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# JESUS' MIRACLES AS A CREDIBLE MEANS OF GOD'S REVELATION FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

#### Introduction

The issue of miracle has generated many debates for and against, since the eras of empiricism and naturalism in the Western World. Some are of opinion that it is a credible means of God's manifestation to the world. According to Thomas Aquinas, "Things that are at times divinely accomplished, apart from the generally established order in things, are customarily called miracles". On the other hand, some group of people like naturalists and pantheists have rejected miracle in all its ramification. According to them, it is an illusion of human imagination of little minds. For them every knowledge must be proved scientifically. And so, the yardstick for the measurement of a true knowledge is science. With this ideology they challenge the idea of a supernatural being and his actions in the world. Besides this group, there is another group of people, deists, who believe in the existence of a supernatural being who does not interfere in the activities of nature. But the arguments of these two groups against the occurrence of miracle have not been able to clearly explain to people the historical actions and deeds of Jesus Christ.

Fundamental theologians believe that God created the world and directs it. That is to say that the information we have in the Scripture about the miraculous accounts of Jesus' deeds are credible and a means of God's manifestation to mankind. By credibility of Jesus' miracles we mean: the historicity, the reliability of witnesses, the plausibility in confronting human reason and knowledge, the religious context, and the religious functions in the past and present. In this write up, we begin with the positive explication of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, trans. Vernon J. Bourke, bk. 2, p. 3 *Providence*, Part II (New York: Image, 1956), no. 101.1.

main concepts from fundamental theology perspective: Revelation and miracle. Subsequently, we defend miracle as a means of God's Revelation against criticism.

# I. Positive Explication of the Main Concepts from Fundamental Theology Perspective

#### 1. Revelation

According to fundamental theologian Gerald O'Collins, "Revelation' is, primarily, the act (sometimes startling act) of revealing and, secondarily, the new knowledge made available through this act"2. As Christians, without God revealing Himself our faith is baseless. In fact, the object of our faith is what He has revealed. And so, "Without a prior act of revelation on God's part, faith – it is held – would have no basis and no object; and without faith the whole edifice of Christian existence would collapse"<sup>3</sup>. On contrary, some people reject Divine Revelation on the basis that it cannot be rationally proved. As a matter of fact, rationality is an aspect of the reality and not reality itself. Moreover, "Revelation conveys truth whose authenticity rests finally upon a judgment that it comes from God. Thus the propositions of revelation convey the highest certainty and challenge the highest degree of assent"4. The acceptance of Revelation does not necessarily depend on the natural light of reason but on the authority of God, the reveller, who cannot be deceived or deceive. So when we talk about God's Revelation, we mean the process or set of events through which we come to know him. However, this does not entail perfect knowledge of God. The perfect knowledge of God will be achieved in eternity. There are two kinds of Revelation: general and special. The beauty and order in the creation manifest something about the Creator and that is general Revelation. "All human beings have access to this general revelation of God mediated through the beautiful and orderly works of creation and through their own, inner spiritual reality"<sup>5</sup>. In the scriptures of Old Testament and New Testament we have a lot of stories about the order and beauty in the creation. On the other hand, special Revelation is a process

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Gerald O'Collins, *Rethinking Fundamental Theology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 57.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Avery Dulles, *Models of Revelation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1992), p. 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Samuel C. Pearson, *The Religion of John Locke and the Character of His Thought*, in: "The Journal of Religion", vol. 58, no. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 251.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> O'Collins, p. 58.

of God's manifestation which is not open to everyone. It is limited to some people whom God has deemed fit to be the mediators like prophets, priests, Jesus Christ and so on. "Christian faith holds that in a special way (which goes beyond general revelation) God has spoken and acted in the history of Israel and of Jesus Christ"6.

#### 2. Mediators of Revelation

Fundamental theology maintains that we have many mediators of Divine Revelation, but some individuals enjoy uncommon capacity in interpreting the message they have received. Some mediators are organized while others are not. So we have mediators like: the prophets, priests, judges, apostles, the holy men and women, and most importantly Jesus Christ; the fullness of Divine Revelation. The Second Vatican document states that, "After speaking in many and varied ways through the prophets, 'now at last in these days God has spoken to us in His Son' (Heb. 1:1-2)". The fathers of Second Vatican Council, made it clear that Christ is the fullness of God's Revelation. Scripturally, Christ attested to that fact, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father (John, 14:9)8.

#### 3. Means of Revelation

According to G. O'Collins, "The means of revelation can encompass both common and uncommon experiences and all manner of positive and negative experiences"9. In the Old Testament God revealed Himself through: the prophets, dreams, persecution, and birth of a child and so on. Secondly, God revealed himself in the New Testament in a various ways as well: Jesus preaching about the kingdom, his death and resurrection. And His mighty works and miracles cannot be forgotten when discussing about means of God's Revelation. And so, "Among the means by which that revelation came, one must also remember the miracles performed by Jesus and the unique event of resurrection. Nothing could be more 'extraordinary' or 'uncommon' than his victory over death, the beginning of the new creation"10. Revelation is an event in the life of people through which they come to know

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Second Vatican Council, Dei Verbum: Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, in: The Document of Vatican II, ed. by Austin Flannery (Bandra: St. Paul's,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> John. 14:9. (New King James' Version).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> O'Collins, p. 74.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

God. And we can see that miracle is part of this event. In the same vein, the Church's document on 'Divine Revelation', *Dei Verbum*, corroborates this position as follows,

To see Jesus is to see His Father (John 14:9). For this reason Jesus perfected revelation by fulfilling it through his whole work of making Himself present and manifesting Himself: through His words and deeds, His signs and wonders, but especially through His death and glorious resurrection from the dead and final sending of the Spirit of truth. Moreover He confirmed with divine testimony what revelation proclaimed, that God is with us to free us from the darkness of sin and death, and to raise us up to life eternal<sup>11</sup>.

The main issue in the Divine Revelation is the teaching and work of Jesus Christ. "But the real locus of divine revelation, the principal authority in matters of religion, was for Locke the teachings of Jesus which were discernible through the Gospel narratives. The authority of those teachings was confirmed by the miracles Jesus performed"<sup>12</sup>. In all Christian ecclesiology, the Church is intimately connected with Divine Revelation. If people accept the Church at all, it is because they find in her a way of communion with God who freely emerges from his silence and discloses himself to men<sup>13</sup>. In the same vein, Erik J. Wielenberg, quoting Samuel Clarke said, "The Christian Revelation is positively and directly proved, to be actually and immediately sent to us from God, by the many infallible Signs and Miracles, which the author of it worked publicly as the Evidence of his Divine Commission"<sup>14</sup>.

#### 4. Miracle

The etymology of the word, 'miracle', comes from the Latin word 'miraculum' meaning an object of wonder<sup>15</sup>. The concept of miracle is very important in Christian Religion as an evidence of both God's existence and His Revelation. In our daily life, we hear people talk about miracle and even call for a celebration because of the miracle that they have received. This

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Second Vatican Council, *Dei Verbum*, no. 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, ed. by M. A. Stewart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. xxiv.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Cf. Dulles, p. 176.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Samuel Clarke, A Discourse Concerning the Unalterable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelations, in: Hume's Abject Failure: The Argument against Miracles, ed. by John Earman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), cited in Erik J. Wielenberg, God and the Reach of Reason, p. 122.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Cf. Mark Corner, *Signs of God; Miracles and their Interpretation* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2005), p. 3.

is a common understanding of miracle which Basinger states thus, "Some use the term to describe any unexpected event – from an unanticipated job offer, to the rediscovery of a hopelessly lost heirloom, to the rapid, welcomed change in a person's behavior"<sup>16</sup>. The events labelled miraculous in the general sense are often assumed to be solely as a result of non-purposeful natural activity but are in principle fully explainable naturally. Hence, it is not beyond nature but our knowledge of nature. Thomas Aquinas in his Summa Contra Gentiles, asserts that, "Things that are at times divinely accomplished, apart from the generally established order in things, are customarily called miracles; for we admire with some astonishment a certain event when we observe the effect but do not know its cause"<sup>17</sup>. It is important to note that there are lots of miraculous stories in the Greco-Roman culture, pagan sanctuaries, Early Jewish culture and in many other cultures. Nevertheless, the most important is the account of Jesus' miraculous actions in the gospels. According to G. O'Collins.

All three synoptic gospels recall not only that Jesus worked miracles but also that his miraculous deeds powerfully symbolized the kingdom and were inextricably bound up with his proclamation of the kingdom. His healing and exorcisms showed themselves to be compassionate gestures, the first fruits of God's merciful rule already operative in and through the person of Jesus<sup>18</sup>.

In fact, without exaggeration Jesus spent much time in His healing and casting out evil spirits which were always public.

There is this tendency of people seeing miracle as a form of a magic but Fundamental Theology is obliged to clear this misconception between miracle and magic. Merriam-Webster online dictionary defined magic as, .. The use of means (as charms or spells) believed to have supernatural power over natural forces"19. There are forms magic as follow: witchcraft, charm, sorcery, conjuration and spell. Many people look at wonder workers with mixed feelings and reservations because of magic. Craig Keener says, "Not everyone viewed all of these wonder workers in a positive vein; although miracle working tended to be public and magic secretive, miracle workers in the Greco-Roman world could easily be understood as sorcerers"20. It is not easy to distinguish between miracle and magic. Even though, there are some distinctions but

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> David Basinger, What is a Miracle, in: Cambridge Companion to Miracles, ed. by Graham H. Twelftree (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 19.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Aguinas, no. 101.1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> O'Collins, p. 107.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. Magic, accessed on 2016.29.04, http:// www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/magic.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Craig S. Keener, Miracles: the Credibility of the New Testament Accounts, vol. 1&2, Kindle edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 2697.

they are not clear cut demarcation such that you will not notice some features of magic in miracle or vice versa. In fact, some of the miracle workers try to use their charism for personal and selfish purposes, which is a negative criterion from theological perspective. "One typical distinction is that magic conventionally seeks to manipulate spirits or forces, whereas religion and miracle do not"<sup>21</sup>. And Craig quoting Philostratus's perspective on Apollonius said that, "Various criteria distinguish magic from miracle working, but most important is the issue of greed. Magical charges were common against all who did miracles, but the best accepted answer to these charges was to keep using miraculous power without seeming to desire it and without seeming greedy"<sup>22</sup>. This is in line with what is obtainable in the scriptures where those who performed miracles were not interested in what they would gain.

There are paradigm shifts that influence people's understanding and acceptance of religious teachings at each point in time. "Kuhn's concept of 'paradigm shifts' is helpful in attempting to understand the major intellectual shifts which have taken place in the history of religious thought'"<sup>23</sup>, McGrath stated. And as such, Religion is not insulated from such cultural and social influences. These kind of shifts affect the theological thought of each particular era directly or indirectly. Most Religions believe in "The view that all limited or finite things are dependent in some way on one supreme or ultimate reality of which one may also speak in personal terms. In Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, this ultimate reality is often called God"<sup>24</sup>. That is theism. The issue of primary and secondary causes were introduced by Thomas Aquinas which did not go down well with many theologian of his era. Nevertheless, the theistic interpretation of secondary causes thus offers the following account of God's action in the world.

God acts indirectly in the world through secondary causes. A great chain of causality can be discerned, leading back to God as the originator and prime mover of all that happens in the world. Yet God does not act *directly* in the world, but through the chain of events which God initiates and guides<sup>25</sup>.

That is to say God acting through the secondary causes indirectly brings about some actions into reality. That entails that miracles are possible only if we believe in God who wrought them. And so our natural knowledge of God is supported by His Revelation through miracles, and this is a credible means.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Ibid., 2720.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Ibid., 2720.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Alister E. McGrath, *Science & Religion: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell, 1999), p. 83.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v. Theism, accessed on 2016.29.04, http://www.britannica.com/topic/theism.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> McGrath, p. 104.

### 5. Credibility of Miracles of Jesus

There are many reasons for one to believe in the reality of miracles especially that of Jesus Christ. Fundamental theology presents them. There are stories of miracles in the parallels history of the ancient Jews, omens and portents, prophecies, healings, demons, and interventions of the gods and fate were regular fare. Furthermore, at least three groups of religious figures were said to have performed miracles: magicians, Hellenistic divine men, and Jewish holy men. But the miracles of Jesus are not seen as magical art or something like that but quite different from the known healers around<sup>26</sup>. Habermas says that,

even Rudolf Bultmann, who popularized demythologization of the Gospel texts, says that 'the New Testament miracle stories are extremely reserved in this respect, since they hesitate to attribute to the person of Jesus the magical traits which were often characteristic of the Hellenistic miracle worker<sup>27</sup>.

Secondly, the miracle of the death and resurrection of Jesus which the Christians based their teaching are unprecedented in the culture of people of ancient Near East. Christianity centers on the death and resurrection of Jesus, and this message is not borrowed from the belief of others<sup>28</sup>. Thirdly, "That Jesus had the reputation of a miracle-worker was corroborated by his critics. who asserted that his power came from Satan and that they had colleagues who could perform exorcisms too. So they accepted the supernatural nature of these events"<sup>29</sup>. Most of the miracles are attested in more than two sources. Accordingly, the attestation of two people is acceptable. For ancient historians, two or three sources in agreement generally render the fact unimpeachable. Furthermore, historical Jesus scholars Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz say, Just as the kingdom of God stands at the centre of Jesus's preaching, so healings and exorcisms form the centre of his activity. Among non-Christian sources, the rabbis and Celsus are clear that Jesus performed miracles, although both sources are hostile to these miracles. More important, the first--century Jewish historian Josephus apparently claims that Jesus was a miracle worker<sup>30</sup>. In other hand, Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost about Jesus

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Cf. Gary R. Habermas, Why I Believe the Miracles of Jesus Actually Happened, in: Why I Am a Christian, ed. by Norman L. Geisler and Paul K. Hoffman (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), p. 111.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Cf. Ibid., p. 114.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> M. R. Licona, & J. G. Van der Watt, *Historians and Miracles: the Principle* of Analogy and Antecedent Probability Reconsidered, accessed on 2016.02.20, http:// www.hts.org.za, p. 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Cf. Keener, 2431.

of Nazareth made paschal events clearer, "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know"<sup>31</sup>. These instances actually give credence to the historicity of the miracles of Jesus and their credibility. However, there are other opposing views from some schools of thought challenging this view.

# II. Fundamental Theology's General Defence of Miracles against Criticism

Fundamental theology would like to present Jesus' miracles as a credible means of God's Revelation, and as such must generally respond to the criticism of miracles. Such defence will be shortly sketched below.

#### 1. Naturalism

Naturalism according to Merriam-Webster online dictionary is, "A theory denying that an event or object has a supernatural significance; *specifically*: the doctrine that scientific laws are adequate to account for all phenomena"<sup>32</sup>. Naturalism denies the existence of supernatural being as well as the idea that Revelation is capable of providing us with genuine knowledge of God. "If Naturalism is true, then miracles are plainly impossible, as there is no supernatural power outside of nature that could interfere with nature"<sup>33</sup>. David Hume said that, if miracle were true, it violates the laws of nature. "A miracle is violation of the laws of the nature and as firm and unalterable experience has established these laws"<sup>34</sup>. However, C. S. Lewis argued against the position of naturalism with the argument from reason showing that there is something outside natural system.

(...), acts of reasoning are not interlocked with the total interlocking system of Nature as all its other items are interlocked with one another. They are connected with it in a different way; as the understanding of a machine is certainly connected with each other. The knowledge of a thing is not one of the thing's parts. In this sense something beyond Nature operates whenever we reason<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Act. 2:22 (New King James' Version).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. *Naturalism*, accessed on 2016.29.04, http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/naturalism.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Erik J. Wielenberg, *God and the Reach of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 135.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> David Hume, *Essays and Treatises of Several Subjects*, vol. II (Edinburgh: James Clarke, 1809), p. 120.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Clive S. Lewis, *Miracles* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), p. 4.

There is something outside the nature which entails existence of Supreme Being who acts in the world in a special way.

#### 2. Pantheism

Pantheism according to Encyclopaedia Britannia is, "The doctrine that the universe conceived of as a whole is God and, conversely, that there is no God but the combined substance, forces, and laws that are manifested in the existing universe"<sup>36</sup>. Spinoza was one of the early rationalistic philosophers who developed Pantheism. "Spinoza believed that there could be only one infinite substance, and that therefore the universe was uncreated"37. This has a serious consequence in the sense that God is not the creator of universe. If there is God at all, he is not different from nature which is infinite substance according to him. Hence, there is no supernatural activity or miracle in the world. But this position cannot stand, because it is based on the principle of determinism

Spinoza's concept of natural law as a deterministic system is self-defeating. If everything is determined, then so is the view that determinism is wrong. But determinism cannot be both true and false. Thus, Spinoza's basis for anti-supernaturalism is unfounded, and miracles cannot be pronounced impossible<sup>38</sup>.

#### 3. Deism

The term "deism" is often used in a general sense to refer to that view of God which maintains God's creatorship, but denies a continuing Divine involvement with, or special presence within, that creation. It is thus often contrasted with "theism", which allows for continuing divine involvement within the world<sup>39</sup>. Deism can be seen as a form of philosophy which believes that God created the world and ceases to act in it. The Deist position could be expressed thus,

God created the world in a rational and ordered manner, which reflected God's own rational nature. The ordering of the world is open to human investigation. On being discovered, this ordering demonstrates the wisdom of God. The laws of nature have been set in place by God; it merely remained for a brilliant human being to discover them<sup>40</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Encyclopaedia Britannica, s.v. Pantheism, accessed on 2016.29.04, http:// www.britannica.com/topic/pantheism.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Norman L. Geisler, Miracles and the Modern Mind (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1992), p. 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Cf. McGrath, p. 17.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 102-3.

They deny that God engages in "particular volitions"; once nature is up and running, God does not intervene in any way. In short, the God of Deism does not work miracles<sup>41</sup>. That is more of determinism which through our daily lives' experience as human beings is not possible.

# 4. Possibility of Miracle

Some people are skeptical about the possibility of miracle as we can see. The development in science and many breakthroughs in medical field in the modern world serve as reinforcements towards the skeptical attitude to miracle. This is clearly stated by Geivett that, ,,the fact that belief in miracles is itself a kind of miracle is precisely what philosopher J. L. Mackie meant by the title of his book *The Miracle of Theism*"<sup>42</sup>. That is to say, that belief and continued belief in the possibility of miracle is a mystery for so many people. Miracles tantamount the existence of the Supreme Being who performs such actions. Geivett quoting Huxley says, "The known is finite, the unknown infinite; intellectually we stand on an islet of an illimitable ocean of inexplicability. Our business in every generation is to reclaim a little more land. The envisioned means of reclamation, of course, is science"43. Has science succeeded in the reclamation? Of course the answer is "No", and why has it not been able? The reason for that is equally a mystery. There are many events that have occurred that natural laws could not account for, like the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The success of science is even helping to make miraculous actions in the world credible, when we consider its in-depth knowledge of natural laws, and yet, it fails to account for some events in accordance with the natural laws. Mark Corner quoting McKinnon with regard to formulating the laws of nature said,

the scientist is merely trying to codify what actually happens; thus to claim that some event is a miracle, where this is taken to imply that it is a violation of natural law, is to claim at once that it actually occurred, but also, paradoxically, that it is contrary to the actual course of events<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> Cf. Wielenberg, p. 124.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Douglas R. Geivett, *Why I Believe in the Possibility of Miracles*, in: *Why I Am a Christian*, ed. by Norman L. Geisler and Paul K. Hoffman (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), p. 96.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> T. H. Huxley cited in R. Douglas Geivett, *Why I Believe in the Possibility of Miracles*, in: *Why I Am a Christian*, ed. by Norman L. Geisler and Paul K. Hoffman (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2001), p. 100.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Alastair Mckinnon, *Miracle' and 'Paradox*, in: "American Philosophical Quarterly", 4: 308–314, 1967, cited in David Corner, *Miracles*, in: *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed on 2016.29.04, http://www.iep.utm.edu/miracles/.

Hence, we can say that miracle is a possible answer to such actions which has religious background not minding a priori rejection by some groups of people. Geivett strongly supports this position when he posits thus,

I can think of no better candidate for miraculous status than the historically well attested event of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is difficult to imagine how such an event could be explained in terms of the known laws of cell necrosis. It is equally unimaginable that the laws of cell necrosis, which predict the permanence of physical death, should be revised so as to accommodate, in an intelligible manner, both the general irreversibility of death and the singular exception of the resurrection of Jesus<sup>45</sup>.

The meaning of resurrection is not just coming back to life as recorded in the New Testament and other places. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a different thing though historical. According to Karl Rahner,

It points to the definitively saved nature of the person and of the history of a man with God. It also indicates that there is no return to our spatio-temporal biological life. It is not a raising up from the dead in the sense of a return to our present corporeal existence as reported in the New Testament and the history of the saints. Our and the original witnesses' experience of the resurrection therefore has an absolute quality which cannot be compared with other experiences and which is consequently 'historical' in a very special way. It is historical because the definitive salvation of a history is experienced in it until that history ceases to exist46.

However, some people have doubted the historicity and the authenticity of this gospel account. But Karl Rahner argues that,

Man is only able to understand an experience of such a unique kind to the extent that he extends to it his own hope that he will himself be definitively saved in his own existence. If this does not happen, a man cannot be anything else but sceptical with regard to the report of Jesus' resurrection and he is bound to look at it as something that took place in the obscure past and ultimately does not concern him<sup>47</sup>.

One major problem scientists are facing with the issue of miracles is the non--repeatable nature of such events. So, hardly can they experiment on most of the issues considered miraculous. "Natural laws do not describe absolutely the limits of what can and cannot happen in nature. They only describe nature to the extent that it operates according to laws"<sup>48</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Geivett, p. 109.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Karl Rahner and Wilhelm Thusing, A New Christology (New York: Crossroad Book, 1980), p. 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> David Corner, Miracles, in: Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, accessed on 2016.29.04, http://www.iep.utm.edu/miracles/.

Are miracles possible then? "In both the early Christian period and the modern period, miracle claims have boasted significant detractors. For much of history, such detractors were sometimes critical of unfounded claims without ruling out the possibility of genuine supernatural activity"<sup>49</sup>. With Hume's definition of miracle as the violation of natural laws, the manner of approach to issue of miracle changed. What we witnessed was an a priori dismissal of miracle as inconsequential matter.

Since the argument of David Hume, however, much of modern academia has a priori ruled out claims of direct supernatural activity in the natural world. Because many of the foundations of Hume's argument no longer fit our contemporary philosophic and scientific context, many scholars have begun to question the Humean paradigm<sup>50</sup>.

If we accept natural law as something that is usual, orderly and general way that world operates, it means that miracle is unusual, irregular with regard to natural law as defined. However, miracle is not violation of laws of nature as Hume defined it. Norman, quoting Sir George Stokes, says, "It may be that the event which we call a miracle was brought about not by the suspension of the laws in ordinary operation, but by the super-addition of something not ordinarily in operation"<sup>51</sup>. Furthermore, David Corner argues that, "It is unreasonable to reject such a supernatural explanation in the purely speculative hope that one day a natural explanation may become available"<sup>52</sup>.

There is another objection against the possibility of miracle which says that every serious fact must have scientific approval. Hence, they say, "that it requires immense scientific knowledge to decide on the reality of any uncommon or incredible facts, and that till scientific men investigate and prove them they are not worthy of credit"<sup>53</sup>. This is certainly not the reality on ground. Wallace reacting to such a view says,

The subject is very important, and the error is very common, but the fact is the exact opposite of what is stated; for I assert, without fear of contradiction, that whenever the scientific men of any age have denied the facts of investigators on a priori grounds, they have always been wrong<sup>54</sup>.

He maintained that modern philosophy teaches more consistently that we cannot have a priori knowledge of natural phenomena or of natural laws. But

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Keener, 3280.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Ibid., 3280.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> George Stokes cited in Norman L. Geisler, *Miracles and the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book, 1992), p. 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> David Corner.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Alfred Russel Wallace, *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1875), p. 16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Wallace, p. 17.

to declare that any facts, testified to by several independent witnesses, are impossible, and to act upon this declaration so far as to refuse to examine these facts when opportunity offers, is to lay claim to this very a priori knowledge of nature which has been universally given up<sup>55</sup>. And this is exactly the position of those who rejected miracle, they have fallen into the same error they have been vehemently protecting and guiding.

More still, there is an argument that if miracle were really true sign from God why is there still suffering in the world. Miracle does not necessarily occur where there is greatest human need, but faith in God who knows the best time, and place to intervene in nature and human history so as to pass his message is necessary. Corner thus says that,

(...) the comparison between 'interventions' in nature and in human history that in the case of the latter God can 'intervene' in order to teach us something, to point to a better way of living, an approach that does not make sense in the context of relieving animal suffering. But this means that divine 'intervention' may not necessarily come at the point where our suffering is greatest<sup>56</sup>.

And if God were to perform miracle always, we will not be able to recognize it again as a miracle again. It would be part and parcel of the nature. Moreover, miracles are only possible under the context of faith in the Supreme Being.

#### Conclusion

Finally, from fundamental theology perspective we can say that miracle enhances and strengthens our knowledge of God and the mission of Jesus Christ on earth. At this point, we will certainly agree with Samuel Clarke who says that, "The Christian Revelation is positively and directly proved, to be actually and immediately sent to us from God, by the many infallible Signs and Miracles, which the author of it worked publicly as the Evidence of his Divine Commission"57. The Revelation of God that acts in the world cannot be rationally explained away. We have been able to explain and defend as a miracle as credible means of God's of Revelation. Science is a serious source of knowledge but not the absolute source of knowledge. It is somewhat limited in nature. Ultimate knowledge is most often reveal to us through extraordinary means by supernatural being, who is the 'Wisdom' himself. As a matter of fact, part of this wisdom has been revealed to us in a miraculous way by God especially through Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ through

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Cf. ibid., p. 50.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Mark Corner, p. 65.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Clarke, p. 112.

his wonderful work of healing, exorcism and most importantly his death and resurrection has revealed God to us. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the highest form of miracle from God. So we can say, that we have come to know God through Jesus' miracles especially.

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# Summary

# JESUS' MIRACLES AS A CREDIBLE MEANS OF GOD'S REVELATION FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

Miracles as a credible means of Revelation have generated different opinions for and against over a long time. Many have tried to define miracle either as a marvelous sign from God or as a violation of natural laws. Revelation is a source of knowledge and information to us. Moreover, it has been historically proven that Jesus performed miracles during his earthly ministry. Many biblical scholars attested to this in their research findings. Altogether, miracles have shown that God's power is active in the world. However, some people see miracle as a form of magic, but there is a distinction between them although the gap is not wide. More still, others have rejected its possibility arguing that it is against the natural laws and cannot be proven scientifically. Deists and naturalists are in the group that rejects miracles. For the people who reject miracles the standard measurement of a true knowledge is solely science. The purpose of this paper is to present miracles as a credible means of God's Revelation from Fundamental Theology point of view.

### Cuda Jezusa jako wiarygodny środek Objawienia Bożego w perspektywie teologii fundamentalnej

Cuda jako wiarygodny środek Objawienia wywołują od dawna debatę za i przeciw. Wielu próbowało definiować cud albo jako niezwykły znak od Boga, albo jako naruszenie praw naturalnych. Źródłem naszej wiedzy i informacji jest Objawienie. Ponadto udowodniono historycznie, że Jezus dokonywał cudów w trakcie swojej posługi na ziemi. Wielu biblistów potwierdziło to w swoich badaniach. Biorąc to pod uwagę, można stwierdzić, że cuda ukazują, iż Boża moc działa w świecie. Jednakże niektórzy ludzie postrzegają cuda jako formę magii – różnią się oni jednak między sobą, choć różnice te nie są wielkie. Co więcej, inni odrzucają możliwość cudu, argumentując, że byłoby to wystąpienie przeciw prawom natury i nie można by go udowodnić naukowo. Do grupy odrzucających cuda należą deiści i naturaliści. Dla tej grupy miarą prawdziwej wiedzy są wyłącznie nauki ścisłe. Celem artykułu jest prezentacja cudów jako wiarygodnego środka Objawienia Bożego z perspektywy teologii fundamentalnej.

**Keywords:** miracle, magic, theism, deism, naturalism, pantheism, revelation, credibility, fundamental theology

**Słowa kluczowe:** cud, magia, teizm, deizm, naturalizm, panteizm, Objawienie, wiarygodność, teologia fundamentalna

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