

## IS EVERYTHING A MIRACLE?

A miracle is a supernatural event - that is it has no natural cause or no possible natural cause. For example, a statue coming to life would be a miracle. The notion that love is a miracle, the tree in the garden is a miracle, is spreading the definition of miracle so thin that it can mean anything.

Too many miracles would make the extraordinary ordinary. The more miracles happen the more the extraordinary ceases to exist and becomes ordinary. It would make the paranormal appearance of a ghost as remarkable as a man being created by a snap of the divine fingers. One miracle would be as good as another. Miracles would cease to be signs from God or teaching mediums.

A miracle usually refers to an event that happens and then it is over. For example, a cancer patient whose cancer vanishes in a moment of time had a very quick miracle. But there can be perpetual miracles too. For example, if a cross appeared in the sun and was permanent that would be a perpetual miracle. God does not do it in an instant of time but keeps it going. It is a maintained miracle. A maintained miracle is really a collection of miracles. God has to miraculously keep the miracle going on and every instant he does so is a miracle on its own.

The traditional definition is that the miracle is what is not naturally possible. It is done by the supernatural which has power over nature. This doctrine implies that if God did the miracle then he had to do it to bring about an effect such as conversions or whatever that would not happen if he directed nature in its natural course. It implies he is not very adept at running the universe that is supposedly subject to his infinite power.

A popular modern definition is that anything natural that you think is speaking to your heart and giving you inspiration is a miracle. This view can lead to anything and everything being understood as a miracle.

Theoretically, as there should be nothing at all but the universe still exists, this is seen as the miracle of creation by God. But, strictly speaking, it is not then really one miracle. The creation of a miniscule grain of dirt is as miraculous as the creation of the solar system. What you really have is an infinitesimal number of miracles all happening at once.

Science shows that antibiotics work. Or does it? What if they are useless and it is a perpetual miracle at work? That would explain why people get better. Researchers all agree that to view God as constantly or perpetually suspending natural law makes science useless and futile and blasphemous. Even the suggestion that God could be perpetually suspending natural law or alternatively that what looks like a natural cause in fact is not (eg if antibiotics do not affect the immune system and the response of the immune system is not down to them but a miracle) ruins science. Science does not make room for any doubt when something is verified. And there is enough to bring doubt in if anywhere without miracles and the supernatural adding to it.

Believers in miracles say that God has made a universe that is governed by natural causes. Sometimes he may suspend the natural law of cause and effect to do miracles but they are exceptions to the rule we are told. If the universe has no natural causes then it is not a natural universe at all. If religion insisted upon the universe being purely supernatural it would collapse like a house of cards for such a view would leave the educated as well as the sheep aghast and psychiatrists would be very worried about religion.

They argue that the universe seems to operate naturally therefore it does. That is not logical - if Ann seems to have ate the cookies that does not mean that she did. What if the supernatural causes were simulating nature? You might think that the seed in your flowerpot is growing naturally but what if it is growing supernaturally in such a way that it looks natural? You never have any reason to distinguish between a natural or supernatural event.

Believers should say there is no natural law and it is all supernatural.

Religious people sometimes say that God does not directly act to make nature function. They say he holds all things in being but leaves them the freedom to go their own way. So they say that when an earthquake happens, God is indirectly responsible for he creates all things. He is remotely responsible for he set up the force and laws that lead to earthquakes. But directly speaking, it is not his doing or his fault. If he worked a miracle to cause the earthquake then he would be directly responsible.

But if all things depend on God for their continued existence and if he is all-powerful, then when things appear to go their own way they actually do not. There is no such thing as God being remotely responsible for evil and suffering. A miracle is still a miracle even if there is no sign of a miraculous intervention. For example, if God sustains my cheese for me and there should be nothing then every moment that cheese exists takes a miracle. And we tell ourselves that it is the same cheese. Is

it? Nobody should be better at making replicas than God - replicas that cannot be detected from the original.

The miracle of making a grain of sand is not just one miracle. It is a perpetual miracle. God has to keep the grain of sand in existence. So it is a continuous series of miracles.

If the existence of anything is a miracle, theoretically all things are miracles. In fact, the less significant or needless something is the bigger the miracle it is. It is strange because it is not needed. Some say that man as God's best creation is miraculous because he is so wonderful. In terms of design man is amazing. But in terms of merely existing he is not that amazing.

The miracle as a supernatural event is more important than a miracle being anything else. Without the supernatural there would be no miracle. And if it took supernatural power to make us, then without the supernatural there would be no us either to be able to believe in miracles or be inspired when they take place. We like supernatural beliefs for they insinuate that something perhaps reasonably benevolent or something that can be turned benevolent is ultimately in charge.

But what about miracles as in awe-inspiring and devotion-inspiring events?

Attempts have been made to call any event that causes faith a miracle. But surely it's not the event that does that but how we choose to see it? This is true of miracles when understood as amazing events. But it is more true of mundane events seen as faith-inspiring. Surely an ability to be dazzled by and awed by the ordinary would make a stronger faith than an occasional miracle?

If any event can be seen as a miracle, then why not see all events as miracles? That would be logical. It wouldn't be very sincere or rational to say that the coincidence that helped you avoid crashing your car is not a miracle but the one where you met your one true love is.

The most logical re-definition goes, "Every event is a miracle. We should see every event as faith-inspiring."

The definition means that a person dying and staying dead is as much of a miracle as somebody rising from the dead. It is clear that there is something very wrong with that view. Religion hates it for it gives us a God who does not need to change the regular flow of nature and make exceptions to it to do a miracle. No rational God will set up nature to work a certain way and then make exceptions without good reason. The exception is supposed to prove the rule!

What is the point of God making dead people stay dead and raising one person when this resurrection has the same faith significance for us as a dog belching? The critics of miracle belief object to miracles on the grounds that they are random and arbitrary. The new definition plays into the hands of the critics.

Belief in miracles in the traditional sense is based on the testimonies of many that such events have occurred. People base religions on these claims. They suppose that the miracles are done by God to help us see what is God's truth and by implication what is not. They point to the true religion. But that would mean they primarily support the witnesses or religious view of miracles which would be the traditional one that miracles are exceptions. So God ends up being seen more in the wonder than in the mundane and everyday.

The attempt to see everything as a miracle and to claim that a death is as miraculous and remarkable as a resurrection is actually attacked by the notion that miracles convey truth. The notion states that miracles reject this interpretation.

If the new understanding of miracle which is that all things are supernatural and therefore miracles is correct, why are there so many religions that do not emphasise it? Why are there so many religions that do not even accept it and even oppose it? Surely God as master of the universe could have prevented those religions from thriving and stewing the world in their errors concerning miracles?

If we are to see all events as miracles, it follows that miracles DO NOT defend any particular religion. They invite us to see that there is something loving making all things. This may be put as, "People want to be part of something bigger". That is all. They really imply we should forget about religion and have this vague faith instead. Nothing else matters. Religion really only gets in the way with all its rules and window dressing.

The atheist often holds that it is better for us to create love than to believe love makes all things. This view is inaccurate. We should hold not that it is better as if the other option is good too though not as good. We should hold that it is the only right and sensible and decent option. If you really create love you will not need to believe that God-love made all things.

It would not be logical for a Mormon to say, "The God of the orthodox Christians is a lie. He is not real. I know that my god who is a man with magical powers is the only real God for I have experienced responses to prayer. Everything is a

miracle from him and inspires my faith." Its not logical for the Catholic to say, "The God of the Mormons is a lie. He is not real. I know that my God is the only real God for I have experienced responses to prayer.

Everything is a miracle from him and inspires my faith." The only agreement they have is that they sense that there is something loving behind all things. That is what may be proved. It is not enough to base a religion on. In fact it would imply we should abandon religion and just keep the core of religion.

The claim that we must see all things as miracles denies our right to see things as natural or possibly natural. Even believers do not see God at work in everything - though they may say they do! They would not curse the rain if they did! The notion accuses unbelievers of being blind or just like the nuts who deny that they believe that they are alive. And it accuses them of being evil people who oppose the excellence of faith. (Faith is excellent but it does not follow that religious faith is necessarily excellent!). The notion violates the fundamental rule, we must never accuse anybody of blindness or badness on the basis of religious faith. People matter. Religion and faith are nothing compared to people.

The advantage of the new definition is that it takes away the inclination to run after wonder-workers and magic relics and apparitions of the Virgin Mary. If you see the sunset as a miracle and a source of wonder and a sign of the divine you will not need to look for a plane ticket to Medjugorje. You will not be the prey of religious opportunists such as many USA Televangelists and Joseph Smith and the visionaries of Medjugorje.

Every meal becomes a miracle. You will not need the Catholic Mass. It will not be important or essential.

The new definition - though it is superstition itself - is nothing compared to the superstitions it undermines and rejects. Sadly, it is only the evil traditional view of miracles that is left standing. Its definition is the only usable definition. If it is wrong then miracles are rubbish.

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