

THE SOBRIETY ARGUMENT FOR GOSPEL RELIABILITY AND JESUS' EXISTENCE

It is argued by Christian scholars that since the gospels are not characterised by absurd plots and claims that they must be history. There is nothing in them for example, about Jesus becoming the Emperor of Rome or turning the Mediterranean Sea into blood or battling vampires and chatting with dragons.

This argument sounds rational but is quite bizarre. It says stories grow more embellished over time. So it all happens one step at a time. But that means there will be miracle stories that are sober and they are not history. It means that for a time the miracle stories though made up will be pretty tame. It means that the gospels could have been put down on paper at a time when the stories were tame or the authors just used the tame stories.

The argument is a flop for it assumes too much. It assumes needlessly that the gospels would not have been written down until the stories about Jesus evolved to an outrageous stage. We must remember too that most of the miracle stories of the Bible are pretty tame too so the Christians would have preferred these types of stories for they would have been more used to them. Tame miracle stories only mean you like tame miracle stories not that you are being truthful.

The New Testament tells serious lies which make all the sobriety in the world no help to it. The New Testament writers lied about Jesus' life and miracles. They lied also about little historical details. They claimed that Jesus cured ten lepers – the number is a small detail. If they concocted small details they cannot be trusted with details of import for perhaps they left out some detail that throws the miracles or resurrection into a different light. Jesus himself said that anybody that lies in small things cannot be trusted in more important things – he was suggesting that lies always destroy trust so he forbids lies even when you feel forced by the circumstances to tell them for that is still harming trust. Jesus refuted the popular Christian belief that there are minor errors or lies in the Bible and yet it is still the word of God.

The early Christians had plenty of time to learn what to say and what not to say. The gopellers would have heard people who attributed lots of miracles to Jesus being greeted with, "If Jesus healed so much when he was on earth why cannot he do it as much now?" This taught them to avoid drawing out the response that people would make if they presented a Jesus who feverishly cast magic spells around him like his life depended on it. They knew that the more restraint the better it would be for intellectuals would be convinced easier. But they knew some silly stories were necessary but they had to be restrained.

There are piles of books on the market without absurd plots. The gopellers knew, as all mature people do, that it is better not to make a story too far-fetched.

Nevertheless, the gospel miracles are silly to some degree however small. They could not have happened for there is no God crazy enough to do them. The devil would rather promise everlasting happiness for doing as much evil as you can and do miracles for that purpose so its not him. So there is nothing to do them unless you want to blame psychic powers.

All miracles are useless for they help one when all of us should be helped. We are blamed for causing evil when in fact we don't have enough free will to be that blameworthy. So we are all entitled to be helped and no God can use the excuse that we must suffer for a purpose. If useless miracles have happened then we must believe every outlandish miracle report. The same applies to miracles that look useless to us so there is no use in pretending that if they are done for a reason we cannot figure out that it is different.

This makes all the New Testament miracles and signs bizarre and unbelievable. And why are they ridiculous? Because when you believe in a miracle you believe in it because of the witnesses so it is the witnesses and not the miracle you are believing because the miracle gives you no reason to believe but they do. God would want you to put belief in him and not in human testimony first so if he does miracles you would see ones yourself. If Jesus did miracles he would prove it to you today. It does not matter if he forces you to believe because he cannot force you do to good and love him or so he says. Religion proclaims miracles to get people to join up. Miracles are about deceitful organisations looking for control over your thinking. They are about men not God.

The Church says the resurrection of Jesus was the greatest miracle ever and it could not be a hoax from men or Satan. If that is true then the gopellers thought it was a better miracle than turning Mount Everest into bread and so the sobriety argument does not support them but refutes them. Jesus battled demons. Is this really any worse than battling vampires? Is feeding 5000 men with a few baskets of food more sensible than believing that Lord Krishna in India was able to duplicate himself so that there was a huge number of Krishnas on earth?

The argument that a strange story is likely to be true when it is sober and could be a lot stranger doesn't apply in the case of miracles because strange events are natural and miracles require a supernatural source. The former are more likely than the latter.

The gospels taught foolish doctrines which stand as evidence that they are not as sober as Christians boast. They approved of Jesus' wacky exegesis which said that God's title, "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" proved the resurrection of the body. The John gospel deceptively said that Jesus saying that he was one witness for himself and God another fulfilled the legal demand for two witnesses before a testimony could be accepted.

"If the gossellers made up the miracles and other deeds of Jesus then why do Matthew and Luke and Mark have many stories in common? Why did they not dream up new stories? The answer is because they were telling the truth."

There could have been any number of reasons for that. Perhaps they just served up some of the same old lies to make it look like that it wasn't just their opinion that Jesus did and said such and such. If I write an irrefutable fake gospel that has overlaps with some other gospel does that really make it likely to be genuine? If Christians wouldn't accept it then they have no right accepting their own. Sobriety is of little importance when lies can be demonstrated to have been told.

The use of similar stories, the material common to the gospels, suggests that the life-story is a pack of lies when it is about a person they could have got different stories about.

The gospels taught foolish doctrines which stand as evidence that they are not as sober as Christians boast. Is a story about Jesus healing a blind man really odder than Jesus maybe dispatching a vampire? The sobriety argument is too subjective. All bizarre tales take decades to get more outrageous.

The bits that ring true in the gospels may show that their authors may have used a lot of real stories about real people to construct their tales. Perhaps a story about some crank curing the blind was plagerised into a tale about Jesus. Even the Epistles sometimes show the same technique. For example the fake epistle of Jude, copies a lot of 2 Peter and the epistle of James.

Christians say that as so much of Mark ends up in the gospels of Matthew and Luke that they merely cut out a lot of work by using Mark. But what if the copying was a crude way of trying to build up a Jesus out of other people's stories? Because Mark was about Jesus, it does not exclude its use being a symptom of their determination to use whatever stories they could get and make them about Jesus. It could be confirmation of how determined they were.

Even if you think there is some force in the gospel evidence, it is insufficient as a basis for such big claims as that Jesus died for our sins and did miracles and rose again and that he is the final word on what God is and what God is like.

The sobriety argument for the existence of Jesus is a failure. When you attempt to apply it to the gospels it makes you more certain that Jesus being a real person is hard to confirm.

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