faith properly again. They do this despite our liberal and humanistic socio-cultural values. Medjugorje is undoubtedly nonsense so the "socially deviant" test is not a test. Socially deviant is simply socially deviant and has nothing to do with showing the deviancy to be valid or true or plausible.

The last point is best discussed in the light of how the killing of people in the early Church for being Christian has definitely been exaggerated and a lot of it was down to them being mistaken for atheists for not using images in worship.

SOURCES

Jesus' Resurrection and Marian Apparitions: Medjugorje as a Living Laboratory By Dr. Hector Avalos at 4/29/2013

<http://www.truthinmydays.com/do-apparitions-of-mary-undermine-the-case-for-jesus-resurrection/>

