

A Critique of Christian Origins

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF JESUSISM (PROTO-CHRISTIANITY / NEO-JUDAISM)

30–325 A.D.

30 A.D. (+/- 2 years)

The alleged execution of *Jesus of Nazareth*.

50-52 A.D.

The first letter was written by evangelizer *Saul of Tarsus* about the savior-god, “Christ”. The other letters of Saul were composed during the 50’s.

About 70 A.D.

The composition of the original gospel account (telling the story of Jesus of Nazareth), labeled “The Good News according to Mark”. Here, the story ended with an empty tomb—sans any specific resurrection accounts. “Q” is composed around the same time: A collection of Greek translations of the Aramaic sayings attributed to the rabbi of Nazareth named “Jesus”.

Thus, 30-70 A.D.

Orally-transmitted folklore, partially influenced by Saul’s letters during the 50’s, occurs.*

** Song, legend, myth, legacy, and heritage serve as the vehicles by which oral traditions (i.e. story-telling) develop and undergo perpetual metamorphoses.*

In this case, the narrative offered pride, hope, and existential orientation to the listeners. Moreover, it provided a sense of fraternity, belonging, and identity to the communities who participated. The savior-god narrative that emerged involved a mysterious and uniquely special miracle-worker, identified as “Jesus”, the preacher from Nazareth. As is the case with word-of-mouth, the account underwent various metamorphoses as the years passed. That the subject matter was emotionally charged and involved vested interests only exacerbated the degree to which the oral transmission transformed the account year after year.

The lore included parables and all the trappings of prophecy-fulfillment schemes. The culmination of this process is recorded in “Mark” and “Q”. Here, we find the seed of Jesusism—proto-Christianity in its embryonic form.

70 A.D. -100 A.D.

In the mid-80’s, the accounts labeled “Matthew” and then “Luke”/“Acts” were composed—replete with further elaborations, modifications and interpretations in the emerging narrative. Each was, in its own way, predominantly based on “Mark” and “Q”...and was further informed by Jewish dogma and contemporary concerns.

These subsequent narratives incorporated elements that reflected the interests, hopes, fears, and dogma of the writers at the time—as well as their audience. All of this is palpably informed by ever-evolving conceptions of Torah piety as well as by developing interpretations of Torah prophecy and prophecy-fulfillment scenarios.

The writers of “The Gospel according to Matthew” updated the story in “Mark”, adding material 55 years after the alleged death of its protagonist—all in order to facilitate the salience of the evolving narrative. “Matthew” thus served as a device for the promotion of the movement more than as a biographical account of historical events.

“Gospels” are, after all, “good news” composed and propagated with certain motives; they are not objective journalism or records kept by impartial historians. They reflect the interests, hopes, fears and dogma of the community *at that time and place*. They were never intended to be taken as literal; they were composed as metaphorical / didactic tools—devices to be used to promote a particular agenda and facilitate a communal movement.

The writing of “Luke”/“Acts” precipitated the schism between Neo-Judaism and proto-Christianity that ensued as the first century drew to an end. The consequence of this bifurcation was made manifest at the turn of the century in the new-fangled account, “The Gospel according to John”.

Via “John”, the separation of proto-Christianity as a distinct cult movement (from Judaism proper) was fully realized. 70 years (2-3 generations) after the alleged death of the protagonist, “John” was written at a time when the antagonism / tension between more traditional Judaism and the new Jesusist sect had become sufficiently significant as to be problematic. “John” reflects this divergence quite stridently.

By the time “John” was composed, Jesus of Nazareth was being increasingly portrayed as a demi-god, not merely a prophet...and thus deified in various ways. The narrative had undergone a drastic transformation in the three decades (more than a generation) between 70 A.D. (when “Mark” was composed) and 100 A.D. (approximately when “John” was composed). Anyone who’d been an adult in the time of the composition of “Mark” was almost certainly dead by the time the writers of “John” amended the narrative...just as anyone who may have been alive at the time of the protagonist’s death were dead by the time the first Gospel account was composed.

The massive modifications of “John” set the stage for the narrative that is now embraced by Christianity—wherein Jesus is equated with the savior-god (the “Christ” talked about in the letters written by Saul of Tarsus during his decade of evangelism).

The full-fledged schism between proto-Christianity and Judaism-proper was based on the account in “John”. The schism ensued during the early part of the second century. Instead of aiming for the “Kingdom of Israel” in the apocalyptic / millennial account of the Torah, the proto-Christians were now focusing on the coming “Kingdom of God” in terms of the return of *Jesus qua Messiah*—an altogether new apocalyptic / millennial account in the form of a spiritual abstraction. The stage was set for Jesusism as a religion unto itself, a memeplex independent of and entirely distinct from Judaism.

100 A.D. – 325 A.D.

In 112 A.D., in Bethenia (in modern-day Turkey), a Roman official (a municipal magistrate named Pliny-the-Younger) set precedent by identifying Jesusists as a distinctly identifiable group within the Roman Empire, separate from the Jews. Unlike Judaism, this new movement was potentially problematic (i.e. seditious) for the established order. At the time, the m.o. of Jesusist conduct was simply: Be a good person (i.e. philo-anthropy). Their insignia was a fish, and the first depiction of the crucifixion was a cross on which was hung a man with a horse’s head. The Jesusists were martyrs who embraced passive civil

disobedience. By the time “John” was being used as a source of dogma, Jesusism had adopted many of the superstitions and themes popular at the time (e.g. virgin births, resurrections, etc.) The original narrative (i.e. “Mark”) was by this time woefully inadequate.

During the course of the 100’s and 200’s, a diversity of proto-Christianities emerged—all based on myriad accounts: a variety of texts and “Gospels”. Some of the texts involved a far more fit memplex than did others—being as they were more conducive to institutionalization. These more fit memplexes therefore rose to more prominence.

Over the two-plus centuries that intervened between “John” and the Council of Nicaea, there was a process of natural selection between memplexes—a sort of “survival of the fittest” for the competing candidate sects. The Council of Nicaea, convened by Constantine as a political maneuver, naturally adopted the memplex that was most conducive to the aims of the incumbent power structures—yielding the official canon of “approved” texts on which contemporary Christianity is based.

The emerging sense of orthodoxy became more and more palpable as the generations progressed between 100 and 325, getting to the point where there was a clear “winner”. Anything that was inconvenient to the maintenance of the established order (heterodox versions like Gnostic Jesusism) tended to be expunged—most notably, the Gospels of Thomas and Mary. Any memplex that was based on individual autonomy was antithetical to the kind of Faith that would serve the interests of power and privilege—and were therefore unacceptable.

The acceptable memes belonged to the so-called orthodox versions—versions that engendered subservience and submission: the kind of which “Christianity” is now comprised. The Council of Nicaea in 325 was the “piece de resistance” of the on-going process of natural selection: its decisive culmination and terminus. No more would metamorphosis of the narrative be tolerated.

The primary interruption of that process had been the McCarthyite-like witch-hunts of proto-Christians within the Roman Empire starting in 250 A.D. (enacted by Emperor Desius). But that strategy would soon prove to be quixotic. The seditious memplex was far too appealing for the poor and downtrodden, as it essentially served as a welfare-state-within-the-Empire. Jesusism offered social solidarity and mutual support for those most in need, giving them hope and solace, as well as something to look forward to after death. The Empire’s official dogma couldn’t compete with that.

The counter-pagan dogma, then, was something that would simply *not go away*. The subversive memplex had become a social juggernaut for obvious reasons. The Council of Nicaea was convened in recognition of this undeniable fact—a scheme for leveraging that influence for its own rule.

Constantine’s strategic transition of Christianity’s status from a counter-Empire movement to the very *embodiment* of the Empire was an act of Machiavellian genius—the consequences of which we see to this day. The rationalization invoked, of course, was not the REAL reason for the maneuver.

(The rationalization offered was an appearance to Constantine of the cross—symbol of the Christian movement—on Helios—conveniently accompanied by the caption, “By this (sign), (you will) conquer.” This explanation sounds much better than the underlying LOGISTICAL reasons for the adoption of Christianity as the State religion. Constantine was an opportunist—a pragmatist. His decisions reflected just this.)

Thereafter, any alternate treatment of Jesusism, of course, was thereby eradicated—as it was tantamount to sedition. Any unapproved text was not only banned, but eliminated—for obvious reasons. The official narrative had to be strictly enforced—no competing memplex allowed to metastasize. History had to be written and controlled to serve the established order. The Imperium had successfully appropriated the

“winning” memplex for its own purposes—and done so on its own terms. The contemporary conception of Christianity had been inaugurated. After having undergone an extensive metamorphosis over the course of many generations, the original folklore had finally achieved stasis.

Christianity—in its modern form—was born.