

THE MIRACLE OPENS UP A PANDORA'S BOX

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

A miracle claim is made. Is it a lie? Is it a misperceived event? Is it a faulty memory of an event? Is it a misperception caused by natural forces that science and nothing else can detect? Is it a supernatural misperception? Is it a psychic one? The odds are stacked against the account being right. The reality is that a miracle is improbable. It is one possibility against several.

The main cause of religious fervour in the world is peoples' fascination with miracles. The sense of wonder they get from them is addictive. This page hopes to do something about that disorder. Miracles are events that seem to be against nature or the way natural law usually runs. In other words, they cannot be explained by nature. Examples are the Blessed Virgin Mary appearing to children, the unexplained cure of incurable illness, blood coming out of nowhere on Catholic communion wafers, the sun spinning at Fatima in Portugal in 1917 and most importantly Jesus Christ coming back to life after being dead nearly three days. It is thought that only God can do these things.

Religion uses miracles as evidence for the truth of its claims. If a miracle happens in a religion it is said that it is intended by God to indicate that the religion is his one true religion. Others argue that God can do a miracle in any religion for the miracle is about confirming the truths in that religion which is not the same thing as saying the religion is the only true religion. It could be argued that the apparition of Our Lady of Lourdes only verifies the Catholic devotion to Mary and the rosary and the sinlessness of Mary but not the Catholic faith as a whole. This view is unpopular for it leads to confusion among believers. It would make more sense for God to use miracles to promote the religion that teaches the truth faithfully and without error rather than specific doctrines as such.

Miracles and seeking them puts a person at risk of being fooled by religious charlatans. If there are no true miracles or believable miracles then all miracle believers have been fooled.

Suppose Jesus rose from the dead and there is evidence. Jesus makes it easier to believe a man who claims to have been seen returning to life from the grave and who claims that the New Testament teaches many satanic doctrines. Why? Because if there is evidence that Jesus came back from the dead it, it is evidence that this heretic may be a true prophet who rose to prove his mission.

By rising from the dead, Jesus made it easier to destroy his own work and for false religions to be created. The fact is that we don't have a heretic prophet like this man does not mean anything for we could have had one and there are many who are in the situation in which they can pull off a hoax like that if they would just think of it.

Anybody could fake a few books that they perhaps said they transcribed from an angel in visions that speak of another dying and resurrecting saviour who condemns Jesus as a fake and seem credible for the same reasons that religious nuts say they find the gospels credible. All they need then is a few sworn affidavits from two or three others who are generally trusted but who have a crafty side to say the angelic visitations occurred. It isn't overly hard to authenticate false miracles for we authenticate loads of non-miracle things that are not true. But if you believe in a miracle be it a real miracle or not the way is opened up to getting fooled.

Joseph Smith, the three visionaries at Fatima in 1917 and Daniel Dunglas Home reported miracles just as impressive, if not more, as the resurrection of Christ. Whatever Jesus rose for it was not to make the truth of God impregnable. Truth is put under siege by miraculous claims and yet Jesus and logic say truth comes first and that anything that attacks it even a bit is bad.

When miracles are so needless and therefore ridiculous and ridiculous in their own right they make us less sure that a person found guilty of murder really did it for a demon or something could have pretended to be him and did it and that is bad for the surer you are of something so serious the better. The less miracles people believe in the better and why we must try to find alternative explanations remembering that if there is any doubt that a supernatural event has happened we must not believe in it for if we start preferring supernatural explanations when we can do without them we will have to believe anything at all to be consistent. Human testimony alone can verify a miracle. If ten people see a miracle and one liar says they are frauds then we can't believe in the miracle even if he is a liar for we don't know if he is and God wasted his time.

Using miracles as pointers to the true gospel results only in chaos for competing miracle claims can and do cancel each other out. Anybody could fake a few books that they perhaps said they transcribed from an angel in visions that speak of another dying and resurrecting saviour who condemns Jesus as a fake and seem credible for the same reasons that religious

nuts say they find the gospels credible. All they need then is a few sworn affidavits from two or three others who are generally trusted but who have a crafty side to say the angelic visitations occurred. It isn't overly hard to authenticate false miracles for we authenticate loads of things that are not true. Those who say miracles authenticate their religion are simply telling you to trust them and nobody else which is thoroughly nasty.

We know that miracles are bad news if they do happen. We know that they are even worse if they are hoaxes or if mistakes have been made and they are not real. We should not let people use them scare us into belief in religion or listen if they say that their religion is true for miracles have happened that point to it being true.

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
- Philosophy of Religion for A Level, Anne Jordan, Neil Lockyer and Edwin Tate, Nelson Throne Ltd, Cheltenham, 2004
- 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