

Declaration on the Non-Historicity of Jesus and the Natural Explanation of Miracles

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March 4, 2025

Preamble

Recognizing the importance of historical accuracy, rational inquiry, and scientific skepticism in the pursuit of truth, we, the undersigned, declare that the figure commonly known as Jesus of Nazareth lacks sufficient historical evidence to be regarded as a real historical person. Furthermore, the miracles attributed to Jesus in religious texts are best understood as mythological constructs, misinterpretations, or fabrications rather than actual supernatural events.

This declaration seeks to promote a rational and evidence-based approach to historical and religious claims, advocating for intellectual integrity and critical examination of ancient texts.

1 Lack of Historical Evidence for Jesus' Existence

1.1 Absence of Contemporary Sources

- There are no known contemporary accounts of Jesus written during his alleged lifetime (c. 4 BCE – 30 CE).
- Roman historians such as Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny the Younger mention Christians but do not provide verifiable evidence of Jesus as a historical figure. Tacitus (*Annals* 15.44) writes about "Christus" nearly a century after the supposed events and appears to rely on Christian sources rather than independent records.

1.2 The Silence of Philo of Alexandria

- Philo (c. 20 BCE – 50 CE), a Jewish historian and philosopher who lived during Jesus' supposed lifetime, wrote extensively about Jewish culture but never mentioned Jesus, his crucifixion, or his followers.

1.3 The Unreliable Nature of Gospel Accounts

- The Gospels were written decades after the events they describe and contain contradictions (e.g., different genealogies of Jesus in Matthew 1:1–17 and Luke 3:23–38).
- The earliest Gospel (Mark) was written around 70 CE, at least 40 years after Jesus' alleged death, and the later Gospels (Matthew, Luke, and John) show signs of theological evolution rather than historical reporting.

2 Miracles as Myth or Misinterpretation

2.1 The Absence of Independent Verification

- No contemporary non-Christian sources corroborate the miracles attributed to Jesus.
- The miraculous events, such as walking on water (Mark 6:45–52) and turning water into wine (John 2:1–11), have no physical evidence or independent eyewitness accounts outside religious texts.

2.2 Scientific and Psychological Explanations for Miracles

- Alleged healings and exorcisms can be explained through the placebo effect, mass hysteria, or psychosomatic conditions.
- Natural phenomena such as weather anomalies or optical illusions may have contributed to the belief in supernatural events.

2.3 Parallels to Other Mythological Figures

- The story of Jesus shares similarities with earlier deities and mythological figures, such as Horus, Mithras, and Dionysus, who also had miraculous births, performed wonders, and rose from the dead.

- Many miracle stories follow established literary patterns seen in mythology rather than historical accounts.

3 The Evolution of Religious Narratives

3.1 The Role of Oral Tradition and Embellishment

- Early Christian beliefs were transmitted orally before being written down, increasing the likelihood of exaggeration and myth-making.
- The process of deification (turning a human figure into a divine being) has historical precedents in other religious traditions.

3.2 The Influence of Pagan and Jewish Traditions

- Many Christian doctrines and miracle stories reflect earlier religious traditions, including elements borrowed from Jewish Messianic expectations and Greco-Roman mythology.

4 A Call for Rational Inquiry

4.1 Promoting Historical Skepticism

- Claims about supernatural beings or events should be held to the same evidentiary standards as any other historical claims.
- The burden of proof lies with those who assert extraordinary claims, as per the principle attributed to Carl Sagan: “Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.”

4.2 Encouraging Secular and Scientific Approaches

- Education systems should emphasize critical thinking and historical methodology rather than faith-based assumptions.
- Scientific inquiry should be the primary means of evaluating claims of miracles and supernatural occurrences.

Conclusion

Given the lack of contemporary evidence, the mythological patterns found in Jesus' story, and the natural explanations for miracles, this declaration asserts that Jesus of Nazareth is best understood as a mythological rather than a historical figure. While religious beliefs play an important role in human culture, they should not be mistaken for historical reality without sufficient evidence.

This declaration calls for a commitment to reason, skepticism, and historical accuracy in evaluating religious claims, ensuring that truth is determined by evidence rather than tradition or faith.

Signed,

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Citations and References

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- Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44 (c. 116 CE).
- Philo of Alexandria, various works (c. 20 BCE – 50 CE).
- Pliny the Younger, *Letters* 10.96 (c. 112 CE).
- Suetonius, *Lives of the Caesars* (c. 121 CE).