

THE MENACE OF MIRACLES

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.

In brief,

1 Belief in the supernatural makes it possible for a person to be misled by some charlatan. Is belief worth the risk? No. Even believers in miracles dismiss most reports as unreliable. The Catholic Church for example accepts only a handful out of thousands of apparitions as authentic and even then it can withdraw that acceptance and change its mind.

2 The reason people want to believe in miracles is they want proof that some power can intervene when the time is right and stop life getting too bad or the world from getting too bad. The mature approach is to deal with this fear and not be telling yourself that magic is going to help. You don't want to end up with a new fear - that the miracles might be nonsense and lies. Nor do you want using faith as an opiate. You need to be realistic about what can happen and consider what the worst outcome could be and learn to cope with that. Faith in miracles does not help - it may make you feel better but it is not about your feelings but about what you are going to do to help the world.

People want to believe in the supernatural for it is comforting to think there are powers that can overcome evil and suffering. This is actually appalling because instead of looking for beliefs to comfort ourselves with we should go out and comfort people. "To comfort rather than be comforted." That way we will start to feel better. Human nature prefers to feel good without having to rely on dwelling on it. Dwelling on it takes the fun out of it.

Encouraging belief in miracles then is a terrible thing. That miracle claims are intrinsically irresponsible matters as much whether or not a miracle really happened. Consider people not just the evidence allegedly in favour of miracles. If the evidence says a miracle happened then we may believe, but we cannot be happy about it.

3 Supernatural claims cry out for investigation. This can be very expensive. For example, if I saw a miracle I would say nothing as the money is better spent on the hospitals for example. True scepticism is inquiry - in other words, a supernatural claim has been made lets check it out.

4 What if a convincing miracle asks us to do something that could be very serious if we do it and it is the wrong thing to do? If somebody speaks of a miracle happening that will prove that antibiotics will stop working from next Sunday when what? What if the miracle happens or the evidence is good for it (the evidence can be good for a fake miracle). Nobody wants to believe we should heed the miracle. We know we should listen to science which will say ignore the miracle.

5 Supernatural beliefs make you biased and immune to logic. For example, if you believe God turned bread into real flesh and the CCTV shows trickery you can say the Devil did something to the CCTV.

6 Supernatural beliefs always come down to accepting testimony rather than hard evidence.

You really need to see and test supernatural claims yourself - anybody doing it for you is no good.

The believer cannot be expected to believe in say, the miracle of Jesus being dead three days and rising again, unless he is given the training and the tools with which to test the dead and living body himself. Is that unreasonable? Not a bit. It is difficult but not unreasonable. There has to be claims so big that they demand that treatment. If a miracle is not such a claim then nothing is. To deny that is bigoted and obstinate and superstitious.

7 If supernatural claims are fraudulent or based on error, then we are leading people into error by promoting them. If we don't have good enough evidence for their authenticity we are putting others at risk - intentionally. You are not an island so don't say you can protect others by keeping your faith private - your faith in miracles will lead others astray if this faith is misplaced for it will affect how you relate to others.

8 Believers in the supernatural often turn very vicious if their belief is contradicted. They slander the investigators who find out the truth. Muslims for example can persecute ex-Muslims.

9 We have to presume that if something reportedly supernatural is happening that what is really happening is down to unknown laws of nature or some super-science. That means we end up violating Occam's Razor. There will be bad habits galore in the person who violates and rejects the Razor.

10 Nobody dies because they didn't believe in the supernatural. We hear of people being sacrificed in black magic rites or contracting AIDS because a supernatural God says condoms are a sin or dying because they trusted alternative medicine and the list is endless.

11 The supernatural is about powers greater than us. This is a dangerous idea for it suggests the supernatural comes first. Evangelical Christians for example want the world to end in nuclear war so that Jesus will come back.

12 Supernatural believers are fond of conspiracy theories. There have been cases where the big bad doctors who find a visionary of the Virgin Mary is faking are considered dishonest by believers. The believers just want to back up the visionary's claims even though the price is the good reputation of the doctors. They attack the persons not the problems with the believability of the apparitions.

So if there is a conspiracy who should we believe? The side that says belief in the supernatural cannot be justified. When there is a choice, assume the natural explanation. You don't know what the explanation is. Its enough to decide that its natural.

13 Once you believe in the supernatural, you have no right to say that such and such a supernatural idea is true and another is false. For example, the medium reports messages from your dead loved one must be believed. Imagine the amount of fraud and trouble that will result from all that.

14 Once a supernatural claim is made, it is inevitable that the gossips will concoct a conspiracy theory to explain it naturally or they will say that the person making the claim admitted to somebody that he was lying. It appears that some people thought that Bernadette of Lourdes was only having visions of Mary because she had been taking alcohol in the belief that it helped her asthma. So the alleged apparitions were merely a reaction to drink. She was very weak and its possible that drink could have made her convince herself that she was experiencing apparitions.

What the believers do with the gossips is they try to turn their claims into support for the authenticity of the visions. They argue for example that if nobody was objecting to the authenticity of the vision that it would be very suspicious looking. Errors made by the apparition are put down to the visionary misunderstanding the vision or remembering something incorrectly. Thus the errors become proof that the visionary was sincere! All these arguments are just rationalisation. They are attempts to explain away the case against the apparition. They are cosmetic.

15 Religion and miracles are used to stop people from adopting an attitude of cheerful despair. The atheist for example can be told that she has only days to live. She knows her death is inevitable. So what she does is try to get the best out of every day she has left. Our feelings protect us from the harsh reality. If people think God and religion do it, they need to be reminded that it is how they themselves emotionally respond to them that is doing it. Belief in God and in religion is useless. It only puts the person under pressure to try and depend on them rather than on oneself.

16 Miracles are said to confirm the beliefs say of the Catholic Church. They are thought to be God's way of saying, "This religion is true. I do this miracle to show that it has my approval". But it is only going to confirm the faith of those who already believe. It is not going to convert an unbeliever. Now if you believe then you don't need the confirmation of miracles. Thus the miracle cannot confirm. Thus it is really good for nothing. The person who believes that God does miracles randomly is superstitious. Believers say that. But they are doing it too. They do believe in an arbitrary God and therefore are disciples of superstition.

17 Miracles are used by bad people as an excuse to defend bad doctrines. Good doctrines such as how great it is to help a sick baby do not need miracles to defend them. Suppose the power of choice exists and you are given a choice between being tortured to death and dying your hair green. You chose to dye your hair green. You chose it freely. You were forced into making the choice but it was still a choice because you could have chosen to be tortured to death. Its a lie to say you had no choice. Thus God has no right to decline to force you to accept eternal salvation in Heaven so that nobody goes to Hell for being forced and choosing Heaven are compatible. The Catholic teachings that we are born in original sin and are obligated to obey the pope by baptism into the Church and to become saints who have a life of misery and who will go to Hell forever if we die in unrepented serious sin say something about the believer. And it is this. The believer wants these horrible teachings to be true deep down even if he feels revulsion for them. The atheist does not acquiesce to evil to that degree. Miracles in Christianity no matter what laudable purpose they seem to have encourage these evil ideas.

Conclusion

Miracles are a menace and those who promote them are up to mischief whether they know it or not.

Further Reading ~

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