

JESUS THE CONJURER

INTRODUCTION

This book considers the evidence that Jesus, if he existed, was nothing more than a stage-magician minus the stage of course. It shows the absurdity of trusting in his miracles. Why should we trust in his resurrection when he had such dodgy miracles behind him? My book, *Non-Miraculous Witnesses*, demonstrates that the Church discerned many miracles in the New Testament that were not miracles at all and which were not clearly presented as such by these scriptures.

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It is nonsense to run through all the miracles of Jesus – if that is what they were - to show how they could have been performed. There are enough books on magic and enough shows on television that tell us how to do the impossible with magic tricks. The miracles are nearly all mundane suggesting that if they were made up everything else probably was as well.

A magician works by distracting the audience, by doing actions which seem unnecessary if one has magical powers but which are needed to do the trick – like always pulling a rabbit out of a hat that is resting on a table – and by not telling the whole truth. Jesus can be proven to have told lies. And he depended on prophecies that anybody could fulfil and used them as credentials.

If Jesus claimed to have magically cured people who could have been cured by psychological means then he would have been willing to use trickery. Most of his healings could be explained that way. He would not have known much about psychology but he would have noticed that sometimes cures took place that seemed to have a link with the brightening of spirits and having a positive outlook.

Jesus' doctrine is wrong so God would not have given him miracle powers and the Devil would have used him to propound smarter doctrines so if Jesus claimed supernatural powers they were tricks.

Jesus said that John the Baptist was the greatest man ever and he named him as his precursor so John must have known him like nobody else did. Jesus said that John was from God and the best prophet. This implies that John knew him the best. And the Baptist was not convinced by Jesus who even had to send messengers to tell him that he did holy signs to prove that he was the messenger of God (Matthew 11). When John was sceptical what does that say about Jesus? The fact that John needed to be told was enough to prove that John was sceptical for had he been a believer he would have followed Jesus' activities with a close interest.

Whole villages that Jesus visited were sceptical about his miracles (Matthew 11). This was while they were supposedly the talk of the land so they would have known if he could alter nature.

The miracle of the loaves and fishes could have been done in the dark which makes trickery easier. In Luke 9 we read that the five thousand were fed in a desert or waste area and significantly near the city of Bethsaida. Jesus could have performed an illusion and had wealthy friends to pay for the food. He told the whole crowd to sit in groups. That was so that only the attendants might have a chance to see where the food came from. Had a real miracle happened the people could have queued up. And why were there enough baskets to carry the food to the people when all they had was a few loaves and fish? The story of the people going out with the baskets and only one person having bread and fish with them just has to be an exaggeration. We even read that the leftovers filled twelve baskets. There would have been more leftovers than that and the people had more food than the story lets on when they had all these baskets. Magicians exaggerate their feats and abilities. Jesus who John said could not lie said he was going to buy food for the crowd (John 6:5). This is a hint that it was all a big trick. Jesus could have the food in a hole in the ground out of sight to feed all the people with.

The Matthew and Luke gospels say that the Devil took Jesus to the pinnacle of the Temple and suggested that he throw himself down for God wouldn't let anything bad happen to him. This miracle would impress the people and get Jesus converts easily because he would need to do it in public to make it worth his while. That is what Christians tell us. But God might have wanted Jesus to do that so why was Satan so sure it was a sin? Jesus doing that would not have stopped him going on the cross later. Obviously the only motivation that makes any sense is that Jesus was being asked to do miracles. Satan and Jesus both believed it would be a sin for him to try. This shows that the gospels of Matthew and Luke which have this story are hinting that we should not believe that Jesus was a true miracle worker. Either the miracles are symbols or they were tricks.

Perhaps Satan helped Jesus do miracles through trickery. Many have testified in the past that Satan rather than changing nature like magic manipulates it so that a miracle seems to have happened. For example, he could make a ghost seem to appear to you by making you mistake a ray of moonlight coming in your window for the shape of a person causing you to imagine that you saw a person who spoke to you. The gospels make no effort to eliminate this hypothesis for the miracles of Jesus. They just give us dubious evidence which is faulty precisely because we are not told enough. The gospels certainly do magic tricks with facts, that is what conjurers do, they don't tell all but use misdirection.

SUSPICIOUS MIRACLES

Here are the details about the miracles that give grounds for suspicion of trickery.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the "dead"? Jesus even said that he would only do this if his friends believed in him first meaning that it was not a miraculous sign. A God would only do miracles and change the way he set nature up for a good reason. That reason would have to be because miracles are pointers to his power and love and the truth.

So Jesus told his friends that he would only be able to raise Lazarus if they believed that he could do it (John 11:40). But belief should not matter. Belief was required in occult operations so we are as good as being told that Jesus was into occultism with its magical pretences. It was like God killing Lazarus by mistake and then putting things right. Jesus once said that the writings of Moses were proof enough that he was the Son of God (John 5:46) which was a totally insane thing to say and shows that the author of John did not know the Old Testament well and was not related to the apostles in any way at all. But it proves that Jesus had no intention of raising men from the dead supernaturally at least.

What was Jesus going to do if they didn't believe? He would probably have still pretended to raise Lazarus. He wanted people to believe he would raise him before it happened so that their perception would be fine-tuned to put all scepticism aside. It was all psychological manipulation. Magicians need to instil faith in their audience so that they will be less likely to catch them out in their trickery. The secret is to get people to believe what they want to believe.

Lazarus would have been wrapped up in bandages so how was he able to walk out of the tomb in the robes when Jesus called him forth? This suggests that it was all a trick. He was prepared for the resurrection hoax.

The Jews were so sure that the blind man Jesus cured was never really blind in the first place that they got together and interviewed the man's parents (John 9). The parents said he was but the gospel indicates that they were habitual liars. They told the Jews that they did not know who cured the blindness but they must have known. They told the Jews to ask their son so they knew he knew. They were not scared of telling on Jesus for it would have been no secret anyway. After all the Jews knew something was supposed to have happened and knew it was Jesus. When the Jews behaved this way it proves that they were sure that Jesus' previous miracles were fake for they would not have wanted to find out that any more were real miracles and end up with egg on their faces. It could have been that the parents were honest and did not want to say that Jesus cured their boy for he was never blind so they told the smallest lie they felt they could tell and should tell. The incident shows that the Jews were honest investigators and were sceptical meaning that Jesus was a fraud.

Jesus realised the dead daughter of Jairus was still alive and he wanted to revive her which was why he put all the people in the house out so that he would be credited with a miracle if he succeeded. Jesus said she was not dead but sleeping. But still he may have let people think he raised her from the dead!

Jesus was said to have revived the dead son of the widow of Naim. When the pallbearers stopped he touched the bier which shows that there was something going on. There was something odd about the miracle when only Luke dares to record it. Luke has Paul raising a man from the dead despite Paul admitting that the man was not dead! Not a reliable reporter! When people have been mistaken for dead today how much more could this have happened in the days of Jesus and Paul? Page 61, A Christian Faith for Today, W Montgomery Watt, Routledge, London, 2002.

When Jesus stopped the storm it could not have been hard to stop for it was not much of a storm when he slept through the whole thing.

The fig tree is a suspicious miracle for Jesus cursed it one day in front of people and it was found withered the next day. The tree could have been dug out and replaced by a bad one. This would be an appalling sign if it is a miracle. It would show the kind of standard the gossellers had.

Jesus fulfilled prophecies that were not prophecies at all and ones which anybody could fulfil and the rest of them are left unfulfilled and we are told they will be sorted out by him later. Jesus failed all the tests for being a true prophet. He was a fake.

When one miracle is or could be a magical trick that means we have to refrain from making up our minds about any of the rest of them and be agnostic.

HEALED LIED FOR JESUS

Some of the people the gospels say were cured by Jesus lied for him.

Every healer has his fans who are willing to fake illness or exaggerate it to make people believe that he cured them. The fact that these were not explicitly mentioned in the gospels suggests that they were only interested in making Jesus look good and not in the truth. You cannot write a book to defend a miracle-worker when you do not discredit the frauds who brought disrepute on him. You do not do it.

When Jesus “cured” the bleeding woman why did he not turn around and see her when he felt the power leaving him at her touch. He pushed through the crowd to find her which proves she couldn’t have got away if she had really been near enough to touch him. In that charged electric atmosphere many people would have felt cured though they were not. Jesus just sought out the person who gave out the signal that she was cured or felt cured and pretended it was her he meant. The woman was scared and that could explain why she felt cured. Strong emotion can simulate a cure and make you feel cured. The failure of the gospels to tell us if the cure was permanent shows that the writers were incompetent as religious reporters and were unduly biased.

The woman was dishonest when she did not want to say that Jesus cured her and was frightened to do so though when she saw him push through the crowd she must have known Jesus wanted it out in the open.

The blind man of Bethsaida was cured by Jesus but broke his promise to tell nobody and broadcasted it all over town. One would expect him to have been afraid to tell in case the miracle would be reversed in retribution. The blind man was either a liar and could not be trusted when he lied to Jesus or he and Jesus had concocted the miracle together or he was convinced that the miracle was only a medical success of some sort and was not a miracle.

Jesus, the synoptics say, performed miracles that he wished to be kept secret. The recipients of the wonders promised to be discreet and then they went and gossiped all over the place. When we are asked to believe people like that that Jesus cured then we are asked to swallow it all on blind faith. If they told lies it is more likely that that they lied about being cured.

Jesus himself occasionally said that they were liars or hysterical for he said their faith healed them when they started shrieking about a miracle.

Don’t object that the disciples saw them or that Jesus told the world what he had done later. There is no evidence and so it is most likely that the recipients did the telling. We have to stick to what is indicated for speculation is no use.

NO AFFIDAVITS FOR MIRACLES

There are no affidavits or sworn testimonies to verify the gospel stories about Jesus.

You cannot ask anybody to believe in a miracle or seeming miracle unless you name the witnesses and evaluate their testimony. A single testimony about them alone is worthless and if its is second hand and third hand and so on this will make it worse. If you think it will do you then you have to believe all you are told. The gossellers never named the witnesses or said that they put their memory and honesty to the test.

Christians respond that we would not believe no matter how strong the evidence was. But that does not mean that it should be as unprofessional and weak as it is. They are saying that we can resist believing but we could do that even if the evidence for a miracle is as strong as the evidence for the existence of the moon. And evidence causes belief. The unnecessary weakness of the evidence proves that it is more reasonable to disbelieve for a supernatural power can’t be involved. And how do they or God know we would not believe even if the evidence came up and bit our noses off?

We don’t know if anybody could corroborate the story that Jesus put demons into swine (Matthew 8), gradually cured the blind man (Mark 8), if anybody who knew if the hand of the man who had a shrivelled hand was really restored or never shrivelled in the first place (Matthew 12) or if anybody knew if the Canaanite woman’s daughter was really possessed and really cured (Mark 7). The gospels were written to provide evidence for Jesus’ claims and only fools just say a miracle happened and no more like they have done. Serious reasons for belief in a miracle are needed.

One miracle that is proven as far as possible is better than a hundred that are not. This proves that the gospels had no divine protection against error.

The gossellers don't so much as say that they are very sure or how sure they are that their stories are right.

Luke says he collected the testimonies so that Theophilus could be sure of what he was told but anybody can collect testimonies and gossip and not check them out right and take too much for granted.

Few are the miracles that the apostles who Jesus designated as his witnesses and testators seen. They verified hardly any of them for us. When the apostles have the job of providing the evidence and it is not done what is the point of considering Christianity?

Any writer with a magical story who expects people to believe because he says so could only be credulous or a deceiver himself.

Conclusion

There are indications in the gospels that if Jesus was a miracle worker then he was using deception and trickery to perform his "wonders". If Jesus existed, then he was a fraud for he did miracles to promote error and religious superstition.

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