

BEST REBUTTAL TO MIRACLE DENIAL REFUTED

A miracle is what is not naturally possible. It is a supernatural occurrence. It is paranormal.

This website argues that if miracles happen, they are not to be considered to be signs from God. They should not be religiously significant. Religion contends that God has set up laws of nature. At certain times, he will do things such as make a dead man live that seem to go against these laws. Why the change? Because he wants to use the event to say something religiously significant. In other words he uses miracle as a sign that he exists and as a teaching tool. So it is the message that matters not how the message is conveyed! Even if miracles happen, the love people have for them is misplaced and idolatrous and superstitious.

The best rebuttal to the fact that miracles are not signs and that it insults God to ascribe them to him is in Monsignor Knox's booklet, *Miracles*. Knox agrees that the sceptics are right to refuse to believe in miracles that are just a theatrical performance. He says that it is derogatory to divine dignity to suggest that the Lord does miracles without sufficient reason (page 8). But the fact is that we have to know the reason why God does each miracle he does before we can be sure that miracles are not random. Nobody pretends to know the reason and whatever reasons they can think of they admit are just their opinion or guesses. God's reasons could be incalculably complex and numerous. Nobody can know for when a miracle happens at Lourdes and is rather private we don't know why a miracle done to get open-minded unbelievers converted or at least to consider if the faith is true was not done instead. It is no answer to say that the miracle is done for a good purpose - only God can see for that is too unspecific. So religion just assumes that miracles defend divine dignity and are not showing off. It is just assuming that they are signs which is the same as saying miracles are not signs at all for if you have to assume they are signs you have no evidence that they are because you are assuming. So miracles do imply that God is dissatisfied with nature and regrets the rules he made and tries to change them. In that case he should know better. He doesn't even have the power to keep the change in force forever - for example, when he makes a statue weep it doesn't weep forever. To say God does miracles to attract people say to Jesus Christ is the same as saying that God is a deceiver for he wants us to accept non-signs as signs. You can't just assume that miracles are not random. Often what is random might not look random.

Knox reasons (correctly for a change!) that since God is so strict in expecting us to believe in his gospel and will send us to Hell for it if we do not then there must be no room for reasonable doubt in the Christian faith (page 11). That is to say, the faith must have excellent evidence and only somebody that didn't want to know would reject it.

Look at the faith and if it has doctrines that can only be considered ignorant and harmful then all the miracles in the world cannot make the faith correct.

Knox says that people saying they believe in the gospels despite the miracles they report is unreasonable (page 12). He says what they should be doing is convincing themselves that the evangelists wrote the truth and then think and see if the Church is right to infer that Jesus was the infallible God from their documents. He says the gospels reporting miracles makes them harder to believe and this is how it should be. So he says that accepting the miracles should not come as a result of thinking the gospels credible but of thinking their evidence that Jesus was God is good enough in which case it would mean the miracles were true. This is a bizarre set-up for that amounts to believing that Jesus was God just because the Gospels (according to him) say so. Yet it is the only thing a Christian can say because they have to admit that a document confessing miracles is hard to believe. He is asking us not to see miracles as evidence for Jesus being God which means we have no evidence for him being that. This contradicts page 15 which says Jesus pointed to the miracles he did as evidence for his being the divine Son of God. He quoted Jesus saying that if he had not done great miracles among the Jews they would be without sin for disbelieving in him. If miracles are hard to believe then how could the gospels help us to believe in the more difficult idea that Jesus is the Son of God or worse God himself?

Probably from what Jesus said about not being able to blame people for refusing to believe if he did no miracles, Knox infers that the resurrection had to be more than just Jesus' ghost appearing to people for then Jesus couldn't seriously call us to account for being sceptical. This ignores the fact that the gospels never say that there was any evidence that the body was miraculously removed from the tomb perhaps by rising from the dead. Matthew does not say if the agitated and jumpy soldiers who reported the missing body were not mistaken. Maybe none of the gossellers knew everything that happened. The gospels have a gap that lets us think the body could have been stolen before Jesus' followers came to the tomb. It is no use to say that Jesus did other miracles so he probably did raise his physical body for Jesus himself warned that evil forces could duplicate his miracles except the resurrection one. It is no use saying that Jesus was touchable after his resurrection and ate food for a ghost would naturally have psychic power in order to appear and so would have the psychic power to pretend it ate food and was solid.

Knox says that there is no doubt that we should not need miracles but they only happen because we do need them for we forget God so easily and need them to startle us out of this forgetfulness (page 10). The problem about this is that there are so many miracles reported today that we get desensitised to miracles so they no longer have this effect. A power that was really able to do miracles would not allow this to happen to that extent. So are all miracles fraud?

Miracles, if they are intended to have an effect on us and do, do not bring us to God. They bring us to fear. We heed their message because we are scared and not because we think the message is true even if we do believe the message. The fact that miracles are not good signs shows that those who believe because of miracles are motivated by fear not reason. The fact that there is no sense in letting a miracle tell us what to believe proves this. And why is there no sense? Because when you decide to believe in the miracle and what it says it is clear, you should be able to believe what it says without needing a miracle. A miracle then has no right to try and make up your mind for that is up to you and can only be up to you. So miracles attempt to destroy your freedom therefore miracles are malignant. Knox writes that religions that claim to be sanctioned by miracles are the only ones that are able to be popular among men (page 10). I say that this shows that religion thrives on fear and error as does belief in miraculous signs and revelations from Heaven.

There is no value in fear in a spiritual context. If you are spiritually balanced you don't need to fear God or anything. All you need to do is resolve with God's grace to do your best and purify your heart of sin. Fear is always an indication that you are not wholly committed to God so miracles induce fear so that you are further from God though at first glance you seem nearer. No miracle however great could prove a religion like Roman Catholicism that teaches that a harmless act of masturbation is a serious sin that deserves everlasting torment to be true. Examples of other harsh traditions from the Roman Church could be given and it would take a month to mention them all.

Knox admits that God has no need for signs for nature is full of evidence of his power and love but says he only does miracles because they are needed to attract men to the holy movement of truth, the Roman Catholic Church. He is not sure if God could do a miracle to back up the truths of the Catholic faith when taught by Salvation Army in China but tends to the view that he would do it. What is God to do? He wants them to have some truth but if he does miracles outside the Catholic faith what happens is that the miracle is construed as evidence that the gospel that differs from the Catholic one is the true one. But a really good God would be concerned about getting people to see good and do it rather than getting them to subscribe to religious dogmas. This would suggest that miracles that seem to back up dogmas are false miracles or from the demonic realm. Why would God be so concerned about truth when we are creatures that prefer delusion according to him? Better to focus on inducing virtue and the perception of moral truth instead. Miracles are no good if the creed they defend is absurd so it is crazy to see them as pointers to the truth.

Knox says that it is because we believe in medical science that we believe in the cures at Lourdes for medical science says they are impossible (page 23). He was writing in 1937 when medical science was still largely in its infancy. That means that a lot of what was medical science then has been refuted since. For Knox's statement to be true, it would have to be the case that medical science then was perfect but it was not. There is no doubt that the Lourdes miracles protest against real medical science for it is a false science they defend. The miracles are evil. They imply that since science misleads that we should pay no attention to it. It is true that science makes it impossible to believe in miracles.

Knox says that he does not believe that the healing miracles of the Christian Science Church or the miracles of the Spiritualist imply that their heretical gospel is true for they expect the Lord to do miracles to order and not when he freely sees the need for it (page 30). This implies then that that Catholic miracle-workers have not done miracles by forcing God to do them. Their miracles happen because of the free agency of God. All these miracle workers use the same procedure usually by laying hands on the sick and praying for healing miracles to take place. Knox is being quite sanctimonious and sectarian. Spiritualists and Christian Scientist and indeed no healer ever has claimed that they can make God heal. Knox is just making an excuse for denying that miracles outside Roman Catholicism are signs that Roman Catholicism is not true and some other faith is. Even if his objection were correct, is it honest to reject miracles that show God can be made to do miracles to order as evidence that he can be controlled? If miracles are evidence for religion being true then clearly we have no right to impose our interpretation on them and have no right to ignore miracles that don't fit our interpretation.

For example, in Spiritualism you may have to develop the gift to make the dead appear but the movement believes you are developing a gift from God and that not everybody has this gift. So Knox just randomly picks what miracle signs he wants to follow and smears the doers of miracles that don't fit. Miracles then certainly attack the law of Christ: "Love thy neighbour as thyself". If they do that then Satan is behind them all. What makes it worse is that the Catholic Church believes you don't need to be a great saint to be able to do miracles. You just need to be chosen so how can Knox be so sure that the Catholic miracles were done by extremely sound people?

How does he know that any Catholic healer or miracle worker wasn't forcing God? They could have forced God to make them look holier than they were while pretending they did not want anybody to see their holiness. That way they could look like sincere servants of God who wouldn't dream of ordering him what to do. Many Christian Scientists and Spiritualists

would be devout lovers of God and they all claim their abilities are gifts from God. Knox wants us to think they are liars and the Catholic miracle doers are not. How arbitrary. Miracles bring out the true bigotry that resides in religion.

Near the end of his treatise, Knox states that the Catholics differ from the sceptics of miracle in saying that: "Maybe it is a miracle and maybe it is not" while the sceptics say, "Whatever it is it simply cannot be a miracle" (page 24). He applauds the Catholic stance as openness towards the truth. But in fact the sceptics view is more open to the truth whatever it might be. The sceptic can see blood coming out of nowhere in a communion wafer and deny that it is supernatural and hold that it is some strange natural illusion caused by some unknown energy. He denies it is a miracle for he has no reason to believe that it is a miracle or could be. He is keeping his heart and mind as close to natural law as he can. Plus a bizarre and far-fetched natural explanation even a conspiracy theory is better than assuming the supernatural for the supernatural is too bizarre. That is the fallacy that Christians fall prey to when they say things like it being harder to believe that Jesus swooned on the cross and came round in the tomb causing the resurrection story than that Jesus really did rise. If an event maybe could be a non-miracle then why believe that it could be a miracle? If the event is a miracle and the sceptic is wrong no harm is done because the sceptic cannot be expected to assume miracles without need for that would be harmful in the sense of being irrational.

Miracles are meant to make us see that we cannot have a sense that our life has value without God. But if you were really a good person you would find zest for life in helping yourself and others and not from God. You would be able to do without him. Miracles are undoubtedly evil.

CONCLUSION

To believe in miracles as signs is evil and a thoughtless insult against all who live on this planet and any God out there if there is one. Miracles or supernatural events are hopeless when it comes to searching for support for any dogma or system in them.

Further Reading ~

- A Christian Faith for Today, W Montgomery Watt, Routledge, London, 2002
- Answers to Tough Questions, Josh McDowell and Don Stewart, Scripture Press, Bucks, 1980
- Apparitions, Healings and Weeping Madonnas, Lisa J Schwebel, Paulist Press, New York, 2004
- A Summary of Christian Doctrine, Louis Berkhof, The Banner of Truth Trust, London, 1971
- Catechism of the Catholic Church, Veritas, Dublin, 1995
- Catholicism and Fundamentalism, Karl Keating, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1988
- Enchiridion Symbolorum Et Definitionum, Heinrich Joseph Denzinger, Edited by A Schonmetzer, Barcelona, 1963
- Looking for a Miracle, Joe Nickell, Prometheus Books, New York, 1993
- Miracles, Rev Ronald A Knox, Catholic Truth Society, London, 1937
- Miracles in Dispute, Ernst and Marie-Luise Keller, SCM Press Ltd, London, 1969
- Lourdes, Antonio Bernardo, A. Doucet Publications, Lourdes, 1987
- Medjugorje, David Baldwin, Catholic Truth Society, London, 2002
- Miraculous Divine Healing, Connie W Adams, Guardian of Truth Publications, KY, undated
- New Catholic Encyclopaedia, The Catholic University of America and the McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc, Washington, District of Columbia, 1967
- Raised From the Dead, Father Albert J Hebert SM, TAN, Illinois 1986
- Science and the Paranormal, Edited by George O Abell and Barry Singer, Junction Books, London, 1981
- The Demon-Haunted World, Carl Sagan, Headline, London, 1997
- The Book of Miracles, Stuart Gordon, Headline, London, 1996
- The Case for Faith, Lee Strobel, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2000
- The Encyclopaedia of Unbelief Volume 1, Gordon Stein, Editor, Prometheus Books, New York, 1985
- The Hidden Power, Brian Inglis, Jonathan Cape, London, 1986
- The Sceptical Occultist, Terry White, Century, London, 1994
- The Stigmata and Modern Science, Rev Charles Carty, TAN, Illinois, 1974
- Twenty Questions About Medjugorje, Kevin Orlin Johnson, Ph.D. Pangaeus Press, Dallas, 1999
- Why People Believe Weird Things, Michael Shermer, Freeman, New York, 1997

THE WEB

The Problem of Competing Claims by Richard Carrier
www.infidels.org/library/modern/richard_carrier/indef/4c.html