

The Year Zero in the Christianity

Joe-Kodzo Homezo
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+41797345024
jozataka@hotmail.com

Traditionally, the Christian faith celebrates Jesus-Christ as the revelator of God in the human history. However, such a belief's core principle remains a constantly source of misunderstanding among bishoprics, theologians and, the Roman emperors. During the first century, believer communities faced the controversial dogmatic interpretation concerning the identity and the real nature of Jesus-Christ. Was the Nazarene of the thirties a human being or God? What is the meaning of the Christian belief? The way one approached and addressed the question of Jesus scattered on believers, churchgoers, as well as the political leaders. The Roman Empire was marked by ceaseless quarrels among Aryan, Gnostic and the Anabaptist theorists who were challenging supremacy. In fact, the theater of huge confusion could be observed inside unanimous communities which claimed without any single doubt that Jesus-Christ is both Lord and God. There was a scramble for God News control. Anywhere in the Christian communities, people were debating whether Jesus-Christ was the sun of God (with a human body) or God himself ("imago Dei"), truly speaking. The most approach to such a task was articulated to a *formal quo* analysis of the faith, especially the relationship between Christianity and Judaism. It is not easy to sort out the proliferation of the Holy Scripture and, to determine the specificity of the Universalist message of Christianity as "*mysterium salutis*", while the salvation in God was confronted to the Roman imperial domination.

In the second century, Marcion (ca 85 - ca 160) — a former Christian theologian who, later, was excommunicated by the Catholic Church after a sentence under heretic accusation — estimated that the God of Jesus-Christ is different from God in the Judaism (called God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). To highlight his distinctive reading, Marcion created the expression of "New Testament" which he opposed to the "Old Testament". According to Marcion, Christianity is based on the Lovely God (Dieu d'Amour), whereas God in the Hebrews perspective would have been only the universe Creator (Dieu créateur). Thus, the differentiation between old and new hagiographical texts induced the preference Marcion expressed toward Gospels he savagely opposed to the Torah. Accordingly, Marcion taught that God in the Old Testament is not the true God, only revealed by Jesus, the Christ.

The dissociation between these deities meant, in doctrinal terms, that the Hebraic scriptural revelation, from the beginning of the salvation story till now, is achieved by the arrival of Jesus-Christ – *Word of God and "Theou-logos"*. In Marconi's theology, the Jewish faith would be a simple preparation of the accomplishment of times and anything in Jesus-Christ ("*Institurare omnia in christo*", Eph. 1, 10). Jews should have then sought for conversion to Christianity in whom the faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the God of Joseph would have meaningful direction. Moreover, Marcion accused Jews for killing God by crucifying Jesus-Christ.

However, the New Testament (NT) is like a tree which hides the forest. In fact, the New Testament is a hagiographic corpus really difficult to appreciate and understand. Several scriptures were also proliferating in the Roman Empire. Christians and other believer communities that could be seen at that period did not have access to the same textual sources. In the former African bishoprics, in Cartagena (Tunisia), Kamet (Egypt) and, in Abyssinia (Ethiopia), some people used to listen to the Gospel of Maria, that of Philippe, as well as the Gospel of Judas. In

other Roman provinces or districts, like in Antiochus (Syria), in Lebanon and in Minor Asia (Ephesus), people had the habit of listening to a variety of other holy scriptures. Each community had its preferences. There were so many sacred writings in circulation, that nobody knew precisely their number. But, later, some of this sacred literature was disqualified, disgraced and labelled as apocryphal books.

In this sociological and religious context of Holy Scripture profusion, Bishop Irene of Lyon (Gaulle) decided to prohibit some Writings he judged inadequate to his ruling Christianity. But, neither Bishop Irene, nor many other prominent church doctrinarians and theologians, at that era, like the Berber native, priest and theologian Arius (AD. 250 or 256 - 336), were aware of the content of the most scripture in circulation. In summary, Irene recommended his criteria and imposed how to identify and select texts he considered as authentic scriptures. In his process, Irene said that "four" is the perfect arithmetic and cosmic number, because there would be four winds or directions: North, South, East and, the West. Thus, in conformity with the cosmology, one needed four Gospels (Mateo, Marko, Luke, John). In admitting four Gospels, as orthodox, despite their doctrines and contradictions, Irene intended to unite Christians by standardizing the access to Scriptures. By doing so, Bishop Irene solemnly condemned the Gospel of Judas, yet this document contains holy literature that is very much appreciated by Gnosis movements.

The criterions initiated to select canonical books are debatable: seniority, apostolicity, catholicity and orthodoxy. The four Gospels selected posed therefore some problems of authenticity. Nobody knew the author of the Gospels entitled with the name of Matthew, Marko, Luke and John. These texts are highlighted with the distinctive label note "Gospel according to... (Matthew, Luke, John)", which meant that neither Matthew, Luke nor Marko is the author of the named document! One is right to point out such an observation concerning the Gospel namely identified as a book of Marko, Luke and John.

In fact, a Gospel is a kind of literature, a style of discourse, a manner of telling and actualizing stories oneself has heard. However, the stories presented in the Gospel as factual were, seriously thinking, simple narrative speeches that were less sure than evoked. The Gospel of Marko was written more than 30 years after the death of Jesus. And everyone knew that the disciples of Jesus had escaped when their boss was arrested, judged, sentenced and crucified. A woman identified Peter, who was walking neutrally behind the mass of people who were shouting and jeering at Jesus carrying his cross on the road to Golgotha, and said: "this man also belongs to the membership, he is Galilean". But, Peter denied categorically: "Woman, don't get me into problems; I don't know this Man (Jesus)".

Moreover, sacred writings are selected under an authoritarian process, arbitrary conditions, and for utilitarian political reasons. How one could determine the authenticity of scriptures that were circulating in different provinces of the Empire, while, at the same time, there were few transport commodities (poor roads, rare contact with people, linguistic barrier, etc.). How could one justify the seniority of a document, whereas nobody had operated any dating? The apostolicity meant that apostles or their disciples were informed of the existence of a text: in fact, nobody has exhaustively listed to sacred literature and there was no form of administration to hold the register of this entire people who said they were disciples. Saint Paulo who had never met up concretely with Jesus alive used to call himself a disciple! Indeed, orthodoxy means right opinion: but compared to which meaning? Who could claim to be well informed and to possess the best dogma, in a context where several forms of Christianity abounded and were mixed Pagan-Christians, Pagans, Gnostics and, many bishoprics leaders firmly attached to their territories?

To avoid bishoprics quarrels, constant controversial argumentations and, the theologian disputes, the Roman Emperor Konstantin, who was not yet baptized, had convened the Council of Nicene (Turkey), in 325, and had imposed the Creed, whose doctrine claimed that Jesus is the Son of God and God himself, "God born of God, true God born of true God": « *Deo de Deo... Deo vero, de Deo vero* ». However, people were very divided on the question: Church leaders and followers did not profess their faith in the same way.

Some affirmed that Jesus has the same nature as God (*homo-ousios*). That means the same substance, property and quality (the Greek name "Ὀυσία», read *ousia - oo-see'-ah*, [read *oussiyâ*] whose the present participle "εἶναι" is said "*being*").

The Book of Proverbs (8, 22), which speaks about Wisdom, has justified that Wisdom is the principle of God and the mediator between created and uncreated things. In the New Testament, Wisdom is Christ who has preexisted to the historical Jesus: "At the beginning was the Word, the Word was near God and the Word was God (Jn.1, 1); the Word is made flesh and, he lived among us (Jn.1, 14) ". In the epistle of Colossians it is said that "Jesus does not retain jealously his equal rank with God" (Col.1, 15).

But other Christian communities recommended that Jesus-Christ would be rather similar to God (*homoios* - hom-oy'-oce [read, *homoyôis*]): Jesus is a man with a divine appearance. He is divine, but with human appearance. The homoiousianism maintained that He was in substance "like God. The similarity or the similar is analogical. Thus, one cannot identify the similar (ontical) and the same (ontological). The difference that requires attention resides in the smallest iota in the Greek alphabet.

Finally, some communities affirmed that Jesus did not have the same identity as God. Since, he was alive, Jesus used to call God his father. He could not call or pray himself. In summary, Jesus and God would be different by nature. They would not be consubstantial. One and Other would be dissimilar. In Aristotle's terms, Jesus would be "Sumbebekos", an accident. Here is the anhomoeanism [anomeanism] thesis or the hetero-ousianism principle. Vis-à-vis the multiple confessions in Christology, the council of Nicene, under the presidency of a pagan, the Emperor Konstantin, retains a formula to be recited, in order to close any debate on that subject.

Indeed, the faith taught by the participants of the Council is that people should believe that Jesus-Christ is God. But the discourse is not yet over. And there will be other councils. Half a century later, in 381, the council of Constantinople has consolidated the thesis of the Trinity of God. The following were the Ephesus (431) and the Chalcedon (451) Council.

Consequently, the question one must address is the following: when did Christianity matter? When did Christianity start year zero? In the Middle-Age, monk Denis, called Le Petit computed the Nazarene Jesus as officially born on December 25th on year 753 of Roma. But this calculation based on the 753 anniversary of the Roman Empire foundation was false. Roman prosecutor, Herod, who ordered a general population census at the time Jesus born, was dead in year (- 5) before the birth of Christ. Consequently, Jesus would have been born four years before the "Anno Domini" (Year zero/ J-C), i.e. latest four years before Jesus-Christ. So what is the starting point of Christianity?

One counts usually, the beginning of a new era by starting from a great event. Some analysts have recommended to aggregate Christianity's year zero with Emperor Konstantin's crown inauguration, in 306. But many thinkers have considered in year 312 more judicious, because at

that time Konstantin's conversion to Christianity was recorded. Some other scholars rather support to appoint September 18th, 324, when Licinius was defeated in. However, various people admitted that February 28th, in 380, would be the best date, since it was the moment Emperor Theodosius declared Church, the official religion of the Empire. Finally most believers were focused on year 392, when Theodosius prohibited the paganism. But some scholars seemed more favorable to the year 395, when Theodosius died. Moreover, "Jesus has announced the kingdom of God, and Church has come". Church defined itself as *norma normans*, as the normative institution, whereas it is only an institution between diverse institutions and organization in the society.

