

TESTING THE FRUITS OF MIRACLES AND SUPERNATURAL CLAIMS

Matthew 7:15-20 New International Version (NIV)

Jesus said 15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them."

When miracle claims happen people look for the good fruits to see if the wonders are from God. And it is a serious matter. Jesus here warns against using that test too easily. If gangsters are turning rapidly into good people or whatever that is the kind of fruit you are looking for. Good works follow most things and for that reason they are not enough. You really need grapes to replace thorns and figs to grow where there were thistles.

The more supernatural beliefs society had the more destruction resulted. People panicked and stampeded when they saw an eclipse happening. They burned witches and blamed them for cursing their crops. They believed the Black Death was a miracle. Jesus and the Bible advocated belief in miracles and gave no safeguards to restrain the dangers of such beliefs. They wanted the evil and are to blame for the evil. Jesus approved of the Jewish law which gave a black magic rite revealed by God for discovering an adulteress and which caused her grave harm if she were guilty.

Another disaster is that miracles cannot prove that God is a desirable belief. To be desirable the belief has to be needed - essential for life. If we can live without belief in God we should, for happiness is more easily attained with simple tastes and the avoidance of unnecessary needs. (Even most people in the Church feel little need for God.) If I can fulfil myself by persuading myself that God exists and is with me then why can't I fulfil myself without him? The Church creates needs and breeds them into people where there are no needs in order to get you around its little finger.

Miracles are evil for they claim to defend religious belief and religion is full of seemingly contradictory and nonsensical doctrines that are called mysteries beyond reason. But you should not believe in a paradox except as a last resort. You could get a revelation from God commanding that babies be killed and say it is a mystery. Don't be smug and say that will never happen. You are making it possible and religious motivated killing does happen. To make it possible is as malicious as doing it. You are certainly saying that God should not send down rain on the starving millions in Africa which proves you are a fanatic just because of that one belief.

Any fraudulent apparition of a supposedly benevolent supernatural entity will produce good fruits. It is safer to argue, "There are central doctrines and peripheral ones. If central doctrines produce good fruits that indicates that they are good doctrines. The good fruits must be excellent and not like the inevitable good fruits that follow even fake apparitions. There must be a direct link between the apparition and the fruits. It is possible to imagine Satan engineering a fake apparition of Jesus and people responding to it in a way he never expected with converts and a drive towards humanitarianism resulting." An apparition can never be central in the modern Roman Catholic faith.

Miracles, that are supposed to be signs, imply that sincere and open-minded love coupled with research into ethics is not good enough. That is disgraceful because the message is "one needs religious dogma and obedience to religious authority more than that". And that is a worrying insinuation. Miracles imply that faith in love is not enough. You must also have the correct beliefs about God and Jesus or Buddha or whatever. Thus miracles are used to support the bigotry of the many religions that put dogma before facts for if the religionists didn't they would change dogmas all the time as new light comes up on each dogma. For example, the Catholic Church considers its dogmas irrevocable. If evidence comes up proving that Jesus was not God they are saying they are going to turn a blind eye to it if it is irrefutable (if that is sincerity then I'd like to see them when they are insincere!). The miracles are saying that being stubborn and refusing to consider contrary evidence is a wholesome and good thing. Why do I say this? Because the dogma that stubbornness is good is the dogma that the dogma of Jesus being God and all the other dogmas depends on. It is the thing that makes them dogmas and so it is their basis and is more important than them. So when miracles advocate dogmas they advocate the dogma they depend on, more than anything else and that is the dogma that the Church should adhere to its teachings at all costs. If miracles are signs then they tell us to put dogma before ethics and people. Such miracles are trying to get us to believe that having the correct beliefs about God and Jesus is most important when it is not important at all if harm is avoided. Miracles are malignant. Many feel that the love that religion preaches about is evil when it is based on and fed by religious faith. Now they know why.

Having established that miracles try to support the view that sincerity and kindness are not enough we see that the implication is that God could reject a person for all eternity for having the wrong beliefs and perhaps on the excuse that those who do not believe will have to pay for their own sins which amounts to the same thing. The fact is, that sincere open-minded love that tries to learn and grow should be enough. Miracles are disgusting for they are hostile to this truth and they, with real rancour, tell us that we cannot and should not believe what we like as long as it does no harm. Religion tells us the same thing so you can't really expect miracles to improve on anything. Miracles incite us to fanaticism and hatred and violence against our inner selves and against others. If that does not happen then it is a reflection on us not on the miracles for miracles hope to make it something that should happen. They do not lead to sincerity but to insincere faith because anybody who claims to believe in a doctrine and hates the case against it and wants it suppressed is no more sincere than a cat is a bird. If it is right to be so wicked then religion has no business opposing any wickedness for it is just hypocrisy to condemn. Miracles are pro-mystery because they tell us that simple honest and careful commonsense in our dealings with others and how we treat ourselves is not enough.

We don't need belief in God. (If you want to believe in an afterlife, absence of belief in God is not going to stop you!) To say there is no morality without God is saying that there is no morality and we need God to invent it. That is not a very heart-warming reason to have a God! And it's really the morality you want and not him. And it's manipulative to say, "Morality is rubbish so we need a God to make sense of it." The end result is not morality. A morality that forbids manipulation while being based on it is not a morality. To understand all that and to worship God would make your worship hypocritical and immoral. Miracles, if from God, definitely imply that we need the goodness of faith in God and to learn about right and wrong from him. Otherwise there is no point in them. So when they are so keen for us to follow the gospel according to men we need to ask if they are really supernatural at all. A religious tyrant finds a God who can invent morality to be the perfect thing with which to further his own agenda when he pretends to speak for that God.

Miracles would not be happening unless we were wrong to reduce right and wrong to the essentials so they imply that we should be enslaved. A good God would not let them happen if they are hoaxes to destroy his reputation. They even imply that believing in the essentials and God and not in Jesus or anything more is evil! The truth is that to make too many moral rules is to be evil for the rules are an extra burden and anybody who breaks them is slandered and hasn't done wrong at all.

If miracles were about persuading and encouraging us to be more charitable people eager to do good for each other then why don't miracles happen to promote charities not churches? Why don't miracles take place to draw attention to charities and attract cash and volunteers to them?

Many would say that miracles are suspiciously too disinterested in love and charity and too interested in furthering the agenda of the Church to get power and money and influence. For example, Mary supposedly appeared in a miraculous vision to St Bernadette of Lourdes in 1858. She never urged Bernadette to do anything humanitarian. It was all about prayers and sacrifices and mainly about Mary's declaration that she was the Immaculate Conception. It was about religion.

The Catholics claim that infallible and totally reliable revelation from God can only be found in the Bible and in the Church's teachings and it is the role of revelations such as Medjugorje to attract people to infallible revelation. That is why even if the Church approves Medjugorje it will consider Catholics who are sceptical of it to be good loyal Catholics. The Church considers infallible and totally reliable revelation to be public revelation. Any other form of revelation is private revelation. There is no obligation to accept it. As there was no concept of this difference in private and public revelation in Jesus' day, he must have meant that the false prophets and true prophets were claiming to be delivering public revelation. Thus the fruits argument then has nothing to do with proving a private revelation to possibly be from God.

All miracles, assuming they happen at all, are malevolent. They would not be happening unless we were wrong to reduce right and wrong to the essentials so they imply that we should be enslaved. A good God would not let them happen meaning they have to be hoaxes or the Devil's work to destroy his reputation. They even imply that believing in the "essentials" and God and not in Jesus or anything more is evil! Religion says that God guides all people who are open to that guidance so he could keep us on the right path without popes and dogmas and Bibles and Churches. Thus miracles are not needed and are superstition. It is superstition if nature does not change and people report miracles. So how much more is it superstition if there is a sensible God and people report miracles?

Miracles do not square with the view that God does good just because he is good. They do not make much of an effort to show goodness directly. For example, is it really good for John to be instantly cured of cancer when he might take a worse illness later? What good does putting stigmata wounds on Padre Pio do? The goodness must be shown clearly and directly and in such a way that nobody can deny the obvious goodness. Instead we get miracle reports and Christians are forced to speculate about in what way they show short-term and long-term good. And nobody agrees on what the goodness is. It's rationalisation.

The evidence we look for is the evidence for the direct goodness in the miracle. The case for it being supernatural should come second. If miracles are really about God giving us good example and edifying us that is the way it has to be. Religion

cares about supporting the view that the miracles are supernatural or proving the miracles supernatural. And even then, its only some of the alleged miracles that suit its claims that its the true religion that it wants to check.

Miracle is a bad tree and produces what seems to be nice fruit but which is rotten when you bite into it.