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The Criterion of Outcome-Realization and Its Application to Evaluating Reports of the Miracles of Jesus

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Abstract

The miracles of Jesus are among the most central Christian beliefs, widely reflected in the Gospels and affirmed by the Holy Qur'an. The historical demonstration of these miracles affects not only the authenticity of this prophet's mission, but also the validity of the Qur'anic claim. Previous researchers have proposed various criteria for examining the historicity of these miracles. Based on library research and the method of historical analysis, the present study introduces the "Criterion of outcome-realization" for assessing historical reports and employs this criterion to evaluate the reliability of reports about the miracles of Jesus. The findings show that virtually all outcomes that can be expected from the occurrence of public and widespread miracles by Jesus can be observed: "Appeal to the miracles by him and his followers, their impact on eyewitnesses, followers, and opponents, repeated requests and appeals, the emergence of an epithet or title, exaggeration, the formation of rituals, naming practices, seeking blessing, and the reflection of the miracles in that religion's sacred text, in the earliest Christian writings, and also in external (non-Christian) sources." Therefore, it can

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be said that the criterion of outcome-realization confirms the historical occurrence of the miracles of Jesus.

Keywords: Jesus, Miracle, Criterion, Reliability, Outcome, Gospel, Qur'an.

Introduction

One of the characteristics of the life-stories of some prophets is the presence of numerous reports about extraordinary events that occurred by them or in connection with them. In the surviving accounts of the books of the New Testament, and especially in the Gospels, many miracles are narrated concerning Jesus, many of which are reflected in the Holy Qur'an.

In the historical approach, judgment regarding miracles faces two major limitations: First, most historians believe that commenting on the direct and extraordinary intervention of God in the occurrence of an event is outside the realm of history as a discipline, and a historian, acting strictly as a historian, cannot make such judgments. Indeed, if the individual also possesses theological or philosophical expertise, they may render a judgment in that capacity, utilizing the materials and methods of those respective fields (for an overview of arguments for and against miracles, cf. Craig, 1986: 15-43). The second limitation is that, given the lack of sufficient medical data, personal interviews, and relevant evidence regarding historical miracle reports, it is difficult even to judge the possibility or impossibility of providing a naturalistic interpretation for such events.

Therefore, what we call the "Historical examination of miracles," and what a modern historian can perform, is to investigate, using the available materials and methods, at least two issues: First, does the origin of the miracle reports

date back to the lifetime of that historical figure? And second, did that person truly perform extraordinary acts (in the view of the people of that time) that he and his followers presented as divine miracles? (Meier, 1994: 515-517) Consequently, the historical examination of the miracles of Jesus narrated in the New Testament and the Qur'an gains meaning within this framework. In this article, by first assuming the occurrence of tangible miracles in the life of Jesus, their logical consequences are listed. Then, using a descriptive-analytical method and based on the surviving historical accounts, the realization of these consequences regarding the miracles attributed to this prophet is examined. It should be noted that in the historical approach, the significant temporal gap between the Qur'anic revelation and the era of Jesus prevents the use of Qur'anic reports as primary historical documents; however, the results of examining other documents (both the New Testament and other sources) assist in establishing the historical nature of the Qur'anic accounts as well.

1. Background

New Testament scholars have conducted extensive research on the miracles of Jesus. For example, the book "The Miracles of Jesus" by van der Loos (1965 AD) is a classic and comprehensive study on the nature, types, and meaning of the miracles of Jesus in the Gospels. Utilizing historical, linguistic, and theological analyses, van der Loos distinguishes between types of miracles (healing, exorcism, raising the dead, controlling nature, etc.) and explains the role of each in the service of Jesus' message of salvation. He also compares the miracles of Jesus with similar instances in Jewish and

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Hellenistic traditions to demonstrate how Jesus was understood within that historical context.

The book "A Marginal Jew" by John P. Meier is one of the most comprehensive and influential studies on the historical Jesus. In volume two of this work, the author discusses the following criteria for examining the historicity of Jesus' miracles: "The criterion of discontinuity, the criterion of multiple attestations, the criterion of coherence, the criterion of embarrassment, and the criterion of rejection and execution."

It should be noted that examining the realization of outcomes is somewhat close to the criterion of coherence, but differs from it. This is because many outcomes might not be realized even though the miracle reports are coherent with other transmitted accounts. Another difference is that what has so far been used as the criterion of coherence for assessing the authenticity of miracle reports refers to the fact that the various actions and sayings of Jesus cohere and support one another (cf. for example, Meier, 1994: 622). Another angle that the coherence criterion considers is the impact of miracles on attracting numerous followers to Jesus (ibid: 623), which is only one of the outcomes discussed in this paper.

Therefore, it may be said that a complete and comprehensive examination of outcome-realization as a criterion for evaluating the authenticity of miracle reports about Jesus has not yet been carried out.

2. Conceptual Clarification of "Miracle"

Since theologians have aimed to prove the divine nature of the prophets' message through appealing to these extraordinary events, they have considered conditions such as challenge and lack of opposition necessary for

the proper application of the term "Miracle" to such occurrences (Subhani, 1992 AD/1413 AH: 3, 69). However, in this article, a broader meaning of miracle is intended, one that includes any extraordinary event associated with Jesus. Choosing this general meaning serves the broader question: from a historical perspective, can it be claimed that extraordinary events were performed by him?

If these miracles occurred in the presence of groups of people and were sensorially perceptible to them (such as through seeing or hearing), they are referred to as "Perceptible Miracles." Thus, extraordinary events reported only by the prophet himself or by prophets and religious figures of later eras are considered "Non-perceptible Miracles," which fall outside the scope of this study (such as the opening of the heavens and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus after being baptized by John, or the forty-day temptation in the wilderness by Satan: Mark 1:10-12).

The reason for this distinction is that it is, in fact, the perceptible miracles that can serve as a priori evidence used by the prophet or his followers to support the divine origin of his message; therefore, all the outcomes that will be mentioned later are expected to be realized in connection with them.

3. Reports of the Miracles of Jesus: Sources and Perspectives

The Gospels and other early Christian texts from the first centuries CE report a large number of extraordinary events in the life of Jesus. The virgin birth of Jesus from a mother who had not known a man, his being tested in the wilderness by Satan and conversing with him, and so on, are examples of such events.

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However, the perceptible miracles of Jesus that are explicitly treated in the Gospels, not counting duplicate reports, are as follows:

- A) Casting out evil spirits (or demons): 6 cases;
- B) Healing human beings: 17 cases (in 3 of which he raised the dead). The resurrection of Jesus himself is not examined here ...;
- C) Miracles related to non-human nature: 8 cases (stilling the storm; multiplying food and feeding 5,000 people, and in another case 4,000; walking on water; cursing the fig tree; the coin in the fish's mouth; the miraculous catch of fish; turning water into wine) (Aune: 1523-24);
- D) To the above we should also add the foreknowledge/hidden knowledge of Jesus (e.g., Mark 2:8; 14:12-16; John 1:48).

There are numerous other phrases in the Gospels (e.g., Mark 1:32-34; Matthew 8:16; Luke 4:40-41; Mark 1:39; Matthew 4:23-24; Mark 3:10-12; Luke 6:17-19; Mark 6:55-56; Matthew 14:35-36) which, by referring to many miracles of Jesus, indicate the occurrence of miracles beyond the specific cases listed above. There are also other instances alluded to only implicitly, such as the phrasing in Luke 8:2-3 and Mark 16:9. After mentioning women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses, the text states: "Mary Magdalene, who was among those from whom seven demons had been cast out ..."

In some verses, miracles performed by the apostles of Jesus are also mentioned (Luke 9:6; 10:17-20; Mark 3:15; 9:18, 28, 38).

Both Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers have discussed the relationship between the miracles of Jesus and the cultural context of his time (for a narration from Imam al-Riḍā, cf. Kulaynī, n.d.: 1, "Book of Intellect and Ignorance," hadith 20). He began his mission in an environment where

extraordinary acts under the heading of "Miracle" and/or "Magic" were very widespread. In the first century AD, narratives about miracles and supernatural powers were widely current among the Jews of Palestine. The repeated retelling of the miracle-stories of Old Testament prophets such as Moses, Elijah, and Elisha in the synagogues, together with references to exorcism and divination in Qumran and in Mishnaic texts, all testify that traditions related to magic and miracle were alive and active. From this perspective, the intellectual and religious atmosphere of that period was heavily saturated with expectation of, and belief in, the operation of supernatural forces.

Therefore, when Jesus began his mission and performed extraordinary acts, those acts took place within a context of widespread popular belief in miracle and magic, and people interpreted them within that same framework. Among the surviving papyri from the period of the later Roman Empire (3rd–5th centuries AD) there are also numerous papyri dealing with spells and magical rites.

At this time public interest in magic increased significantly especially during the period often referred to as the "Age of Anxiety." Nevertheless, some of these magical texts even date back to the final centuries BCE and the early centuries AD. These pieces of evidence, together with other literary works such as novels and historical writings, indicate that belief in magic and miracles was a common and accepted phenomenon among the people of that era (Meier, 1994: 537-538).

Although the Gospels extensively report the miracles of Jesus, and throughout history belief in his performance of extraordinary acts has been an important element of Christian faith, attempts have been made since the Enlightenment

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period to deny or reinterpret these reports. Beginning in the nineteenth century, some New Testament scholars proposed that the authentic Gospel reports portray a Jesus without miracles (Bousset, 1913: 98). Since then, figures such as Jefferson (1904 AD) and Mitchell (1991 AD), influenced by the intellectual climate of the Enlightenment, produced selected versions of the Gospels in which efforts were made to remove the miracles of Jesus. Bultmann (1926; 1948-53) and his followers (Conzelmann, 1959; Braun, 1969), although they did not deny all miracles of the historical Jesus, assigned these events only a marginal role in their portrayal of him (Meier, 1994: 617-618).

A well-known claim in Western academic circles has been that the miracles in the Gospels do not differ essentially from what was known as magic in the Greco-Roman world, and that Jesus himself in fact employed the same techniques as magicians (Crossan, 1991: 137-167, 303-332; Aune, 1980: 1523-1539). The emergence of such doubts about the miracles of Jesus prompted Western scholars to devote numerous works to examining the Gospel reports concerning his miracles (see the background section).

4. The Criterion of Outcome-Realization and Its Application to Perceptible Miracles

Various positive and negative criteria can be used in the historical investigation of miracle reports. For example, Bultmann and Dibelius addressed this issue through form criticism, citing similarities between the miracle narratives in the Gospels and stories of extraordinary events found in the pagan world and among first-century Jews (Bultmann, 1921: 233-260; Dibelius, 1919: 66-100).

John P. Meier, critiquing this approach, attempted to examine the issue with the help of well-known criteria used for evaluating Gospel reports, such as discontinuity, multiple attestation, coherence, embarrassment, and rejection and execution (Meier, 1994: 616-630).

Another criterion that can be employed in the historical examination of miracles is the extent to which the expected consequences of their occurrence as historical events are realized. This is a two-sided criterion: if a high percentage of the expected consequences of a reported event fail to materialize, one may judge the claim to be false; whereas if a considerable number of those consequences are realized, the probability of the claim's truth increases.

Observing perceptible miracles and believing in an individual's power to perform them, especially miracles that impact people's daily lives, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, resolving problems, providing information about the Unseen, foretelling the future, etc., certainly entails various consequences. One example is the frequent influx of people seeking that individual to solve their problems. Furthermore, if this person claims prophethood and also has both followers and enemies, one would expect other consequences to materialize, such as appealing to these miracles to prove their prophethood.

Of course, it must be noted that the probability of one consequence occurring may differ from another. On the other hand, in some cases, the surviving historical reports may not be sufficient to clearly depict the realization of a given consequence. Therefore, in examining each consequence, one must also consider the probability of its occurrence and the possibility of identifying it

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in historical texts. Below is a list of definitive and probable consequences of miracles:

- A) Appealing to miracles by the wonder-worker and their followers in various periods, for purposes such as inviting others to the faith, dispelling the doubts of followers, or refuting accusations against the wonder-worker;
- B) Impact on eyewitnesses, such as inspiring wonder in them or causing some to embrace faith under the influence of the miracles;
- C) Impact on followers, such as their amazement and discussion of the miracles; the cultivation of firm faith in the miracle-worker and their path; and the formation of intense hostility toward skeptics in the hearts of true believers;
- D) Impact on enemies, including taking a stance against the miracles and attempting to deny or rationalize them;
- E) Frequent requests made to the miracle-worker and visits from near and far to solve problems, heal illnesses, find lost items, etc.; as well as requests made to their spirit after death, pilgrimages to their grave for healing and problem-solving, and seeking blessings from their material remains, such as their grave, clothing, etc.;¹
- F) Emergence of attributes or titles associated with the miracles for the wonder-worker;
- G) Exaggeration regarding the wonder-worker, such as calling them God or the Son of God;

¹. For example, in the biography of Nafisah Khatun, Shablanjī writes that because of the healing obtained from her ablution water, the people of Egypt constantly visited her, to such an extent that she said, "I have been prevented from [performing] my prayers and worship." (Shablanjī, n.d.: 389)

- H) Formation of special rituals connected to the miracles;
- I) Naming a specific day or place in commemoration of those miracles;
- J) Considering objects or locations associated with the miracle as blessed;
- K) Reflection of the miracles in the sacred text of that religion;
- L) Recording of the miracles in the oldest surviving religious and historical texts written by followers, especially those miracles performed in the public eye;
- m) Recording or mentioning of the miracles in the writings of non-believers (external sources).

5. Examination of the Consequences of the Miracles of Jesus

In what follows, based on the points discussed in the previous section, the historical consequences of the occurrence of miracles by Jesus are examined.

5.1. Appeal to Miracles

Appeals to the perceptible miracles of Jesus are reported both by himself and by the apostles. For example, during one journey the apostles were worried because they had only one loaf of bread with them. According to the Gospel accounts, Jesus, referring to his previous miracles, especially the two occasions when he multiplied food, rebuked them and said:

"...When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." "And when the seven loaves were for the four thousand, how many baskets full of pieces did you take up?" They said, "Seven." Then he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?" (Mark 8:19–21)

According to the Book of Acts, after the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and the miracle of their speaking in different languages, Peter

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delivered a relatively lengthy speech in response to the accusation that they were drunk. In that speech he appealed to the miracles of Christ:

"Men of Israel, hear these words: "Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God did through him among you, as you yourselves know ..." (Acts 2:22; see also 2:29–32)

In another event, after Peter healed a paralytic in the name of Jesus, he addressed the people, who had gathered around him in amazement, saying:

"Men of Israel ... And by faith in his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all ..." (Acts 3:12-16)

In this incident Peter and John were arrested. The following day he again spoke of the miracle of the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 4:8–10; see also 10:38–40; 13:32–33; 1 Peter 1:3).

5.2. Impact on Eyewitnesses of the Miracles Such as Amazement or Conversion

The combination of Jesus' miracles and his teachings had a remarkable impact on those who witnessed his miracles. Josephus writes:

"At this time [that is, during the governorship of Pontius Pilate in Judea], Jesus appeared, a wise man. He was a doer of wonderful works and a teacher of people who received the truth with pleasure. And he gained followers both among the Jews and among the Gentiles." (Josephus, 1965: 18.3; 3, 63-64)

The four Gospels also report numerous instances of people being affected by witnessing the miracles of Jesus. For example, in Mark (1:22), the reason for the people's amazement at how Jesus taught in the synagogue at Capernaum is identified as the fact that he taught as one who had authority, not like the teachers of the law.

After reporting Jesus' first miracle in the Capernaum synagogue, the exorcism of an evil spirit from a man, Mark writes: "The people were so amazed that they asked each other, 'What is this?' A new teaching, and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him." (Mark 1:27) In the following verse, he reports the rapid spread of this news throughout the entire region of Galilee (Mark 1:28).

After a few days of traveling to surrounding towns, Jesus returned to Capernaum. Many people who had heard the news gathered at his place of residence. They lowered a paralyzed man through an opening in the roof of the house before Jesus, and he was healed. According to Mark's report, the people were astonished and praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" (Mark 2:1-12)

Another example is the healing of a man who had an evil spirit named Legion. After Jesus drove the spirit out of him, he said to him, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what Jesus had done for him, and all the people were amazed (Mark 5:1-20).

Mark immediately refers to the healing of the daughter of Jairus, one of the synagogue leaders, and the woman who had suffered from hemorrhages for twelve years, and at the end, he again writes of the people's amazement at these miracles of Jesus (Mark 5:21-42).

Jesus returned with his disciples to his hometown and taught in the synagogue on the Sabbath. Many who heard were astonished and said, 'Where did this man get these things?' 'What is this wisdom that has been given to him?' 'What are these remarkable miracles that he is performing?' 'Isn't this the

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carpenter?" 'Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon?' 'Aren't his sisters here with us?' (Mark 6:1-6).

Even the disciples, although they had witnessed numerous miracles from Jesus, became terrified when the storm at sea was calmed at his command, saying to one another, 'Who is this?' Even the wind and the waves obey him! (Mark 4:35-41). Mark also reports the fear of the disciples when they saw Jesus walking on water (Mark 6:49).

The miracles of the apostles, performed through the power of Jesus, had similar effects. According to the Book of Acts, after rising from the grave, Jesus spent forty days with the apostles. He promised them that he would soon baptize them with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:3-5). On the day of Pentecost, with the help of the Holy Spirit, the apostles spoke in various languages. As a result, everyone was bewildered and in doubt, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" But others mocked them, saying, "They are full of new wine!" (Acts 2:2-14)

In another report, after Peter healed a paralytic in the name of Jesus, "All the people were filled with wonder and amazement and ran to them in the porch called Solomon's." (Acts 3:11; see also Acts 4:14-22)

5.3. Impact on Followers

In several narratives, the New Testament mentions that those who were not direct eyewitnesses of a miracle also came to believe or were deeply affected upon hearing the news of that miracle. For instance, after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, "Many of the Jews who had come to visit Mary, and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him." (John 11:45) The following chapter states: "Meanwhile, a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the

dead... and on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and believing in him" (John 12:9-11).

In another report, after conversing with Jesus, the Samaritan woman brought news of him to the people of the city. The text states: "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony." (John 4:39) Later, those who went to see Jesus themselves said, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world." (4:42)

On the day after Jesus multiplied the loaves and fish (John 6:22-26), other people who had heard from afar that he had performed a miracle there sought him out and asked, "Rabbi, when did you get here?" Jesus answered, "You are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill." (John 6:26; for other instances, see Acts 5:12-16; 19:17-20; Matthew 28:7-10; John 20:30-31)

5.4. Impact on Opponents

In the narratives of the New Testament, the miracles of Jesus also had effects on his enemies and opponents. Instead of believing, they often responded with suspicion, accusations, suppression, and attempts to plot his death. This pattern appears both in reactions to the miracles performed by Jesus himself and to those carried out in his name by the apostles. In summary, these cases include:

- Jewish jurists and scribes, in response to Jesus' exorcisms, accused him of acting by the power of Beelzebul and demonic forces (Mark 3:22; Matthew 12:24; Luke 11:15).
- After Jesus healed a man with a withered hand, the Pharisees consulted with the Herodians on how they might destroy him (Mark

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3:1-6). In John 5:16-18, healing on the Sabbath likewise leads to persecution and the accusation that he was "Making himself equal with God."

- The Pharisees and Sadducees demanded further miraculous signs, and Jesus interpreted this demand as evidence of their hardness of heart (Matthew 12:38-42; 16:1-4; Mark 8:11-13).
- In John 10:31-39, despite Jesus' reference to the "Works of the Father," his opponents attempt to stone or arrest him. In John 7:31-32, when murmurs of belief among the people increase, the Pharisees send officers to arrest him.
- After the raising of Lazarus, the Jewish council convenes and decides to put Jesus to death (John 11:47-53). They even consider killing Lazarus himself, because many people were believing on account of him (John 12:10-11).
- In Matthew 27:63, Jesus' opponents, in response to the miracle of his resurrection, call him a "Deceiver." After the resurrection, the chief priests bribe the guards to spread the story that Jesus' body had been stolen-a claim intended to explain the empty tomb (Matthew 28:11-15).
- The healing of a man lame from birth by Peter and John leads to their arrest and threats, although the Jewish council cannot deny the miracle (Acts 4:1-23; 5:17-40).

Beyond these cases, there are also references in extra-New Testament sources from the first and second centuries AD. For example, in "Dialogue with Trypho," Justin Martyr reflects a common accusation that Jesus was a "Magician" and a "Deceiver of the people" (Justin Martyr, 1948: 69). In his

"Apology," Justin also states that opponents attributed Jesus' miracles to magic, whereas Christians understood them as the defeat of demons (Justin Martyr, 1885: 30, 54). Tertullian, in his "Apology," similarly responds to this line of accusation and speaks of the official hostility of authorities (Tertullian, 1885: 21-23). The Greek philosopher Celsus (second century), as reported by Origen in the third century, explicitly describes the miracles of Jesus as "Magical acts learned in Egypt." This indicates that discussions about Jesus' miracles were present in anti-Christian circles, and that the dominant strategy for countering them was to reduce them to sorcery and magic (Origen, 1885: 1.28; 1.38; 2.48).

5.5. Frequent Visits and Requests

The Gospel texts contain numerous reports of the widespread and increasing visits of people to Jesus in order to seek relief from their suffering and illnesses, a process that began immediately after the appearance of his first public miracles; for example, the Gospel of Mark, in narrating his first miracle in the synagogue of Capernaum (the expulsion of an unclean spirit), refers to the amazement of those present and the rapid spread of the news throughout the region of Galilee. According to this account, by the evening of that same day, a large number of sick people and those possessed by evil spirits were brought to him, and many were healed (Mark 1:27-34). This pattern continued through his preaching and healing journeys in other synagogues of Galilee (Mark 1:39).

The account of the healing of the man afflicted with leprosy in this same period is a clear example of the social consequences of these miracles. Despite Jesus' insistence on keeping the matter concealed, the spread of the news by the healed man made it impossible for him to appear publicly in the towns.

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Nevertheless, even residing in the outskirts and uninhabited areas did not prevent crowds from various regions from flocking to him (Mark 1:40-45).

His subsequent return to Capernaum was met with such a reception that there was no empty space left in the place where he was staying, not even near the doorway; to the point that the companions of a paralyzed man were forced to lower him through an opening in the roof into his presence (Mark 2:1-12).

Mark's later reports indicate a remarkable geographical expansion of these visits. After the healing of the man with the withered hand on the Sabbath, which led to a confrontation with the Pharisees, the crowd's focus shifted to the lakeshore. At this stage, throngs of people came not only from Galilee, but also from more distant regions such as Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon, all surging toward him to touch him and be healed (Mark 3:1-10). The intensity of these visits was such that even after he chose the twelve apostles, when he and his disciples were staying in a house, the crowding became so great that they did not even have the opportunity to eat (Mark 3:13-20; for other reports cf. Mark 5:21-42; 6:53-56; 7:24-26; 7:31-37; 8:22-26; 9:17-29; 10:46-52).

From an analytical perspective, this narrative sequence reflects the natural and logical consequence of the occurrence of miracles within a social setting. Once an individual's miraculous power to heal the sick is established, it inevitably generates a wave of repeated and widespread visits from other needy people seeking to benefit from this supernatural power, something that explains the constant crowds surrounding Jesus.

After the ascension of Jesus and the appearance of miracles at the hands of the apostles, especially Peter, the number of believers continually increased, and repeated visits by the people, this time to the apostles, continued:

"They brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed." (Acts 5:15-16)

5.6. Expectation of Miracles by the Disciples

The transfer of healing power and the ability to perform extraordinary acts from Jesus to the apostles is recorded in the Gospels. For example, Mark 3:14-15 states:

"He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons." (See also Mark 6:7)

In the Gospel of Mark (6:13) and especially in the Book of Acts, numerous miracles performed by the apostles are reported (Acts 2:1-4; 2:43; 3:1-7; 5:1-12; 6:8-58; 8:3-14; 9:17-18, 32-42).

It can be said that these reports about the apostles' healing powers and miraculous acts indicate that Jesus was recognized as someone endowed with such abilities, and his followers were expected to manifest similar powers.

5.7. Emergence of Titles or Attributes

In the New Testament, Jesus is known by titles and attributes rooted in his miracles or derived from Jewish messianic expectations. Some titles directly stem from his miraculous deeds, such as:

- Son of David: Used by the sick and blind when seeking healing (Matthew 9:27; 20:30).
- Great Prophet: Uttered by the people after Jesus raised the widow of Nain's son from the dead (Luke 7:16).

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The title "Messiah" (Hebrew: Mashiach) does not originate from his miracles but is a religious, eschatological designation previously used in Jewish tradition for kings and divine saviors. However, in the New Testament context, Jesus' miracles serve as evidence for his messianic identity. For instance, in John 7:31, the people say:

"When the Messiah comes, will he perform more signs than this man has done?"

5.8. Exaggeration

The New Testament does not explicitly declare the divinity of Jesus, but certain textual evidences laid the foundation for later beliefs in his divinity.

Examples include:

- The Prologue of John's Gospel, which describes the *Logos* (Word) as a divine being (John 1:1-14).
- The command to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19).
- Narratives where Jesus forgives sins (Mark 2:5-12).

These texts, while not directly equating Jesus with God, provided the linguistic and conceptual framework for the development of Trinitarian doctrine and later beliefs in his divinity in Christian theology.

The evidence recorded in the Gospels demonstrates that the miracles of Christ were influential in the formation of exaggeration regarding him. For example, in John 20:28, when Thomas, after seeing the resurrected Jesus, said: "My Lord and my God!" In John 5:17-23, also, after the healing on the Sabbath, he refers to his works as the same as the works of the Father, and the people perceive this as a form of equality with God. In Matthew 14:33, after the storm is calmed, the disciples worship him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

Similarly, in John 9:38, the man who was given sight worships Jesus. After the resurrection, his disciples also worship him in Matthew 28:9, 28:17, and Luke 24:52. In Matthew 27:54, the Roman officer, after seeing the earthquake and the signs, says: "Truly this was the Son of God." Therefore, although only Thomas explicitly calls him "God," in other cases, the reaction of the people and the disciples to his miracles, worship, acknowledging him as the Son of God, or accusing him of making himself God, shows that the miracles played a significant role in the formation of the perception of Jesus' divinity among them.

5.9. Formation of Rituals and the Naming of Sunday

In the early Christian community, the belief in the resurrection of Jesus as a central miracle became the foundation for the formation of weekly worship on Sunday. In Acts 20:7, it is written that "On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread," and this is the first biblical reference to the ritual gathering of Christians in memory of the resurrection. In the second century AD, Justin Martyr, in his *First Apology* (Justin Martyr, 1885: 67), states that Christians gather on the "Day of the sun" because "On this same day Jesus Christ, our Savior, rose from the dead." Also, in the "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (Didache)," it is commanded: "On the Lord's Day of the Lord gather yourselves together and break bread and give thanks," (Holmes, 2007, Didache 14:1-3) which shows that the Sunday worship ritual originated directly from the belief in the miraculous resurrection of Christ, and this event became the center of the temporal and liturgical order of the early community.

Jesus' power to cast out impure spirits was also ritually institutionalized in the early Christian tradition. The Gospels report in unison that Jesus cast out

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evil spirits from people with authority (Mark 1:27; Matthew 12:28), and these very miracles inspired the formation of the ritual practice of exorcism in the Church. In the Gospel of Mark 16:17, Jesus promises: "And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons," which is considered an explicit basis for the transfer of this power to his followers. In the writings of the second and third centuries AD, such as those of Tertullian (Tertullian, 1885: 23; idem, 1885b: 30) and Origen (Origen, 1885: VII.4), Christians speak of casting out evil spirits (exorcism) as a sign of the presence of divine power in the Church. Tertullian even refers to a debate with pagans, stating: "If you do not believe, bring forward those who are possessed by demons and the spirits shall be cast out of them at our command, in the name of Christ." (Tertullian, 1885: 23)

5.10. Blessing of Objects, Places, etc.

In the New Testament and the texts of the first centuries AD, several instances of seeking blessings from objects and places associated with the miracles of Jesus are reported, which show that the belief in the grace-bestowing power of miracles expanded in the form of ritualistic and symbolic behaviors. This belief in the sacred effect of contact with objects associated with Jesus is also alluded to in the Gospel itself; for example, in Mark 6:56, it is stated: "And wherever he went, into villages, towns or countryside, they placed the sick in the marketplaces and begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed."

Also, in Acts 19:11-12, it is stated: "God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them." This report may be a reflection of the healing tradition of Jesus seen in the Gospels,

because just like the woman who touched Jesus' garment in Mark 5:27-29 and was healed, here too, touching objects associated with the body of an apostle or a holy person is considered a medium of grace.

Except for the cases mentioned above, in the reports of the first two centuries, there is no evidence of Christians seeking blessings from garments or tools left behind by the person of Jesus or persons associated with his miracles, nor of seeking blessings from places associated with his miracles.

5.11. Reflection of Miracles in Sacred Texts

The accounts of the miracles of Jesus are widely reflected in all four canonical Gospels, as well as in the reconstructed gospels known as Q, M, and L. Of the 666 verses in the Gospel of Mark (up to 16:8), which is the oldest official gospel, 209 verses are directly or indirectly related to the miracles of Jesus. If we do not count the reports related to the passion and death of Jesus, approximately 47% of this gospel is linked to his miracles (Meier, 1994: 619; for a detailed report on the extensive and diverse reflection of the miracles of Jesus in other gospels, see *ibid*: 620-1).

Since, according to the popular scholarly view, the date of writing for this gospel (and also Q) is around 70 AD, there is only a 40-year gap between the time of the events and their recording. Therefore, the accounts in this gospel must be considered as derived from the writings or oral traditions of the first generation of Jesus' followers (Achteimer, 1972: 198-221).

The recording of the miracles of Jesus in various sources is so extensive that, according to some New Testament scholars, if we were to doubt all these reports, no other account regarding the historical Jesus could be believed (Meier, 1994: 630).

5.12. Recording of Miracles in the Earliest Religious and Historical Texts

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In addition to the canonical texts of the New Testament, accounts of the miracles of Jesus are also recorded in several non-canonical (apocryphal) texts belonging to the early centuries of the Common Era. The oldest and most explicit collection of childhood miracle narratives is found in the "Infancy Gospel of Thomas" (mid-second century AD). This text reports miracles such as animating clay birds by blowing on them, reviving a child who had died, and healing his brother James from snakebite (Ehrman and Pleše, 2011: 6-29). The *Protevangelium of James* (mid-second century) focuses primarily on the birth of Christ, but it includes a report of the miracle of healing the withered hand of the midwife (Salome) after she doubted Mary's virginity, which occurred through contact with Jesus during his infancy (ibid: 50-81). The *Gospel of Peter* (late second century), although primarily a narrative of the passion, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, narrates an astonishing scene of the colossal figure of Jesus emerging from the tomb and a talking cross, which is recognized as a representation of the miracle of the resurrection (Elliott, 1993: 150-160).

Egerton Papyrus 2 (early second century), which preserves fragments of an unknown gospel, contains a report similar to the healing miracles (including a dialogue about the healing of a leper and miracle-centered debates) and, in this respect, confirms the existence of independent miracle traditions outside the four canonical gospels (Elliott, 1993: 37-42). Furthermore, scattered reports from the *Gospel of the Hebrews* and texts belonging to the family of the *Gospel of the Nazarenes/Ebionites* have been preserved by the Church Fathers, which point to events such as his post-resurrection appearances and his extraordinary deeds (Ehrman and Pleše, 2011: 177-209).

In addition to these instances, the very early testimony of Quadratus the Apologist (early second century), as quoted by Eusebius, states that some of those whom Jesus had healed or raised from the dead were still alive in his own time (Eusebius, 1926: Book IV, Chapter 3, Section 2).

5.13. Recording of Miracles in External Sources

Beyond the ancient Christian texts, references to Jesus performing extraordinary deeds can also be identified in Jewish texts:

A) Josephus wrote as follows

At this time [i.e., during the rule of Pontius Pilate in Judea] there was Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles (Josephus, 1965: 18, 3; 3, 63-64).

Of course, some scholars have considered the portions of this text that include praise of Jesus to be the interpolations of a Christian into the original text (Meier, 1991: 56-59).

B) The Babylonian Talmud says the following regarding "Yeshu the Nazarene"

That he "Was hanged on the eve of the Passover" because "He practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy." (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 43a, qtd. in Schäfer, 2007: 64) This expression, regardless of its negative value judgment, clearly acknowledges that extraordinary deeds were attributed to him.

Other Jewish and pagan texts have also alluded to the extraordinary acts of Jesus, but they almost all belong to the period after the middle of the second century AD. It is difficult to consider them independent sources; rather, it appears that the authors of these texts referred to the miracles of Jesus based

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on the texts of the Gospels and the claims of Christians of that era (Meier, 1994: 635-6, n. 10).

Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, there are various affirmative and negative criteria for assessing historical reports. In this article, only one of these criteria, the examination of the extent to which outcomes were realized, was utilized. Every historical event should naturally entail certain consequences. Examining the extent to which these natural consequences were realized can be presented as a metric for evaluating the accuracy of those reports.

In this article, first, the conceivable outcomes for a hypothetical person who has performed many miracles publicly were enumerated. In the next step, based on the religious and historical texts of the first centuries CE, the occurrence of these thirteen outcomes regarding the miracles of Jesus was examined. The results obtained indicate that all these outcomes are, more or less, observable.

1. The miracles of Jesus Christ were frequently cited by him and his followers as evidence of his truthfulness;
2. There are numerous reports of the impact of miracles on eyewitnesses, such as the generation of wonder or the act of coming to faith;
3. In the New Testament, several accounts indicate that people who were not direct witnesses to a miracle also came to believe or were influenced upon hearing the news of that miracle;
4. In the narratives of the New Testament, the miracles of Jesus also had impacts on his enemies and opponents. Instead of faith, they turned to suspicion, accusations, suppression, and pursuing plans for his

- execution. In addition to the above, there are also cases in reports outside the New Testament from the first and second centuries AD;
5. The Gospels have collected numerous reports of widespread appeals by the people to Jesus , and to the apostles (after his ascension), for the resolution of their problems;
 6. The reports of the miracles of the apostles indicate that Jesus was recognized as an individual endowed with such abilities, and it was expected of his followers to demonstrate similar abilities;
 7. Jesus became known by titles and attributes, some of which are rooted in his miracles, such as "Son of David." Regarding the title "Messiah," the miracles of that noble prophet played an evidentiary role in the people's belief in his possessing this characteristic;
 8. The formation of exaggeration regarding Jesus was one of the consequences of his miracles, which the evidence of the Gospels demonstrates;
 9. In the early Christian community, the belief in the resurrection of Jesus as a central miracle became the foundation for the formation of weekly worship on Sunday and its naming as the "Lord's Day";
 10. In the New Testament and the texts of the first centuries AD, several instances of seeking blessings from objects associated with the miracles of Jesus are reported, which show that the belief in the grace-bestowing power of miracles expanded in the form of ritualistic and symbolic behaviors;
 11. The accounts of the miracles of Jesus have a wide reflection in all four canonical Gospels, as well as in the reconstructed gospels Q, M,

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and L, which, given the proximity of some of them to the time of the recorded events, are ancient testimonies to their authenticity;

12. Accounts of the miracles of Jesus are also recorded in several non-canonical texts belonging to the first centuries AD, such as the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, the *Protevangelium of James*, the *Gospel of Peter*, and *Egerton Papyrus 2*;

13. References to the performance of extraordinary deeds by Jesus can also be identified in Jewish texts, such as the Babylonian Talmud and the book of Josephus.

It is worth noting that this article has used the "Criterion of Outcome-Realization" to examine the reports of the tangible miracles of Jesus Christ, and it is clear that a comprehensive examination requires attention to other criteria as well. This article adopts a historical approach; within this approach, the only examinable issue is whether the reports of this prophet's miracles date back to his lifetime or were constructed in later periods. The question of whether such events truly occurred is a theological matter that must be examined in its own appropriate place. Of course, accepting the miracles of Jesus with the help of this criterion does not mean accepting all the reports present in the Gospels (even Christian historians do not make such a claim). Another noteworthy point is that the realization of outcomes whose only means of verification is the New Testament itself cannot, by itself, prove the occurrence of miracles; for a good novelist might also carefully consider and include the consequences of an imaginary event within their text.

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