

## miracles - wreck any attempt at finding the supernatural explanation

Categorical Imperative by Ray Hyman: "Do not try to explain something until you are sure there is something to be explained." Thus it is a waste of time considering any alleged explanation for a miracle.

A miracle is an event that is not naturally possible. That does not mean it is necessarily impossible. There could be a power greater than nature such as a god that can do it. A miracle is supernatural. Its really magic and superstition under a different name. If a power can instantly remove an incurable terminal disease, then it can guarantee bad luck for those who walk under ladders.

If something happens that seems to be magical and you cannot explain how it is natural, saying it is magical is the weakest explanation. Preferring a natural explanation even if you don't know what it is and settling for saying it is natural is necessary. When you take a fantastic explanation you are going too far. And if you see a ghost somewhere you will see ones everywhere. Or you should! You can never prove that a magical explanation or a supernatural one is the simplest. What if some spirit doing the miracle has to do tons of things before it is able to do the miracle? Your explanation could be that the spirit lives a billion universes away and so you need to explain how it knows where and when to do the miracle. Then you have to explain how it can send the power. Perhaps it has to kill or torment other spirits with supernatural ability to trigger its own powers? It is never enough then to say something is supernatural and that is all there is to it. In the same way, it would never be enough to say aliens visit earth and that is all there is to it for that raises questions about evidence and witnesses and how they can get here and hover unseen above the skies. The questions become endless.

Suppose a miracle happens. All you may be able to show is that it is unexplainable and that the testimony to this is reliable. You cannot prove or give adequate evidence that God did it. All you get is an extraordinary fact. You can only guess what did it. What if its an artificial intelligence that cannot be seen or heard just like God cannot be seen or heard? In fact, you would be entitled to make the best guess and that would be that its some kind of artificial intelligence. It is false that miracles would show us the existence of God or that Jesus is his supernatural messenger.

Once you admit that a miracle has a supernatural explanation you shouldn't go any further than that. And that is simply because you can't. The supernatural cannot be understood. Religion says that a miracle can seem by all accounts to be a healing by some benevolent power. But it does not "seem" at all. A blind force could do it too. Maybe the devil had to heal for the sake of making a complicated plan work. The religion is only seeing what it wants to see. Its about that and not the truth.

Religion does not want you to regard a miracle merely as supernatural but also as act of God done to show that it speaks his truth and guards his message. It is not content with getting you to accept a miracle as supernatural but it seeks to impose a certain kind of belief in the authority of a supernatural religion on you. Its not enough to accept that somebody was supernaturally healed. You are meant to see it as pointing to a religion that claims its ideas were revealed to it supernaturally by God.

Christianity wouldn't want you to think that the resurrection of Jesus was supernatural without you thinking it showed he was a supernatural son of a supernatural God who rose to supernaturally save us. Yet even if the resurrection was supernatural that doesn't prove that the resurrection meant all those other things. There are millions of possibilities. If a man comes back from the dead, there are many natural possibilities about how this might have happened. For example, perhaps the man was not declared dead by a competent doctor. Perhaps he revived after being declared dead due to some medicine he had. There could be a lot of possibilities ranging from probable to improbable. But if you bring in the supernatural then you are left with infinitely more possibilities. Then there could be billions of explanations as to how he came back. Perhaps a fairy tricked the machinery or the doctor. Perhaps an alien made the doctor imagine he was declaring him dead and so on. With the natural, there is a limit to what you can say by way of explanation. But not so with the supernatural. If you know its supernatural, you don't know the supernatural mechanics of how it came about. It is better not to use it to try to work them out but to simply stick with saying it happened if it happened. It is more honest.

Occam's Razor says you must choose the simplest explanation. Suppose something demands a supernatural explanation. Suppose the supernatural cause could be magic or God or a fairy or some psychic force. Choose the least supernatural one. I'd choose the psychic force. It is the simplest. The simplest explanation of all is that miracles do not happen except in so far as we get miraculous hallucinations.

If it is more supernatural for a man to rise from the dead and less supernatural for this resurrection to be an illusion by a witch then believe the latter if it is the least supernatural.

If you accept the possibility of miracles, and that a natural explanation is to be preferred, then what if it cannot be preferred? Choose the minimal miracle you need to explain. For example, suppose you see a statue of Jesus waving its hand at you. The minimal miracle is that you had a vision of it moving but it did not really move. The maximal miracle would be that it came to life and moved. So you decide it was a vision. Deciding it came to life would be going too far. It would be further than necessary. If you prefer a natural explanation then you must prefer a minimal miracle explanation if the natural explanation will not do.

If you can choose the most supernatural explanation for a miracle, then why stop there with miracles? Why not say that if you find snail marks on your carpet though you feel no snails can get into the house that it was a miracle and not a snail at all? By the way, Jesus Christ was shown to be a fraud simply by the big number of miracles attributed to him. Religion just uses miracles not as a reason for holding to what it believes but as an excuse. It forces an explanation on the miracle to make it fit its outlook. Its trickery with logic.

Miracles are a menace and those who promote them are up to mischief whether they know it or not. Though we should speak to and challenge miracle believers in a respectful way, it is to win them over. We must not think, "They have a supernatural worldview but we must respect them because they are more than their worldview." Actually they are not. Your worldview is what you are and what you are about. It is because we respect them we must undermine their worldview and help them change it.

Science no matter how certain it is about something has to remain open as much as it can to theories and suggestions that seem unlikely to be correct. Science does this for it is confident that its tests work. You don't fear bad rival theories if your theory is true. The openness then to God is not a sign that science has doubts about its atheism. It is a sign that science has no doubts that it is right. It shows an openness to God that is critical.

Calling God, God himself is a miracle, the soul or anything a miracle is just saying I will not keep trying to explain it. It is lazy and stops investigation.

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