

PJ MCGRATH HIS EXCELLENT SCEPTICAL STUDY OF THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

The apostles said that Jesus' miracles demonstrated the truth of his claims. Jesus himself never treated his miracles apologetically except in so far as they were to be signs of the coming kingdom of God and could prove he could forgive sins. He believed he could lie all he wanted but God would do miracles through him to warn about the kingdom. He wanted the healing of lepers hidden and then he did miracles in public, which suggests that the public ones were lies and all the miracles were unverifiable.

I want to use PJ Mc Grath's study of the miracles of Jesus in his excellent, *Believing in God*. He said that the four gospel writers have to assumed to have been sincere because being a Christian had no benefits in those days – this is illogical when the authors were anonymous. Joseph Smith was perfectly sane and got only persecution and abuse and every crime he had committed paraded through the papers and no money and books and a Church of only six members for publishing the *Book of Mormon*. And he was still a fraud. We have greater grounds for suspecting the gossellers because they were anonymous. The earlier writers never mentioned who these books were written by and Luke and Matthew depended on Mark for nearly all their miracle stories suggesting that there was nothing better they could do and were not eyewitnesses.

Mark says that Jesus came from Tyre and travelled through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee and into the Decapolis area which is silly for that is too long a route and there was no road from Sidon to Galilee in the first century (page 158) and there did not need to be for one could go back to Galilee through Tyre. *The Case for Christ* says that it was not too long for Decapolis was used loosely for any of the ten cities – which the term means - in that area so it was a sensible route (page 134). But Mark says this for only one reason, to get Jesus to that area to do a miracle. Why would he outline all that detail when he could not be specific as to the exact city that Jesus did the miracle in? He was not an eyewitness or using an eyewitness and was not John Mark who would have known the geography of Palestine. And the objection in *The Case for Christ* is fraudulent because Galilee was southeast of Tyre and Sidon was nearly north of Tyre. The looseness of Decapolis has nothing to do with it. It is no use saying that Jesus must have had good reason to go the long route

Mark located Gersanes on the shore of Galilee (*Believing in God*, page 158). Christians say that Mark is right and that although the town was 35 miles or so from the shore as the crow flies the whole area was loosely called Gerasenes. All these bizarre explanations. Mark would have been specific and clear for he was writing for Jews and Christians in Rome and the land was in disarray after the wars it had been hit with. There is no evidence for the loose usage. If Mark were going to be loose he would have used the towns of Hippo or Gerdessa which would have been more logical for they were near the shore

And Mark was confused about the towns near Galilee and thought that the large town of Bethsaida was just hamlet. These errors are important for they are linked to Jesus' miracles and show that Mark was no eyewitness. Nor is the claim that he got his data from Peter who travelled with Jesus tenable unless Peter never knew Jesus and was making it all up. It is true that Jesus was unlikely to have been born in Bethlehem for the Lucan idea that a census would require Mary who was heavily pregnant to travel there is rubbish and Matthew cannot be trusted when he says that Jesus was born there because he says that Mary and Joseph did not flee when they heard from the magi that inhuman King Herod knew about his rival, their baby boy.

It could not have been good for Matthew and Luke when they depended on what was not even an eyewitness testimony to create their own gospels.

The author of Luke and Acts liked to claim that the prophets all said that Jesus would die and rise again so that anybody who believes in him will be forgiven. This could be a lie to make quick converts or it could be that the author was not a Christian for Christianity was based on the Old Testament so he would have known that this was untrue if he had been a real Christian. The gospel was kept secret so the latter is the most probable option and I can only conclude that the gospel was pure invention at least where it has different material from Mark and Matthew.

McGrath asserts what when they cannot be trusted with ordinary things about Jesus they should be trusted less with their miracles (page 130, *Believing in God*). The person who makes loads of mistakes cannot be trusted in more serious matters.

Let me give an example of my own of the dishonesty of the gospel in the mundane things. When Jesus told the Jews they blasphemed and sinned when they said he was using Satan to cast out Devils we do not read that they answered back, "But your argument fails for the Devil would cast out demons to get disciples for his sorcerer – you - and they could go to harass

somebody else.” They would have said that for they would have been ready for him for it was not the first time they locked horns with Jesus. This shows the extreme bias of the gospels. They only care about the one side: theirs’. They were prepared to slander the Jews to defend it. Jesus knew all about the Devil’s strange ways like every Christian does so his brushing off the objection without proof suggests that he did not care who or what was doing the miracles. Whoever would traffic with the Devil is trafficking with the Devil. John was written long after the other three gospels for the latest of them, Luke, and its sequel Acts says that the Church was very much tied to Judaism. But John has them completely separate which implies a much later date. John refers to the excommunication of Christians from the synagogue which happened in 85 AD (page 161). It might have been written earlier than that but when it could have been late that is enough to warn us not to pay much attention to its miracles. You only believe in miracles when the sources are immaculate and near the event or as a last resort. It also belies the alleged divine inspiration of the gospel. It is the fake word of God.

Believing in God, PJ McGrath, Millington Books in Association with Wolfhound, Dublin, 1995