

Saturday, 11 January 2025

## Explaining contradictions: The paradoxical expressions of Christian mysticism

It strikes me that the way in which (what I might call) mainstream/ orthodox/ traditional Christian theology tries to explain its inbuilt contradictions, is by the assertion of contraries, in a paradoxical and mystical way.

The contradictions arise from *monism* - by which I mean that the starting assumption is of the unity of God who is assumed to be omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. This means that **everything is God**, including all of creation, and every possible derivative and consequence of creation.

So that God is good, and God is also everything we regard as evil. And the world, which seems to be a mixture of good and evil, is actually (by assumption) absolutely unified. All that exists is *one kind-of-thing* - because that thing is God, because there is nothing else that it could be.

The appearance of the world seems to include many distinct people, animals, plants, minerals etc; but at root all must (by assumptions) come from God; and everything about them comes from God. All all apparent differentness is ultimately one.

For Christians there must be freedom, agency, autonomy; and therefore life unrolls unpredictably. And yet, everything that seems independent is actually just "a thought in the mind of God" (who is time-less), and everything that happens is foreknown to God -

because for God there is no time; and all that was, is, and shall-be is "simultaneous".

How does mainstream Christian theology explain such contradictions? Ultimately it does *not* explain them - ultimately, these contradictions are asserted in sequence, one after another, and both sides of the contradiction are then said to be true.

For instance: 1: We are creatures wholly of-God - everything of us was made, from nothing, by God. 2: We are also free agents, capable of genuine choice, from our-selves. Both at once, 1&2... Q: But how exactly? A: Just *Because*.

Two contradictory statements are made, one after the other, and asserted both necessarily to be true - and *that* is the (mystical) explanation of the contradiction.

Therefore, when an enquirer digs deep into Christian theology to ask how it fits-together; he meets with *mysticism*: and that mysticism entails the sequential assertion of contraries as simultaneous truths. Christian mysticism is the realization that all apparent contradictions are compatible within the unity of Omni-God.

**For mainstream/ orthodox/ traditional Christian theology; contradictions are fundamental and unavoidable - therefore paradoxical mysticism is *necessarily* the bottom-line "explanation" when it comes to reconciling The World with Ultimate Reality.**

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The question for each Christian is whether or not he is happy with having his religion rooted in paradoxical mysticism?

It seems that in the past, in many times and places, people *were* happy with a religion rooted in contradictions.

However, *I* am *not* happy with such a situation here-and-now; and indeed regard it as a fundamental and fatally-weakening flaw...

Which is why I have needed to develop a qualitatively distinct explanation for Christianity, rooted in different primary assumptions regarding the nature of God and reality.

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Posted by [Bruce Charlton](#) at [Saturday, January 11, 2025](#)



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## 4 comments:

### **Francis Berger said...**

The juxtaposition of metaphysical assumption versus metaphysical assertion is a good one. It really struck a chord with me. Whenever I have attempted to discuss assumptions, I'm inevitably countered by assertions.

[11 January 2025 at 19:50](#)

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### **The Social Pathologist said...**

"This means that everything is God, including all of creation, and every possible derivative and consequence of creation. "

The progeny is distinct from the progenitor, otherwise it is not. True, there have been strong tendencies in Christianity to erase distinctions--and we are in one of those periods now--but Christianity isn't Buddhism. Traditional, mainstream Christianity always maintained that distinction.

One of Karl Barth's great contentions with Catholicism is that it maintained that distinction. Her derisively called it "Der Kaltholische und".

11 January 2025 at 21:38

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**Bruce Charlton said...**

@SP - That is one of the contradiction's I am talking about. The progeny is distinct from the progenitor. Absolutely everything about the progeny was wholly created (from nothing) by the progenitor. Both of these are asserted to be true.

Christianity always maintained that distinction. Yet at the same time; Christianity did not allow any basis for that distinction.

Christianity isn't Buddhism - Christianity insists on distinction. Yet The omni-God-creator-ex-nihilo collapses into Buddhism; because it erases any basis for distinguishing between creator and created.

I would say that, when it is asserted (with Classic Christian theology) that all being originates in God; then this assertion entails that all causes originate in God.

In one sense classic theology insists that all causes do originate in God. It also asserts that some causes originate in created beings. Yet there is no place from which causes could originate in a created being, except for God.

So I agree that Christianity asserts all sorts of distinctions. And I regard these distinctions as real. But Classic Theology makes it impossible to \*explain\* them - except by recourse to mystery.

11 January 2025 at 23:44

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**Rich said...**

like you, Doctor, i find these explanations possibly insufficient.

"possibly" in the sense that, yeah sure, these paradoxes may be unintelligible \*mysteries\* to the mind of Man.

but i always had the feeling there is so much more. for my part i appreciate your waxing on about Christianity like you do. so much food for thought.

12 January 2025 at 01:49

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