

HUSSEIN ABDULWAHEED AMIN, EX-CATHOLIC, IRELAND (PART 2 OF 4): INVESTIGATING THE CHRISTIAN RESOURCES

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Description: Hussein talks about his experience of researching into the Bible and gives us a glimpse of his conclusions.

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Saint Paul and the early Christian Church

Having gone as far as I could at that time with my research of Islam, I next set about a serious study of the historical Jesus and the early Christian church. I was astonished at what I learned - things I had never even heard about in my fourteen years of Religious Education at Catholic schools. As my knowledge increased, I came to reject what I now regarded as the doctrinal innovations of the foremost evangelist of the early church, Paul of Tarsus, usually referred to as Saint Paul the Apostle. Paul was not an Apostle at all. In fact, he personally never even met Jesus, yet claimed to receive visions of Jesus which overrode the first-hand historical and theological knowledge of those who had known and followed Jesus during his actual ministry. Paul's abrogation of the Law of Moses was decried by the Jerusalem church, led by Peter, and comprised of the original Jewish disciples of Jesus. They saw themselves as a movement within Judaism and would not accept gentiles unless they converted to Judaism, for example, through circumcision and acceptance of Jewish dietary law. For the original Jewish disciples of Jesus, the notion of a literal and physical Son of God would have been blasphemous and in direct contravention of the First Commandment. In Exodus 20:2-5 we read:

"I am the Lord your God...Worship no god but me...I tolerate no rivals."

And Deuteronomy 6:4 is variously rendered as:

"Hear O Israel, the LORD - and the LORD alone - is our God."

Or

"The LORD, our God, is the only God."

Or

“The LORD our God is one.”

There seems no scope for a “Son of God” or Trinity based on those readings, only for God “the Father” in Christian parlance or Allah as He is known to Muslims. [Allah is simply the Arabic word for the God (capital G). He is not some other deity, as some people in the West mistakenly think. Arabic-speaking Jews and Christians use the word “Allah” too and “Allah” appears throughout the Arabic Bible.]

This understanding that a literal, physical Son of God would have been (and still is) blasphemous to Jews was subsequently confirmed to me in private correspondence with a Jewish university professor of religion. Speaking of the Jewish understanding of the Messiah, he stated: “The figure described here is clearly a human being, not a divinity or son of God”.

Saint Paul’s missionary work was overwhelmingly directed at polytheist pagans in the northern Mediterranean. In Corinth he gave up in exasperation on the Jews who stayed faithful to the worship of God alone and to the oneness of God. In Acts 17: 6 Paul declares to the Jews:

“If you are lost, you yourselves must take the blame for it. I am not responsible. From now on I will go to the gentiles.”

The notion of gods having children would have been very familiar to gentiles such as the Greeks. I suspect that Paul distorted the message of Jesus to make it more acceptable to this audience and thereby gain as many converts as possible as quickly as possible. We see evidence in Acts 17: 22-23 of how Paul in Athens draws explicitly on the existing religion of the Greeks to introduce his corrupted version of Christianity to them. There is also evidence that Paul made things up as he went along and conjured up doctrine on the hoof without reference to Jewish scripture, the teachings of Jesus or even one of his own famed visions. For example, in 1 Corinthians 7: 25 in reply to a query about unmarried people, Paul admits that “I do not have a command from the Lord”, yet nevertheless proceeds to offer his own private opinion in his self-proclaimed capacity as “one who by the Lord’s mercy is worthy of trust”.

The Questionable Validity of the New Testament

Growing up in a Catholic home and attending Catholic schools, I had always unquestioningly regarded the Bible as the Word of God. As a result of my private study in adulthood of the history of the writing and compilation of the Bible, I now came to view the New Testament in particular as deeply suspect. Paul or his followers wrote most of it. Note, for example, that from chapter 16 onwards, the Acts of the Apostles follows the career of Paul, not his co-missionary Barnabas, an original disciple of Jesus. Barnabas was acknowledged as the founder of the Christian Church in Cyprus and was the author of a Gospel which was accepted by the earliest Christians. But his Gospel was arbitrarily excluded from the Bible when the New Testament was officially compiled for the first time at the behest of the pagan Roman Emperor Constantine three

centuries after Christ. Barnabas had originally vouched for Paul when the Jerusalem disciples of Jesus wanted nothing to do with him, but then parted company with Paul after a bitter argument (Acts 15: 36-40).

As for the four Gospels now accepted as canonical by Christendom (and only since as late as the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E.!), these were compiled from unreliable third and fourth-hand accounts long after Jesus' lifetime.

Mark 65-75 C.E.

Luke 80-85 C.E.

Matthew 85-90 C.E.

John 95-140 C.E.

Source: University of Calgary, Department of Religious Studies^[1]

How can the true Word of God contain two glaringly different genealogies of Jesus (Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-37)? And why include human genealogies at all if Jesus were truly the literal or physical "Son of God"? How many thousands did Jesus really feed with loaves and fish? Two different gospels give two different figures. The actual numbers are a relatively trivial detail, but these examples highlight an important point - the unreliability of the Gospels concerning the life and teachings of Jesus and therefore their unsuitability as a basis for doctrine.

Moreover, in general, it is particularly important to consider that not only are the Gospels not contemporary accounts, they were actually written retrospectively in a climate of disassociation from Judaism and ingratiating with pagan Rome during or following the failed Jewish anti-Roman uprising of 66-74 AD. In contrast, the earlier and more authentic gospel written by Barnabas was excluded from the official Bible and suppressed by the Pauline-dominated Church establishment from the 4th century onward.

In addition, it seems silly to have to point it out, but Jesus, his apostles and disciples were Jews whose scriptures were in Hebrew. However, the New Testament was written in Greek. And an appendix to the Good News Bible authorized by the Catholic Church lists 85 instances including 15 in the Gospels where New Testament writers have Jesus and the other central characters of early Christianity quoting from, paraphrasing or alluding to texts not from the original Old Testament in Hebrew but the from Septuagint version, a Greek translation made in Egypt around 200 BC. The appendix states:

In a number of instances this version differs significantly in meaning from the Masoretic Hebrew text.

It is not credible that the Jesus and his followers would be quoting from a foreign language translation containing significant differences rather than from the Hebrew original of their Jewish scriptures. This casts further doubt on the accuracy of the New Testament and again undermines its validity as a basis for doctrine.

Footnotes:

[1] (http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~elsegal/C_Transp/C_Index.html)

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