

Welcome to our latest newsletter

Welcome to the latest edition of the What about RELIGION? newsletter. This is the best way for you to keep up-to-date with our ongoing research about religion facts. Enjoy the reading!

FOLLOW US

We will update our publications on facebook, pinterest, our beyondallreligion.net webpage and in our email contact list.

Write your comments and ideas to samjcr@pobox.com



this issue

All about miracles **P.1**
Quotes about miracles **P.5**

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

Miracles happen to those who believe in them

A miracle is a supernatural event that seems inexplicable by natural or scientific laws. In various religions, a phenomenon that is characterized as miraculous is often attributed to the actions of a supernatural being, (especially) a deity, a magician, a miracle worker, a saint, or a religious leader.

Informally, the word miracle is often used to characterize any beneficial event that is statistically unlikely but not contrary to the laws of nature, such as surviving a natural disaster, or simply a "wonderful" occurrence, regardless of likelihood (e.g. "the miracle of childbirth"). Some coincidences may be seen as miracles.

A true miracle would, by definition, be a non-natural phenomenon, leading many writers to dismiss them as physically impossible (that is, requiring violation of established laws of physics within their domain of validity) or impossible to confirm by their nature (because all possible physical mechanisms can never be ruled out).

The former position is expressed for instance by Thomas Jefferson and the latter by David Hume. Theologians typically say that, with divine providence, God regularly works through nature yet, as a creator, is free to work without, above, or against it as well.

The word miracle is usually used to describe any beneficial event that is physically impossible or impossible to confirm by nature. Wayne Grudem defines miracle as "a less common kind of God's activity in which he arouses people's awe and wonder and bears witness to himself." Deistic perspective of God's relation to the world defines miracle as a direct intervention of God into the world. [

. A miracle may just be fake information or simply a fictional story, rather than something that truly happened. A miracle experience may be due to cognitive errors or psychological errors of witnesses. Use of some drugs may produce similar effect.

What
about
RELIGION?



We must not allow the clock and the calendar to blind us to the fact that each moment of life is a miracle and mystery.

— H. G. Wells —

AZ QUOTES

Law of truly large numbers

Main articles: Law of truly large numbers and Littlewood's law

Statistically "impossible" events are often called miracles. For instance, when three classmates accidentally meet in a different country decades after having left school, they could consider this as "miraculous". However, a colossal number of events happen every moment on Earth; thus extremely unlikely coincidences also happen every moment. Events that are considered "impossible" are therefore not impossible at all — they are just increasingly rare and dependent on the number of individual events. British mathematician J. E. Littlewood suggested that individuals should statistically expect one-in-a-million events ("miracles") to happen to them at the rate of about one per month.

Supernatural explanations

A miracle is a phenomenon not explained by known laws of nature. Criteria for classifying an event as a miracle vary. Often a religious text, such as the Bible or Quran, states that a miracle occurred, and believers may accept this as a fact.

Philosophical explanations

Aristotelian and Neo-Aristotelian

The Aristotelian view of God has God as pure actuality and considers him as the prime mover doing only what a perfect being can do, think. Jewish neo-Aristotelian philosophers, who are still influential today, include Maimonides, Samuel ben Judah ibn Tibbon, and Gersonides. Directly or indirectly, their views are still prevalent in much of the religious Jewish community.

Baruch Spinoza

In his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* Spinoza claims that miracles are merely lawlike events whose causes we are ignorant of. We should not treat them as having no cause or of having a cause immediately available. Rather the miracle is for combating the ignorance it entails, like a political project.[clarification needed]

David Hume

According to the philosopher David Hume, a miracle is "a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition of some invisible agent". The crux of his argument is this: "No testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact which it endeavours to establish." Hume defines miracles as "a violation of the laws of nature", or more fully, "a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity, or by the interposition



of some invisible agent." By this definition, a miracle goes against our regular experience of how the universe works. As miracles are single events, the evidence for them is always limited and we experience them rarely. On the basis of experience and evidence, the probability that a miracle occurred is always less than the probability that it did not occur. As it is rational to believe what is more probable, we are not supposed to have a good reason to believe that a miracle occurred.

Friedrich Schleiermacher

According to the Christian theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher "every event, even the most natural and usual, becomes a miracle as soon as the religious view of it can be the dominant".

Søren Kierkegaard

The philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, following Hume and Johann Georg Hamann, a Humean scholar, agrees with Hume's definition of a miracle as a transgression of a law of nature, but Kierkegaard, writing as his pseudonym Johannes Climacus, regards any historical reports to be less than certain, including historical reports of miracles, as all historical knowledge is always doubtful and open to approximation.

James Keller

James Keller states that "The claim that God has worked a miracle implies that God has singled out certain persons for some benefit which many others do not receive implies that God is unfair."

Religious views

According to a 2011 poll by the Pew Research Center, more than 90 percent of evangelical Christians believe miracles still take place. While Christians see God as sometimes intervening in human activities, Muslims see Allah as a direct cause of all events. "God's overwhelming closeness makes it easy for Muslims to admit the miraculous in the world."

Buddhism

Main article: Miracles of Gautama Buddha

The Haedong Kosung-jon of Korea (Biographies of High Monks) records that King Beopheung of Silla had desired to promulgate Buddhism as the state religion. However, officials in his court opposed him. In the fourteenth year of his reign, Beopheung's "Grand Secretary", Ichadon, devised a strategy to overcome court opposition. Ichadon schemed with the king, convincing him to make a proclamation granting Buddhism official state sanction using the royal seal. Ichadon told the king to deny having made such a proclamation when the opposing officials received it and demanded an explanation. Instead, Ichadon would confess and accept the punishment of execution, for what would quickly be seen as a forgery. Ichadon prophesied to the king that at his execution a wonderful miracle would convince the opposing court faction of Buddhism's power. Ichadon's scheme went as planned, and the opposing officials took the bait. When Ichadon was executed on the 15th day of the 9th month in 527, his prophecy was fulfilled; the earth shook, the sun was darkened, beautiful flowers rained from the sky, his severed head flew to the sacred Geumgang mountains, and milk instead of blood sprayed 100 feet in the air from his beheaded corpse. The omen was accepted by the opposing court officials as a manifestation of heaven's approval, and Buddhism was made the state religion in 527 CE.

The Honchō Hokke Reigenki (c. 1040) of Japan contains a collection of Buddhist miracle stories.

Miracles play an important role in the veneration of Buddhist relics in Southern Asia. Thus, Somawathie Stupa in Sri Lanka is an increasingly popular site of pilgrimage and tourist destination thanks to multiple reports about miraculous rays of light, apparitions and modern legends, which often have been fixed in photographs and movies.

Christianity

The Miracle of the Slave, a 1548 painting by Tintoretto, from the Gallerie dell'Accademia in Venice. It portrays an episode of the life of Saint Mark, patron saint of Venice, taken from Jacopo da Varazze's Golden Legend. The scene shows a saint intervening to make a slave who is about to be martyred invulnerable.

The gospels record three sorts of miracles performed by Jesus: exorcisms, cures, and nature wonders. In the Gospel of John the miracles are referred to as "signs" and the emphasis is on God demonstrating his underlying normal activity in remarkable ways. In the New Testament, the greatest miracle is the resurrection of Jesus, the event central to Christian faith.

Jesus explains in the New Testament that miracles are performed by faith in God. "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'move from here to there' and it will move." (Gospel of Matthew 17:20). After Jesus returned to heaven, the Book of Acts records the disciples of Jesus praying to God to grant that miracles be done in his name for the purpose of convincing onlookers that he is alive. (Acts 4:29–31).

Other passages mention false prophets who will be able to perform miracles to deceive "if possible, even the elect of Christ" (Matthew 24:24). 2 Thessalonians 2:9 says, "And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of His mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the Truth, that they might be saved." Revelation 13:13,14 says, "And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live." Revelation 16:14 says, "For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." Revelation 19:20 says, "And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone." These passages indicate that signs, wonders, and miracles are not necessarily committed by God. These miracles not committed by God are labeled as false(pseudo) miracles though which could mean that they are deceptive in nature and are not the same as the true miracles committed by God.

In early Christianity miracles were the most often attested motivations for conversions of pagans; pagan Romans took the existence of miracles for granted; Christian texts reporting them offered miracles as divine proof of the Christian God's unique claim to authority, relegating all other gods to the lower status of daimones: "of all worships, the Christian best and most particularly advertised its miracles by driving out of spirits and laying on of hands". The Gospel of John is structured around miraculous "signs": The success of the Apostles according to the church historian Eusebius of Caesarea lay in their miracles: "though laymen in their language", he asserted, "they drew courage from divine, miraculous powers". The conversion of Constantine by a miraculous sign in heaven is a prominent fourth-century example.

Since the Age of Enlightenment, miracles have often needed to be rationalized: C.S. Lewis, Norman Geisler, William Lane Craig, and other 20th-century Christians have argued that miracles are reasonable and plausible. For example, Lewis said that a miracle is something that comes totally out of the blue. If for thousands of years a woman can become pregnant only by sexual intercourse with a man, then if she were to become pregnant without a man, it would be a miracle.

There have been numerous claims of miracles by people of most Christian denominations, including but not limited to faith healings and casting out demons. Miracle reports are especially prevalent in Roman Catholicism and Pentecostal or Charismatic churches.

Evangelicalism

For a majority of Evangelical Christians, biblicism ensures that the miracles described in the Bible are still relevant and may be present in the life of the believer. Healings, academic or professional successes, the birth of a child after several attempts, the end of an addiction, etc., would be tangible examples of God's intervention with the faith and prayer, by the Holy Spirit. In the 1980s, the neo-charismatic movement re-emphasized miracles and faith healing. In certain churches, a special place is thus reserved for faith healings with laying on of hands during worship services or for campaigns evangelization. Faith healing or divine healing is considered to be an inheritance of Jesus acquired by his death and resurrection.

Hinduism

In Hinduism, miracles are focused on episodes of liberation of the spirit. A key example is the revelation of Krishna to Arjuna, wherein Krishna persuades Arjuna to rejoin the battle against his cousins by briefly and miraculously giving Arjuna the power to see the true scope of the Universe, and its sustainment within Krishna, which requires divine vision. This is a typical situation in Hindu mythology wherein "wondrous

acts are performed for the purpose of bringing spiritual liberation to those who witness or read about them."

Hindu sages have criticized both expectation and reliance on miracles as cheats, situations where people have sought to earn a benefit without doing the work necessary to merit it. Miracles continue to be occasionally reported in the practice of Hinduism, with an example of a miracle modernly reported in Hinduism being the Hindu milk miracle of September 1995, with additional occurrences in 2006 and 2010, wherein statues of certain Hindu deities were seen to drink milk offered to them. The scientific explanation for the incident, attested by Indian academics, was that the material was wicked from the offering bowls by capillary action.

Islam

Main articles: Islamic view of miracles, Quran and miracles, and Miracles of Muhammad

See also: Occasionalism

In the Quran, a miracle can be defined as a supernatural intervention in the life of human beings. According to this definition, miracles are present "in a threefold sense: in sacred history, in connection with Muhammad himself and in relation to revelation". The Quran does not use the technical Arabic word for miracle (Mu'djiza) literally meaning "that by means of which [the Prophet] confounds, overwhelms, his opponents". It rather uses the term 'Ayah' (literally meaning sign). The term Ayah is used in the Quran in the above-mentioned threefold sense: it refers to the "verses" of the Quran (believed to be the divine speech in human language; presented by Muhammad as his chief miracle); as well as to miracles of it and the signs (particularly those of creation).

To defend the possibility of miracles and God's omnipotence against the encroachment of the independent secondary causes, some medieval Muslim theologians such as Al-Ghazali rejected the idea of cause and effect in essence, but accepted it as something that facilitates humankind's investigation and comprehension of natural processes. They argued that the nature was composed of uniform atoms that were "re-created" at every instant by God. Thus if the soil was to fall, God would have to create and re-create the accident of heaviness for as long as the soil was to fall. For Muslim theologians, the laws of nature were only the customary sequence of apparent causes: customs of God.

Sufi biographical literature records claims of miraculous accounts of men and women. The miraculous prowess of the Sufi holy men includes firasa (clairvoyance), the ability to disappear from sight, to become completely invisible and practice buruz (exteriorization). The holy men reportedly tame wild beasts and traverse long distances in a very short time span. They could also produce food and rain in seasons of drought, heal the sick and help barren women conceive.

Judaism

Descriptions of miracles (Hebrew *Ness*, נס) appear in the Tanakh. Examples include prophets, such as Elijah who performed miracles like the raising of a widow's dead son (1 Kings 17:17–24) and Elisha whose miracles include multiplying the poor widow's jar of oil (2 Kings 4:1–7) and restoring to life the son of the woman of Shunem (2 Kings 4:18–37). The Torah describes many miracles related to Moses during his time as a prophet and the Exodus of the Israelites. Parting the Red Sea, and facilitating the Plagues of Egypt are among the most famous.

During the first century BCE, a variety of religious movements and splinter groups developed amongst the Jews in Judea. A number of individuals claimed to be miracle workers in the tradition of Moses, Elijah, and Elisha, the Jewish prophets. The Talmud provides some examples of such Jewish miracle workers, one of whom is Honi HaM'agel, who was famous for his ability to successfully pray for rain.

There are people who obscure all miracles by explaining them in terms of the laws of nature. When these heretics who do not believe in miracles disappear and faith increases in the world, then the Mashiach will come. For the essence of the Redemption primarily depends on this – that is, on faith. — Rebbe Nachman of Breslov

Most Chasidic communities are rife with tales of miracles that follow a yechidut, a spiritual audience with a tzadik: barren women become pregnant, cancer tumors shrink, wayward children become pious. Many Hasidim claim that miracles can take place in merit of partaking of the shirayim (the leftovers from the rebbe's meal), such as miraculous healing or blessings of wealth or piety.

-extracted from Wikipedia-

INSPIRING QUOTES ABOUT MIRACLES

There are two ways to live: you can live as if nothing is a miracle; or you can live as if everything is a miracle.

Albert Einstein

Miracles come in moments. Be ready and willing. The invariable mark of wisdom is to see the miraculous in the common.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

The only way to live is to accept each minute as an unrepeatable miracle, which is exactly what it is: a miracle and unrepeatable.

Storm Jameson

You can hope for a miracle in your life, or you realize that your life is the miracle.

Robert Breault

Miracles happen to those who believe in them.

Bernard Berenson

People usually consider walking on water or in thin air a miracle. But I think the real miracle is not to walk either on water or in thin air, but to walk on earth. Every day we are engaged in a miracle which we don't even recognize: a blue sky, white clouds, green leaves, the black, curious eyes of a child -- our own two eyes. All is a miracle.

Nhat Hanh

When we bring what is within out into the world, miracles happen.

Henry David Thoreau

Learning is the beginning of wealth. Learning is the beginning of health. Learning is the beginning of spirituality. Searching and learning is where the miracle process all begins.

Jim Rohn

Miracles are not contrary to nature, but only contrary to what we know about nature.

Saint Augustine

Searching and learning is where the miracle process all begins.

Jim Rohn

To me, every hour of the light and dark is a miracle. Every cubic inch of space is a miracle.

Walt Whitman

Making a hundred friends is not a miracle. The miracle is to make a single friend who will stand by your side even when hundreds are against you.

John Spence

Miracles happen everyday, change your perception of what a miracle is and you'll see them all around you.

Jon Bon Jovi

Love is the great miracle cure. Loving ourselves works miracles in our lives.

Louise Hay

Every day holds the possibility of a miracle.

Elizabeth David

Out of difficulties grow miracles.

Jean de la Bruyere

Impossible situations can become possible miracles.

Robert H. Schuller

Miracles start to happen when you give as much energy to your dreams as you do to your fears.

Richard Wilkins

We are the miracle of force and matter making itself over into imagination and will. Incredible. The Life Force experimenting with forms. You for one. Me for another. The Universe has shouted itself alive. We are one of the shouts.

Ray Bradbury

A gentle word, a kind look, a good-natured smile can work wonders and accomplish miracles.

William Hazlitt

Don't believe in miracles - depend on them.

Laurence J. Peter

-extracted from azquotes.com-