

## THERE IS NEVER AT LEAST ONE CONCLUSIVE PIECE OF EVIDENCE FOR A MIRACLE

Evidence comes in bits. Some evidences are conclusive. Others are not. A conclusive argument arises when it is all looked at together. We will learn that nothing in favour of a miracle is ever conclusive. No argument as a whole that a particular miracle is real works either.

### *Reason*

Reason is the method for weeding out stupidity and contradictions.

You can have reasons to believe in something and your belief can still be unreasonable. A belief can be reasonable and you can believe in it for unreasonable reasons.

That is a problem with all belief. But if your belief is too far-fetched and magical, you demand suspicion that you are depending on unreasonable reasons.

If you claim you are reasonable you have to prove it. You have no right to just claim it. Remember proving that you are reasonable is not the same thing as proving your belief. A reasonable person shows he uses the right method and that is more important than what the method results in. He does not cheat people by asking them to believe he is reasonable.

You need to be skilled at reason and give exceptionally good reasons to believe the exceptionally hard to believe.

### *Ordinary and non-ordinary*

Miracles are improbable in the extreme. That is not calling them impossible. A miracle is a supernatural event. It is a wonder. Miracles have to be considered to be very improbable. Christians agree that they must be very improbable otherwise they wouldn't be miracles. They wouldn't be signs of God's love and an invitation from him to join his true faith and the religion he founded in order to save us from man-made religion. It follows then we must have extremely good evidence to believe in them.

An extraordinary claim is one that is out of the ordinary. A miracle is totally out of the ordinary. Very odd things can happen naturally but a miracle is in a totally different league. Thus if you need strong evidence that a five year old boy is the best computer hacker of all time you need even stronger verification if he claims to be a god or something.

### *Verify that you cannot verify*

You can verify that you cannot verify a supernatural claim.

If the supernatural/paranormal takes place and leaves you verifying that you cannot verify it then that is something supernatural/paranormal telling you that it does not care about evidence. Should you assume that the supernatural/paranormal always cares? Yes would mean arguing that if you cannot verify that the supernatural/paranormal is involved that means it is not! No would mean the supernatural/paranormal is random and thus a miracle can be taken as just an oddity not as anything that is intended by God to be meaningful for us.

If the supernatural happens and you verify that you cannot verify it then clearly as the supernatural does not like evidence, then if you want to have a chance to verify it you need as much solid and careful evidence as you do for the assertion that Hitler drank water.

### *What level and standard of evidence?*

The evidence required for something very unusual at the bare minimum must be independent evidence. There is not a single independent witness of the resurrection of Jesus.

What happens when you hear of a supernatural event? You may think it is a natural event mistaken for a magical or supernatural event. You may think lies are being told. You may say you need solid evidence before you believe so you are keeping an open mind. You might believe.

If I say I have built a tree house, you wouldn't need much evidence for that. It's not unusual so you could take my

testimony as sufficient evidence. But if I said I built a spaceship that could go to the moon you would need to see and test the spaceship before you could believe me. A miracle would be even more extraordinary. Its more out of the ordinary. Having the spaceship would be strange but at least it would be a natural event.

A miracle being supernatural would be stranger and even more unusual. If miracles are routine events and happen too much, the message they allegedly convey from God will not be taken very seriously. We need to test and check out the evidence very carefully. Then we can work out if miracles are believable.

Magical claims (a miracle is a magical claim) would need exceptionally good and exceptionally comprehensive evidence - no gaps. The believers say the unbelievers in miracles are making the bar so high that no evidence would be any good. That is nonsense - all we want is the evidence to cover all holes and gaps and to be exceptionally good. For example, we need a CCTV recording of Jesus rising from the dead. They say we will make out its interfered with. But unless we have evidence we cannot assume that. We take it at face value. If we ignore the CCTV without reason the fault is in us. It does not prove that exceptionally good evidence can be done without. Our faults are irrelevant.

We would need to investigate to see what alleged miracle has the best evidence. This would set the bar for us. It would tell us that we need better evidence than that before we consider ourselves justified in believing in a miracle.

Not all cases of something being shown true beyond all reasonable doubt are equally strong. We need evidence for a miracle that is as good as the evidence say for a murder conviction which is strongly beyond reasonable doubt. That religion has a problem with us needing that speaks volumes.

*Evidence for one miracle cannot annul evidence for a contrary one*

What if there is evidence for Jesus' miracles and it is better than the evidence say for the miracles of some other character such as Apollonius? It would mean that you consider the miracles of Jesus to be the best supported. But it would not mean that you can dismiss the other ones as well. They would have to be afforded inferior belief. There is no grounds for dismissing them and that is just bias and dishonesty.

Christians need ordinary good evidence for their supernatural claims if they want to ignore or dismiss contrary claims. They need good evidence that the other claims are false.

To afford strong faith to Jesus' miracles and lesser to others leads to gullibility which is another reason why really good evidence is required.

*Our damaged faculties*

Religion says that our reasoning powers are damaged because Adam and Eve turned away from God and damaged us and put sin in us. They are right that our faculties have problems though wrong to blame original sin for it. Science shows that our cognitive and intellectual faculties never function to their full potential and often the potential is not high enough. Even if our reason is diminished that does not mean we cannot expect good evidence before we believe in religion. In fact it means the evidence should be exceptionally good and remarkably good. You would need as good of evidence that Jesus is still alive as you would that your cousin is still alive.

*The argument from ignorance*

People say that miracles are unlikely so even if they happen we have no reason to believe in them. Religion can have only one response to this: "How do you know what's likely?" This reply shows how religion refuses to be self-correcting. Science looks for evidence against its discoveries as well as evidence for them. Faith looks for only the evidence for its claims. It is inherently biased and unfair. It leads to aggression that is aroused by fear.

Miracles by definition and in our outlook are not very likely. You don't expect the snow on your path to just vanish despite 6 inches falling on it through the freezing night. So we need evidence that is abnormally good to justify believing in something that is so unlikely as a miracle. If something is very unlikely you need marvellous evidence for it. You would need evidence for example that Mary appeared at Lourdes that is as good as the evidence if not better than that the Queen of England visited Ireland in 2011. Religion answers that we do not know what is unlikely. It does not believe this at all for we cannot be happy and make plans if we believe that! Miracles then attack the beliefs and confidence we need.

*Religionists lie about the evidence*

Evidence cannot tell you if something is supernatural or might be supernatural. That is not its job. It can show that there is no known source of the blood when a statue of Jesus weeps blood. That is all it can do.

Belief in miracles is about wanting to believe and has no real regard for evidence though believers will manipulatively cover that up.

It is more likely when a miracle or supernatural event or alteration of natural law is reported that the report is false for people lie and make mistakes even if you can't explain the reports. You may be mystified at the strange puddle on your floor but you know it didn't just appear there even if two reliable people testify that it did. If human nature lies so much about testable stuff then non-testable claims such as miracles will attract more lies.

*Are sceptics against miracles guilty of bias?*

Everybody agrees that a miracle is what is not ordinary. Religious people say they are supernatural acts of God. Atheists do not believe in miracles. If you say that only the ordinary happens you are accused of bias. You will be told that not everything that happens is ordinary. But in fact it is. What is ordinary and what we see as ordinary are not the same thing. We make mistakes about what is ordinary. We think an athlete breaking some world record is not ordinary but if we knew how much training she did and how healthily she eats we would not see it as ordinary at all. What is extraordinary is really only in our heads. Miracle and magic if they happen are the only real extraordinary.

If you demand good enough evidence before you will believe in the supernatural, people will tell you you believe in natural things on less evidence. They insinuate that you are exhibiting a prejudice against claims of miracles or supernatural happenings or religion. They say it is not fair that you make your standard higher when it is a claim that can be categorised as a religious or spiritual or supernatural one. They are also implying that if you demand good enough evidence before you will believe in the supernatural claim, then that is unfair if you believe in other supernatural things on less evidence.

*But nature is extraordinary not just the supernatural*

The laws of nature are so unlikely and yet we have them. They are extraordinary. The evidence for them is near-undeniable. So we have extraordinary evidence for nature working a certain way. A miracle needs extraordinary evidence not just because it is extraordinary but because nature is extraordinary. To reject miracles as nonsense is about preferring extraordinary nature to the supernatural. It is wiser to prefer to assume that nature is extraordinary instead of looking for extraordinary miracles. Why? If nature is amazing that should be enough for you.

*Unscientific*

A miracle is never scientific in the sense that every detail is recorded and given to a scientist for examination. When something happens in the past, lots of the details will be lost forever and forgotten forever. Religion still sends in scientists when it wants to consider a miracle claim but that is stupid and pointless. It shows that religion agrees with the sceptics that its allegedly miraculous origin should not be taken seriously but it won't admit it. The science is really about hiding what nonsense it is. It is about lending it a false aura of credence and importance.

Extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence and that is a science principle. The religious won't even admit that any miracle report or magic report needs to be backed up by a higher standard of evidence that what you would need for anything else. No miracle story gives us such evidence.

*The evidence for miracles is often lies and guesses*

Some Christians lie that some miracle stories do. They may put forward the resurrection of Jesus as the best verified and most believable miracle of all time. And that in spite of the fact that even the gospels don't clearly eliminate any chance that Jesus was not put in the tomb. So there is no evidence that the body was in the tomb or if it was that it went missing because it rose. These people exaggerate the quality of the evidence. They lie outright that the gospels make it undeniable that Jesus was buried!

Religion agrees with the fact that the bigger the claim then the bigger the evidence that is needed. But when you tell it that its evidence say for the resurrection of Jesus is hardly outstanding it says the claim is not that big or strange after all. This dishonesty and proneness to self-deception and the deception of other people is hardly going to make us confident in believers who say have witnessed miracles or who claim they have understood and garnered evidence that miracles really do happen.

You need to eliminate all the possible ordinary explanations before you go on to the extraordinary or supernatural. Miracle

investigators do not look at all the explanations. They pick out one or two and eliminate them. Then by a process of elimination they arrive at the conclusion that the miracle is authentic. That kind of exploitation and dishonesty would not be tolerated in any other profession.

Even a believer in miracles must or should concede that the resurrection of Jesus cannot rationally be believed in. We don't even have depositions stating that Jesus rose. We need those at least. To say, "but if you had them you still wouldn't believe" is unfair and judgemental. It is also trying to excuse absent evidence, poor evidence or unconvincing evidence.

If the evidence is good and some still disbelieve and refuse to accept what the evidence implies, this is not an argument for belief in miracles. They are entitled to think the evidence is not enough for if that is how they see it that is not their fault. We all differ in how we take evidence.

There is an argument from religious experience for the resurrection. It goes, "I feel the risen Jesus with me. Somehow I know he is in my soul and I enjoy the benefits of his resurrection which shows me it really happened." But even if this proves that a saviour rose from the dead it doesn't prove it is Jesus. There could be a mistake that the saviour was Jesus. It could be that they do experience the power of a risen saviour but that does not mean they are right in thinking the saviour is Jesus. Arguments from religious experience only show that you trust your experience to reassure you. They have nothing to do with proving the experience to be true. For example, you may have a religious experience that gives you drive and ambition in life. But that only proves the power of the experience not that the thing experienced has any power.

If Christian scholars say there is enough evidence to warrant belief in the resurrection of Christ that does not mean they are right. Even if they are right, we have the right to disagree just as we all have our individual take on things.

### *The limits*

If such a thing as evidence for miracles exists then it stands to reason that there are cases where there is very strong evidence for some events being true miracles even though they are not. The Solar Miracle of Fatima looks impressive until you look below the surface. If you see that x must be a murderer and then something happens that shows he could not have done it that could be called a miracle. Cases have happened where somebody was nearly proven to be a murderer and they were not guilty. We would need to investigate to see what alleged miracle has the best evidence. This would set the bar for us. We would only then consider believing in a miracle if it had better evidence than that one or evidence equally as good.

Believers say it is ridiculous to say miracles don't happen without looking at the evidence for them. It is not ridiculous. It's another of the lies that belief in miracles leads to. We are not under obligation to investigate miracles. We are not silly if we don't. If a woman wants to believe that relationships with men are dangerous let her even if she hasn't investigated. Even if she is wrong it might be the best belief for her. We respect peoples belief that they should marry their chosen partner and we know they could be wrong so we leave them to it.

The Church says that sceptics have made up their minds that miracles don't happen instead of accepting the evidence that they do.

The sceptic will either reject the evidence or ignore it.

The sceptic who ignores the evidence cannot be accused of having made up their minds about miracles being false without any concern for evidence. We are not under obligation to examine the evidence for anything unless we want to examine it or need to.

So what about a sceptic who sees the evidence for miracles and rejects it by still refusing to believe? Is he being dogmatic? Dogmatic and unreasonable are not necessarily the same thing. Everybody has to hold that there are truths that must be accepted. If something is known to be true it is reasonable to be dogmatic about it and unreasonable not to be. So lets ask if he is being unreasonable. The sceptic could be right even if he is being unreasonable. For example, the sceptic who disbelieves in the resurrection might be right to but disbelieve for the wrong reasons. Maybe he hates the resurrection for he thinks dead bodies rising again is the stuff of horror.

The Church makes up its mind that it knows all about nature and so can be sure that a miracle is not a freak natural law at play and therefore not a miracle. The Church's view obviously cannot be right.

Who then is guilty of the worst dogmatism? Who is being the more unreasonable? Who is being the worst know-all?

If a person needs evidence and is accused of all kinds of dishonesty just because he or she needs it and looks for it, the accusers are not the servants of truth they pretend to be.

If you believe in something that is extraordinary for a person to believe in that makes you extraordinary. Are you asking for others to look for extraordinary evidence that you believe it? Yes. The first thing to assess about a miracle claim is, "Do people believe it who could know if it were true?" There is no such thing as people checking out supernatural claims nobody believed in or believes in. If the believer believes in something that is very unusual or odd or supernatural, the believer has to give you evidence that she believes. She has to justify the notion that she is not simply being a crank.

*Hard evidence is needed and why religion should need it more than sceptics do*

Nobody can understand evidence better than the person working with it. It follows then that only those who investigate miracles and find good evidence for them should believe. The general public should not. To encourage it to believe miracles is exploitation even if the miracles are proven. They are not proven to them and that is the problem.

Now we all know that there has to be some things we must see ourselves before we can be asked to believe in them or before we can believe in them. If miracles do not fall into that category then what does? Miracles look like magic for goodness' sake! Religion takes it for granted that some miracle reports at least should not be believed unless you see it for yourself. It should say that of all miracle reports because it is denying that evidence or the reliability of the testimony to miracles counts.

"Hard evidence is needed for miracle claims for they are such big claims". Religion needs this more than sceptics.

The sceptic values truth which is why he or she insists on a high standard of evidence before belief in such big claims as miracles or magic can be considered.

The religionist too says that truth is to be valued.

The religionist who believes that God is truth had an additional reason to the sceptic for valuing it. It is valuable to the sceptic just because it is truth. It is valuable to the religionist for that reason and also because God makes it sacred and demands that it be honoured and clarified and endorsed. If there is an obligation to honour truth, the obligation is more serious if there is a God of truth. And if God is truth as Christianity says.

If the sceptic wants a lot of evidence to endorse a miracle as probably true or believable then the believer needs far far more.

The believer assumes God exists and for her that paves the way for believing in miracles done by God. If she criticises the sceptics demand for good evidence that justifies believing in such a big thing as a miracle then she insults her own belief in God. She opposes truth and is criticising the sceptic for being more moderate than what she should be.

If you claim special powers such as the power to heal people or to see the future, science needs replicable evidence before we can be expected to believe you. If you perform healing for X and X gets better then if you fail to help anybody else then that shows that X's cure was not down to you. Good evidence for miracles is needed for there is a problem with people thinking that a caused b just because b came after a. Correlation does not necessarily indicate a causal link. Belief in miracles is always based on the notion that you know there is a causal link when none is there.

**FINALLY - THE EVIDENCE FOR MIRACLES IS NEVER CONCLUSIVE. THE CONTEXT WHICH SAYS "THERE COULD BE CONCLUSIVE EVIDENCE HERE" NEVER WORKS EITHER.**