

THE TENSION BETWEEN CATHOLIC DOCTRINE THAT REVELATION ENDED THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO AND YET IT SAYS MIRACLES HAPPEN TODAY

The Church says she does not bind you to accept any miracle – even an officially approved one – that was not taught or implied by the teaching of the apostles or the Bible.

You have to believe in the biblical idea that Jesus rose from the dead and you have to believe that the Virgin was conceived without original sin which is falsely said to be implied by the Bible. Catholicism's unbiblical doctrines that are not even implied by the Bible are said to have been implied another way. The other way is: "The apostolic tradition should be believed and the Bible says so and these doctrines are a part of that tradition." The Church holds that revelation that must be believed, ceased when the last apostle died (page 4, Twenty Questions About Medjugorje; part 66,67, Catechism of the Catholic Church) and stakes her infallibility and her being the true Church on it. She says that she cannot add to that body of doctrine for in Christ God revealed himself completely (page 19, Medjugorje). She calls herself the apostolic Church for this revelation was given to the apostles and she claims to be their only legitimate successor. The apostles did not predict that Mary would appear at Fatima in 1917 so she says that nobody is bound to believe that she did. All the Church does is to declare that an apparition agrees with what she teaches and that the people are permitted to believe in it if they like (page 4). Cardinal Daly said as much in Knock in 1996 during the Armagh pilgrimage (St Martin de Porres Magazine, page 6, March 1997).

The Roman Catholic faith says that the Roman Catholic faith was revealed to the apostles by God. It says that since the apostles died, there has been no binding revelation. The Catholics say there is no need for any more revelation. The reason there is no revelation, revelation that has full authority and which we are obligated to believe, since the apostles is that Jesus himself was God's last word to man. Jesus gave the fullness of truth to the world through the apostles. The scriptures say that God used to speak to us by prophets but now he speaks by his Son. But Jesus left no writings and left his apostles to tell us his message promising he would be with them as much as ever. Catholics argue that the voice of the apostles is that of Jesus for he invested them with his authority. They say that the modern Roman Catholic bishops are the custodians of the apostolic message and have inherited similar authority from them.

So, in Catholic doctrine, God has not ordered us to believe anything new since the apostles.

Yet what about the miracles the Church says the saints have done to show they are in Heaven and the miraculous apparitions of Mary at Lourdes and Fatima etc and other forms of revelation that have happened since the last apostle died. The Church says they are only pointers to the revelation given by the apostles. So they just reiterate their message. They are not new revelation. We are bound to believe in the visions and miracles and revelations reported by the apostles but are not bound to believe that any real miracle happened since.

The view of some that private revelation is binding only on the persons who have visions and revelations etc is incorrect. That would be heresy for it would imply that they have experienced shows that for them at least, Jesus is not the last word. It would imply that they have more light and revelation than anybody else can have.

Hume said we must only believe in miracles when the people lying or being mistaken would imply a greater miracle than the event they reported. But he held that this never happened. He is certainly right that a miracle should only be believed as a last resort. The Catholic Church surprisingly has the same attitude for it is hostile to visions and miracles that have not been recorded in the traditions of the apostles and accepts them reluctantly. The Church always opposes visions in the early days and this has happened with Lourdes and all authenticated ones. Catholics are obliged to believe the Bible miracles but the most the rest of the accepted ones get is a declaration that they are compatible and supportive of the faith and that if the people want to believe in them let them. The Church says it has the right to revoke approval of an apparition if further light comes up.

The Church is being inconsistent for allowing people to believe in non-Bible miracles if they want and forbidding the Bible ones getting the same treatment. If they are optional then people may disbelieve and if people may disbelieve a miracle it should not be authenticated. The point about miracles is that if God does them to teach us then we should believe in them. It is arbitrary to pick miracles that may be believed and ones that may not. Yet this error is the core doctrine of the Church!

If the Catholic Church really were the true Church the miracles would not be happening. The Church cannot give us a coherent account of how miracles make sense. Miracles then would be proof that there is no way to know if religious doctrine is plausible and true.

