

## BY DEFAULT, A MIRACLE CLAIM THAT CANNOT BE CROSS-EXAMINED SHOULD BE IGNORED

Faith should mean believing in something in light of the evidence. That means you have to be open to revising and improving what you think the evidence is and what it is saying. Faith in God goes with respect for evidence that he gives. You cannot trust a God who fails to grant you the gift of evidence.

Closemindedness and fundamentalist obscurantism is a sign of playacted faith.

There is more to faith than religion. It is by faith that you trust your car not to fall apart and leave you stranded in the middle of nowhere. It is by faith that you think other cars will not crash into you. It is by faith that you think a tree or something won't fall on you when you go out for a drive. There are hundreds of other faiths, many that you don't realise you have - eg faith that lightning will not blow up your car with you in it. It is not faith but faiths. It is plural.

Faith mostly respects evidence so much that you feel safe to venture out in the wind by faith though you know that you could be making a terrible mistake. Your faith is based on how you were safe before so you assume you will be safe now. But the past is not evidence that you will be safe today. Thus while faith respects evidence, this is not faith for it is distorting evidence. Faith that is not based on evidence is based on what you want it to be so it is not faith. It may however be seen as faith in your own arrogance.

The gospel of John asks you to accept it as evidence, sufficient evidence, that Jesus did miracles to show you he was God's Son and the way and the only truth and the way to spiritual life. But nothing changes the fact that a record of a miracle is not the same or as good as the miracle. The gospel is hearsay. It is obvious that though the gospel could be true that is not the point. It is still the case that it is more likely to be wrong or lying for the simple reason it is easy to write a miracle report than to experience the miracle for real. Anybody can write anything. It is said that this is our view without even looking at the evidence. It can be but does not have to be. Probability on its own and also evidence show that the commonsense thing is not to believe John. Whether that means having no opinion or deciding he is wrong is another question. But belief is not a rational option. While it is true we should not always refuse to believe the improbable, we should not believe in the improbable when it is magical. Improbable natural things can happen. As improbable for example as it is for miracles, even if they can and do happen, to be verified strongly and convincingly when they are not real miracles it can happen. Improbability though seen as a reason for believing in miracles in fact is a reason for being sceptical even if the evidence is there. Don't forget that. It is the core thing. It silences miracle believers - all of them.

David Hume showed us that we shouldn't believe in miracles even if they are true for the evidence to date is flawed under examination.

If you claim a miracle has happened you have to ask and expect people to treat you as misled or mad or a liar until further light comes. No loving God would give you a miracle to put you through that. If you are not asking that you are not a reliable source for miracles and should not be heeded.

A miracle that happens in a nice faith, if there is such a thing, is different from one that happens in a religion that is full of questionable historical claims (eg does it make sense to say that Jesus was raised bodily when even the gospels do not say what exactly happened to the corpse) and spurious doctrines (eg the Bible commands us to believe God commanded the murder of non-virgins so that the Israelite men could enjoy the virgins) and doctrines you need proof for (eg the suggestion that God more than the Romans got Jesus on the cross in order to make him pay for sinners - mere hearsay or evidence is not enough for such a belief proposition). In short if a nice miracle needs excellent evidence then the miracle linked to a dodgy religion needs huge evidence. Naturally Christians do not offer unassailable evidence for their miracle stories being true. Their apologists and theologians are paid good money for writing shocking nonsense.

Miracles are reported in religion but in "non-religion" too. Not everything that is a religion really is. And some teachers call themselves spiritual and do not form religions and still report miracles. Thus miracle reports for religion are cancelled out by ones that are for non-religion or even anti-religion. The miracle of overnight transformations among Born Again Christians who do not link to any denomination or Church speaks more against the authenticity of the Roman Catholic Church or Mormon Church than ten Medjugorjes or Golden Plates coming from the hands of an angel. An inner miracle is always belittled in the face of wonders such as spinning suns and exorcisms and such nonsense.

Christianity makes too many claims that need a high standard of investigation. Books are not enough. Records are not enough. We at least need to talk to the witnesses and nobody has done that. Whatever you think of extraordinary claims

needing extraordinary evidence there is no doubt that cross-examination is necessary and there should be no lending of credence to the stories without it. The faith would ask for less work if the only miracle was the resurrection of Jesus. But it is not. Strangely, Jesus did supposedly raise people from the dead in front of others and no testimonies were gathered. Such a thing happening would be huge legally and socially but nobody seems to have cared!

Each extraordinary claim in Christianity needs to be examined by itself. If one claim is hard to believe and needs hard work to establish it then a second one is as bad. The more claims the more investigative work. Christianity has failed to do that work. It has too many claims to check thus it is an improbable religion.

Witnesses to the miracle claim to verify it. It is never the witnesses that should be the people doing the verifying. Those who check them out do that. Indeed that is the way it should be. And they need to be impartial. A religion checking its own miracle stories is foolish and manipulative.

Hume not only thought that witness testimony is never good enough for a miracle even if it is good but that a miracle was a weak and thin thing to build a religion, he was thinking of Christianity, on.

The supernatural cannot testify to the supernatural any more than a website can diagnose you even though it potentially can. The possible or potential is not enough here.

There is more than just principle contradicting Christian claims. The evidence confutes the religion too.

The records from the early centuries show that few literate and educated people became members of the religion. This is why even now the worship is about reading to the people not having the people read. The New Testament and the gospels got away with their lies all because of public theological disinterest.

The religion tells lies in case anybody doubts that Jesus died on cross.

Why is the only reference to nailing Jesus coming from a vision? John 20:25 alone mentions nailing and even then we are not told for sure Jesus was nailed to the cross. Or how long! What if he was roped on and somebody said, "He's up there a few hours. Nail him"? What if his enemies realising he was not nailed asked for him to be nailed as a desecration? A vision is no ground for holding that Jesus was nailed to the cross. Why did even John not tell us he was nailed when he was going into such other detail about the passion of Jesus?

Was Jesus a miraculous healing rather than a resurrected man? Did he only seem dead and come around by a miracle healing? Did he make the mistake of thinking he died and rose?

Christians make a lot out of Paul writing that 500 saw Jesus after he rose from the dead.

Matthew says Jesus' tomb was guarded against grave robbery by the guards. We know they were not numerous for the story says they had to claim to have slept on duty. Nobody could believe any more than a few men could do that at the one time. The apocryphal tradition is all we have and it says in the Gospel of Nicodemus that the 500 only saw Jesus depart for Heaven and largely comprised the soldiers who attended Jesus's tomb in case the body would be stolen.

That would be the first time we are told who the 500 were but the story is lies for there would not be that many soldiers at the tomb. The gospel lies about soldiers so it could have lied about anything.

The men at Jesus's empty tomb in Matthew 28 tell the women to tell the disciples to go to Galilee to see Jesus. So this is all about a vision and not anybody checking out the tomb or searching to see what happened to the body. And then Jesus appears to tell the women the same message as if they are not trusted by Jesus or as if he does not know the men gave the message already.

John gives the impression Mary Magdalene was alone when the other gospels mention a group of women. That may have been to offset any worry that the women opened the tomb or found it open and took the body themselves.

John's gospel, 20, tells us that it was said at the time Jesus was taken from the tomb.

Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

She is so sure he was stolen that she even tells the angels he was taken away by some "they". Angels! Why does she not ask

them if they took him? You are very sure and must have an idea about who stole him when you act that way. She is so sure that she does not register that she is seeing Jesus when he appears.

She turns around and sees Jesus. At that point she thinks he is the gardener until he names her. Then she turns around AGAIN! and calls him master.

The gospel shows signs of tampering. Mary turns around to face Jesus when a few verses before we read she is facing him already. Either the author forgot or somebody interfered with the text. If so then how can we rely on it? What can be left out to fix the story? What may have been the original?

John 20

11 Now Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb

OMIT 12 and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

13 They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him."

14 At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

15 He asked her, "Woman, why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

END OF OMISSION

16 Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means "Teacher").

17 Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

18 Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.

This has Mary seeing a vision of Jesus in the tomb. The stuff about the body had to go in for a spiritual vision is not enough to base a resurrection claim on. The gospel does not say outright that Jesus rose bodily but prefers to let people think he might have. Why that reticence? Guilt?

No early source claims that the disciples were martyred for their faith in the resurrection of Jesus. Acts 12 just mentions the murder of James son of Zebedee in passing. It is telling that if James died for Jesus that we get no detail. The truth is he was killed only to please his Jewish enemies and it was not about Jesus as such.

The risen Jesus experience often had its evidence disputed even by Christians!

Paul alone wrote an eyewitness account of Jesus's appearance that is so vague it is useless.

In the Clementine Homilies 17, we have Peter accusing Paul of having only one brief vision that was no good on any level. "If, then, our Jesus appeared to you in a vision, made Himself known to you, and spoke to you, it was as one who is enraged with an adversary; and this is the reason why it was through visions and dreams, or through revelations that were from without, that He spoke to you. But can any one be rendered fit for instruction through apparitions? And if you will say, 'It is possible,' then I ask, 'Why did our teacher abide and discourse a whole year to those who were awake?' And how are we to believe your word, when you tell us that He appeared to you? And how did He appear to you, when you entertain opinions contrary to His teaching? But if you were seen and taught by Him, and became His apostle for a single hour, proclaim His utterances, interpret His sayings, love His apostles, contend not with me who companied with Him. For in direct opposition to me, who am a firm rock, the foundation of the Church, you now stand. If you were not opposed to me, you would not accuse me, and revile the truth proclaimed by me, in order that I may not be believed when I state what I myself have heard with my own ears from the Lord, as if I were evidently a person that was condemned and in bad repute.

But if you say that I am condemned, you bring an accusation against God, who revealed the Christ to me, and you inveigh against Him who pronounced me blessed on account of the revelation. But if, indeed, you really wish to work in the cause of truth, learn first of all from us what we have learned from Him, and, becoming a disciple of the truth, become a fellow-worker with us. When Simon heard this, he said: Far be it from me to become his or your disciple. For I am not ignorant of what I ought to know; but the inquiries which I made as a learner were made that I may see if you can prove that actual sight is more distinct than apparition. But you spoke according to your own pleasure; you did not prove. And now, tomorrow I shall come to your opinions in regard to God, whom you affirmed to be the framer of the world; and in my discussion with you, I shall show that he is not the highest, nor good, and that your teacher made the same statements as I now do; and I shall prove that you have not understood him. On saying this he went away, not wishing to listen to what might be said to the propositions which he had laid down.

Don't go too far with the word proof. Good evidence even if not perfect can be called proof in a loose sense. If I have the burden of proof that is to say and demand in the name of truth and fairness that I prove or reasonably show that what I say is right. It is not up to others to prove or show I am wrong.

If people tell you that their cats rise from the dead you have no need to even check. Its normal for cats to stay dead. So the job of showing Jesus rose is up to EACH INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN AS AN INDIVIDUAL!

You may have the burden of proof for a miracle claim you make yes. That's one burden. If a miracle is right there then it will be possible to verify it reasonably well in principle even if not in practice. To say a holy book records real miracles demands another burden of proof. A miracle happening now in principle can be shown true. A miracle recorded in a book in principle can never be shown true. It's a double burden. It's an impossible burden of proof then.

Hearsay is interesting. It amounts to saying what cannot be shown true or false. It cannot be cross-examined. Hearsay in court is not admissible and is seen as useless evidence posing as something useful and informative. What Christians call evidence or proof for Jesus being saviour, spiritually special and risen is hearsay and gossip. Its gossip and has a malicious side for what it implies about Jews and others who did not believe.

The doctrine of Jesus having risen from the dead assaults our rights and makes Christians irresponsible with the burden of proof/evidence. If we don't ask for miraculous or super-evidence but merely cross-examination they cannot even give us that.

