

Proposed solutions for the three puzzles of the early Christian history

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The Introduction

I am a Muslim, and the reason for my interest in the early Christian history was for solving four Islamic metaphysical puzzles related to Jesus that have never been explored before.

However, looking into the early Christian history, I found 3 historical puzzles that are very interesting:

- How did Jesus' teaching pass and flourish from its local limited domain (the Jewish Community in Palestine) to a foreign domain (the Greek-Roman world) in less than 20 years?
- Christianity had managed to expand and flourish quickly in Europe, but it didn't do the same in Persia, India or China. So, what is in Europe that is not in India, or what is in India that is not in Europe?
- How did a complex concept (Trinity) manage to prevail while many other simpler concepts had faded away?

The original plan was to write a set of articles as a proposal for solving these puzzles, and to present them (if possible) in Bart Ehrman blog. However, I did end up with 11 articles of about 2000 words each. Therefore, presenting these articles one by one is not really practical. So, I have decided to collect all of these articles into one PDF file and to present them as such.

I need to stress here that this set of articles doesn't discuss metaphysics and it is not into apologetics, it is a pure historical discussion. Therefore, the second article (the methodology) is important because it does clarify how a Muslim with clear Islamic metaphysical beliefs can analyze records through scientific historical analysis that might end-up with conclusions that are very contradictive to his own beliefs. Hence, there is a methodology here. Also, in the second article, I need to explain how an amateur in a specific field can legitimately discuss and argue about some points in this field with the professionals. Hence, there is another methodology here.

So, article-2 might be a dry philosophical one, but it is needed to give a level of legitimacy to the proposed solutions for these puzzles.

However, I did prefer to start this set of articles with an interesting subject rather than a philosophical one. So, the first article will an interesting subject which is to discuss whether Jesus was a normal and simplistic person that was coincidentally caught in some exceptional series of events that made him famous in history or was he an extraordinary person.

Although the answer might be an obvious one, but it needs to be clarified in order to use it as a reference for further arguments.

Article 1 - A simplistic person or an extraordinary one

Suppose you were in a hill overseeing a large lake, and suddenly you noticed a wave propagating quickly outward. You will instinctively realize that this wave has originated from its center, and you can probably pinpoint this center with ease by looking at the wave.

However, your eyes will open wildly in astonishment and your scientific mind will turn upside down when you see the wave reaching the shore then jumping to the next lake and start propagating there.

This is going to be a very weird phenomenon. But this exact phenomenon needs to be included in our explanatory models for the expansion of Christianity:

The point of propagation for Christianity was the point of establishment at 30AD, and in less than 20 years, the teaching of Jesus managed to propagate outside its local domain to many foreign domains. This is an extraordinary phenomenon. Notice that the Greek Christians were very serious in their faith to the point that many of them went for circumcision, which I assume would probably be painful and memorable experience for a grown-up man. But this how serious these Greeks were.

Just to make a near “apple to apple” analogy, let us just **imagine** a little twist in history as the following:

The Start of this imaginary analogy:

Suppose we are at 1844 AD, and at this day “Joseph Smith” (the founder of the Mormons) was shot dead by a mob. Two years after that, the Mormons started the immigration to their new home (Utah). During this period, few Chinese were around, and they were very impressed with the teaching of Joseph Smith to the point that they converted to Mormonism. They went to China and started to form churches there and went preaching their new faith to the Chinese populace, and Mormonism started to expand quickly there.

This was very strange because there weren’t any prominent leaders that organized this expansion. Even the leader of Mormons in Utah (Brigham Young) at that time didn’t really care about these Chinese followers; he was only interested in the “lost sheep” of the white European Christians. So, it seems that the management of things in China was almost instinctive.

These Chinese Mormons were very serious in their faith to the point that women accepted without second thoughts the polygamy marriages. This how serious these Chinese were to the teaching of Joseph Smith.

Although American Mormons didn’t regard Joseph to be the son of God, but the Chinese did give him that title metaphorically as a title of glorification. But in 1900 the Chinese Mormons decided that Joseph Smith was not just the metaphoric son of God, but he was the true and only “son of God”.

In 1950 the population of the Chinese Mormons overtook the American Mormons.

In 1980 the Chinese Mormons realized that they made a mistake, and that Joseph Smith was not just the “son of God” but he was the Mighty God himself. In their metaphysics, there is only one God, but their God is like a coin: one face of this coin represents the father, and other face represents Joseph Smith. But it is only one coin, therefore one God.

In 1985, the Chinese Mormons declared that the American Mormons are heretics as they won't recognize Joseph Smith to be the true God and the true creator of this universe.

150 years after that, the Chinese Mormons managed to gain the political dominance in China as the Emperor converted to Mormonism. After only 100 years, all of China became Mormons who worshiped one God: Joseph Smith.

We could argue that Joseph didn't regard himself as God, and the Chinese had just deformed his teaching, but we cannot deny that Joseph was extraordinary in constructing such a teaching that managed to redefine the dynamics of the world.

The End of this imaginary analogy.

Now ... this is really a very weird fictious twist of history. We know that Mormonism is not an international religion, Mormonism didn't spread through China, and Joseph Smith teaching didn't redefine the dynamics of the world. But we can acknowledge that Joseph Smith was an extraordinary person: We could conclude that he had a good level of charisma, Good level of leadership skills, good level of storytelling skills, and high level of determination. When these four groups of skills put together (charisma, leadership, storytelling, and determination) you would probably get a person with a strong vision (regardless whether it was sound or not).

So, Joseph Smith teaching didn't create an international religion, and didn't redefine the dynamics of the world But Jesus teaching did.

The purpose of this previous fictious story was just to magnify some events to a sensible level: if we are going to regard teachers who managed to redefine the dynamics of the world to be extraordinary persons (for example: Socrates and Buddha) then by far we need to regard Jesus as an extraordinary person; as his efforts managed to redefine the dynamics of the world in a much shorter time than many others.

For Jesus teaching to reach this quick spread over the world, then at least Jesus should have had a high level of charisma, leadership, storytelling skills, and determination. Which we have translated them by saying that Jesus was an extraordinary person.

We should acknowledge that many scholars might disagree that Jesus was an extraordinary person. This is not surprising as the history of Jesus is limited and doesn't have a clear solid foundation. Therefore, many scholars may have so many different and contradicting “legitimate opinions” regarding the life and nature of Jesus. However, claiming that Jesus was an extraordinary person is not a bizarre illogical conclusion, as it could be supported by comparing Jesus contribution with the extraordinary contributions of others.

This is the first “Referencing conclusion” that we are going to use in analyzing the available historical records related to Jesus. “Referencing conclusions” are short and simple statements that can be used for filtering and interpreting data.

There is one serious argument that might be used to reject this conclusion: If Jesus was an extraordinary person with a high level of charisma then why we don’t have any extensive historical records about him?

The early records about Jesus came from one of his followers (Paul of Tarsus) 20 years after Jesus, and the first records about Jesus that had been compiled by a historian came with very abbreviated words, 60 years after Jesus By Flavius Josephus.

However, the previous statement is not really a logical argument, it is just a question. The answer: “I don’t know” is sufficient for such questions. Therefore, this question needs to be transformed to a logical statement in order to be taken seriously. This statement can be as follows:

- If Jesus was an extraordinary person, then there would have been extensive historical records about him.
- But there isn’t.
- Therefore, Jesus cannot be an extraordinary person.

Transforming argumentative questions into logical statements can reveal the level of validity of these questions. For example, the first point in the above statement is not valid as we can count many figures in history who were extraordinary without having sufficient records about them (for example: Socrates).

Furthermore, the above statement lacks serious data related to the context and background: If we have lot of extensive records between 30AD and 100AD in Palestine about the influential people in that part of the world, then it would be a problem if we didn’t find any records for Jesus. But if we don’t have extensive records about the influential people of the time, then we should expect that Jesus accounts will also not be recorded. Therefore, the argument above doesn’t properly explore the context and background, and it does assume that recording accounts at the time of Jesus is the same as today.

Article 2 - The General Methodology

I do apologize that this article can be a bit dry as it is a philosophical one without any entertaining stories. But I think I need to include it for future referencing.

I am a Muslim and I truly acknowledge my Islamic metaphysical beliefs. However, I do have two clear approaches when analyzing a metaphysical subject:

- The metaphysical analysis of the texts in the scripture (Quran and Hadith) related to the subject.
- The scientific analysis of this subject.

Now ... the gap between the two approaches can be very valuable as it might draw the attention to some different meanings in the text in the first approach, or it might draw the attention to some hidden areas in the second approach.

By the definition of “Scientific Method”, no metaphysical input is allowed to enter the “scientific analysis”. However, the “scientific conclusions” can be used as inputs in the “metaphysical analysis”. For example, if there are many legitimate interpretations for a metaphysical text, then the scientific conclusion can support one interpretation over the other.

Now ... there are some gaps between the two approaches that are acceptable to us. For example, if there is a clear-expressed miracle in the approved metaphysical text then this will be an accepted gap between the metaphysics and science. However, if the miracle is not clearly expressed or there are some illogical issues then the gap needs to be resolved.

Therefore, the only accepted gaps between the metaphysics and science are those that have clear expressed information. All other gaps need to be resolved.

For example, parting the sea for Moses is clearly expressed in the text, and this is an accepted gap between the metaphysics and science. The reason for this acceptance is that if God existed then “parting the sea” could happen, but the question would be “did it really happen”. This is the reason that we need a clear-expressed information in the text. But the way that Moses managed to protect himself from the Pharaoh is not clearly expressed, therefore we cannot just invent a miracle for that, and we need to find a logical explanation.

Also, there are some gaps between the metaphysics and science that are due to insufficient information. Some of them might never be resolved as the metaphysical texts aren’t in details and the science doesn’t have all the data. But if the gap between them is shrinking overtime then this would be sufficient.

So, in a nutshell, creating a pure scientific model for the metaphysical event is necessary (even if it wasn’t acceptable) as it can act like a gap gauge to warn us if we probably went too far in our metaphysical conclusions.

Furthermore, creating pure scientific models for the metaphysical events can be a good starting point for discussion between different theological parties, as what I am about to do in this set of articles.

Now ... History cannot be put into testing and experimentation; therefore, it cannot be analyzed scientifically. But we can use “Science” as a filter for historical records: If a historical record contradicts with the scientific laws of nature then we can reject this record for the analysis of the second approach.

I would like here to stress that I am not content with the academic definition of “History”. “History” is an ancient word that existed before academia. Metaphysical understandings have been part of the recorded history of almost every civilization. I don’t think it is really right for the Academics in the 20/21th century to take the word “History” from the standard dictionary and redefine it according to their views.

However, this matter can be resolved by adding one word: “Scientific History”. So, history should include all data related to an event (Metaphysical or none-Metaphysical), while “Scientific History” is a special branch of history that only deals with none-Metaphysical data.

Now “Scientific History” might be a meaningless combination of words, so let us define it. “Scientific History” is a special branch of history in which we only select records that don’t contradict with the scientific laws of nature. Then these selected records will be under robust historical analysis to determine their level of accuracy.

In this regard, the body of knowledge that historians refer to as “The Historical Jesus” should actually be “The Scientific Historical Jesus”, which means: the history of Jesus based only on records that doesn’t contradict with the scientific laws of nature.

I do acknowledge that adding words in names is a bit problematic. However, this subject is sensitive to many religious people as many of them regard the metaphysics as an integral part of the history of Jesus. Therefore, clarity is more important here than the number of words in the name.

So, my methodology for analyzing a metaphysical event in history can be summarized as follows:

- Conduct the metaphysical analysis based on the approved metaphysical text related to the event in question.
- Conduct the scientific historical analysis of this event.
- Identify the gaps between the previous two analyses and analyze them to form the overall metaphysical conclusion (as based on the above discussion).

Therefore, there need to be an effort to create a pure scientific historical model for the event in question in order to be used in this methodology.

The articles I am going to present in this set will all be based on scientific historical analysis, and they are not into metaphysics or apologetics. Therefore, there are no metaphysical conclusions in this set.

Now ... I am not a scholar in the field of early Christian history, I am just an interested amateur.

How can you recognize an interested amateur?

This is easy: Interested amateurs will probably have large depth of knowledge about some limited subjects in the field, but probably they have no knowledge about many other main subjects in that field. The reason is that they have the privilege to read and study the interesting stuff and just ignore the other boring bits. Professional scholars cannot have this privilege; they have to study the good, the bad, and the ugly,, the interesting stuff and the boring stuff, and they need to go through exams and write assignments to verify that they have understood all the main subjects in the field.

So, how can an interested amateur compete with the professionals in a specific point in the field?

This is also easy; it is by standing at the shoulders of the Gurus and professionals in this field.

Let us put an analogy here: if a dwarf was able to stand at the shoulders of giants then he can see the horizon, and probably he might be able to notice things that were missed by them.

Translating this analogy to the real world: Standing at the shoulders of Gurus means that the amateur need to be aware of the conclusions of some current Gurus and professionals in a particular point, taking into account the differences between them in that point. By comparing these data with sufficient skills in logical and scientific analysis, then the amateur might be able to notice some stuff that might have been missed by these professionals.

The Idea here is that amateurs need to conduct some sufficient “literature reviews” about a particular point to make sure that they grasped the main idea in that point, and to make sure that they don’t start from zero but from the last level where the Gurus and professionals have stopped.

This doesn’t mean that you need to follow these Gurus’ opinions, but it means that if you want to present a new idea then at least you need to do some sufficient homework.

This is how an amateur can compete with the professionals, and this how a dwarf can dance with the giants: by standing at their shoulders.

However, you might not be able to gather all the ideas from all different Gurus but doing the best available is sometimes valuable, and the missing data or errors can be obtained and clarified later in discussions. It should also be noted that there will be errors in any work conducted by interested armatures. This might include wrong expressions, wrong naming, etc. Nonetheless, if these amateurs were standing firmly at the shoulders of giants then their work will be valuable; if they managed to draw the attention to some areas that might have been missed.

Therefore, I am not a scholar in the field of early Christian history, and there might be some errors in my conclusions. But I think I did my homework properly and I can promise here that I will draw the attention to some interesting areas that might have been missed.

It should also be noted (although I think it is obvious) that English is not my native language (my native language is Arabic dialect). Therefore, some expressions here might not be right. But these expressions could also be clarified later after discussions.

Article 3 - literate vs Illiterate

Scholars are in difference regarding whether Jesus was literate or not, and I would like to explore this subject.

Most of the people who lived in Galilee at the time of Jesus were peasants, and most of the peasants were poor, and most of the poor peasants were illiterate.

Therefore, we can conclude that Jesus was illiterate.

But the above conclusion was based on the “null hypothesis”. “Null hypotheses” are statements of initial probabilities.

So ... Let Sam be one of the people who lived in Galilee at that time. We know nothing about Sam except that he lived in Galilee. Therefore, the probability of Sam being a poor illiterate peasant is very high, and the probability otherwise is very low.

Therefore, the “null hypothesis” (i.e. the “initial assumption”) about anyone living in Galilee is that they were poor illiterate peasants.

However, there is no evidence that every single peasant in Galilee was poor illiterate. In the contrary, you can find some rich people in the poorest communities, and you can find some literate people in the most illiterate communities. So, we are dealing here with probabilities.

Returning back to Sam: Sam could belong to a middle-class peasant family that were financially stable, and they might have been interested in sufficient level of education. We could be a bit overdramatic here and say that Sam family were a noble and influential family in the capital many generations before, but they lost favor in the eyes of the authority and they have been casted out and forced to exile to Galilee. This is a dramatic assumption, but it is not impossible.

So, if we don't have any data about Sam other than he lived in Galilee then the highly likely conclusion is that Sam was a poor illiterate peasant. But this is the initial conclusion and not a definite one. As we collect more data about Sam, then this initial conclusion can be affirmed, or it might be altered.

The same thing is about Jesus: the initial conclusion about Jesus is that he was a poor illiterate peasant. Therefore, we need to collect more data to affirm or alter this initial conclusion.

So, let us discuss the available data related to Jesus:

Nazareth was not a rural village in the middle of nowhere in Galilee. Nazareth was 6km (about 1-hour walking distance) from Sepphoris, which was a well-known capital city in antiquity. Also, Nazareth was 3km (about 30 minutes walking distance) from Yafia (now called Yafa Al Naseriyye) which Josephus called it the largest village in Galilee.

Nazareth at the time of Jesus had at least one synagogue (Mark 6.2, Luke 4.16).

Archaeological findings are not conclusive yet, and everyone is interpreting these findings according to their views. There are some people who have suggested that Nazareth never existed before 70AD (Ref: Salm), and there are Archaeologists who have suggested that Nazareth might have had a synagogue at the time of Jesus (Ref: Dark).

Nazareth probably wasn't a tiny village near Yafia but a considerable one:

“The first mention of Nazareth in a non-Christian source is a fragmentary fourth-century inscription from Caesarea Maritima. This mentions Nazareth as one of the Jewish towns in the Galilee to which priests had relocated when exiled from Jerusalem after the destruction of the Temple.” (Ref: Gregory C. Jenks).

It would be a bit ironic that Jewish priests have settled down in the same village of Jesus after the destruction of the Temple. It would be more ironic to imagine that they have lived in the same house of Jesus or maybe the house next door unless of course Nazareth was not a tiny village.

Jesus has been recorded in Luke to be reading from the book of Isaiah (Luke 4.16). He didn't just read the book, but he rolled the scroll to a specific paragraph and read it. This imply a previous knowledge about the book of Isaiah.

Jesus has been recorded in the gospels to be arguing with religious figures. It is unlikely for a person to go head to head with religious figures without sufficient knowledge about the subject he is arguing about.

There are many accounts in the Gospels that Jesus had supported his arguments with lines from the Jewish bible. This imply previous knowledge about the Jewish bible. This is really important as some of the arguments of Jesus are really problematic to both Jews and Christians, and it managed to stand the impact of time, for example Mark 12:

35 While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David? 36 David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet”, 37 David himself calls him ‘Lord’, How then can he be his son?

There are many interpretations for these lines, but there is also a valid question here: was Jesus implying that the Messiah is not from the seeds of David?

Nonetheless, this argument is smart and cannot be derived from someone who is illiterate in the Jewish bible.

Jesus has been mentioned in the Palestinian Talmud with a story showing an admirable knowledge. The story goes like this:

Rabbi Eliezer (the teacher of Rabbi Akiva) was arrested then set free. In analyzing this event, “Rabbi Akiva suggested that perhaps one of the minim

[heretics] had spoken a word of minuth [heresy] to him and that it had pleased him. Rabbi Eliezer recalled that this was indeed the case, he had met someone in the streets of Sepphoris who spoke to him a word of minuth in the name of Yeshu ben Pandera, which had pleased him” (Ref-A, Ref-B, Tabor).

This admiration has been explained in the Babylonian Talmud as follows:

Jacob [the Heretic] quoted Deuteronomy 23.19: "You shall not bring the fee of a whore or the price of a dog into the house of the Lord your God in fulfillment of any vow." Jacob then asked Eliezer whether it was permissible to use a whore's money to build a toilet for the high priest. When Rabbi Eliezer did not reply, Jacob [as taught by Yeshu] quoted Micah 1.7: For they were amassed from whores' fees and they shall become whores' fees again. This was the teaching that had pleased Rabbi Eliezer (same references).

Therefore, we have a non-Christian account that demonstrate that Jesus did support his arguments with lines from the Jewish Bible.

The compilation of the Palestinian Talmud started about 80AD, and it was first presented in Galilee about 200AD (i.e. the Mishnah and Tosefta) and then many commentaries have been added to it later over the years. It has few accounts related to Jesus that originated about 100AD (as these accounts are from Rabbis Eleazar and Akiva as mentioned previously). In these accounts, Jesus has only been regarded as heretic, and there is no mention or mocking about his birth. The Babylonian Talmud is the book that mocked Jesus about his birth, but it was compiled much later after the Palestinian Talmud.

Now ... The name that Jesus has been referred to in the Palestinian Talmud was “Yeshu ben Pandera”, and it wasn’t a defamation name. Therefore, we can conclude here that “ben Pandera” was Jesus’ surname.

Let us analyze this for a bit: It is reasonable to refer socially to Jesus in Jerusalem as “Jesus Nazareth” (in Arabic Style) or “Jesus of Nazareth” (in Greek/English style). But in Nazareth, Sepphoris, Yafia (or any other nearby village) then the name “Jesus of Nazareth” will be meaningless as there are so many individuals in Nazareth with the name of Jesus. It is probable that Jesus’ paternal family referred to him socially as “Jesus ben Joseph”, while his maternal family referred to him socially as “Jesus ben Mary”.

This social naming is still in effect today in the Palestinian villages, especially if the father and mother are from different villages. This is not disrespectful behavior from one family to the other, but the paternal family knows the father much more than they know the mother, therefore they would socially refer to their cousin by the father name (Sam ben Joseph). Equally, the maternal family knows the mother more than the father, therefore, they would socially refer to their cousin by the mother name (Sam ben Mary). Non-family members would refer to him socially by a distinctive feature as his profession (Sam the Herdsman) or his homeplace (Sam of Hebron) or by the surname (etc.). After many generations from that person death then people would normally refer to him by his surname.

So, it is very logical to conclude that “ben Pandera” was the surname of Jesus. There might be an objection here: “Ben” is the Hebrew word for “son”, therefore, Pandera is not the surname but the father name. But “Pandera” is not a common first-name in the Jewish community (neither in the Greek community). Furthermore, “Ben” does not necessary refer to the father but sometimes it refers to the title or surname. For example: Simon bar Kokhba (the leader of the Jewish revolt in 135 AD). The Kokhba is not his father name, but it was Simon’s title. It should be noted here that “Bar” is the Aramaic word for “son”.

Now ... Pandera (or more accurately Pantera) is a Greek name which is now associated with the word “Panther”, but at that time, Pantera was a legendary creature that resembles a big cat with a multicolored hide (Ref: Wiki-Pantera).

If we want to have a sense of this surname by today’s terms, then it can be: “Jesus the Tiger” from the “Tiger family”. Actually, there is a known family in Palestine with this surname (in Arabic: Al-Namer).

Greek names and Greek surnames were familiar names for Jews in the capital at that time. But what is the probability for a poor illiterate peasant family in Galilee to have an elegant robust Greek surname as Pantera?!

I would really assume that the probability here is low.

Taken the conclusion of the first article: Jesus was an extraordinary teacher, we ask: what is the probability that an extraordinary teacher be illiterate?

The Muslims believe that Muhammed was illiterate, so this is one. We don’t know a lot about Socrates, but as we are desperate for numbers then we will add him in. And if we squeezed the historical records biased to this cause then we might find about 25 illiterate extraordinary teachers in the past 2500 years.

But the literate extraordinary teachers are counted by the hundreds.

Therefore, the probability for Jesus to be an illiterate extraordinary teacher is low. We can also conclude that the probability for Jesus to be a young-aged illiterate extraordinary teacher is very low.

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All the above points can be obstructed by two verses: Mark 6.3: “Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary”, and Matt 13.55: “Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary”.

[This actually can be regarded as one verse as it is probable that Matthew copied and altered the verse from Mark].

The conclusion that has been originated from these two verses is that Joseph and Jesus were carpenters. This type of work has only been practiced by low-class peasants, and low-class peasants cannot afford education.

But surprisingly in the same chapter of Mark (6.2) we find: “When the sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him?”.

And this is really a good question, if Jesus was illiterate because he was a carpenter, then where did he learn how to teach, and where did he obtain this wisdom?

The same question can be highlighted for John 7.14: “Not until halfway through the festival did Jesus go up to the temple courts and begin to teach. 15 The Jews there were amazed and asked, “How did this man get such learning without having been taught”.

This is also a good question: where did he get such learning, how did he learn the skills of teaching and how did he learn the religious subjects for teaching?

Of course, in John 7.15, the verse ended with: ”without having been taught”, however, John 7.14 provide a witness statement that Jesus was teaching, but this verse: “without having been taught” is not a witness account, it is just an opinion.

There are numerous accounts that Jesus was teaching. These accounts actually imply that he was a good teacher. So, we have two contradictive arguments:

Poor carpenters cannot afford education.

Poor carpenters cannot be good teachers in religious matters.

So, we have four options here:

- Either we accept the authenticity and interpretations of the carpenter verses, and to reject all the numerous accounts above.
- To reject the carpenter verses.
- To conclude that Jesus was a carpenter and he was literate at the same time. This is not an impossible conclusion though it is a bit bizarre.
- To find a possible reconciliation that can fit all related accounts.

A reconciliation is possible which is to say that Joseph was not a freelance worker, but he was a businessman in the field of carpentry. This means that he had a reasonable workshop with many workers and sufficient tools. I am not sure if this type of business was available in Palestine at that time, but if this business was available and Joseph was the head of the business; people will still call him: the carpenter.

However, taking all points discussed above into consideration then we could say that the initial conclusion about Jesus was probably not accurate, and it is likely that Jesus family were a middle-class peasant family in Galilee with stable financial income. This family would have been probably interested in education for at least a sufficient level. This education might have been conducted in Sepphoris, Yafia or even in Nazareth itself. Actually, the conclusion that Jesus family “had a stable financial income” is important; because Jesus went touring from a village to a village, and there are no clarifications of how he managed to finance his tours. A valid option is to say that his family had financed these tours.

Last point to discuss here: I really think that Pantera is not a legendary animal, but it might have been the Liger. Ligers are very rare in the wild, and it could only be seen (at ancient

time) in India. Ligers are the offspring of a male lion and a female tiger, and it is the largest land-predator on earth. Tigers were only found in the Indian continent, and lions in India were numerous. It is not so bizarre to assume a meeting between an evicted lion with a lonely tigress. Lions in India have mane, so the liger will be a giant cat with the mane of his father and the stripes of his mother. As these animals were very rare in the wild, then probably the Greeks at the time regarded them as legendary.

Article 4 - An ascetic street Preacher or a Man with a plan

I am going here to generate a story (a built-up story) that you should read as a fictional imaginary one. Just go with this story to the end. After that, we will start a serious discussion.

So, let us start this imaginary built-up story:

Jesus, John the Baptist, and Zechariah (John's father) were relatives, and they originated from a noble family in the capital until they have lost favor in the eyes of the authority many decades before the time of Jesus, and they were forced to exile to Galilee.

Zechariah has formed a secret movement with the objective of liberating Palestine from the Roman rule and their puppets in the capital. When Zechariah passed away, his son followed the plan. They (Zechariah and John) managed over the years to form a culture of high religious observants in Galilee.

That was the first phase in Zechariah plan: to form a region in Palestine with high religious observant people. There were 5 phases in Zechariah plan:

- Form a strong religious culture in Galilee.
- Conduct a proper and secret marketing campaign in the rest of Palestine.
- Prepare the revolution at the right place in Galilee that could withstand and overcome the first Roman reaction.
- If the previous 3 phases were conducted properly then it is expected that the whole Jews in Palestine will go into revolt. Therefore, the 4th phase will be to lead this revolution.
- The last phase is to employ the internal strength and the external environment to expel the Romans from Palestine, and maybe from of entire east.

The objective of the first 4 phases is to make a successful mass-level revolution, and the 5th phase is about leading the revolution to victory.

John managed to end the first phase successfully. This phase wasn't difficult; it requires a highly dedicated charismatic religious leader. Both Zechariah and John were qualified for this phase.

As John managed to end the first phase, he started to plan the next one. He realized that the next phase requires another type of leadership: charismatic mass leadership, which John doesn't have. But he did find this quality with his cousin: Jesus.

John and Jesus started to detail the next phase of Zechariah plan. They both studied the environment around them, and they also studied the previous attempts of rebellions. From their study, they found that the major players in the 2nd phase are three: The Romans, the religious-leaders, and the people. They also understood the following notes about these players:

The Romans had a very effective principle that they followed in all Roman territories specially in the republican era, and the start of the imperial era (until the imperial civil servants went into skills bankruptcy). This

principle was: "divide and rule". Within this principle, the Roman authorities would tolerate (and even protect) any group as long as they don't challenge the Roman dominance, don't "seriously and abruptly" disturb the social order, and don't interfere with tax collection.

The religious-leaders (the Pharisees and Sadducees) have formed an unwritten truce with the Romans. Also, these leaders have established a substantial authority over most of the Jews in Palestine. Therefore, these leaders might be the first to condemn any rebellion against the Romans as it might affect their status in the community.

In all previous rebellions that happened prior to Jesus time (and they were many), only one was successful in reaching an organized mass-level, which was also the only one that managed to achieve victory. This rebellion was the Maccabean Revolt against the Greek in 167BC. It should be noted that in all Jewish history, there are only two rebellions that reached an organized mass-level: the one we have mentioned in 167BC and the Bar-Kokhba revolt in 132AD. However, the Bar-Kokhba revolt wasn't successful in achieving victory.

It should also be noted that the rebellion in 70AD didn't reach an organized mass-level: This rebellion was fought by zealots rather than the people. Also, these zealots were fighting each other as well as fighting the Romans.

So, the question here: how the Maccabean rebellion reached a mass-level while other rebellions were localized and isolated?

We could give a quick answer: At the time of the Maccabean Revolt, the people were furious against the Greek to the point that they would ignore their differences and unite for expelling the Greek. But in all other rebellions, the people hated the foreign occupation but not to the level of furiousness.

It should also be noted here that the Bar-Kokhba revolt was initiated at the time of furiousness, and this probably helped this revolt to be in a mass-level.

John and Jesus realized the success and failure factors in these previous rebellions and realized that the people at their time are not in furiousness, and this could jeopardize their revolt. Therefore, an innovative solution is urgently required to work around this issue.

John and Jesus understood clearly their position and started to formulate a strategy that could exploit the quality of Jesus as a charismatic mass leader. The strategy they formed has the following points:

- Jesus needs to go from a village to a village introducing himself as a teacher from Nazareth. Jesus will not introduce himself as a Prophet, Christ or King, but only as a teacher from Nazareth.
- Jesus will not endorse the Romans, neither he will condemn them. The teaching of Jesus should not involve the Romans.

- Jesus cannot encourage the people for social reform; otherwise the authorities will be alarmed. The workaround for this is to concentrate on moral reform. It should be noted that moral reforms can easily be shifted later to social reforms.
- John and Jesus realized that the people are not in a furious level, and they are not going into that direction soon. The innovative workaround for this obstacle was to overwhelm the people with prophecies of the “New Kingdom” that will arrive soon. Therefore, John and Jesus were hoping to push the people to higher level of hope which could substitute for the missing furiousness.
- John and Jesus realized that the religious-leaders are going to be a serious obstacle for their revolution. Therefore, the strategy was to criticize these leaders and highlight their hypocrisy in order to reduce the power of these leaders on the People.

These were the main points of John-Jesus strategy for the second phase of Zechariah Plan.

John also has anointed Jesus in a private ceremony. This revived a custom that was almost forgotten. As Jesus was anointed after so many centuries since the last anointed one, then the small group around Jesus started to call him “The Christ”. No one before him has been called with this title, as this title has never existed before; anointing was a ceremony for a prophet, king, or priest,, and it wasn’t a ceremony for itself. The expression “The Anointed one” has been mentioned in the OT many times but as a description not a title.

As John and Jesus were discussing the best time to start, the authorities came and arrested John for judicial matter and condemned him to death. Therefore, Jesus was left alone for fulfilling the established strategy, and he did exactly as planned; he went from a village to a village introducing himself, encouraging the people for moral reform, overwhelming the people with prophecies, and highlighting the hypocritic conducts of the religious-leaders,, and he did all of that without alarming the Roman authorities.

However, he made a tactical error by going to Jerusalem and confronting the religious-leaders there. The leaders managed to see him and see through him and they realized what he is about to do; they realized that he is threatening their stability and current status, and they realized that they should act quickly and decisively.

The leaders could charge him with blasphemy, but this charge doesn’t have any ground and it could take long time, and they don’t have time. The best available solution was to plea to Pilate (the Roman Governor) who has the authority to execute criminals in the spot. So, the leaders went in unity to Pilate pleading him to charge Jesus with the criminal act of planning against the Roman Empire. Pilate probably never heard about the title “The Christ” except at that day when the religious-leaders probably clarified that “The Christ” is a special title for the “King of the Jews” the same as “Caesar” is a special title for the Emperor.

Now Pilate was a pragmatic governor who was skillful in the principle of “divide and rule”. Therefore, when he saw that the religious-leaders (with all the differences

they have before) came in unity insisting for the execution of an unknown peasant from Galilee, then we can understand his reluctance to defy them. Therefore, it is expected that Pilate at the end will give the order to execute Jesus.

This execution put an end to Zechariah plan as there was no one at the time that can substitute the personal qualities and skills of Jesus.

After that, the religious-leaders went into their daily business and their differences and arguments between themselves, and Pilate managed to protect the “Nazareth sect” (under the leadership of James the Just) from the bullying of the mainstream Jews. Pilate did this in accordance with the Roman principle: “divide and rule”.

If we supposed that the religious-leaders have left Jesus unhindered then we expect that Jesus would continue his tour for about year or two, and he would probably visit the southern parts of Palestine. Then the second phase of the plan would have been concluded, and the plan for the third phase would have started. In this third phase, Jesus would need to recruit a skillful military tactician who will take charge of the military planning (under the political leadership of Jesus). This arrangement would work the same as Augustus-Agrippa arrangement: Augustus wasn’t skillful in military tactics and warfare; therefore, the military management has been given to Marcus Agrippa who was a loyal friend to Augustus.

The third phase of the plan was to declare a revolution in Galilee in a specific place in order to be able to withstand and overcome the Roman immediate reaction: if part of Galilee went into rebellion then it is unlikely that the Roman will send the 4 legions stationed in Syria, but they will probably send a part of a legion or one legion maximum.

If Jesus and his followers managed to overcome this force (and taking into account the successful campaign of Jesus and his introductory to the people in the previous phase) then this victory would shake the Jewish community in Palestine, and it would encourage the people to go for a full mass revolution against the Romans.

But this plan was cut by the ruling of Pilate to put Jesus into death.

The end of this imaginary built-up story

As I have said, this is a fictional story, and there are some points that grab the attention, but there are also some other points that totally contradict with my Islamic beliefs. However, we are trying here to form a scientific historical model as discussed in article 2.

Now we don’t know anything about the life of Zechariah and John. Also, we know very little things about Jesus and his activities. So, let us turn the table around and see things from the activities of Jesus and let us ask the following questions:

- Could the activities of Jesus imply a specific plan with a clear end in mind?
- Was Jesus an ascetic street preacher or was he a preacher with a strategy?
- If we supposed that Jesus had the plan that we have discussed in our story, would this plan work to establish a mass-level revolution against Rome?

These questions are not for historians only: they require a joint effort from historians and strategists. We want to know if the activities of Jesus could form a pattern that can be identified as a “plan”.

However, my preliminary assumption here is that Jesus was a man with a plan, probably not as dramatic as the one in the story, but the activities of Jesus do seem to represent a pattern that could be identified as an intentional plan with a clear end in mind.

Now if we took this into account then how could we describe Jesus?

Can we call Jesus a zealot as Aslan suggested in his famous book?

The word zealot has a negative annotation to it. Zealots in general are people who would shoot now and ask questions later. They will fight now and do the planning later. Therefore, we cannot call Jesus a zealot as he did his homework properly (assuming that my previous preliminary assumption is valid).

Can we call Jesus a revolutionist?

My preliminary assumption here is that Jesus was a man with a plan, but even if this is true, it is still based on series of conclusions rather than a clear historical record. So, even if our assumption of Jesus is valid, we cannot call him a revolutionist.

Can we still call Jesus an apocalyptic prophet?

Jesus did provide the people (according to the Christian historical records) with apocalyptic prophecies, but this was just a tiny thing that Jesus have done. Therefore, I really don't think we can summarize Jesus identity as an apocalyptic prophet.

Can we call Jesus a Reformer?

I think that “religious and moral Reformer” might be the best description of Jesus from a historical perspective (which is based on the data from the Gospels):

- Jesus was probably the first “Karaites Jew” as he was the first to oppose and publicly criticize the “religious man-made laws” of the Pharisees.
- Jesus tried to reform the morality of the people.

I would also say here that Jesus was a Reformer with a plan.

Article 5 - The miracles of Jesus from a scientific historical perspective

The definition for Miracles is actions that contradict with the scientific laws of nature. Therefore, walking on water is a miracle that contradicts with the scientific laws of nature. In this article we will try to create a scientific historical model that can explain how many people believed that Jesus was a miracle-worker.

I need to clarify here that I totally believe that Jesus was a Prophet and he did perform many miracles. However, these set of articles are based on scientific historical analysis, and this analysis cannot include or conclude any matter that contradict with Science. Furthermore, creating the best possible scientific historical model will be very valuable even if myself and others regard it as wrong (refer back to article 2) as it will help to link the previous article with the next one.

I am going to create this model by analyzing the stories and background of a preacher that some people believed (and still believing) that he was a miracle-worker although everyone knows that he was not a Prophet.

After that, we will apply the model on Jesus to see if it can fit from a scientific historical perspective.

The Preacher that I have analyzed his stories and hence established the required model is “Abdul Qadir Jilani”, referring to him afterwards as Qadir (1077–1165 AD). He is a very respected person in the Muslim world. He was born in Jilan of Iran and then settled in Bagdad.

The model that I have established for explaining the miracles that many people believed that Qadir performed is based on the following:

1. Qadir had a very high level of Charisma.
2. Qadir was a very moral individual.
3. Qadir was a very good storyteller.
4. Qadir was a very good preacher.
5. Most of Qadir devoted followers were simple peasants and simple working-class people.

Qadir was more of a preacher than a teacher. As a result, Qadir has not been regarded as a reference for knowledge (as Al-Tabari or Al-Shafiee who were, and still are, regarded as references for knowledge), but he was a major reference for spiritual preaching.

This needs to be explained:

Before the time of Qadir, the Muslim world was in a high level of unrest due to a very vicious capitalist culture that was ruling that world. This caused many rebellions in the Muslim world, and this actually caused the establishment of the first social-communist state in eastern Arabia (Qarmatians 899-1067 AD).

Now Qadir wasn't a Sufis practitioner, but his preaching helped to guide the people to Sufism. Sufism is a religious practice that focus on spirituality to a much higher level than the standard. Sufism did in the Muslim world what Christianity have

done in Europe; it encouraged the poor to accept their destiny and to be content with their status and to ignore (to a limit) any observed injustice or iniquity, and it also encouraged the rich to pay more for charities.

[Also, in parallel to Christianity, Sufism went into spirituality to the level of irrationality. This really killed the critical thinking in the Muslim world at that time].

This was the time where Qadir appeared; the time of high unrest, and his preaching helped to stabilize the Muslim world by guiding them into more spirituality.

Returning to the previous five points (Charisma, Morality, Storytelling, Preaching, and Simplistic followers). The first two points will create (with time) many devoted followers. The third and fourth points will attract more peasants and working-class people rather than highly educated and intellectual individuals.

The fifth point is the one responsible for the miracle stories: simple peasants and simple working-class people are much more emotional than rational, and they are not used to critical thinking. So, when some devoted simple peasants see their teacher in a good coincidence, then they pass this story with a little bit of exaggerations, then the next will pass it with another bit of exaggerations, and so forth. Therefore, when this story reached the next generation, it will become a full-scale miracle.

So, these devoted simple followers are almost acting like a resonant box: whatever good fortune happened to the teacher, this good fortune will be unintentionally exaggerated to a full-scale miracle.

If the teacher did have sufficient numbers of highly educated individuals, then they would have probably managed to restrain these miraculous stories. But if not, then in just few years (specially after the teacher death), these miraculous stories will start to appear and spread through the generations.

Furthermore, spiritual teachers who practice long periods of true praying will probably gain some kind of ultra-sensory capabilities that are similar to the capabilities that have been observed in some of the Monks in Hinduism and Buddhism. These capabilities can include strong memories, accurate intuitions, high self-control, etc. For example, the ability to walk on red-hot coal has been practiced by some Monks. Notice that these Monks cannot stand on red-hot coal for a long time. They also cannot walk on melted steel, neither they can walk on a red-hot steel. But they can walk on red-hot coal, which is extraordinary. This walk can be explained scientifically:

if someone has a calm strong nerve, and was walking on a red-hot coal, then his total calmness will help the blood to circulate quicker and smoother, which will help to dissipate the heat quickly. Furthermore, their system will be able to generate sweats on the sole of the feet larger than normal, which will help to create a thin shield protecting the feet from the heat. The idea here is that if the psychology of the individual is calm then their system can react to the external environment in a more efficient way.

However, if that person was not calm, and started to panic then his whole system is not acting in harmony, and the blood is actually concentrated on specific areas (which are the standard areas for fight or flight) rather than having a free quick smooth circulation.

Therefore, walking on red-hot coal doesn't contradict with the scientific laws of nature, but it is still extraordinary, and it can be seen as miracle. So, If Qadir did reach a kind of ultra-sensory capabilities, then the stories that are related to these capabilities can later be exaggerated by the people to full-scale miracles.

I need here to clarify that Qadir (to my understanding) has not been attributed with healing miracles. However, I am going to argue here that "Healing Miracles" are the easiest miracles that could be attributed to perceived holy people:

There is a definite relationship between the mind and the chemical status of the body. It is also been observed that the mind can influence the healing of the body, but we don't know exactly the limits of this influence.

One of the ways that the mind can influence the healing of the body is through the "Believe System" of the individual. There has been a lot of academic discussions about the "Placebo effects" and its relationship on healing. The classical example/experiment about this Placebo is to give an individual some capsules that contain only sugar and convince them that these capsules are very new and has been proven to be very effective in healing. If this individual did really believe this claim, then there is a good chance that they will start the healing process by just these capsules. The chances of healing that come from the "Placebo effects" are beyond the boundaries of coincidence, and the only factor in this experiment is the "believe system" of the individual.

I would assume that a lot of the none-serious illness can have a very good chance (let us say about 40-60%) of healing by the "believe system". There are also some serious illnesses that are caused by psychological factors. These illnesses can have a very high chance of healing by the "believe system" as this system can alter the psychological status of the mind.

So, if a peasant was really devoted to a teacher and he really regarded the teacher to be a "Man of God", and the teacher one day came and put his hand at the head of this peasant and said: do not worry my son, you will be healed soon", then there is a good chance that this peasant will start the healing process by the effect of the Placebo.

I also need here to highlight the phenomenon of the "self-fulfilling prophecy". The best example of this phenomenon is that people who trust themselves "too much" will only remember their successes. Therefore, in any events and challenges, they will only expect the best (which is actually a serious problem for conducting risk analysis). In the other hand, people who distrust themselves "too much" will probably not remember their successes, but only their failures, therefore they always expect the worst.

I can take this phenomenon and modify it a bit and apply it to devoted people: I would say here that simplistic and naive devoted people to a charismatic teacher will

probably never remember their teacher's failures, but they will only and always remember his successes.

So, this is the model: Some preachers with specific qualities and with simplistic followers would probably be attributed with many miracles due to the unintentional exaggerated stories of these followers.

There are many individuals in history who were attributed with miracle-works. To name a few: Apollonius of Tyana (Philosopher 1st century), Hanina ben Dosa (Jewish scholar 1st-century), Tekle Haymanot (Priest 12th century), Shimon ibn Lavi (Jewish scholar 15th century), Baal Shem Tov (Jewish scholar 18th century), and many more.

I didn't examine in depth the life and stories of these individuals to verify if the model can be applied to them, But I am assuming that the model is sufficient to provide an initial logical answer for explaining the miracle-work stories attributed to these individuals.

However, this model can really give a good scientific historical explanation to the miracle stories attributed to Jesus as the previous five points can be seen in him:

- Jesus was highly charismatic
- Jesus was a very moral individual.
- I am assuming that Jesus was a very good storyteller.
- Jesus was a very good preacher.
- Most of Jesus followers were peasants and working-class individuals.

Therefore, we can provide here a Scientific Historical Model for Jesus attributed miracles: Jesus went from a village to a village calling for moral and religious reforms. Most of his followers were simplistic people, who were very attracted to his persona and charisma. Jesus didn't intentionally cure anyone, but people believed in him to the point that touching and speaking to him gave many of them the necessary Placebo that started the healing process. These successes (and other good fortunes that have been seen on Jesus) have been unintentionally exaggerated by the simplistic followers to the level of full-scale miracles.

It should be noted that Qadir spent about 40 years in preaching until he managed to create a base of devoted followers. Jesus in the other hand spent only 1 to 3 years in preaching and managed to create a strong base of devoted followers. This can be solved by saying that Jesus did have an ultra-high charisma that helped him to create this base in such short period.

Now ... As I have said before, I do believe (according to my Islamic metaphysics) that Jesus did perform true miracles. However, I really needed to create a scientific historical model (which is needed for the next article) to explain how people could believe that Jesus was a miracle-worker in the scientific historical assumption that Jesus didn't do any miracles.

Article 6 - The First Puzzle

In this article we will propose a solution to the first puzzle: How did Jesus teaching pass and flourish from its local limited domain (the Jewish community in Palestine) to a foreign domain (the Greek-Roman world) in less than 20 years?

But we need first to discuss the Pythagorean Movement: Pythagoreanism originated in Greece from about the 6th century BC. However, I am going to argue here that Pythagoreanism didn't really have much influence on the communities. They did have a huge influence on knowledge and wisdom through history, and the current human knowledge and wisdom can be related back to the first Pythagorean Philosophers (including Socrates and Plato), but my argument here is about the influence of these philosophers on the daily life of the masses at ancient times, and my assumption here is that they had little influence over the life of the ordinary people at that time.

Now ... I don't have a solid proof here to support this claim, but I will regard it as a valid assumption, and I will move on in establishing the model for solving the first puzzle, awaiting the conformation or rejection of this claim.

I do think that that the main reason for these Philosophers not to have a huge influence over the masses in the community is that they were never united. They shared a broad set of concepts, but I would assume that they were in constant and serious differences when dealing with the details. I would also assume that the main reason for these differences came from the fact that Pythagoreanism put huge emphases on morality, but the Pythagorean Philosophers themselves didn't have a common agreed moral reference.

Let us discuss this in more details:

How can you prove logically that stealing from the rich to give the poor is not a moral act?

It would probably be very difficult to prove this logically, and the reason is that "Logic" alone cannot prove anything. There are two things that are needed to prove a concept or solve a problem: Logic and a set of agreed references (laws, concepts, axioms, etc.). When we want to solve a problem then we link the problem by logic to an agreed reference. If the link was solid, then we have reached an accepted solution. So, logic alone cannot really prove or solve anything without the set of agreed references.

This is what I assume that effected the unity within the Pythagorean camp; there are no shared moral references between them as every culture has its own moral reference, and even within the culture itself they are many groups that have different moral sets.

So, if there is a moral argument between two capable philosophers that don't have a shared moral reference then they will go for constant arguments that could last forever.

Now ... I am going here to present a model for solving the first puzzle. However, it should be noted that there are no proofs whatsoever for this model; we have no

historical records about the early Christians from 33AD until 50AD. This period is blank, and we have nothing to shed light on it.

So, how can we determine the value of this model?

The value of this model will be determined by the number of questions that it can answer. So, if the model managed to present valid answers to a lot of questions then the model will be valuable, and it will continue to be of value until the introduction of another model that can answer these questions better. So, the model I am going to present here is actually a scenario for some possible events that could answer some serious questions.

This scenario starts like this:

After a year or two from the crucifixion, a few ascetic Pythagorean philosophers were passing through Palestine. They heard some people speaking about Jesus and his morality and his miracle-works. However, these philosophers have heard so many things over the years. Therefore, they probably didn't take any notice about this man.

But after talking to so many different people speaking about the same man, and talking about almost the same stories, and almost the same miracle-works, their critical mind took notice and started to look into this matter more seriously. They realized later that the story of Jesus doesn't follow the standard Jewish stories, and even doesn't follow the standard eastern stories, it is more alike a Greek story.

Some of these ascetic Pythagorean philosophers became convinced that Jesus was a man of metaphysical higher authority, and for that they converted to Judaism. This conversion wasn't difficult for them: They would have welcomed the pain that comes from circumcision as it is for a good purpose, and they didn't have a problem with Jewish dietary because they were highly likely vegetarians.

Also, they were professional philosophers with high level of argumentative skills. Therefore, they would have probably found some philosophical interpretations for the texts and laws that they didn't like. It is not surprising to say that these philosophers put philosophy in the first place, then they put their new religion in the second. Nevertheless, they were very serious about this religion to the point that they endured the pain of circumcision.

However, their philosophical mind combined with this new religion have gave them extraordinary capabilities that they would never thought about:

1# It gave them the needed moral reference. This by itself was the seed for unity. So, let us return to the previous question: how to prove that stealing from the rich to give the poor is not a moral act?

The new Pythagorean Christian movement have a clear answer for this problem: Because God said so. This answer didn't solve the problem, but it managed to shift the problem from a moral domain to a metaphysical domain (i.e. how do u know that your God exist?) and this domain was always a game to the Pythagorean Philosophers as they were well trained argumentatively in it.

2# It gave them a good level of spirituality. Pagan religions lacked true spirituality. A healthy amount of spirituality can be useful for the community: it could provide a shield that helps the community in front of turbulent environments. It also helps in initiating voluntary and charity works in the community. Spirituality can become destructive when it is controlled by contemporary leadership to support their views.

3# The Pythagorean Philosophers were trained preachers. Preachers cannot stop preaching (once a preacher always a preacher). This preaching with the philosophical mind, the agreed moral reference, and spirituality have created something that never happened before: the Christian brotherhood. Of course, there were many brotherhoods before this one, but they were all exclusive, while the Christian brotherhood was open to the public regardless of race or profession.

I don't think it was named the "Christian brotherhood", and I don't think this brotherhood had a name, but I could say with confidence that this institution (the brotherhood) had been established instinctively and very early in the new Christian movement.

4# Who was their competitors? Was there any competition for them in the Roman-Greek world?

There was none. The Roman-Greek "Market" was totally free to them from about 35AD until at least 650AD. It should be noted that Judaism is an isolated religion that cannot expand outside. Furthermore, Jewish scholars didn't have the needed philosophical argumentative mind and the preaching skills that are needed to preach for a new religion in hostile environments.

So, the new Pythagorean Christian movement have managed to create a package that have philosophical answers, moral code, spirituality and brotherhood,, and no one had what they got, and no one could give what they offered.

Of course, having no competition in the market doesn't mean that you can sell your product to everyone immediately, but it does mean a quick expansion in that market. This, I presume, the reasons behind this quick expansion of Christianity in the Roman-Greek world.

As we have said before, Pythagorean Christians have put philosophy above religion, although they were very serious in their new religion. But they couldn't really depart from the clear-cut laws in the Jewish scripture; because Christianity at that time was firmly managed by the Church of Jerusalem, which was under the leadership of James the Just (the brother of Jesus). Therefore, any confrontation with "the Brother of Jesus" would probably be futile.

This is where Paul of Tarsus appear in our story: I really don't think that Paul was influential at his time. Also, I truly think that even if Paul didn't exist, Christianity will progress to its current level. Paul at his time couldn't have a chance with James the Just; as people could refer to Paul as the man who saw Jesus in a dream, while they will always refer to James as "the brother of Jesus". I would assume that Paul was desperate in his last visit to Jerusalem to make amends with James, but he failed.

I would also assume that Christianity would not have separated from Judaism if it wasn't for the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. This act destroyed the "central recognized authority" of the follower of Jesus. This allowed the Greek churches to be independent.

In general (though not an exact principle), a religion without centralized authority will tend toward liberalism. In Christianity's case, churches started to move toward liberalism from the laws of Moses. At this specific time, the letters of Paul became useful because it provided the necessary arguments to justify this liberal movement. But even if Paul didn't exist, the liberal movement will invent similar arguments.

The end of the suggested scenario.

As I have said before, there are no proofs that can support the claims mentioned here, but these claims represent a proposed model. This model will be of value if it could answer some persistent questions about the history of Christianity from 33AD to 50AD. If this model managed to answer these questions logically, then it will be regarded as valuable, and it will continue to be of value until the introduction of another model that can answer these questions better.

Article 7 - The Second Puzzle

Christianity expanded quickly in the Roman-Greek world, but it didn't expand with the same rate in India or China. So, what is in Europe that is not in India, or what is in India that is not in Europe?

Form the previous article, we have proposed that the first group of the Greek Christians were ascetic Pythagorean Philosophers/Preachers. As these Preachers converted to Judaism and followed the teaching of Jesus, they managed to create a unified movement that includes a shared set of moral references, spirituality and effective brotherhood.

Now ... let us draw the attention to this pattern: most of the churches in the world today will start preaching by talking about the love of Jesus. So, it is logical to assume that this piece of preaching has originated very early in the Christian history. So, what does "Love" mean here?

I don't think the meaning of spirituality was clear in the mind of the people in ancient times as it is now. I would also assume that the best word that can capture the meaning of spirituality is "Love". People who are very spiritual in a religion don't worship for fear of hell or for the paradise in the afterlife, but they would probably do it because they are in-love with God. This could sometimes lead to some bizarre behaviors: some of the highly spiritual individuals would have no problem in breaking some of the religious laws because they consider themselves having a true and special "love relationship" with God that gives them some leeway in things. This proves that human behaviors sometimes are really contradictive.

So, I would assume that the first group of Greek Christians started to implement spirituality in their preaching to the Greek pagans. This can lead to a clear conclusion: The Roman-Greek world was very hungry for spirituality. The Roman-Greek world was ruled by two systems: the class system that differentiate between noble families and others, and the capitalist culture that was very vicious. Therefore, a spiritual movement will be very welcomed by many in the masses at that time.

As we have discussed in the previous article, spirituality with the philosophical mind and the preaching determination have all contributed in establishing the first religious Brotherhood in the Roman-Greek world. This Brotherhood was the catalyst for many voluntary works and generous charities which probably was something new to the Greek world and hence it was very noticeable.

Furthermore, the Roman-Greek cities were very busy and materialistic to the point that family's relationships were weak and mostly broken (similar to the family's relationships in busy cities in the West today). This probably made the Christian Brotherhood to be seen as a substitute for these missing relationships. This could explain how Christianity expanded quickly in the Roman-Greek cities rather than the countryside as the family's relationships in countryside were much stronger than the cities.

So, Christianity did have an efficient package to offer to the masses, which includes the following:

Philosophical concepts that could be used effectively in arguments for this new religion even in hostile environments.

Spirituality that was really needed to balance the materialistic culture that people were living in at that time.

Common shared moral references.

A brotherhood that was open to the public regardless of race. It was also a catalyst for voluntary works and charities, and it was regarded by many to be a valid substitution for the missing family relationships.

Lastly, there were no other competitive packages in the Greek world at that time.

This is a good model to explain how Christianity expanded so quickly in the Roman-Greek world. But why Christianity couldn't expand in India or China as it did in the Roman World?

Buddhism and Hinduism were both spiritual based religions, and probably they were more spiritual than Christianity. Furthermore, the family's relationships in India were (and still are) much stronger than Europe. Therefore, the Indians were satisfied spiritually, and they didn't suffer from weak family's relationships.

The question then would be: why Buddhism and Hinduism couldn't spread through the Roman-Greek world?

I guess the answer would be that Buddhism and Hinduism lacks the philosophical argumentative skills that are necessary to promote a new religion in hostile environments, which the Greek Christians have possessed.

It would be useful here to create a model for the approach that the early Christian philosophers used in preaching. I could argue that it is the same exact approach that is still used today in debates by most of Christian Apologists:

- Using philosophical and argumentative tools to neutralize and counter the opponent arguments and objections.
- Supporting the view by using private opinions or selective interpretations to texts or events while ignoring other legitimate interpretations.
- Supporting the previous point with a lot of assertions and favorable testimonies, and stories of how the love of Jesus have changed the life of the people.
- Using high doses of spirituality in terms of tones and words in the previous two points.

If you noticed, most Christian Apologists don't support their views with clear-cut proofs, but they depend heavily on presenting their views with a high dose of spirituality. I do assume that this approach started from the first Greek Christians, and I do assume that it was like magic with the Greek pagans as those pagans were really hungry for spirituality (i.e. the feeling that there is a God that truly loves them and that he will be with them whenever they needed him).

Article 8 – The Father and the Son

When and how the people of the Christian faith started to refer to God as “The Father”?

Jews today refer to God as Adonai, Hashem, or Elohim. Karaite Jews do refer to God as Yahweh, but the Rabbinic Jews don’t use this name as they regard it sacred.

But (to my understanding) there are no Jews (Karaite or Rabbinic) who refer to God as “The Father”. Also (to my understanding) there are no Jews in history who have referred to God as “The Father”.

Therefore, I can establish the following null-hypothesis that Jews at the time of Jesus didn’t refer to God as “The Father”.

Now ... if someone managed to extract a paragraph from an ancient Jewish manuscript (for example: one of the books of Philo, Josephus, or the dead sea scrolls, etc.) that demonstrate that common Jews at the time of Jesus used to refer to God as “The Father” then the previous hypothesis will fall apart. But if there is no ancient reference for this, then the hypothesis should stand.

The Old Testament (OT) did refer to God as “Father” (not as “The Father”). This has appeared only a few times in the Old Testament (9 times as demonstrated by BibleThingsInBibleWays, which conformed by Medved, see the references).

For example:

- Jeremiah 31.9: For I am a father to Israel and Ephraim is my firstborn.

The word “Father” for God have appeared in the OT at: Deuteronomy 32.6, Psalm 103.13, Proverbs 3.12, Isaiah 63.16, Isaiah 64.8, Jeremiah 3.19, Jeremiah 31.9, Malachi 1.6, Malachi 2.10 (previous references).

Also, some people have been mentioned in the OT as children of God. For example:

- Hosea 1.10: Ye are the sons of the living God.

The words “sons” and “children” for God have appeared in the OT at: Exodus 4.22-23, Deuteronomy 14.1, Psalm 82.6, Isaiah 1.2, Hosea 1.10, Hosea 11.1 (previous references).

Also, there are some specific individuals that were refer to in the OT as “Son of God”. For Example:

- 2 Samuel 7.14: I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to Me.

The words “Son” for a specific individual appeared in the OT at: Deuteronomy 14.1, 2 Samuel 7.14, Psalm 2.7, Psalm 2.11-12, Psalm 82.6, Proverbs 30.4, Isaiah 1.2, Isaiah 7.14, Isaiah 9.6-7, Micah 5.1-3, Hosea 1.10, Hosea 11.1, Daniel 3.25 (Ref: Simnowitz).

Now ... all the above can be tempting to conclude that God was referred to as “The Father”, but this is not the case; these passages could only demonstrate that God could

be referred to as “The Father”, but it doesn’t conclude that God was referred to as “The Father”.

Let us clarify this: we are not discussing if “The Father” is an appropriate name for God. We are discussing here if the Jews at the time of Jesus did refer to God as “The Father”. These are two different subjects.

Therefore, the null hypothesis here still stands.

Furthermore, the word “Father” might have been regarded (in the OT passages) as an attribute description of God rather than the “name” of God.

So, the crucial question in this subject is: did the Jews before the time of Jesus use to refer to God as “The Father”, and I can say with confidence that they didn’t.

Therefore, I can also conclude that this name (The Father) has not been initiated by Jesus or by the Jewish followers of Jesus; otherwise there would have been serious arguments about this name between them and the mainstream Jews.

So, we return back to the title of this article: When and how the people of the Christian faith started to refer to God as “The Father”?

I will answer this question by referring to the model that we have introduced in a previous article that the first Greek Christians were Pythagorean Philosophers. As this new group started to preach for their new religion, they realized that they couldn’t use the names: Adonai, Hashem, or Elohim,, as it didn’t have a clear punch within the Greek culture, so they decided to use the name “The Father” because this was actually the name of the Greek and Roman supreme gods: Zeus (the supreme god of the Greek) was called “the Father”, and Jupiter (the supreme god of the Roman) means literally: The Sky Father.

So, “The Father” was a recognized name for the supreme god. Therefore, these first Christians in their preaching were saying that: Zeus is not “the Father” (which means that Zeus is not a true god) and Jupiter is not “the Father”, but “The Father” is our God; the God of Jesus.

Do I have any proof that can support this claim?

No, I don’t. I don’t even have a proof that the first Greek Christians were Pythagorean Philosophers. We have no data about the first Greek Christians, and we have no knowledge about Christianity from 33AD to 50 AD. These 17 years are almost blank.

However, I am supporting this claim by the strength of the null-hypothesis that Jews don’t refer to God as “The Father”. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that Jesus would refer to God as “The Father” (after all, Jesus was a devoted Jew). So, a possible logical explanation for the origin of this name (The Father) comes from the new converted Greek Christians.

Another indicator that could support this conclusion is that the normal names of God at the time of Jesus (Adonai, Hashem, Elohim) are rarely (if any) presented in the NT. This could support the conclusion that the Greek deliberately translated these names to “The Father”.

It should be noted that “James the Just” and his followers probably didn’t have an objection for this naming as it was clear that it is metaphorical for the Greek to the Greek.

In the same logical process, we can discuss the origin the of title “Son of God”, which was given to Jesus. So, the question here: did Jews use to give this title (Son of God) to their current gurus and living respected individuals?

There have been many highly respected individuals in Jewish history (let us say from 300 BC until now), and none of them have been given the title “Son of God”. If this title was on the table, then I would assume that the Maccabean leaders would have taken it. If this title was on the table, then I would also assume that King Herod would have taken it.

So, the null hypothesis here: Jews don’t refer to their living scholars, gurus, and religious figures as “Sons of God”.

Of course, David and Solomon have been mentioned in the OT to be Sons of God (2 Samuel 7:14, 1 Chronicles 22:10), but we can assume with confidence that these passages have been written much after the life of Solomon. Therefore, it doesn’t affect the proposed null hypothesis: Jews didn’t refer to any individual in antiquity with the title “Son of God”.

Therefore, it is highly unlikely that Jesus would have called himself as “Son of God” or that his Jewish followers would have referred to him as the “Son of God”.

This also can be supported by Josephus accounts as he mentioned that Jesus has been called “The Christ”. Although this is not a direct proof that the Jewish followers didn’t call him as “Son of God”, but I am assuming here that the title “Son of God” is higher than “Christ”. Therefore, if the followers used to call Jesus as “Son of God” then I would assume that Josephus would have mention it. So, this is **not** a direct clear-cut proof, but it is a supportive indicator.

Also, it is known (by Eusebius from Hegesippus) that James the Just was executed because he insisted that Jesus was the Christ (Ref: Wiki-James, Ref-H). If James did refer to Jesus as the “Son of God” then this would have been regarded as higher blasphemy. This is also **not** a clear-cut proof, but it can be regarded as a supportive indicator.

The main support for this claim is the null hypothesis that: Jews didn’t refer to any individual in antiquity with the title “Son of God”.

So, the question here: when and how Christians started to refer to Jesus as the “Son of God”?

I will return back to the previous model of the first Christians (i.e. the Pythagorean Philosophers): In some heated discussions, they would probably slash the pagans by saying: Julius Caesar is not the son of God, Augustus is not the son of God, but the only son of God is Jesus. It should be noted here that the Romans did refer to Julius and Augustus as sons of God. So, I would assume that a heated argument with pagans could produce such a claim.

If we took this analysis seriously then the title “Son of God” didn’t start as a theological concept, but it was rather an effort to put Jesus in a higher status than Augustus.

I could also suggest another explanation: If the Greek didn’t have the expressions: “Slave of God” and “Servant of God”, then I can assume that the expression “Son of God” was a translation for these expressions; as “Son of God” also contains the meaning “Servant of God” but with a higher status.

Article 9 - The road from the "Duo of Philo" to the "Trinity of Nicaea"

There is a clear relationship between the early Greek Christianity and the Greek metaphysical philosophy, and we will explore this here. But let us first show the genius of the Greek thinking process:

Let us take an object. This object can be divided into two objects. Then each one can be divided into two objects, and so forth. But this process of division cannot continue forever; otherwise all objects are just a combination of zeros. Therefore, there need to be an elementary object that cannot be divided. The Greek called this object: "the Atom". We will call this object the "Greek Particle" to differentiate it from the physical atom that we now know.

This deduction is truly brilliant, and the difference between this conclusion and our current physical understanding is that it seems we have many different "elementary particles", not just one. Electrons and quarks are considered (so far) elementary particles that cannot be divided into smaller parts.

In almost the same process of thinking, the Greek concluded that the Universe has been created by the "One". They deduced this through the following:

Everything we are aware of has a cause for its existence: the book was caused (created) by an Author, the broken window was caused by a thrusting rock, etc. Each of these causes has also a cause, and each of these causes has a cause, and so forth. But this cannot continue forever. Therefore, there should be a cause that doesn't have a cause. You could call this cause: the elementary cause, but the Greek called it: "The One" (Monad).

Therefore, the "One" is the ultimate cause for every existence in the universe. The Greek then theorized that: if the One doesn't need a cause for existence, and he is the reason for the existence of others. Therefore, this "One" doesn't need anyone and doesn't need anything; he is all mighty with absolute perfection.

The Greek then started to study the properties of the "One", but this was **an extreme logical error**: It is clear that the "One" (according to the Greek thinking) was outside the universe. In our current terminologies we could say that the universe is a closed system, and the "One" is an external entity to it. The rules, laws and axioms in a closed system might not be similar to the external system. Therefore, trying to analyze an external system by the laws of a closed system might end up with bizarre contradictions. This is exactly what happened when the Greek tried to analyze the properties of the "One" according the concepts and axioms of this universe.

The Greek have noticed that all things are changing, and all things are also temporal (i.e. not eternal). Therefore, the Greek linked the idea that all changes are temporal. This led to the idea that change is a property for all temporal objects, which means that the "Eternal" (i.e. the "One") cannot change.

There was also a philosophical proof for this conclusion: if the One was all mighty and all perfect then this One cannot change, because change would either make the One more perfect, or less perfect, or it did nothing of the sort. If we took the first

option then the One was not perfect before, which is not an accepted option. If we took the second option then the One is less perfect than before, and this also cannot be accepted. If we took the third option, then the change by itself is meaningless and cannot be expected from the One.

Therefore, the conclusion for the Greek philosophers that the One cannot change because the One is all mighty with absolute perfection.

But decisions are a sort of changes: if you make a decision today, then yesterday, you didn't have that decision. Therefore, there has been a change within you between yesterday and today.

But the "One" cannot change. Therefore the "One" cannot have decisions. Therefore, the "One" cannot create the universe, because creating the universe requires a decision.

We will refer to this as the "Change Paradox" which is stated as: "The Eternal doesn't need anyone and doesn't need anything. Therefore, the Eternal is perfect. Therefore, the Eternal cannot change. Therefore, the Eternal couldn't make decisions".

This produced a bizarre contradiction between two conclusions (which we will call: Alpha and Beta):

- The Alpha conclusion: the "One" created the universe.
- The Beta conclusion: the "One" couldn't create the universe, because he cannot change, therefore, he cannot make decisions.

There have been efforts from the Greek to resolve this contradiction. One of the given proposals is to assume "Intermediaries" between the "One" and the universe. These Intermediaries have been called: Gods or Demiurges.

However, this proposal contradicts with the Beta conclusion, because it assumes that the "One" has created these Intermediaries. But it seems that some philosophers were content with a model of few contradictions (i.e. the "One" had created few Gods whom they collaborated in creating and managing the universe) rather than a model with constant and endless contradictions (i.e. the "One" has created the universe and still managing it).

Later, some philosophers have proposed that the "One" didn't decide to create the Intermediaries, but the Intermediaries have been created by the influence of the existence of the "One". It is almost like the Sun didn't decide to heat Earth, but Earth is heated by the Sun because of the Earth proximity to the Sun.

I need to clarify here that I am presenting these philosophical ideas in a "very simplistic format". My interest here is not the "Who, What, and When". My interest is to see the dynamics of things from a "high bird view" that would provide a clear sense to the philosophical ideas that influenced the Christian faith. It should be noted here that there were many intense arguments among the Greek philosophers concerning their metaphysical views.

Philo of Alexandria (20 BC- 50 AD) was a devoted Jew who also was professional in Greek philosophy. He made a lot of efforts to explain (align, merge) the Jewish metaphysics with the Greek philosophical ideas. The “Duo Model” was among these efforts. In this model, Philo recognized “Yahweh” (the God of Abraham) as the “One”. But, in order to keep his model within a good proximity to the Beta conclusion, he assumed that God created the “Word” (Logos), which refers to the knowledge and Intelligence, and this entity (the Word) created the Universe.

Now ... there is a contradiction between this model and Beta as God has created an entity. Nonetheless, this model provided a proper compromise as it contains only one point of contradiction with Beta.

Although there are no explicit evidence, but it is highly likely that the first Greek Christians were very impressed with Philo’s model, but with minute modification: The God is still the same (i.e. the God of Abraham), whom the Christians named him “The Father”, and the “Word” is none other than Jesus himself. This can be clearly supported by the starting verse of John’s Gospel: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1.1-NIV).

It should be noted that many are preferring a different translation of this first verse of John: They argue that the original Greek verse is “En arche en ho logos, kai ho logos en pros ton theon, kai theos en ho logos” (Ref: Sigal). The first God in this text (ton theon) means “The God”, while the last God in the text (theos) means “God”. As the Greek language doesn’t have an indefinite article (a or an), therefore they argue whether the last God in the text should be translated as “The God” or “a God”. But reading this text as “a God” does fit exactly with Philo’s model: The One is the God and the Word is a God.

This Model of Philo has been altered by Justin Martyr (100-165AD), as Justin has added the Holy Spirit to this Duo Model.

[It should be noted here that there is no evidence that Justin took this trio model from Matthew’s Gospel (28:19). I am assuming here that this trio was first introduced by Justin. Therefore, I assume that the verse 28:19 in Mathew was probably added to the Gospel after Justin].

The Spirit was a major entity in Greek philosophy much before Justin: philosophers from old times had theorized that Humans are dual combination of Body (Matter) and Spirit (which literally means breath). Death happens when the Spirit leaves the Body. This wasn’t evident only in Greek philosophy, but it was also dominant in Hinduism and Buddhism.

As there was a clear identified entity in John Gospel which has been referred to as “the spirit of truth” (John 14:17), then it wasn’t surprising that Justin have added the Spirit in this duo model of Philo.

It is probable that the first Christians who were influenced by Justin model didn’t really think that Jesus himself was the creator of the universe. It seems to me that the intention was to recognize the three most important figures in the Christian faith: The One (i.e. the Father), the Word (i.e. the Son), and the Holy Spirit.

So, I would assume that Justin model was initially adopted metaphorically, but the highly defragmentation of Christianity at the first three centuries and the intense arguments that shaped this defragmentation led many churches to adopt the literal interpretation of this model. Therefore, there were many churches at the early fourth century who literally believed that Jesus was the Word that created the universe.

The “Trinitarian” Christians in the start of the fourth century could be classified into two groups:

1# The Christians who literally followed the model of Justin: They believed that Jesus is the Word of God, and he created the universe. But Jesus is not eternal, and he was created by God at some point. Therefore, Jesus was subordinate to God.

Arius (256-336 AD) was the famous advocate for this view.

2# There was another view that probably gained momentum from the mid of the third century: Jesus and God were equal entities. We could refer to this view as an effort to modify Philo’s Model in order to remove the point of contradiction in it. Their arguments were simple: Jesus is the Word of God and the Spirit of God. So, if Jesus was not eternal then there was a time when God was without word and without spirit!

Another argument for them is: God is “The Father”. But God cannot Change (Beta conclusion), therefore God was the Father from eternity. Therefore, Jesus was always the Son from eternity.

Alexander I (the Patriarch of Alexandria, died in 326 AD) was the famous advocate for this view.

These two famous advocates (Arius & Alexander) clashed at the early fourth century. This happened at the time when Constantine I adopted Christianity and wanted it to be the glue for the empire. He couldn’t allow this clash to hinder his plans, so he vigorously summoned a meeting for the highly influential priests in the empire in order to contain this clash. This was the “Council of Nicaea” in 325 AD.

I really don’t think that Arius had any chance to win the debate. Alexander was the Pope of a very influential church in the empire. Arius was just a Presbyter (senior member in the church). Major churches in the past three centuries formed an unofficial alliance against detected heretics. The first obvious action of this alliance is the unity of these churches against Paul of Samosata (the Bishop of Antioch) in 269 AD. Paul was a persistent advocate for Monarchianism; he believed that Jesus was just a man who was adopted by God. The major churches united in their effort to depose him, and it is really ironic that these churches requested the help of the Roman Pagan Emperor “Aurelian” for this purpose. It is wrong to think that the “Council of Nicaea” was the first Imperial-Christian council. The first council was held in 272AD, which was organized by Aurelian in order to decide the fate of Paul. The council concluded to depose Paul as the Bishop of Antioch.

Returning back to Arius and Alexander: The major churches in the empire had a stable unofficial alliance between them. According to “System Theory”: stable systems will resist any change that can disturb their stability. I could add more to this law: Stable but fragile systems will aggressively resist any change that can disturb

their stability. Trinity was the common view at that time, but it was also fragile. By fragile I mean that this view cannot easily withstand logical scrutiny. If the council had favored Arius over Alexander, then there would have been a real risk of breaking the major churches in the empire.

I am not saying that there was a conspiracy to oppose Arius. Not at all. All of this happened instinctively within the group subconscious mind. I would assume that the Bishops in this council were embarrassed to oppose any view. But it was clear that the stakes were very high. So, my assumption here is that these Bishops were (instinctively) waiting for the right excuse to support Alexander.

The “Council of Nicaea” ended up supporting Alexander and dictating the view of the major churches at the time, which is the well-known Trinity doctrine.

Just a sidetrack here: there has been a serious clash between Cyril (the Pope of Alexandria) and Nestorius (the Pope of Constantinople) at the Council of Chalcedon in 451AD, and this council denounced Nestorius. So, here we have a “Pope vs Pope” rather than a “Pope vs Presbyter”. But still, I can apply the same previous dynamic understanding (Stable but fragile systems will aggressively resist any change that can disturb their stability): Nestorius had proposed a dramatic change in the doctrine. Therefore, it is expected for the major churches to unite against this change.

The rest is known history.

Article 10 - Notes in logical analysis

I would like to discuss here some logical notes related to the previous article.

1# A Contradiction in a statement requires two opposing sub-statements that each of them “might” possibly be right alone, but they cannot both be right at the same time.

For example: let a variable X be larger than 9 and smaller than 2. This statement includes two sub-statements. Each one of them might be right alone, but they cannot both be right at the same time.

2# How about this statement: 9 is smaller than 1. Is this a contradictive statement?

This statement is not contradictive because it doesn't contain two opposing sub-statements. However, this statement is “false” because it contradicts (or it does not comply with) the agreed mathematical concepts.

But if we look in the field of management, there is a concept that is called synergy, which describes the group cooperation in which the effort that has been done by the group as whole is larger than the combined single efforts of the group members. The classical analogy for it: synergy happens when “ $1 + 1$ is much larger than 2”.

Therefore, the accuracy of a statement in a subject depends on the body of knowledge related to that subject.

3# What about the “meaningless combinations” (or meaningless expressions). For example: squared circle, circular square, cubical sphere, Noisy silence, silent noise, successful failure, etc.

These combination of words does not have any meaning. However, we can choose a meaningless combination and make a definition for it. For example, “Standing Waves” might seem to be a meaningless combination, but physicists have made a very clear logical definition for this expression, and whenever we see this expression, we just take it out and put in its definition.

The same for “Scientific History” which might seem to be a meaningless expression, but we have provided a clear logical definition for it in article 2, and whenever this expression appear then you just take this expression out and put in its definition.

This might be applied to “Squared Circle”: Suppose a student of philosophy have opened a coffee shop near the university and named it “The Squared Circle Cafe”. So, the combination of this expression is still meaningless as there is no specific logical definition for it. But the whole expression is now a “Name” for a specific thing, which is in this case a cafe, which actually might become a center for some genius philosophers who want to discuss the possibility of the impossible.

So, the conclusion here is that meaningless expressions will continue to be meaningless unless a clear logical definition has been formed for it, or if the whole expression became a “name” for a specific thing.

4# Let us return back to the X statement (let X be larger than 9 and smaller than 2), and let us suppose a person (and let him be Sam) is really convinced that this

statement is true, and the appeared contradiction is just due to our limited mind and limited comprehension abilities.

Sam here is using the comprehension argument (or you can call it: the comprehension ticket). He is trying to use this argument to justify the apparent contradiction in the X statement. However, if an argument can be used by anyone to justify anything then this argument is useless and without any value.

Equally, if Sam want to use this argument to justify the apparent contradiction in his statement, then he needs to accept others to use the same argument to justify the contradiction in their statements.

This is the comparison approach which is very effective in countering logical fallacies. For example, suppose Sam is arguing with the following logic: Paul is from London, London is in England, Peter is from England, therefore Peter is from London.

Now, if Sam couldn't (or won't) recognize the fallacy of this logic then we can use a fair point-to-point comparison like the following: Apple is a fruit, fruit is a plant, rice is a plant, therefore rice is a fruit.

Therefore, by fair comparison: if Sam wants to use the comprehension argument for justification, then he needs to allow others to use the same argument for their justifications.

5# Now let us analyze the statement related to the “Greek Particle” that we have discussed at the start of the previous article: “There is a particle that cannot be divided into smaller parts”. This statement is weird and counter intuitive. So, is it contradictive, is it meaningless, is it false or is it true?

The “Greek Particle” statement is not contradictive as it doesn't have two opposing sub-statements, and there is no other specific statement that oppose it.

The statement does not contain meaningless expressions.

The statement is supported with an accepted logic (Divisions cannot continue for infinity). Therefore, we cannot say for sure that this is a false statement although it is weird and counter intuitive.

We might probably consider the statement to be logically valid, but we cannot say that this statement is definitely true without verifications from accepted experimentations and tests. If we couldn't support this statement with accepted experimentations and tests, then we could adopt this statement as a valid conclusion but not as an absolute truth.

The point of this discussion here is that weird and counter intuitive conclusions can be accepted if they were supported by valid logic.

6# Let us return back to Sam and his X statement. Suppose Sam truly believe that the X statement can be accurate, and the appeared contradiction in the statement is not valid. He has a reference to support his belief which is a verification from Peter who is a genius scholar and a well-known mathematician.

Let us analyze the following discussion between Sam and Ali:

#Sam: The contradiction in this statement is not valid.
#Ali: how do you know that?
#Sam: Because Peter the mathematician has said that there is a valid solution for this statement.

#Ali: Did Peter write about this?
#Sam: No.
#Ali: did you hear Peter speak about this?
#Sam: No.
#Ali: How do you know that Peter have discussed this matter?
#Sam: In one of his private gatherings, Peter has told his friend about this matter, this friend told his friend, and this friend told my friend, and my friend told me.

#Ali: What is the name of Peter's friend?
#Sam: I don't know.
#Ali: what is the name of the friend of the friend?
#Sam: I don't know.

The issue here is that Sam depends on a verification that is based on anonymous sources. So, the question would be: does Sam have a strong and solid information that can support his claim about the invalidity of the apparent contradiction in the X statement?

Now ... If Sam does accept anonymous witnesses to justify apparent contradictions, then he needs to accept others to do the same in justifying their apparent contradictions. This is the comparison approach for examining possible logical fallacies.

7# Some might regard Sam to be silly in believing that the X statement has a valid solution, but he might not be: I have a friend who is really smart, and he is a professional manager, and he truly believes that the Earth is flat, and the Sun is orbiting Earth. I was astonished to know this, but I later realized that there are numerous people who believe the same, and they have groups and foundations. As we might think that these people are naive, they also have the same thought about us.

It should also be noted here that the most innovative discoveries in history were carried out by individuals who decided to disbelieve some of the things that normal rational smart people of the time did believe in.

The believe system (what things you believe, why you believe these things, and how did you come to believe in them, etc) is a very bizarre system in human beings. This system doesn't necessarily follow a logical path, and there are many factors that shape this system including materialistic benefits.

So, if Sam and Ali have a belief difference and they started to look deep to the root of this difference, then it is likely that the root is just a single statement that one them thinks it is valid while the other thinks not. Some of the belief differences might not be reconciled, but I do think that gaining the ability to recognize logical fallacies

would at least raise the quality of debate, which might reduce the gap between differences. But this ability requires serious training.

8# looking back at the previous article, I can say that there are two main contradictions that cannot (in my opinion) be reconciled in the trinity doctrine:

The three different entities that they are also one at the same time.

Jesus was begotten of the Father, and Jesus does not have a beginning.

These two statements are contradictory because they contain two opposing sub-statements.

The statement: “Jesus was begotten at eternity” could be regarded as meaningless as the expression “begotten at eternity” does require a clear and logical definition.

If we look at the root of these statements, then I would say it was generated originally from the “Change Paradox” that we have discussed in the previous article: The Eternal doesn’t need anyone and doesn’t need anything. Therefore, the Eternal is perfect. Therefore, the Eternal cannot change. Therefore, the Eternal couldn’t make decisions”.

However, this conclusion is based on a logical fallacy: God is an entity outside our universe, and our universe is a closed system. The laws and axioms of a closed system might not be applicable to the surrounding system. So, trying to identify the properties of God by applying our laws and axioms have a very serious margin of error.

Furthermore, the Trinity doctrine is actually contradictory to the “Change Paradox” itself: Jesus is eternal. Therefore, Jesus doesn’t need anyone and doesn’t need anything. Therefore, Jesus is perfect. Therefore, Jesus cannot change. Therefore, Jesus couldn’t make decisions.

The “Change Paradox” is really a paradox by itself and cannot be used as a valid logic.

Article 11 - The Third Puzzle

How did a complex concept (Trinity) manage to prevail while many other simpler concepts had faded away?

There was a single point of authority for all the follower of Jesus, and that was the Church of Jerusalem. However, at 70AD the whole of Jerusalem has been destroyed including this church. This event allowed the churches in the Roman-Greek world to be independent. With this independence and with the lack of any recognized central authority, large number of different denominations have been established. Christianity from about 70AD to 250AD was almost like a turbulent sea with so many divergent and different metaphysical thoughts and opinions. With this complex environment, the denominations that could survive are the one that have managed to establish an authoritarian and serving management system.

Let start from the beginning. Churches have been established to be a service center. As we have discussed before, the philosophical mind and spirituality of the first group of Greek Christians have invented “the Christian Brotherhood”. This brotherhood served as religious and social net for the followers of Jesus. From this brotherhood, centers for social and religious purposes has been established which has been called churches. So, form the start, churches were a social and religious service centers.

As Christianity started to divide to so many different denominations, the centers of service (i.e. the churches) started to provide more services (probably even economical support) otherwise they would lose their followers support.

So, it was from the start that churches were established with a Serving Management System. However, this system alone cannot survive the turbulent sea. So, another element needs to be added to this system which is a firm authoritarian system. With this system, change in concepts or protocols are resisted at all cost.

So, the denominations that managed to survive the turbulent Christian sea were the one who continued to provide the needed services and the one who were truly authoritarian, and these were the Trinitarian Christians.

Let us be clear here: the authoritarian system is needed at times of emergency but for a very short time. For example, the Roman Republic have institute that at times of emergency, the senate can appoint an individual with the total power (i.e. the power of the senate and the power of the people) to do whatever necessary to deal with these emergencies. But this power will only last for 3 months, not one single day more.

So, you need an authoritarian system to deal with emergencies, but this system needs to be for a very short time. If this system starts to be the norm, then there will be a very serious side effects: this system will literally kill the critical thinking inside the system, which at end will create the single-minded zealots.

So, I am proposing here that the Trinitarians have managed to survive the Christian turbulent sea because of their servicing and authoritarian management system. So, the complexity or simplicity of their doctrine was not a factor in their survival, but the major factors for it was their management system.

The crucial points here are Servicing and authoritarianism. Servicing will manage to keep the loyalty of followers. Authoritarianism will resist any change in the concepts of faith. This last point is vital because any proposed change in concepts within a turbulent sea of thoughts will definitely lead to cracks and divisions inside the denomination.

So, the question now: how did the Trinitarians managed to be united through the lands and to have this authoritarian system?

As I have proposed in a previous article, the first group of Greek Christians were the Pythagorean philosophers. I would also propose here that the Trinitarians were the students of the students (etc.) of these Pythagorean philosophers. Because of their study of philosophy, the hostile Roman attitude toward their new religion, and the surrounding turbulent Christian sea of thoughts,, it seems that all of this forced them to keep unity and to reinforce the norm that: differences between them need to be resolved behind closed doors, and anyone who would challenge this norm would face a vicious united front regardless whether he was right or wrong.

It is obvious that the thoughts of the Trinitarians in 325AD are so different to the first Pythagorean Christians, but the change in thoughts was very slow. I don't think there has been any paradigm shift in thoughts for the Christian mainstream from 70AD until 325AD, which support the idea that changes in thoughts in the Christian mainstream was very very slow.

Let us reflect this model to the current day. It has been estimated that the Protestant members count to about 800 million, and some might regard them to be the second largest form of Christianity. But this is not very accurate; Protestantism is not a single denomination, it is an umbrella that contains about 30,000 denominations, which some of them regards others to be heretics. The largest denomination within this umbrella is the Anglicanism which count for about 110 million. Therefore, the second largest Christian denomination is the Eastern orthodox Church which count for about 230 million.

The largest Christian denomination is none other than the Catholic Church which count for 1.3 billion. This is really impressive: for all the scandals and turbulent events that the Catholic Church went through (burning convicts due to differences in opinion, Galileo affair, etc.) but still: they were number 1, they continue to be number 1, and are still number 1.

I really think that their survival has nothing to do with the complexity or simplicity of their thoughts and concepts, but due to their authoritarian and serving management system. Although their authoritarian system did cause some serious side effects.

The Appendix

Notes for Article 9:

Article 9 (The road from the "Duo of Philo" to the "Trinity of Nicaea") was published in Bart Ehrman blog as a Platinum post in May 8, 2023, then as a public post in June 30, 2023, and there were some very interesting discussions in the blog about this article that it would be useful to be included here:

OmarRobb June 30, 2023 at 6:57 am:

There are the following two notes:

1# It has been brought to my attention that the way I wrote this article could give the impression that the "Atom hypothesis" and the "One hypothesis" are the "Greek Views". It should be clarified that these hypotheses were originated from the Greek, but they were also disputed among them. Therefore, these were not the dominant views for all the Geek Schools.

In the article, I used phrases such as "the Greek concluded" and "the Greek called it," but these were merely summarizations. However, I did highlight the following paragraph in the article, and it might be useful to highlight it here as well:

{I need to clarify here that I am presenting these philosophical ideas in a "very simplistic format". My interest here is not the "Who, What, and When". My interest is to see the dynamics of things from a "high bird view" that would provide a clear sense to the philosophical ideas that influenced the Christian faith. It should be noted here that there were many intense arguments among the Greek philosophers concerning their metaphysical views}.

It might be useful here to highlight that Leucippus (born 510 BC) was probably the first to present the "Atom Hypothesis" and then it was expanded by his followers: Democritus (born 460BC), and Epicurus (born 341BC).

2# "Neurotheologian" added few comments with deep details, which interested readers can just use in google to search for more.

I disagree though with Neurotheologian regarding Philo's model: Philo did name the "Logos" as the first-born son, but I think his model was just duo (God and logos) but with a door open for more. Nonetheless, even if Philo's model wasn't duo, then the Christians modified it to a duo model, therefore, we could still name the model as the "Duo of Philo".

I hope that Neurotheologian and BartEhrman will not object to me copying and pasting their related comments from the platinum post to this post:

Neurotheologian May 9, 2023 at 5:36 pm:

The relationship between Greek concepts of God or the divine and the development of the concept of the Trinity is indeed interesting. I think the problem is that you may have conflated different Greek concepts of God, such as the platonic ineffable "one" developed by both the middle Platonists (such as Philo), and the Neoplatonists,

especially Plotinus with the more easily analysable concept of the first mover or the unmoved mover of Aristotle, developed by Aquinas. Plato got his idea of unchangeability of “the one” from Parmenides and his idea of “the one” (as opposed to the two or the three or the four) from Pythagoras. The problem, that Plato and his subsequent followers had was the fact that a perfect God would have to be unchangeable, immovable, and already perfect, so that any act of creation or subsequent act of intervention, would be incompatible with an already complete and perfect deity. I like to call this, the philosophical problem of evil or imperfection (as opposed to the moral or natural problems of evil).

Philo tried to get around this problem of imperfection or incompleteness in a similar way to Plato himself in the *Timaeus* – by postulating intermediaries. The logos was not a sole intermediary, but the Logos was rather the chief of a panoply of intermediaries. Philo used the metaphor ‘first born’ to attribute priority to this particular intermediary, which, of course the Johannine Christians subsequently picked up and applied to Jesus. Philo did not postulate a duo, but more of a multiplicity of intermediaries, of which the logos was the chief. Plotinus got around this “philosophical problem of evil or imperfection” by the concept of emanation, which you nicely illustrated by the idea of being warmed up by the nearness of the Sun. In Plotinus’s theology, the one emanated the nous and the nous emanated the world soul which divided into individual souls. Interestingly, the soul is also postulated as unchangeable and eternal, which creates a creates another problem of incompatibility with human evil, but that’s another discussion.

OmarRobb:

Very interesting. I didn’t study this matter to this fine details, I just wanted to recognize (from a bird’s-eye) the road from the Greeks to Trinity. So, I do appreciate your contribution here. Thank you.

I did read more about Plotinus before; as his work was influential for the Muslim philosophers and it caused serious dispute among them whether this work is accepted from the theological perspective. I also recognize that he initiated the emanation model. Surprisingly, it seems that the work of Philo wasn’t of interest to these philosophers.

However, my understanding is that Philo did modify the existed model to the Duo model, so that he would have only one point of contradiction with the concept of “total perfection”. If he didn’t then his model is just a re-enforcement to the existed one, but with links to the Jewish theology.

So, if I understood your perspective here, then you are saying that Philo re-enforced the existed model (God and multiple intermediaries) with the Word as the “Chief of Staff “. Then the Johannine Christians modified it to the Duo model (God and Jesus), then later they added the third entity to it (i.e. the spirit).

Neurotheologian May 10, 2023 at 3:03 am:

Yes, the prologue of John’s Gospel appears to pick up 3 Greek ideas about the Logos.
1. The fragment of Heraclitus’s writings about humans not understanding the Logos

even after being shown it “his logos holds always but humans always prove unable to ever understand it, both before hearing it and when they have first heard it”. See John 1:5 & John 1:10 . 2. Heraclitus’s “all things come to be in accordance with this logos” . See John 1:3 . 3. Philo’s “The Logos is the first-born of God” See John 1:14 for example. However, John actually slips up when quoting Jesus as saying he was “*a* son of God” in John 10:36 . It seems to me that Jesus frequently described God as father of all of us eg in the beginning of the Lord’s Prayer. Jesus referred to God as “spirit” rather than physical stuff with location in space eg in John 3: 5-8 and John 4:24 . I think that, to him, receiving the Holy spirit was none other than receiving God.

Neurotheologian May 10, 2023 at 10:30 am

My question for Bart is where did the author of Colossians get his first born of creation Logos-like Christology? Was it written after the 4th Gospel? Did the author of the 4th Gospel get it from Colossians? Colossians 1:15-20

BDEhrman May 11, 2023 at 6:58 pm

I don’t think there’s evidence of literary dependence one way or the other, since they are sufficiently different as well as interestingly similar. Logos Christology must surely have spread in some deep thinking Christian circles at the end of the first century, and came to be interpreted, discussed, propagated by various theologically minded people; it fit very well with the views developing of Christ as a pre-existent being with God before becoming human.

Testcase July 4, 2023 at 3:10 pm:

I am not an expert in atomism but I have read some about it related to another topic and I would like to point out an issue.

It seems like you are conflating Pre-socratic, atomist thinking and the idea of the Monad and related. I believe these are contradictory views.

Atomist theory posited a universe that was fundamentally stochastic. There is no ‘cause’ and one could imagine it as as swirling vortices of atoms. This chaotic universe is created through voids, clinamen, and interaction of atoms in time and space. This is an attempt at a naturalistic understanding of the universe.

This seems in conflict with the basic ideas of Plato and the later Neoplatonists and terms of Forms and other ideas you refer to.

While I understand you are trying to simplify things here and not do a history of Greek philosophy, I think you at least need to disentangle these ideas because while some of these concepts clearly influenced Christian theology (Particularly derived from Plato) it is hard to me to see how the atomistic view could be related to what you describe here.

OmarRobb July 5, 2023 at 12:06 pm:

I didn't imply that the Atomic hypothesis is a prerequisite for the Monad hypothesis. I started this article by highlighting the genius of the Greek thinking process and I used the Atomic hypothesis for this purpose because it is something that we can relate to by our scientific knowledge today. Then I used this thinking process to present the Monad hypothesis. Therefore, I wasn't linking the Atomic hypothesis with the Monad Hypothesis, but I was linking the thinking process itself.

However, I did dig in the Greek philosophical world just enough to understand the dynamics of the Christians faith. However, your comment here does trigger an inquiry:

You are saying that the Greek regarded these both hypotheses to be contradicting to each other. Is this right? Have the Greek Monad Philosophers from before Plato to Philo and beyond explicitly rejected the Atomic hypothesis and explicitly accepted infinity to be the end of divisions?

I am asking this because my understanding (due to abbreviated general readings) that the ancient Muslim Philosophers (800AD+) translated the Greek books and they discussed and explained both hypotheses, and I didn't sense that they discussed a possible contradiction between them. So, I am surprised that the Greek Monad Philosophers would not accept infinity for the "Monad Hypothesis" but they would accept it for the Atomic Hypothesis.

Is it possible that the Greek Monad Philosophers accepted the Atomic hypothesis (or at least accepted that divisions will not end in infinity) but rejected the Stochastic Hypothesis that was built on it? Or they all clearly rejected the Atomic hypothesis and clearly accepted that divisions will end in infinity?

Testcase July 5, 2023 at 12:23 pm:

I believe Parmenides and the early atomists, Leucippus and Democritus, could be said to have opposing views on this question. There might be some difficulty because some of this thought has to be reconstructed from others commentary on it. I think this entry on Democritus explains the difference.

<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/democritus/>

OmarRobb July 6, 2023 at 10:02 am:

Thank you, Testcase,

I looked briefly at your reference and also at the following reference:

<https://plato.stanford.edu/Archives/win2021/entries/atomism-ancient/#PlatPlat>

It is not clear if Plato rejected the Atomic Hypothesis or not. It seems that this hypothesis was rejected by Aristotle, and I am not sure about his logic, and it does seem that there were some back and forth after him.

I don't think that the Atomic Hypothesis led directly to the Stochastic Hypothesis, and the two could have been regarded separate. I am still saying that it is surprising that the Monad Philosophers would not accept infinity for the Monad Hypothesis, but they will accept it as an end for divisions.

Also, it seems to me that the Stochastic Philosophers were one step shorter for deducting the philosophical component of the 2nd law of thermodynamics: Chaos in the system will not transform into order without external work. Or in its' formal definition: Entropy in the system will not decrease without external work. And the entropy here is the measure of the chaos in the system.

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