

Miracle – 886 words  
– college essay



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Paul Tilich describes a miracle as “ An event which is astonishing, unusual, shaking, without contradicting the rational structure of reality ...

an even which points to the mystery of being” Miracles are a religious term, they are divine acts of God, and can be explained in no other way, a miracle must contain three basic attributes: The experience must be against regular experience or “ break the laws of nature”; the event has purpose and meaning; it is possible to ascribe religious significance to the event. Thomas Aquinas suggested that miracles were “ those things ...

which as done by divine power apart from the order generally followed in things” He proposed three categories of miracles: Events done by God which nature could never do; Events that God can do and nature could do but not in that order; Events done by God that nature can do but God does without the use of natural laws. Problems occur in Aquinas’s categories when we look deeper into them, we don’t actually know all the natural laws or how they operate, therefore we cannot tell if their broken or not. We do not fully understand our world, so when something unusual happens it may just be the natural laws at work, but perceived to be a miracle. Richard Swinburne claims that the laws of nature are reasonable predictable, and if the “ impossible” happens, then it I just to call it a miracle.

He suggested that what actually determines a miracle is the timescale on which it happens, for example some one being resurrected from death, take Jesus for example. Others believe miracles to be pure coincidence. Brian Davies argues that miracles are “ unexpected and fortuitous events in the light of which we are disposed to give thanks to God”. R. F. Holland

suggested that miracles are in fact nothing more than extraordinary coincidences.

He used an example of a boy stuck on a railway line with an oncoming train, the boy was powerless to move out the way, but the driver fell asleep, lifting his hand off the throttle, stopping the train. Some may call this a miracle; others may call it a coincidence. The only problem with Holland's suggestion is that it makes a miracle based on the subjective views of the witness. I will also look at the significance of Miracles in a religious context. Richard Swinburne says " If a God intervened in the natural order to make a feather land here rather than there for no deep, ultimate purpose, or to upset a child's box of toys just for spite, these events would not naturally be described as miracles" Although many miracles seem to be without purpose, like the liquefying of the blood of St Januarius.

Or the statues of the Hindu Gods drinking milk seen al over India, this is a pointless miracle. John Locke argued that the definition of a miracle must be seen in a broader context of who performs it and who sees it; he said that a person must be acknowledgeable by God, and that the messenger should have come from God. Gareth Moore says that the idea of God performing miracles is ridiculous because God is not a person. He argued that a miracle has no relation to God at all, Miracles happened because they happen, and God does not make them happenNext I will look at the strengths and weaknesses of the miracles argument.

I will look at the evidence for Miracles and how reliable it is. David Hume approached miracles on the basis of experience, observation, evidence and

probability. He argued that miracles are not simply an extraordinary event, but events that go against the natural laws. He claimed that because the evidence of Miracles was unreliable it was impossible to believe in them. Hume gave four reasons as to why there was not enough evidence for the presence of miracles. Firstly he questioned the witnesses of “ unquestioned good sense, education and learning” to give full testimony to the present miracles.

Secondly he said religious believes and human natures are prone to believe in miracles, he says that humans believe in miracles when the reality isn't really there. Thirdly he observed miracle stories to some from unreliable sources, most coming from religious believers and the bible alike. Hardly unbiased sources and therefore not reliable sources for a just argument. Lastly we can see his last view through Illiyaas Ali's view of an inconsistent triad. This works of a basis of looking at the possibilities of miracles, it says that either: miracles occur; miracles are claimed in all religions and religions clam exclusively. Neither can occur without the contraries being incorrect.

There has been much criticism over Hume's observations. We can judge Hume's description of natural laws, as they are still being understood, so, with all today's scientific advances, how can we judge what goes against natural laws or not? Next we can look at the language that Hume uses, his argument is open to widely differing interpretations, he seems to suggest that the improbability of an event leads to the logical conclusion that it did not happen. But some would say that this very improbability makes it even more believable than God willed it so. He also does not say what constitutes to a valid amount of witnesses to a miracle.