

That there is a witnessing community is sufficient evidence that there was and is a Jesus, in the sense in which "Jesus" is understood in the community's witness.

"Jesus" is understood there to refer to the origin and principle, the noncompressible core, of the witnessing community itself. In this sense, "Jesus" designates the "fact" of which the witnessing community is the "believing reception" (Paul Tillich).

Alternatively, "Jesus" may be said to refer to the "call" to which the witnessing community is the "accepting response"—the accepting response to a call being as inclusive of the call as the believing reception of a fact is inclusive of the fact. An advantage of this way of putting the matter, however, is that something may be experienced *as* a "fact" without the fact's being experienced as existentially significant, whereas to experience something *as* a "call" is *eo ipso* to experience it as having existential significance. To experience it *as* a call is to experience it *as* re-presenting one's own existential possibility, just as to respond to the call acceptingly is to accept it as exactly that.

But either way, the witnessing community, being the believing reception of the fact or the accepting response to the call, is sufficient evidence that there was and is a Jesus in the only sense in which this is important for Christian witness and theology.

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