

*Miracles warrant special consideration precisely because of **what** miracles are, **why** miracles are, and **whether** miracles are.*

What Are Miracles?

A Philosophy of Miracles

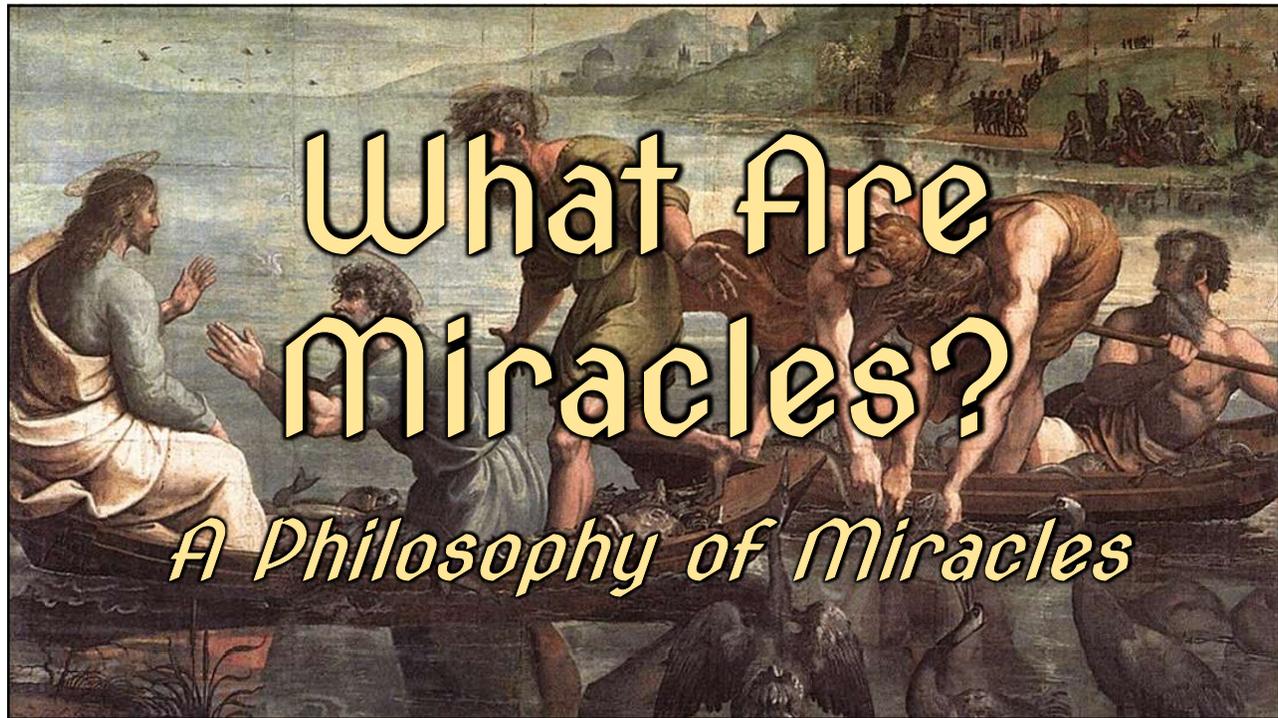
Why Are there Miracles?

A Theology of Miracles

Are There Miracles?

An Apologetic of Miracles

Nothing I say in this presentation should be taken to mean that I deny that God could perform a miracle today as an act of His grace and mercy.



*Miracles are interventions of
God into the natural world
that interrupt the natural
course of events.*

It is important to maintain the proper distinction between

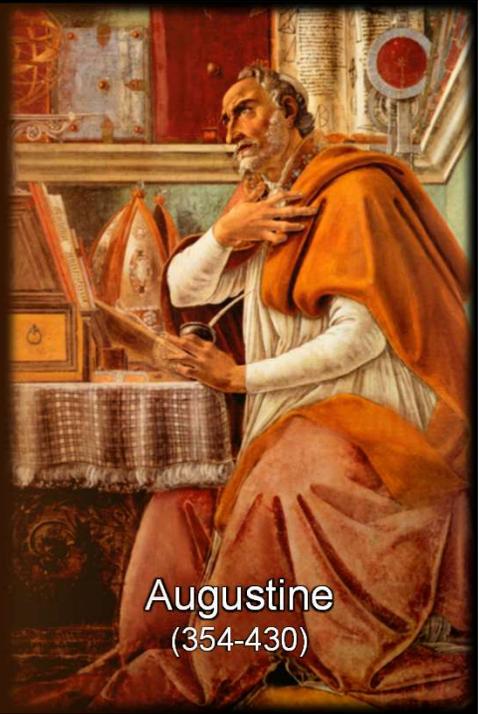
events that proceed according to the course of nature as created by God

events that proceed according to an exceptional intervention by God

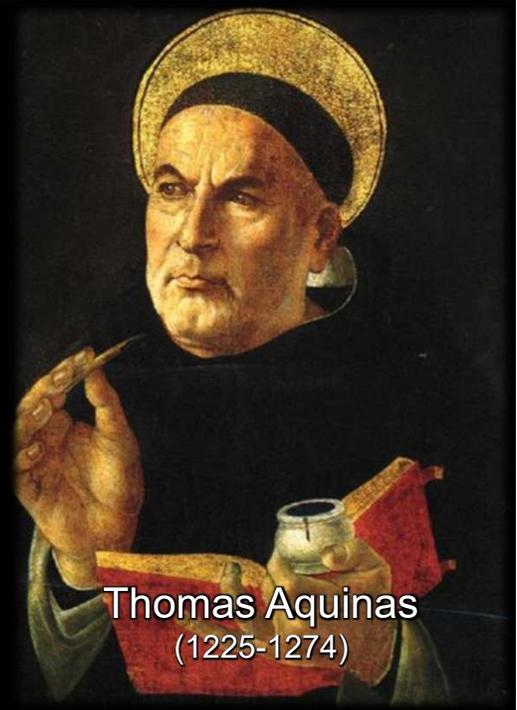
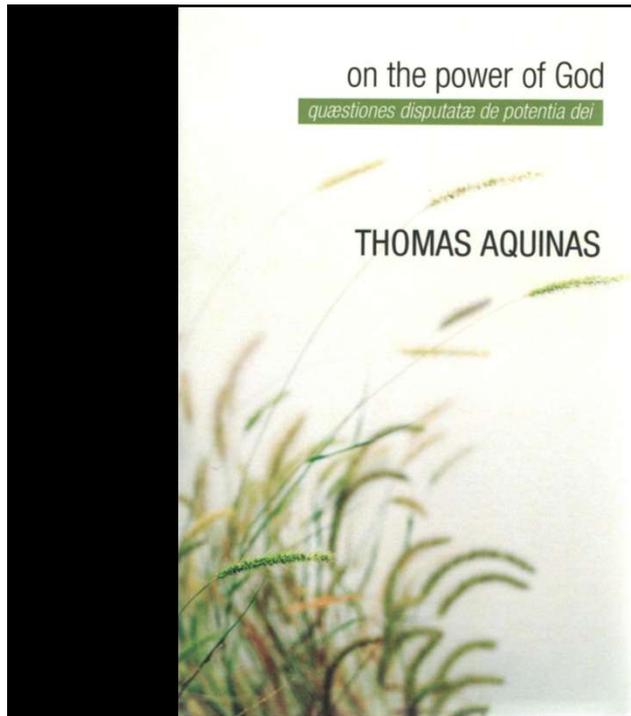
Thus, one should avoid using the term 'miracle' to refer to just any naturally occurring (albeit wonderful) event.

"By 'miracle' I mean something strange and difficult which exceeds the expectation and capacity of him who marvels at it."

[Augustine, *The Usefulness of Belief*, trans. John S. S. Burleigh in *Augustine: Earlier Writings* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953), 320]



Augustine
(354-430)



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

*"Those effects are properly called miracles which are produced by God's power alone on things which have a **natural tendency** to the opposite effect or to a contrary mode of operation ..."*



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

"whereas effects produced by nature, the cause of which is unknown to us or to some of us, as also those effects, produced by God, that are of a nature to be produced by none but God, cannot be called miraculous but only marvelous or wonderful."

[Aquinas, *On the Power of God* (quæstiones disputatæ de potential dei), trans. English Dominican Fathers (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004), II, vi, 2, pp. 164-165]



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

*"whereas effects produced by nature, **the cause of which is unknown to us** or to some of us, as also those effects, produced by God, that are of a nature to be produced by none but God, cannot be called miraculous but only marvelous or wonderful."*

[Aquinas, *On the Power of God* (quæstiones disputatæ de potential dei), trans. English Dominican Fathers (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004), II, vi, 2, pp. 164-165]

Understandably, Aquinas says that effects produced by nature whose causes are unknown should not be called miracles.

*"whereas effects produced by nature, the cause of which is unknown to us or to some of us, as also **those effects, produced by God, that are of a nature to be produced by none but God**, cannot be called miraculous but only marvelous or wonderful."*

[Aquinas, *On the Power of God* (quæstiones disputatæ de potential dei), trans. English Dominican Fathers (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004), II, vi, 2, pp. 164-165]

But why would Aquinas say that effects that could only be produced by God also should not be called miracles?

"whereas effects produced by nature, the cause of which is unknown to us or to some of us, as also those effects, produced by God, that are of a nature to be produced by none but God, cannot be called miraculous but only marvelous or wonderful."

[Aquinas, *On the Power of God* (quæstiones disputatæ de potential dei), trans. English Dominican Fathers (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004), II, vi, 2, pp. 164-165]

The reason is this. If an effect could only be produced by God and could never be produced by nature, then it would not fit the definition of miracle, viz., that which is "produced by God's power alone on things which have a natural tendency to the opposite effect or to a contrary mode of operation."

"whereas effects produced by nature, the cause of which is unknown to us or to some of us, as also those effects, produced by God, that are of a nature to be produced by none but God, cannot be called miraculous but only marvelous or wonderful."

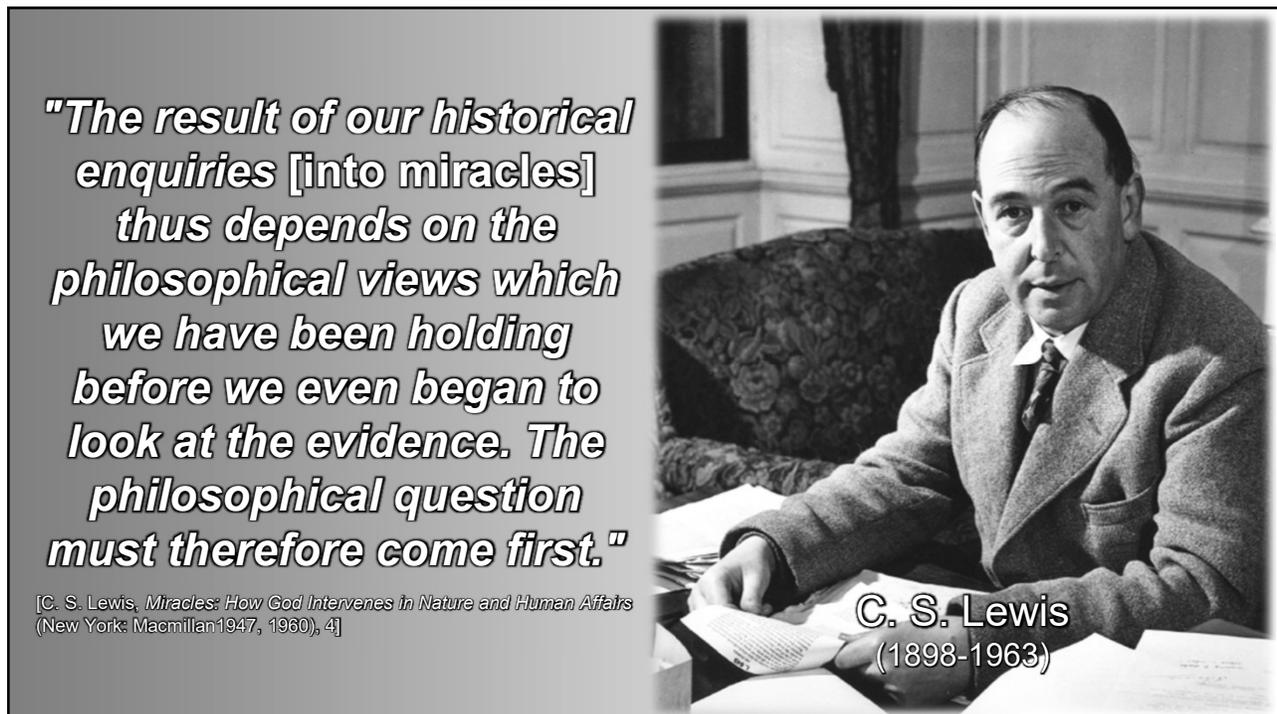
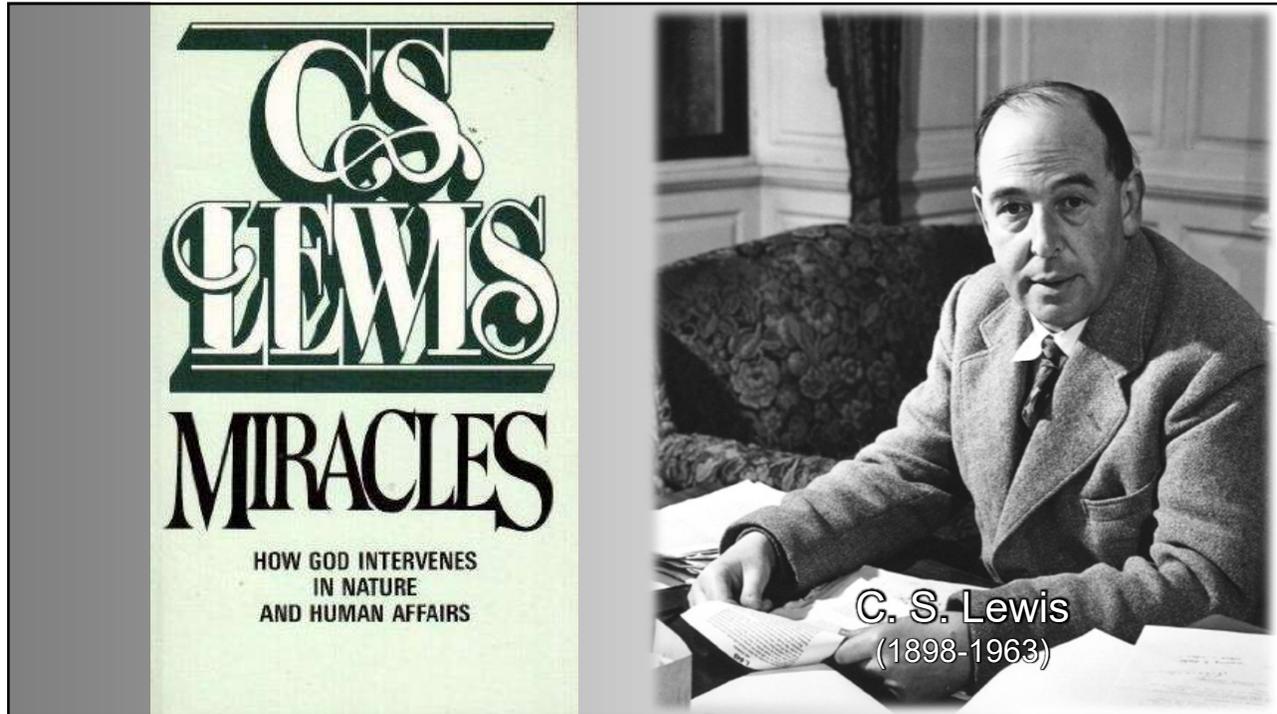
[Aquinas, *On the Power of God* (quæstiones disputatæ de potential dei), trans. English Dominican Fathers (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2004), II, vi, 2, pp. 164-165]

Can you think of an effect "produced by God, that [is] of a nature to be produced by none but God"?



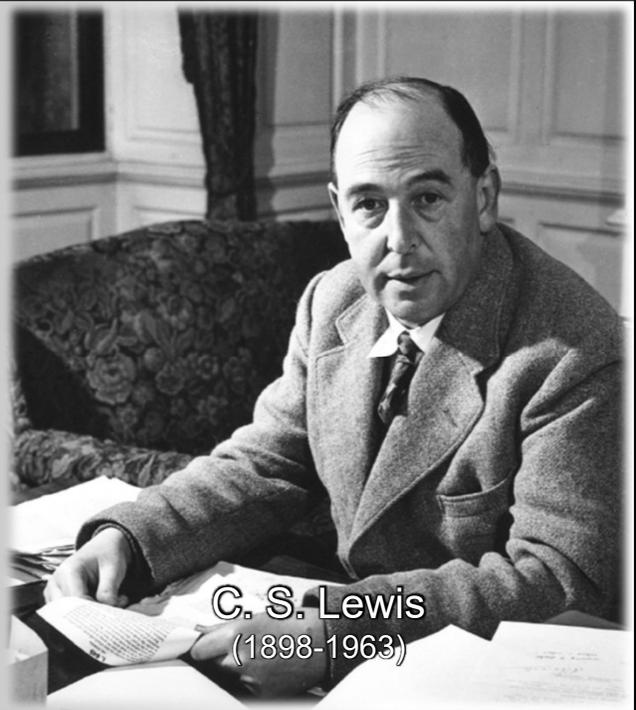
The act of creation itself is not miraculous since God is not acting "on things which have a natural tendency to the opposite effect or to a contrary mode of operation."

This is because, since creation is from nothing, there was not anything there (before creation) upon which God acted and which could be said to have any natural tendency.



***"I use the word
Miracle to mean an
interference with
Nature by
supernatural
power."***

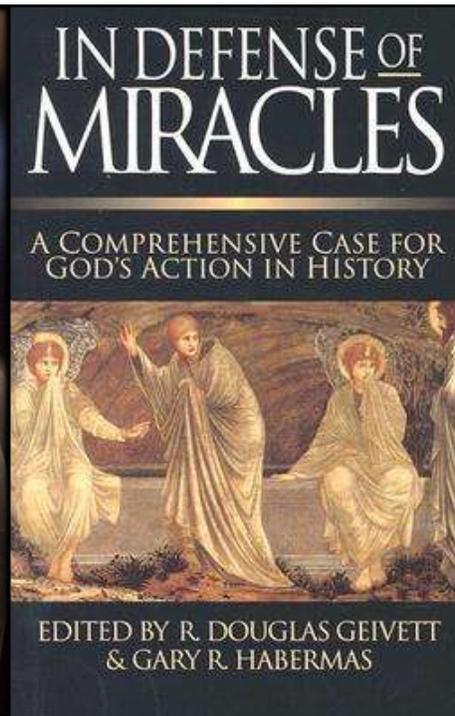
[C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: How God Intervenes in Nature and Human Affairs*
(New York: Macmillan 1947, 1960), 5]



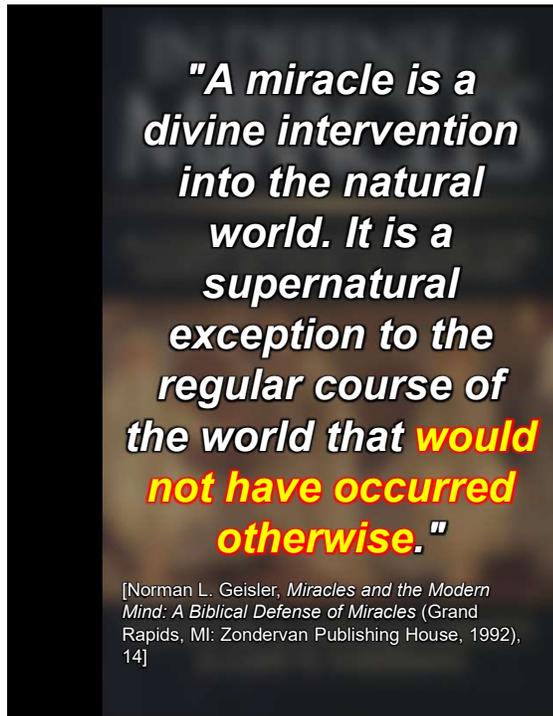
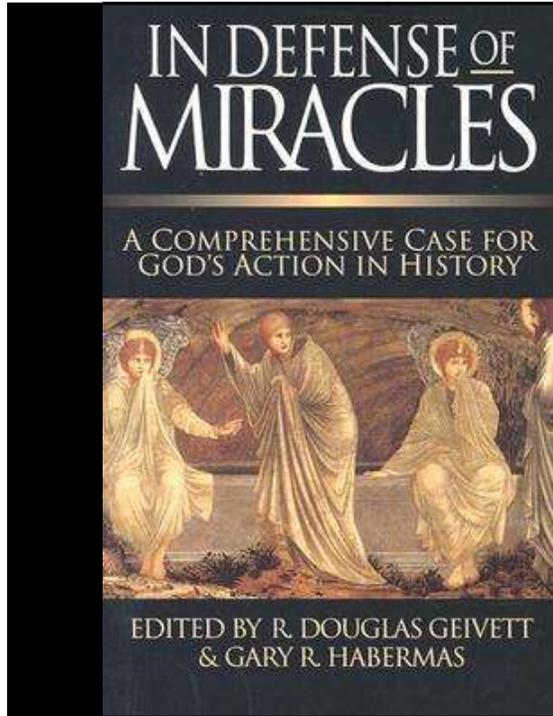
C. S. Lewis
(1898-1963)



Gary Habermas



R. Douglas Geivett



"A miracle is a divine intervention into the natural world. It is a supernatural exception to the regular course of the world that **would not have occurred otherwise."**

[Norman L. Geisler, *Miracles and the Modern Mind: A Biblical Defense of Miracles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 14]

Geisler's wording "... would not have occurred..." amounts to the contraposition of Aquinas's wording "...would have naturally occurred otherwise."

"A miracle is a divine intervention into the natural world. It is a supernatural exception to the regular course of the world that **would not have occurred otherwise."**

[Norman L. Geisler, *Miracles and the Modern Mind: A Biblical Defense of Miracles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 14]

To say that X would have occurred without God's intervention is the same as saying that X would not have occurred this way except for God's intervention.

"A miracle is a divine intervention into the natural world. It is a supernatural exception to the regular course of the world that **would not have occurred otherwise.**"

[Norman L. Geisler, *Miracles and the Modern Mind: A Biblical Defense of Miracles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 14]

The logical relationship of the two statements is known as "contraposition."

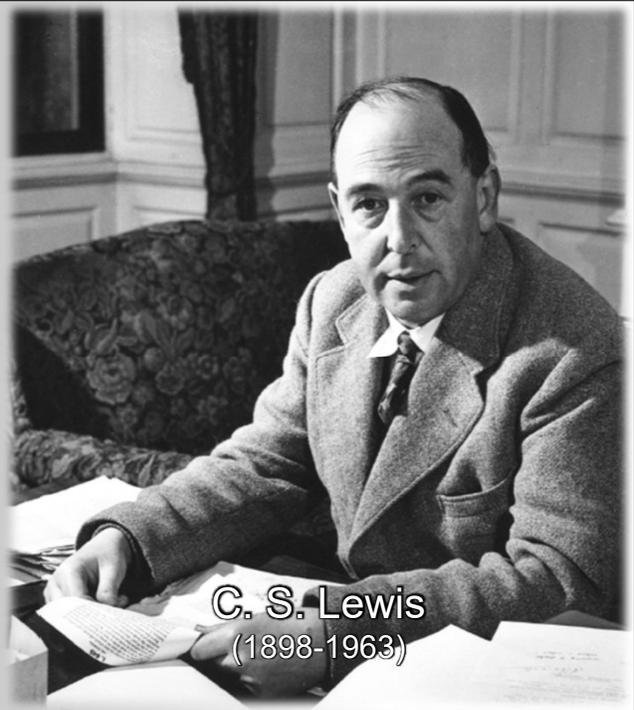
The are contrapositives of each other. Being contrapositives means they are logically the same.

Since by definition miracles are acts of God, they presuppose the existence of God.

There cannot be acts of God without a God who can act.

"Unless there exists, in addition to Nature, something else which we may call the supernatural, there can be no miracles."

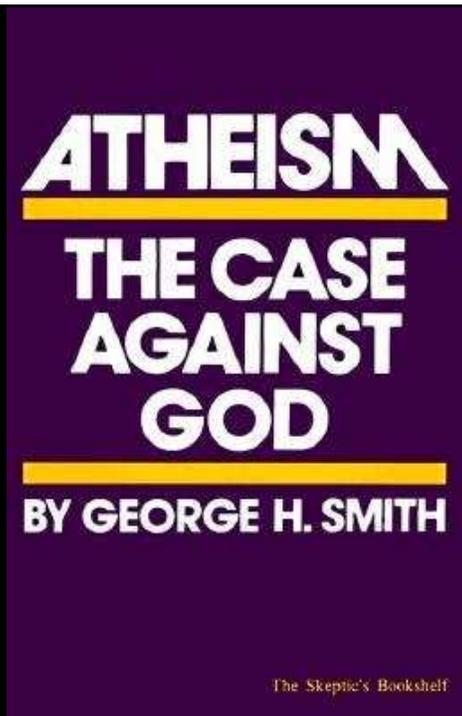
[C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: How God Intervenes in Nature and Human Affairs* (New York: Macmillan 1947, 1960), 5]



C. S. Lewis
(1898-1963)



George H. Smith
(1949-2022)



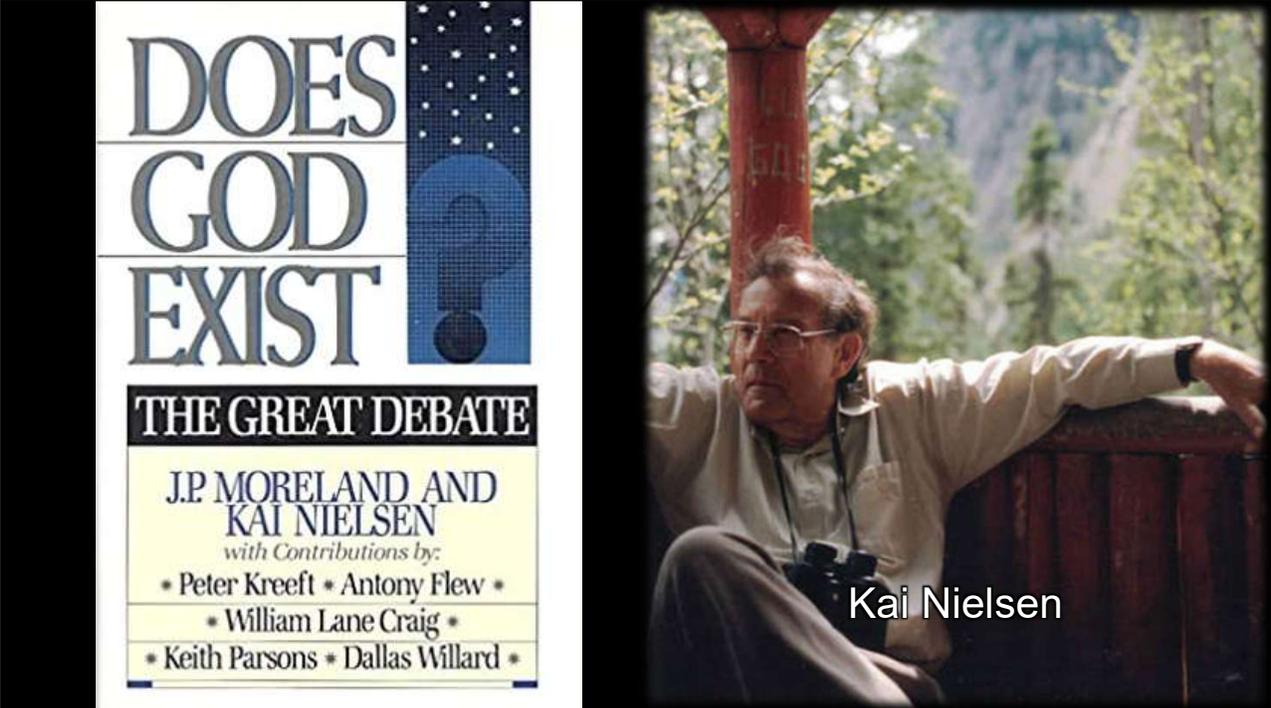
The Skeptic's Bookshelf



George H. Smith
(1949-2022)

"What is a miracle? Some theists define it as divine intervention in the natural course of events. This definition presupposes the existence of a God, and since it requires that one first believe in a supernatural being before one can believe in a miracle, it is useless for establishing the existence of a god."

[George H. Smith, *Atheism: The Case Against God* (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1989), 211]



**DOES
GOD
EXIST**

THE GREAT DEBATE

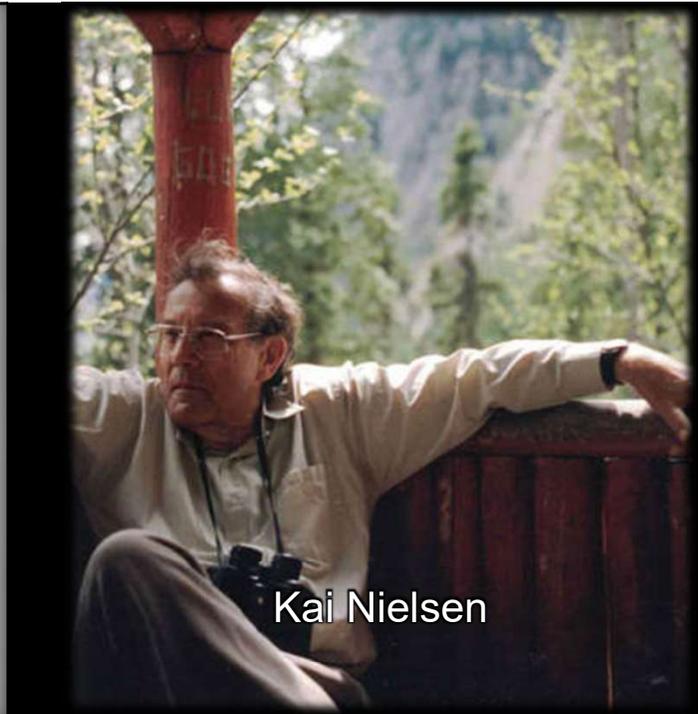
**J.P. MORELAND AND
KAI NIELSEN**
with Contributions by:

- Peter Kreeft • Antony Flew •
- William Lane Craig •
- Keith Parsons • Dallas Willard •

Kai Nielsen

"Let us suppose it were the case that Jesus was raised from the dead. Supposed you collected the bones, and they [went] together in some way reconstituted the living Jesus. ... This wouldn't show there was an infinite intelligible being. It wouldn't give you any way of being able to detect if there is a god. It would be just that a very strange happening happened, namely, that somebody who died ... came together again as a living human being."

[Kai Nielsen, "An Atheist's Rebuttal," in J. P. Moreland and Kai Nielsen, *Does God Exist?: The Great Debate* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 64, republished *Does God Exist?: The Debate between Theists and Atheists* (Amherst: Prometheus, 1993), 65]

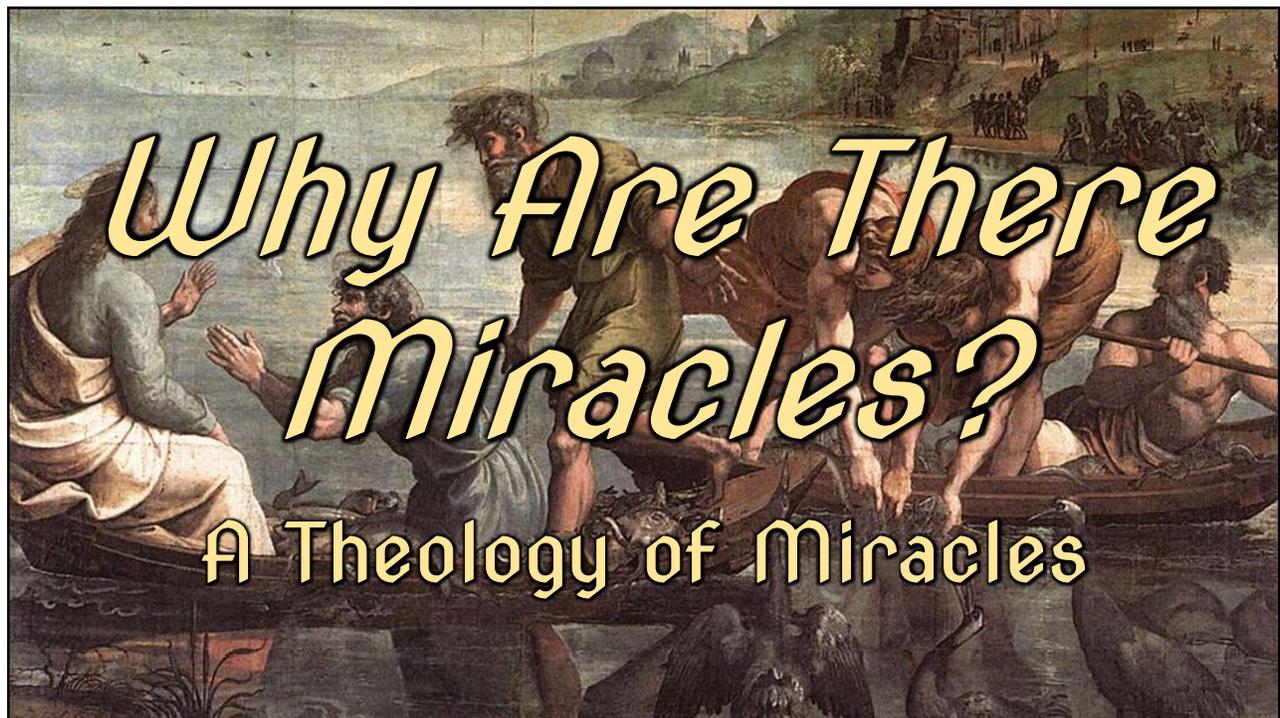
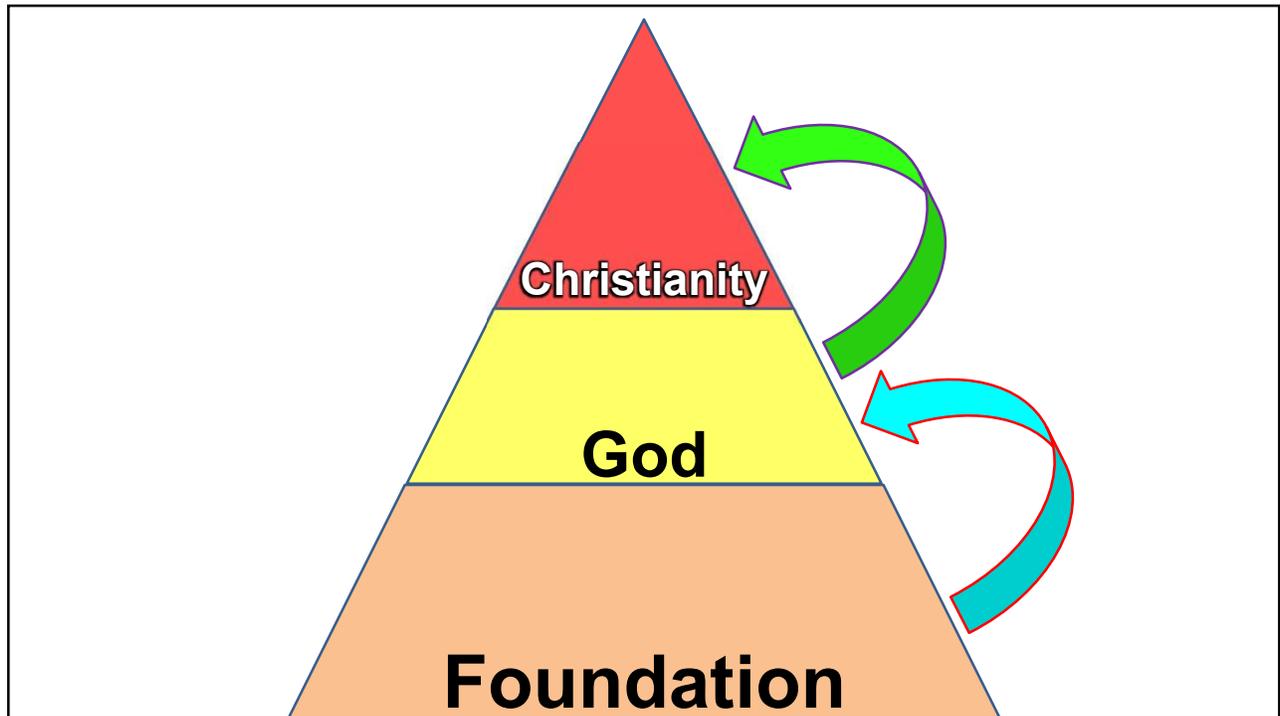


Kai Nielsen

Thus, philosophically speaking, miracles themselves cannot be evidence for God's existence.

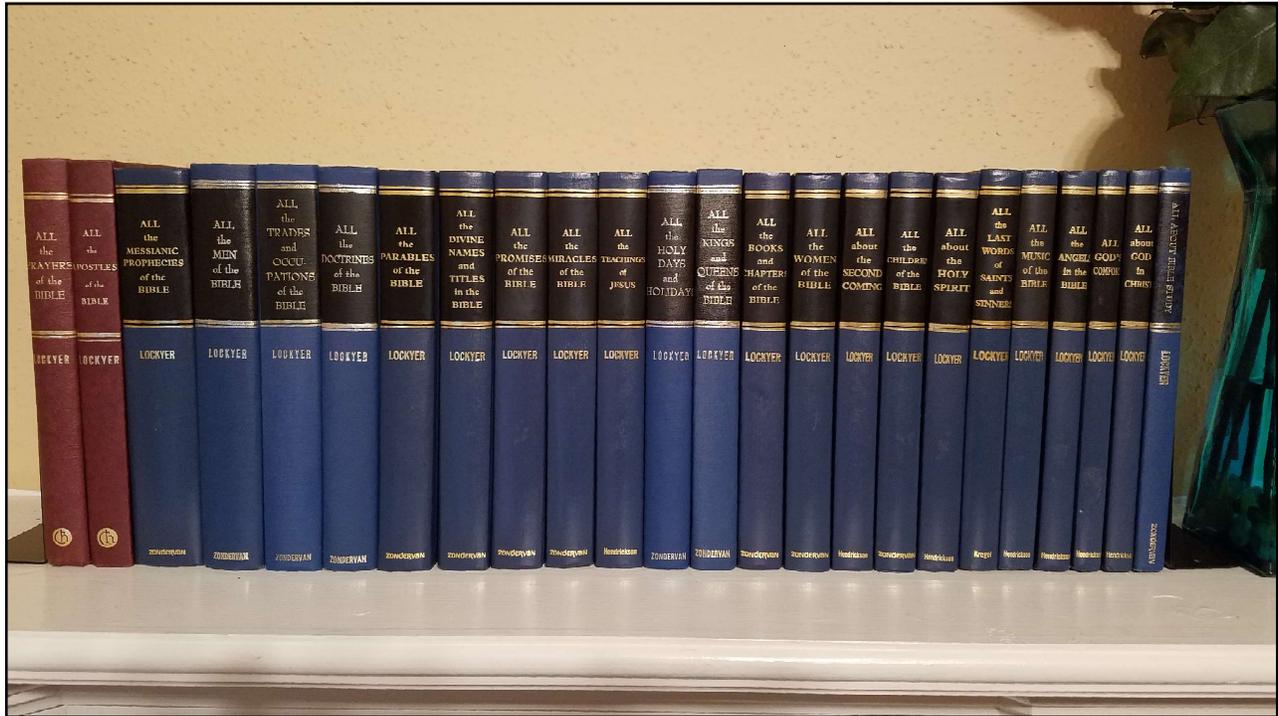
What is more, the only religions in which there could be miracles are those religions that have a transcendent (supernatural) Deity.

**Classical Apologetics
Method:
Three Steps**



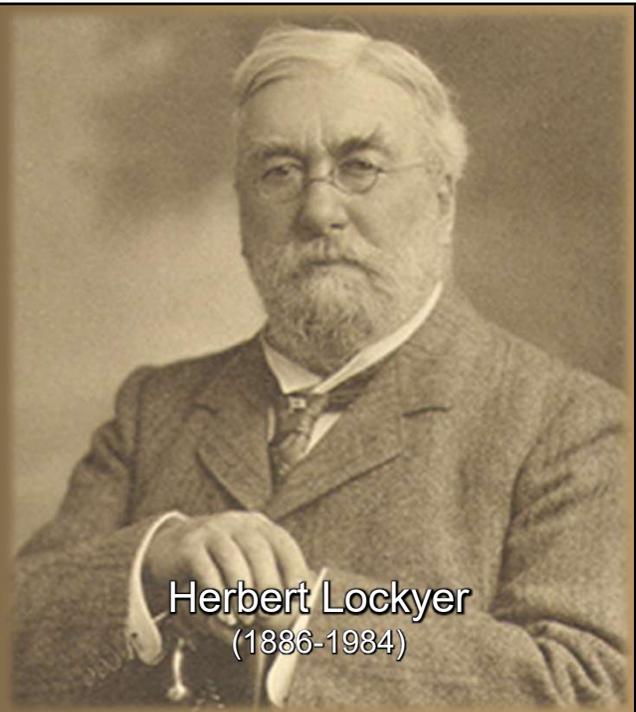
Miracles are given by God to vindicate His messenger and confirm the message.

To say that miracles were for the purpose of vindicating the messenger and confirming the messages is not to deny that God can perform miracles as an act of His grace apart from this purpose.



"Bible miracles—not including prophesies and their fulfillment, which are also miracles—fall into great periods, centuries apart:

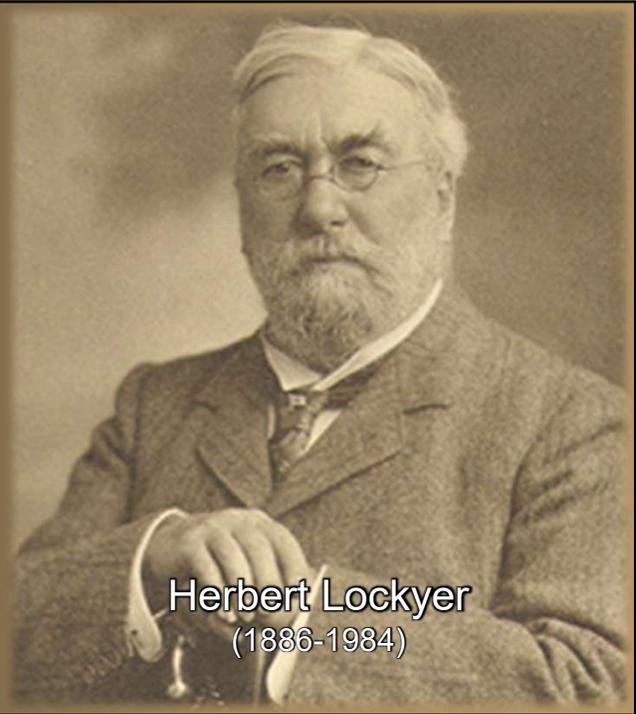
- *The establishment of the Jewish nation - 1400 B.C.*
 - ✓ *Moses and Joshua were conspicuous as miracle-workers.*
- *The crisis in struggle with idolatry - 850 B.C.*
 - ✓ *Elijah and Elisha are prominent in this era.*



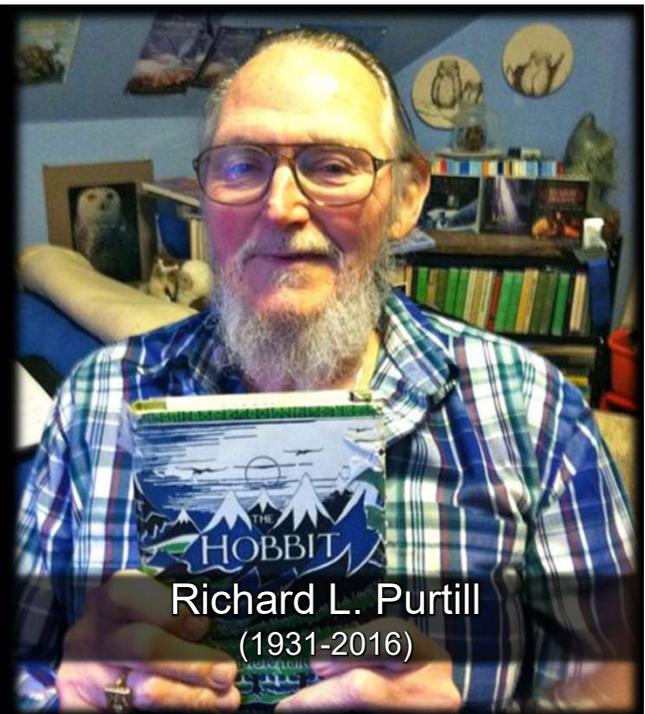
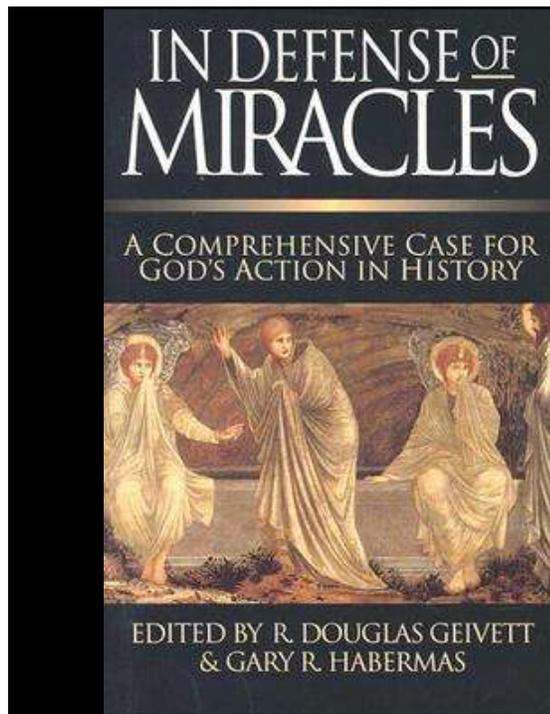
Herbert Lockyer
(1886-1984)

- *"The Captivity, when idolatry was victorious - 600 B.C.*
 - ✓ *Daniel and his friend were subjects of miracles.*
- *The introduction of Christianity - 1 A.D.*
 - ✓ *The virgin birth of Christ was the initial miracle of the New Testament. Christ and His apostles were the miracle-workers.*
- *The great tribulation.*
 - ✓ *Great signs and wonders are to characterize this period.*

[Herbert Lockyer, *All the Miracles of the Bible: The Supernatural in Scripture-Its Scope and Significance* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1961), 17-18]



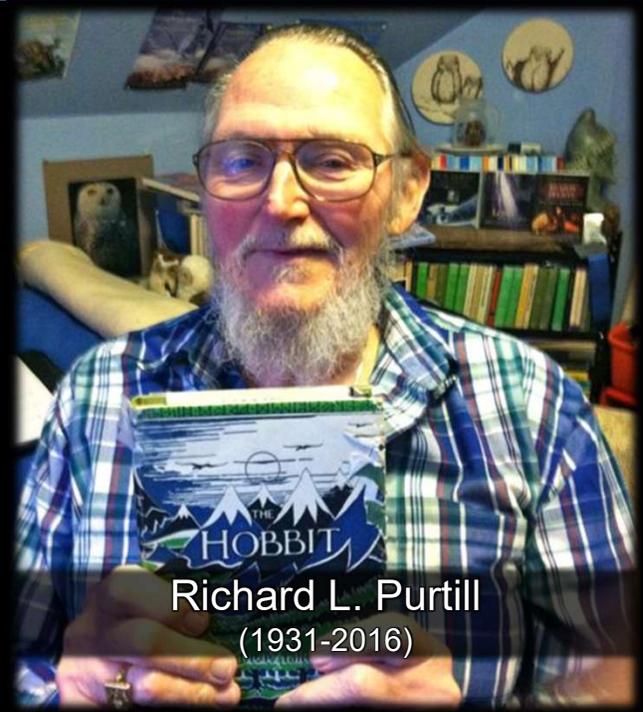
Herbert Lockyer
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Richard L. Purtill
(1931-2016)

"A miracle is an event in which God temporarily makes an exception to the natural order of things, to show that God is acting."

[Richard L. Purtill "Defining Miracles" in Geivett and Habermas *In Defense of Miracles*, 62-63]



Richard L. Purtill
(1931-2016)

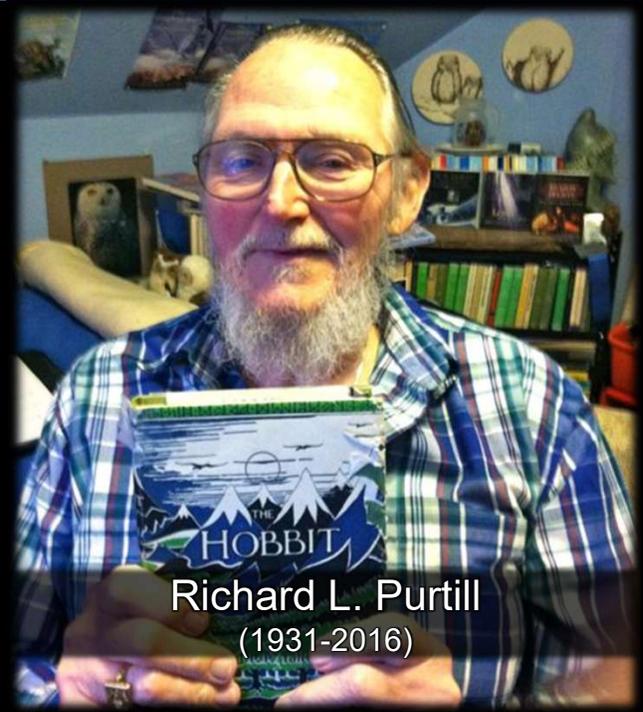
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[Richard L. Purtill "Defining Miracles" in Geivett and Habermas *In Defense of Miracles*, 62-63]

1. No one came to believe that just anyone could start raising people from the dead.
2. No one came to believe that such miracles would become a matter of course.
3. Miracles are so because there is a natural order of things.

"A miracle is an event in which God temporarily makes an exception to the natural order of things, to show that God is acting."

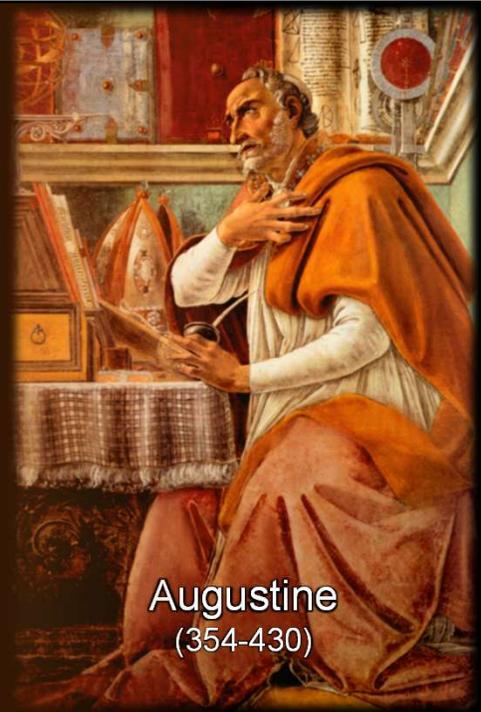
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Richard L. Purtill
(1931-2016)

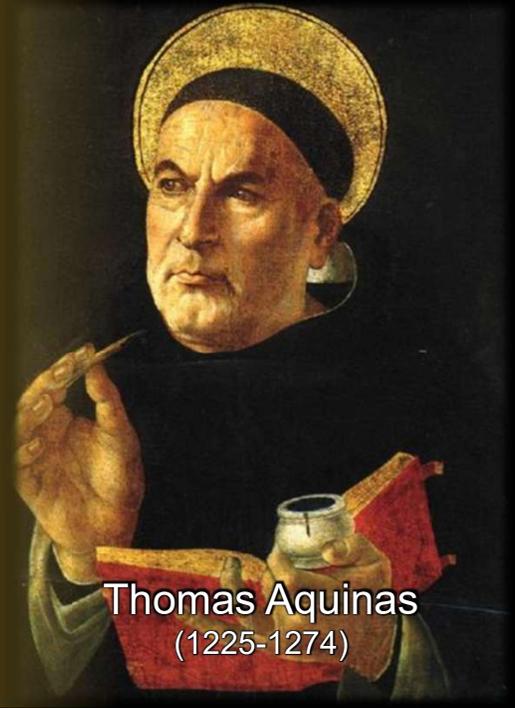
"Men would have laughed [Christ's resurrection and ascension to heaven] out of court ... had not the possibility and actuality of these events been demonstrated by ... the truth of the divine power, with confirmation by miraculous signs."

[Augustine, *City of God*, XXI:8, p. 1033]



Augustine
(354-430)

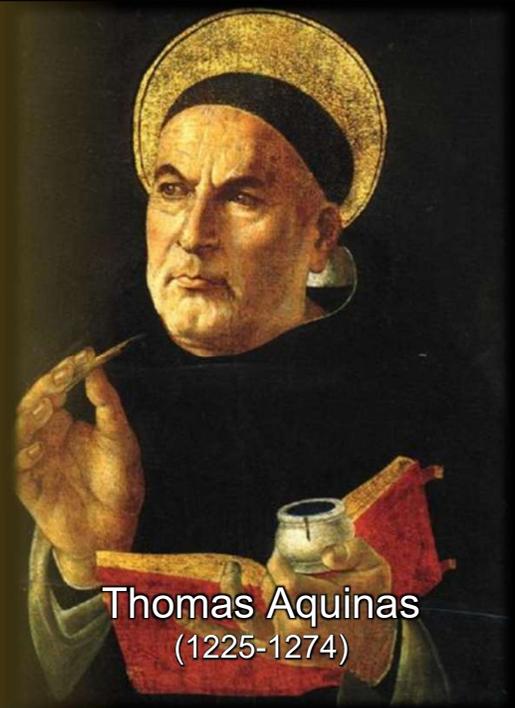
"The word uttered needs to be confirmed in order that it be rendered credible. This is done by the working of miracles, according to Mark xvi. 20, and confirming the word with signs that followed: and reasonably so."



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

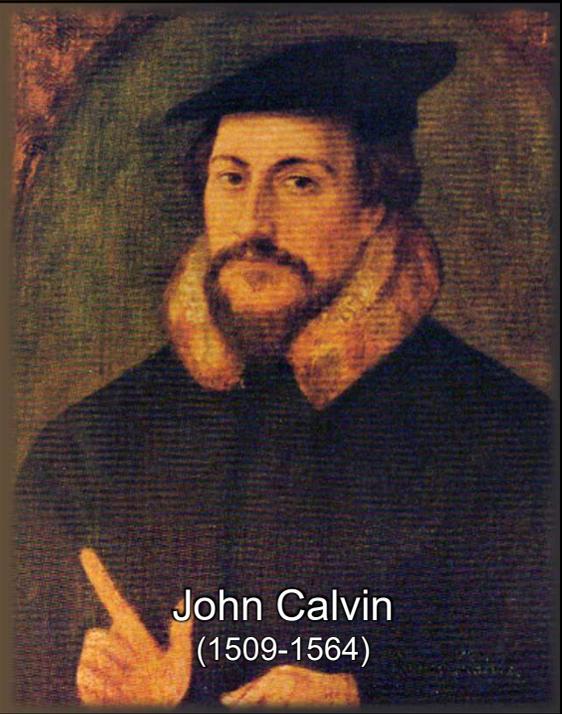
"Just as man led by his natural reason is able to arrive at some knowledge of God through His natural effects, so is he brought to a certain degree of supernatural knowledge of the objects of faith by certain supernatural effects which are called miracles."

[Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, 178, 1; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Complete English Edition in Five Volumes*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981)]



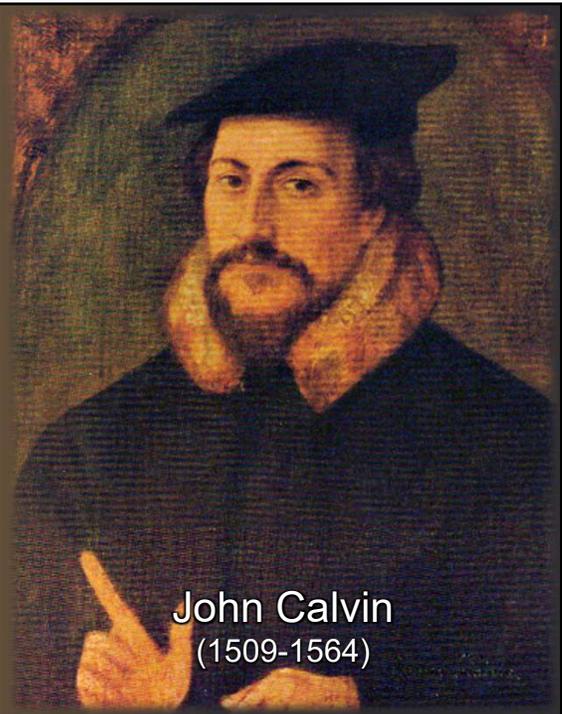
Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

"We have not coined some new gospel, but retain the very one the truth of which is confirmed by all the miracles which Christ and the apostles ever wrought. ..."



John Calvin
(1509-1564)

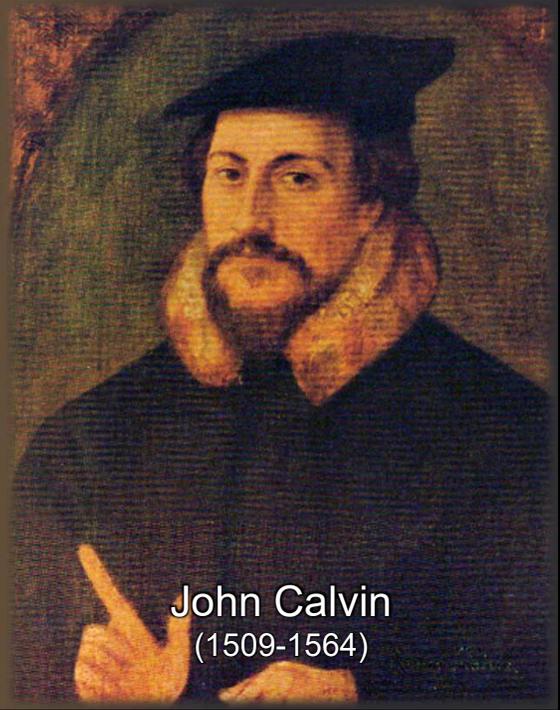
"Mark tells us (Mark xvi. 20) that the signs which followed the preaching of the apostles were wrought in confirmation of it; so Luke also relates that the Lord 'gave testimony to the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done' by the hand of the apostles (Acts xiv. 3).



John Calvin
(1509-1564)

"Very much to the same effect are those words of the apostle, that salvation by a preached gospel was confirmed, 'the Lord bearing witness with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles' (Heb. ii. 4)."

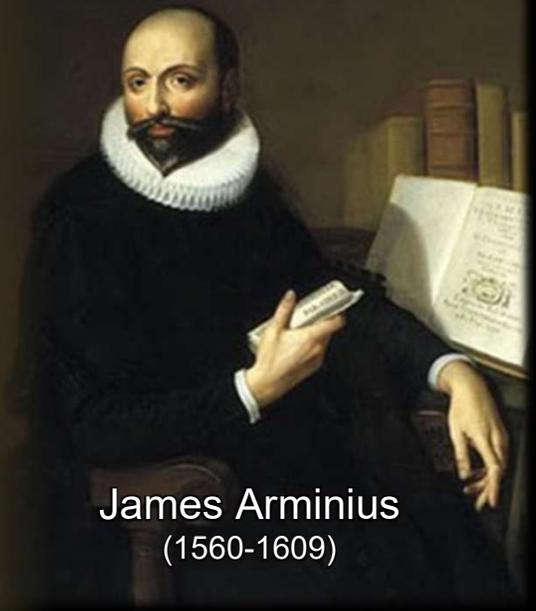
[John Calvin, "Prefatory Address by John Calvin to Francis I., King of France" in *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 2 vols., trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1975), I, I, pp. 8-9



John Calvin
(1509-1564)

"An illustrious evidence of the same divinity is afforded in the miracles, which God has performed by the stewards of his word, his prophets and apostles, and by Christ himself, for the confirmation of his doctrine and for the establishment of their authority."

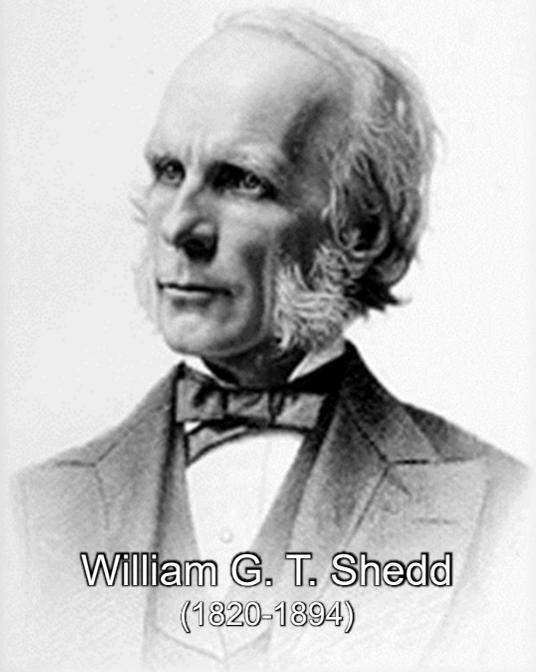
[James Arminius, *The Writings of James Arminius*, 3 vols., trans. James Nichols and W. R. Bagnall (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), I, 129-130]



James Arminius
(1560-1609)

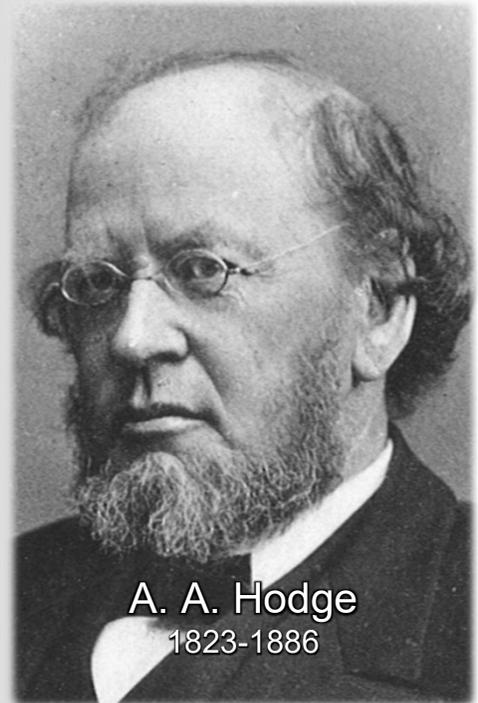
"A miracle therefore, if an actual historical fact, is a proof of the divine origin of the truths attested by it."

[William G. T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1980), vol. 1, 117]



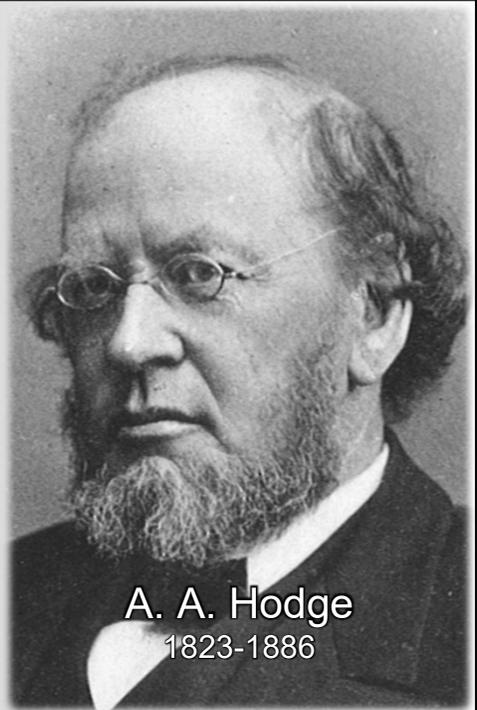
William G. T. Shedd
(1820-1894)

"A miracle is (1) an event occurring in the physical world, capable of being discerned and discriminated by the bodily senses of human witnesses,



A. A. Hodge
1823-1886

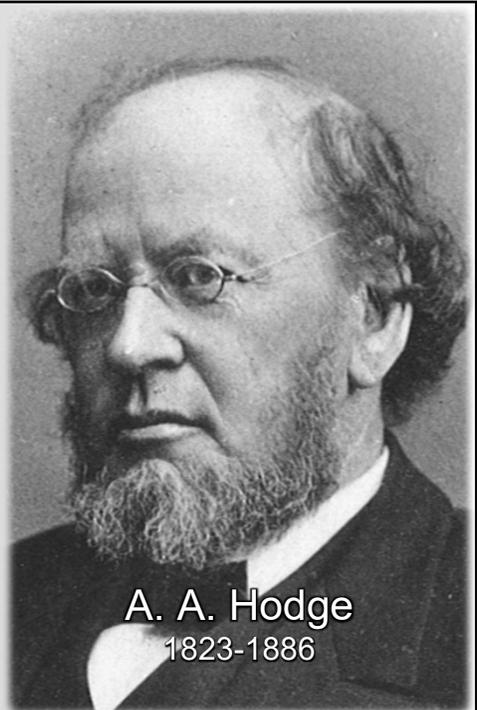
***"(2) of such a character
that it can be rationally
referred to no other
cause than the
immediate volition of
God,***



A. A. Hodge
1823-1886

***"(3) accompanying a
religious teacher, and
designed to authenticate
his divine commission
and the truth of his
message."***

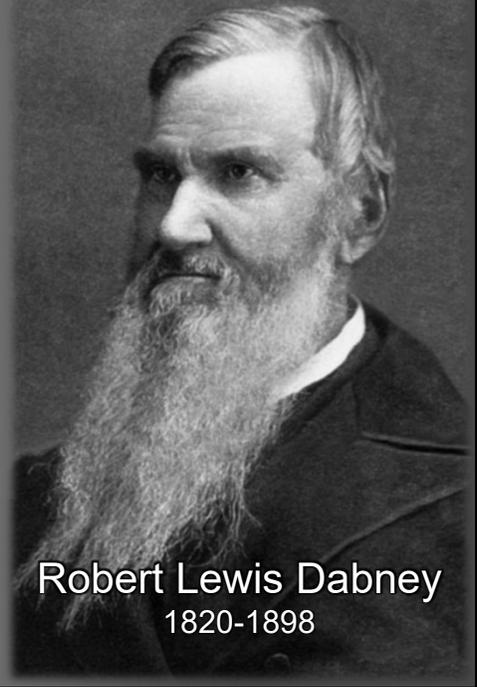
[A. A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology for Students and Laymen* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), 275]



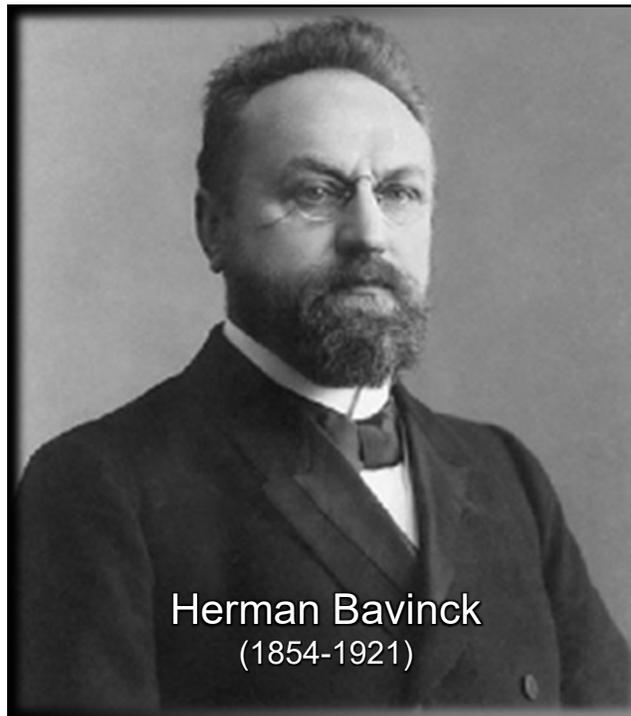
A. A. Hodge
1823-1886

***"The prime end for which
God has introduced
miracles [is] to be
attestations to man of
God's messages."***

[Robert Lewis Dabney, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972), 233]



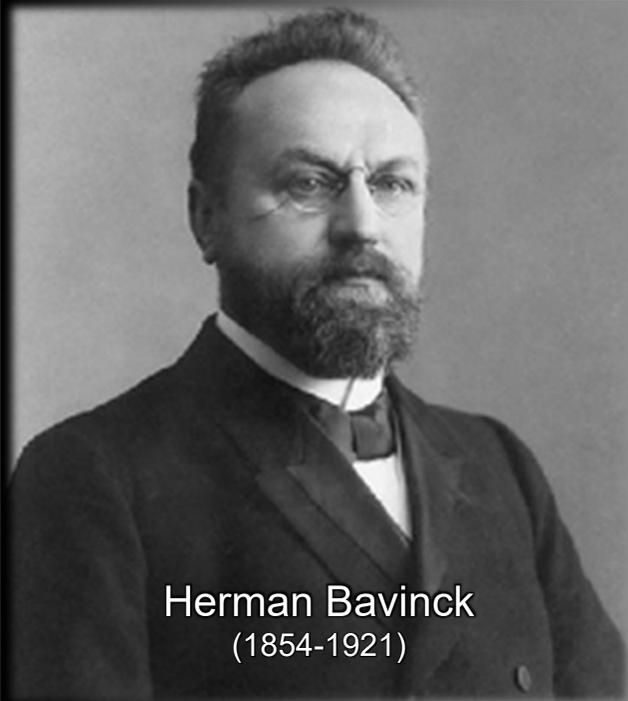
Robert Lewis Dabney
1820-1898



Herman Bavinck
(1854-1921)

"Those works of God are, first of all, to be observed in his creation and providence. All God's words are wonders. Also his works are frequently described in Scripture as wonders.... From this fact, however, we must not infer ... that Scripture makes no distinction between nature and miracle. Certainly the notion that a miracle would be contrary to the laws of nature and therefore impossible does not arise. All of Scripture proceeds rather from the belief that nothing is too wonderful for God This does not imply, however, that Scripture lacks the distinction between the ordinary order of nature and the extraordinary deeds of divine power."

[Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Prolegomena*, Vol. 1, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 336]



Herman Bavinck
(1854-1921)

*They [miracles] occur for various reasons, sometimes to punish the wicked ..., other times to save and redeem God's people, to bring salvation and healing, like the plagues in Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, the miracles in the wilderness, the healings of Jesus. **Frequently also they have the direct or indirect purpose of confirming the mission of the prophets, the truth of their word, and thus belief in their witness**"*

[Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: Prolegomena*, Vol. 1, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic), 337]

"Though miracles are wonders (Acts 2:19) in the eyes of men and display the power of God, their true purpose is that of a 'sign' (Matt. 12:38; John 2:18). They certify and authenticate a teacher or his doctrine."



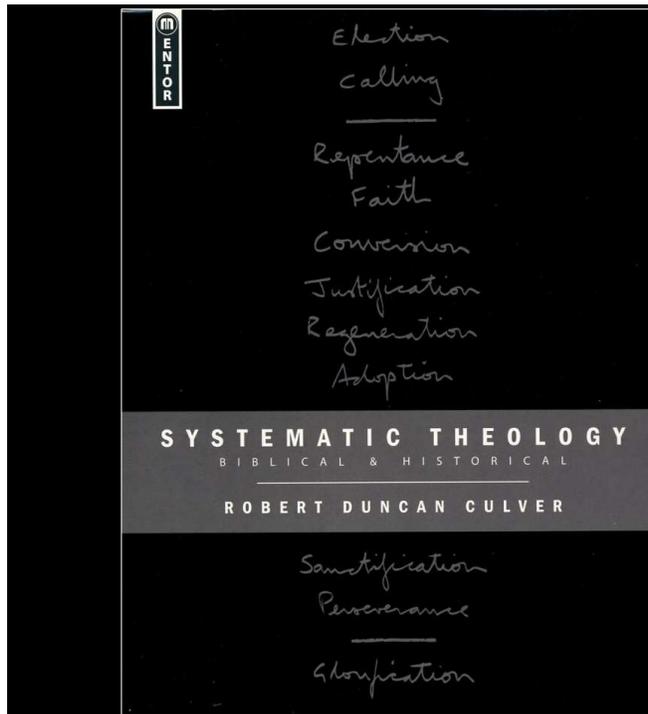
Lewis Sperry Chafer
(1871-1952)

[Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 8 vols. (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), I, 256-257]

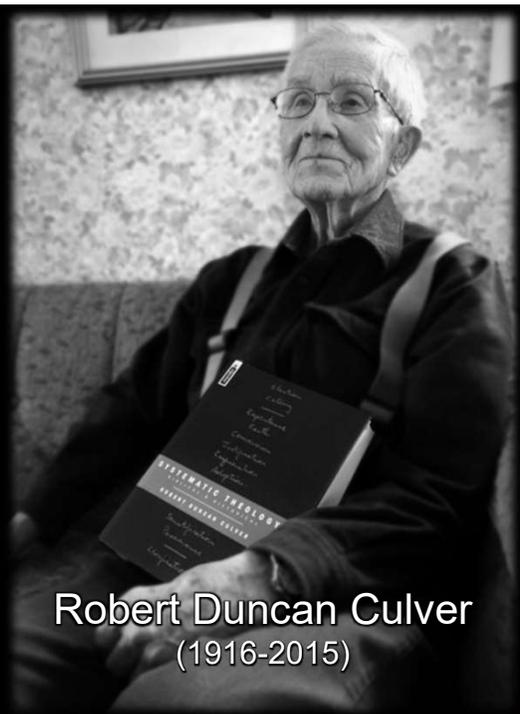
"Turning more specifically to the miracles wrought by Christ, it may be asserted that they were intended to sustain His claim to be Jehovah, the theanthropic [God/Man] Messiah of Israel, and to give divine attestation to His teachings."

[Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, V, 172., 233]

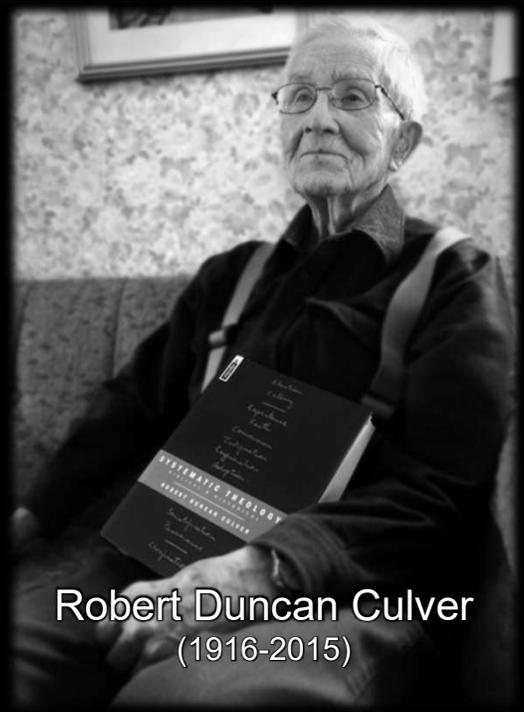
Lewis Sperry Chafer
(1871-1952)



Robert Duncan Culver
(1916-2015)



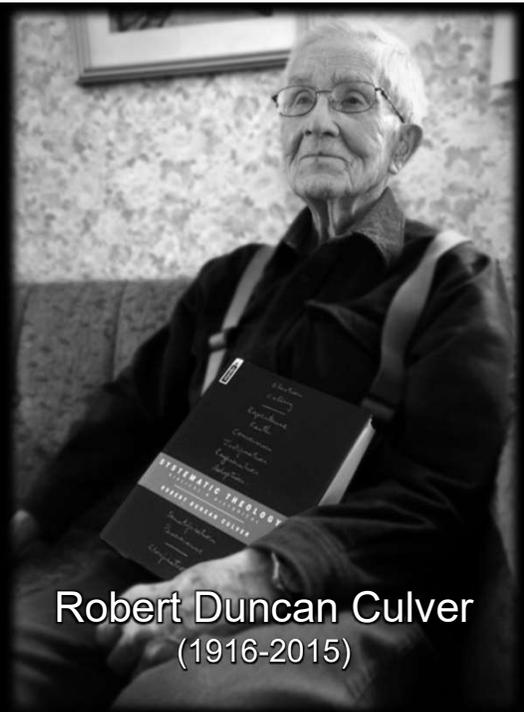
"Biblical miracles are extraordinary events (ergon) which capture public notice, producing amazement (teras, thaumadzō) and which have meaning (sēmeion). This meaning is the special presence of God in some special way usually declared by a prophet (Aaron, Elijah, Moses, Jeremiah).



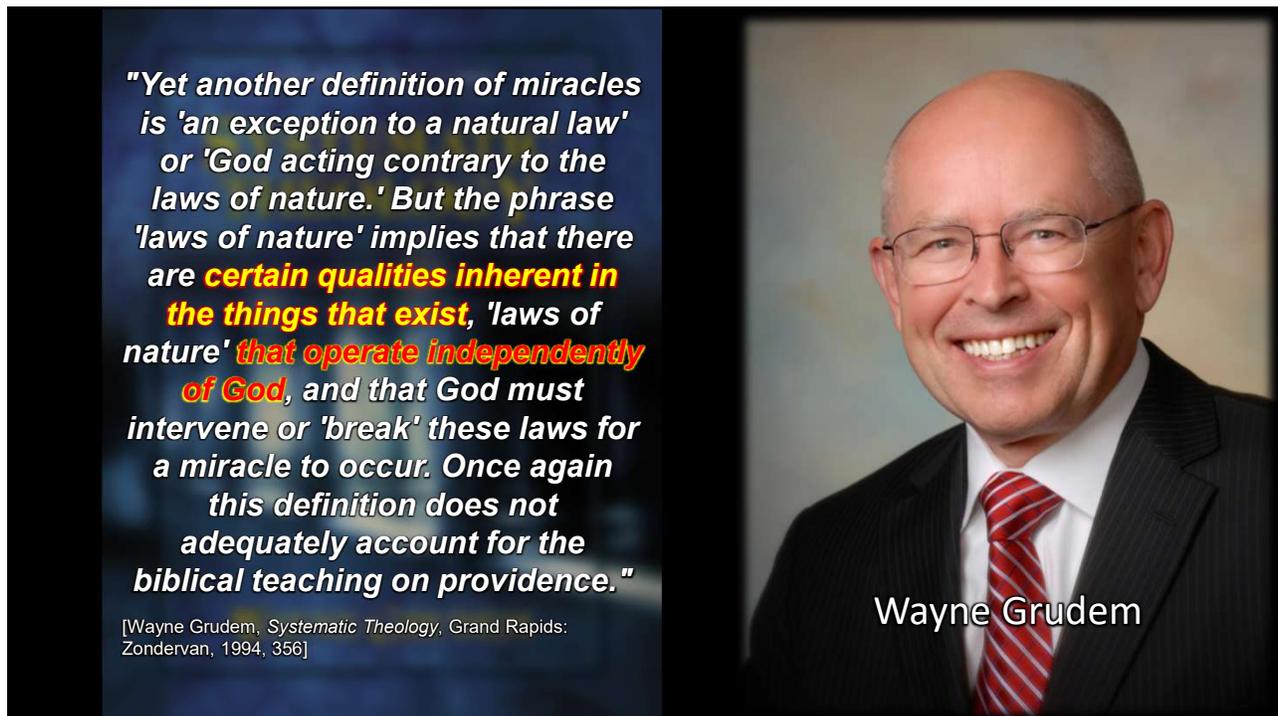
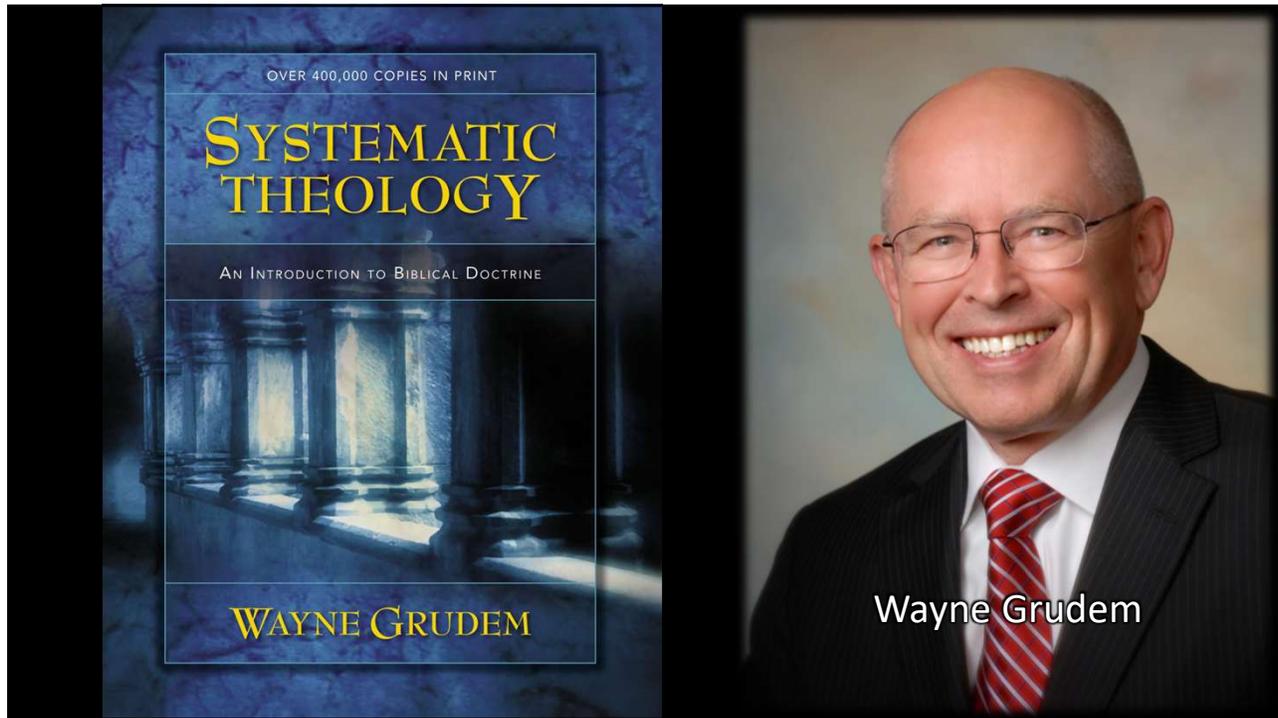
Robert Duncan Culver
(1916-2015)

"Finally a biblical miracle is dunamis, the product of and evidence of divine power and authority, not only in the event itself but of delegated power in the divinely authorized person at whose word the miracle took place."

[Robert Duncan Culver, *Systematic Theology: Biblical and Historical* (Fearn, Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2005), 206]



Robert Duncan Culver
(1916-2015)



*"Yet another definition of miracles is 'an exception to a natural law' or 'God acting contrary to the laws of nature.' But the phrase 'laws of nature' implies that there are **certain qualities inherent in the things that exist**, 'laws of nature' **that operate independently of God**, and that God must intervene or 'break' these laws for a miracle to occur. Once again this definition does not adequately account for the biblical teaching on providence."*

[Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 356]

Grudem does not give an example of someone who defines 'miracle' as "an exception to the natural law" or "God acting contrary to laws of nature" who holds the popular understanding of 'laws of nature' that implies that "there are certain qualities inherent in things that exist ... that operate independently of God."

*"Yet another definition of miracles is 'an exception to a natural law' or 'God acting contrary to the laws of nature.' But the phrase 'laws of nature' implies that there are **certain qualities inherent in the things that exist**, 'laws of nature' **that operate independently of God**, and that God must intervene or 'break' these laws for a miracle to occur. Once again this definition does not adequately account for the biblical teaching on providence."*

[Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 356]

Given that there might be some who have this definition of 'miracle' who holds this assumption, Grudem is right to reject this definition not only because it might not "adequately account for the biblical teaching on providence" but also for more philosophical reasons.

*"Yet another definition of miracles is 'an exception to a natural law' or 'God acting contrary to the laws of nature.' But the phrase 'laws of nature' implies that there are **certain qualities inherent in the things that exist**, 'laws of nature' **that operate independently of God**, and that God must intervene or 'break' these laws for a miracle to occur. Once again this definition does not adequately account for the biblical teaching on providence."*

[Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 356]

In the Classical tradition, there is a better way to understand 'laws of nature' such that they would not be operating "independently of God."

Grudem acknowledges that there may be an alternative way to define 'natural law' that understands it to mean "the predictable patterns of behavior that God gives to and maintains in each created thing."

Such a characterization is closer to the Classical tradition and Grudem finds it "less objectionable."

*"Yet another definition of miracles is 'an exception to a natural law' or 'God acting contrary to the laws of nature.' But the phrase 'laws of nature' implies that there are **certain qualities inherent in the things that exist**, 'laws of nature' **that operate independently of God**, and that God must intervene or 'break' these laws for a miracle to occur. Once again this definition does not adequately account for the biblical teaching on providence."*

[Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 356]

Regrettably, Grudem's treatment of this option does not go beyond a footnote.

Given how the Classical tradition would unpack this "alternative way to define 'natural law' " it would have been interesting to see whether Grudem would conclude that this definition of 'miracle' would "adequately account for the biblical teaching on providence" and would assuage his other concerns about certain definitions of miracles.

*"Yet another definition of miracles is 'an exception to a natural law' or 'God acting contrary to the laws of nature.' But the phrase 'laws of nature' implies that there are **certain qualities inherent in the things that exist**, 'laws of nature' **that operate independently of God**, and that God must intervene or 'break' these laws for a miracle to occur. Once again this definition does not adequately account for the biblical teaching on providence."*

[Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994, 356]

In the classical tradition, sensible objects possess certain qualities that are inherent to them because of their nature.

The natures of these sensible objects are created by God.

*"Yet another definition of miracles is 'an exception to a natural law' or 'God acting contrary to the laws of nature.' But the phrase 'laws of nature' implies that there are **certain qualities inherent in the things that exist**, 'laws of nature' **that operate independently of God**, and that God must intervene or 'break' these laws for a miracle to occur. Once again this definition does not adequately account for the biblical teaching on providence."*

[Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994, 356]

Such natures give sensible objects potencies and powers that give them their teleologies.

This enables us to "predict" their activities. Such predictions we call the "laws of nature."

*"Yet another definition of miracles is 'an exception to a natural law' or 'God acting contrary to the laws of nature.' But the phrase 'laws of nature' implies that there are **certain qualities inherent in the things that exist**, 'laws of nature' **that operate independently of God**, and that God must intervene or 'break' these laws for a miracle to occur. Once again this definition does not adequately account for the biblical teaching on providence."*

[Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994, 356]

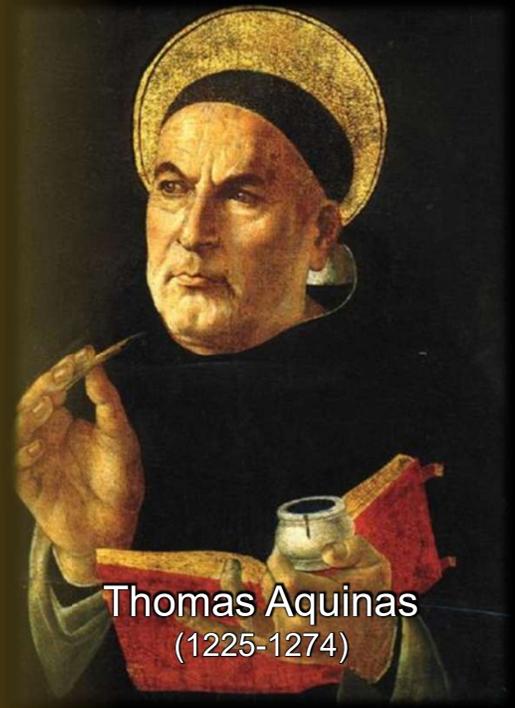
Thus, in contrast to certain popular understandings, it is not the case that such things "operate independently of God."

"The natural necessity inherent in those beings which are determined to a particular thing, is a kind of impression from God, directing them to their end; as the necessity whereby an arrow is moved so as to fly towards a certain point is an impression from the archer, and not from the arrow."



Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)

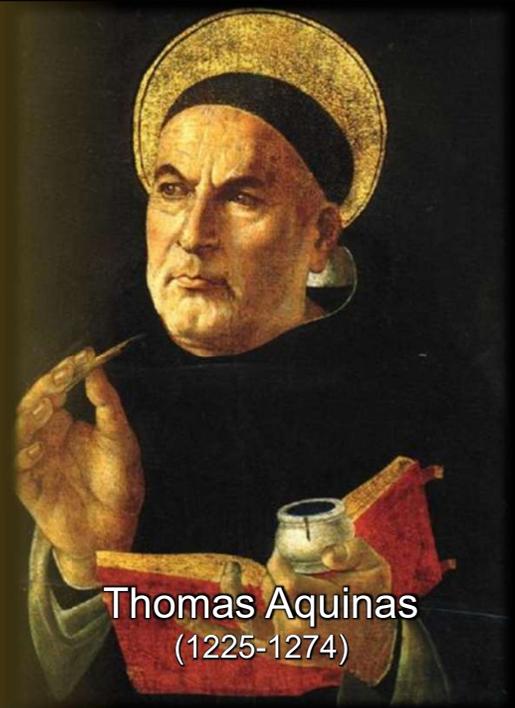
***"But there is a difference,
inasmuch as that which
creatures receive from God is
their nature, while that which
natural things receive from
man in addition to their
nature is somewhat violent.***



**Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)**

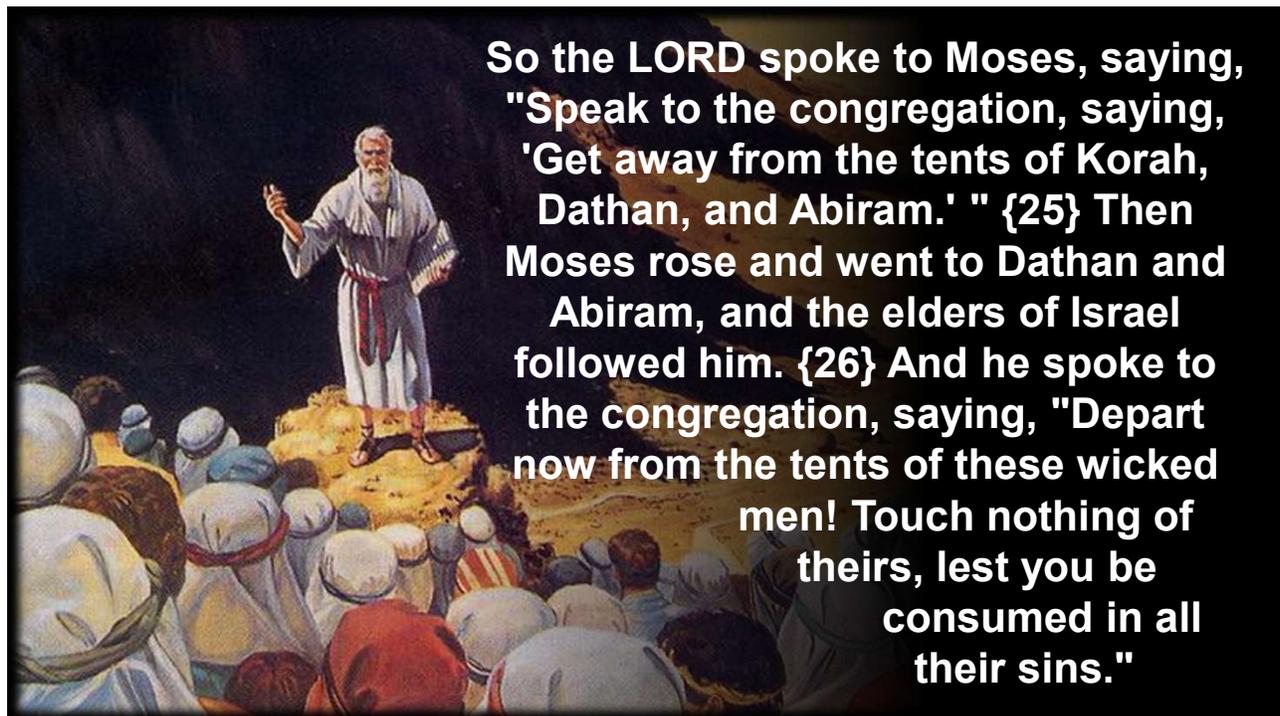
***"Wherefore, as the violent
necessity in the movement of
the arrow shows the actions
of the archer, so the natural
necessity of things shows
the government of Divine
Providence."***

[Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 103, i, ad. 3; St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica: Complete English Edition in Five Volumes*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981)]

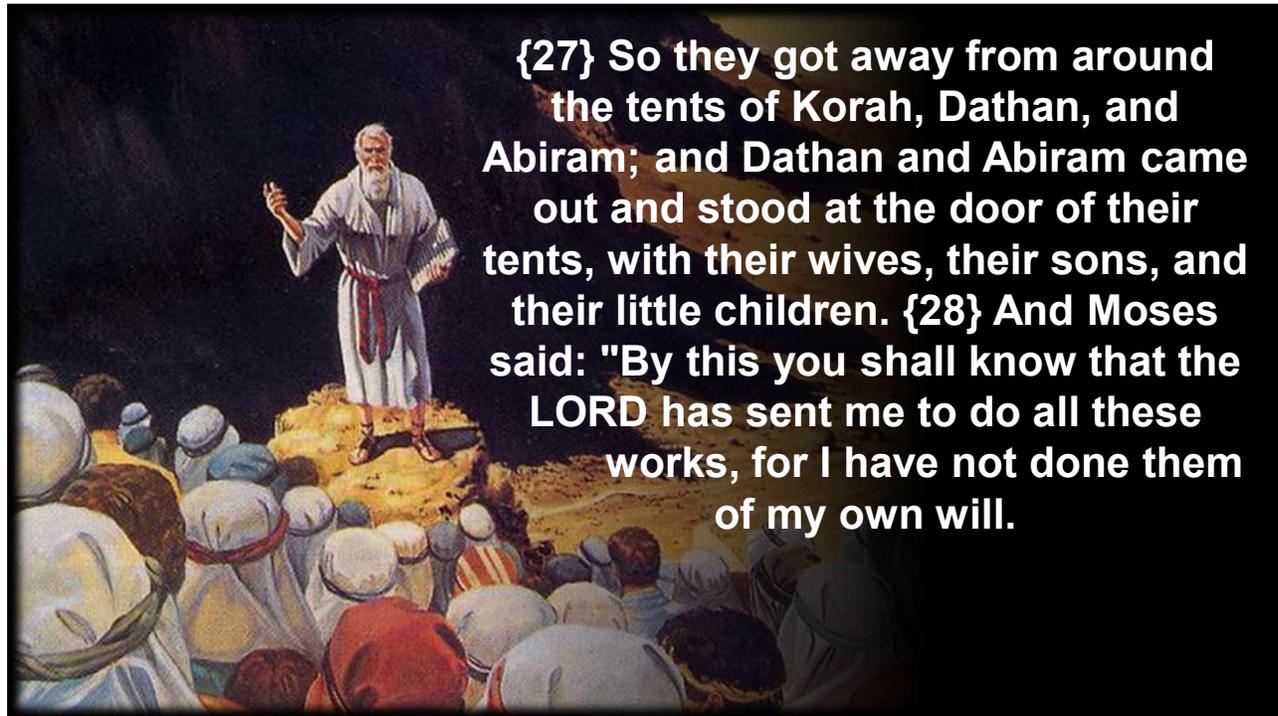


**Thomas Aquinas
(1225-1274)**

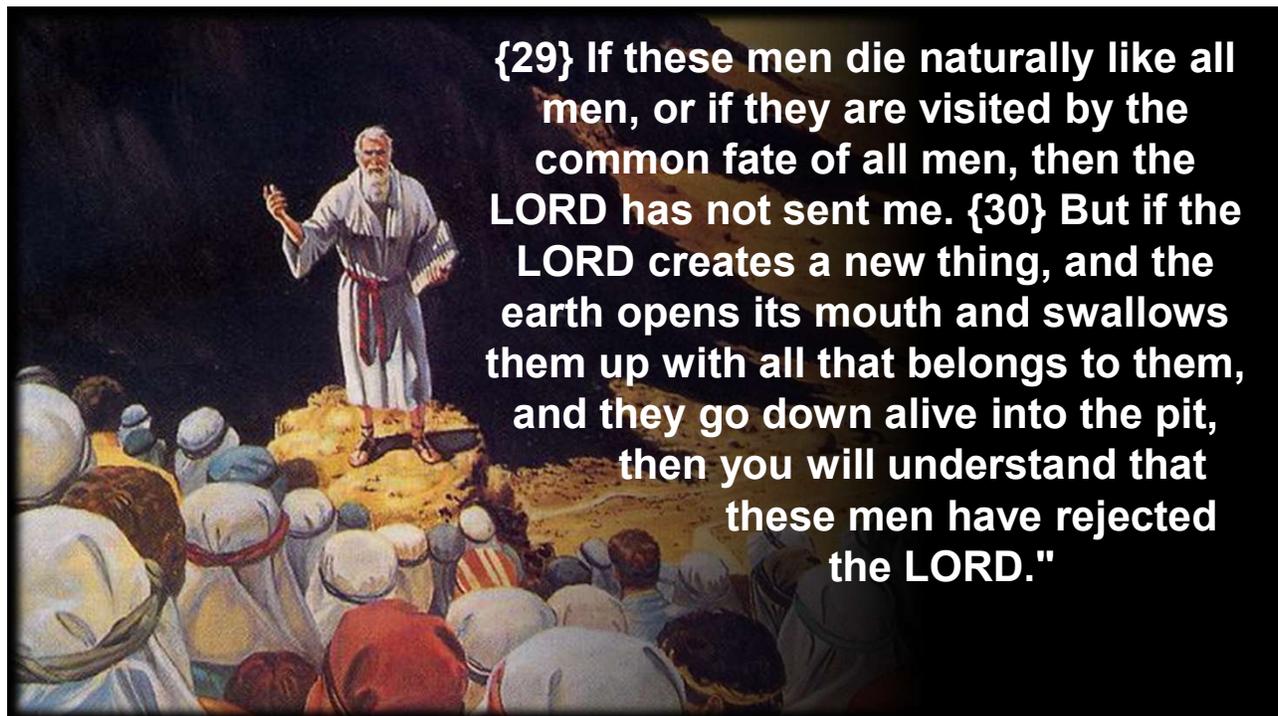
But an overemphasis on these types of miracles could erode one's understanding of the biblical reason for miracles.



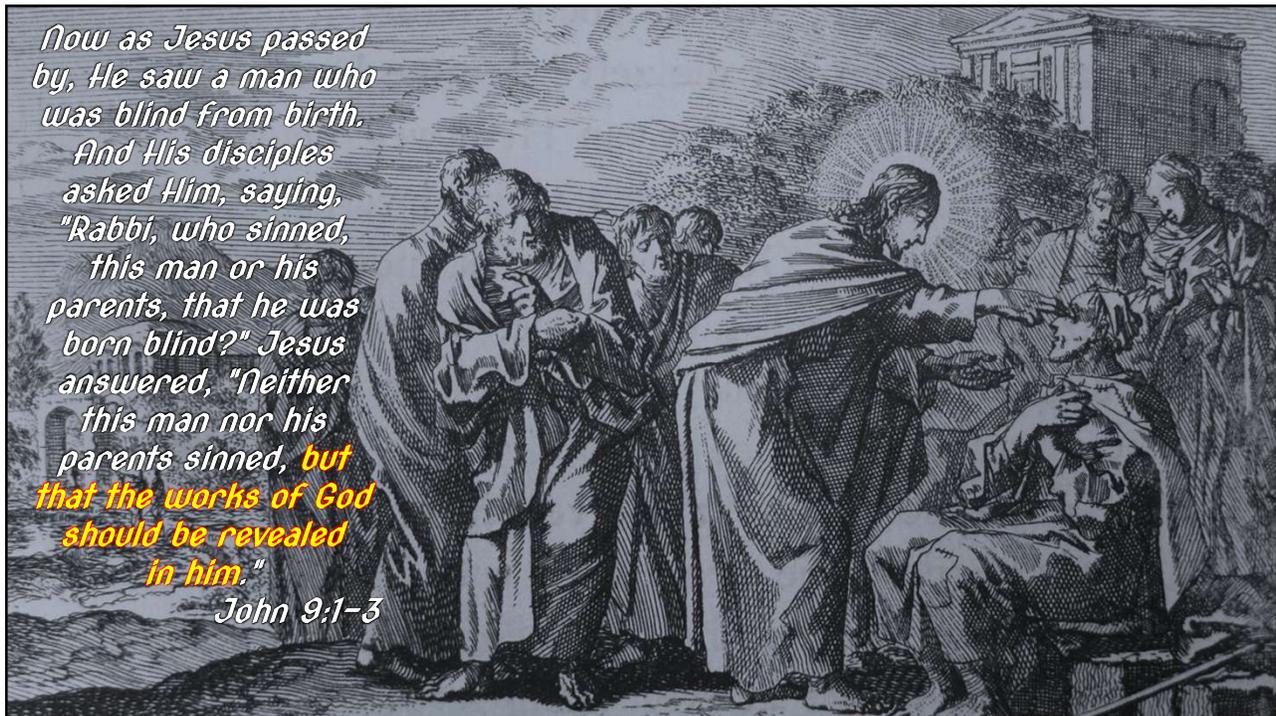
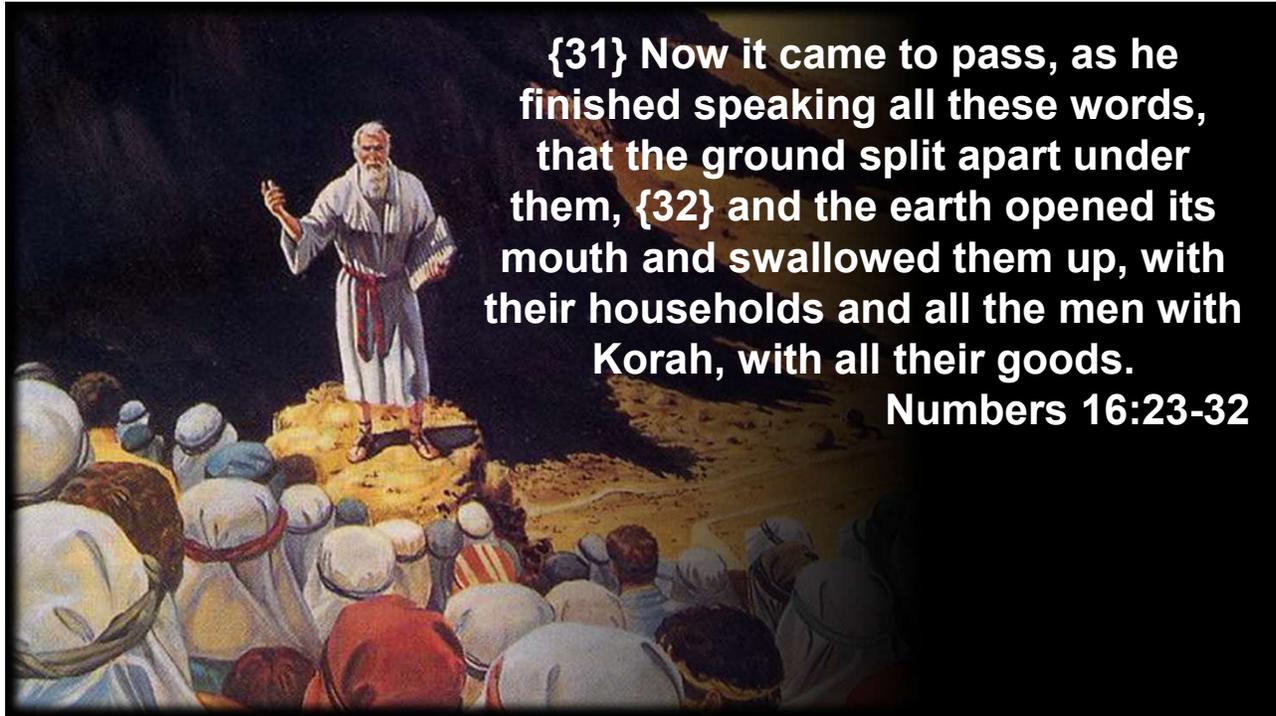
So the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the congregation, saying, 'Get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.'" {25} Then Moses rose and went to Dathan and Abiram, and the elders of Israel followed him. {26} And he spoke to the congregation, saying, "Depart now from the tents of these wicked men! Touch nothing of theirs, lest you be consumed in all their sins."



{27} So they got away from around the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram; and Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents, with their wives, their sons, and their little children. {28} And Moses said: "By this you shall know that the LORD has sent me to do all these works, for I have not done them of my own will.



{29} If these men die naturally like all men, or if they are visited by the common fate of all men, then the LORD has not sent me. {30} But if the LORD creates a new thing, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the pit, then you will understand that these men have rejected the LORD."



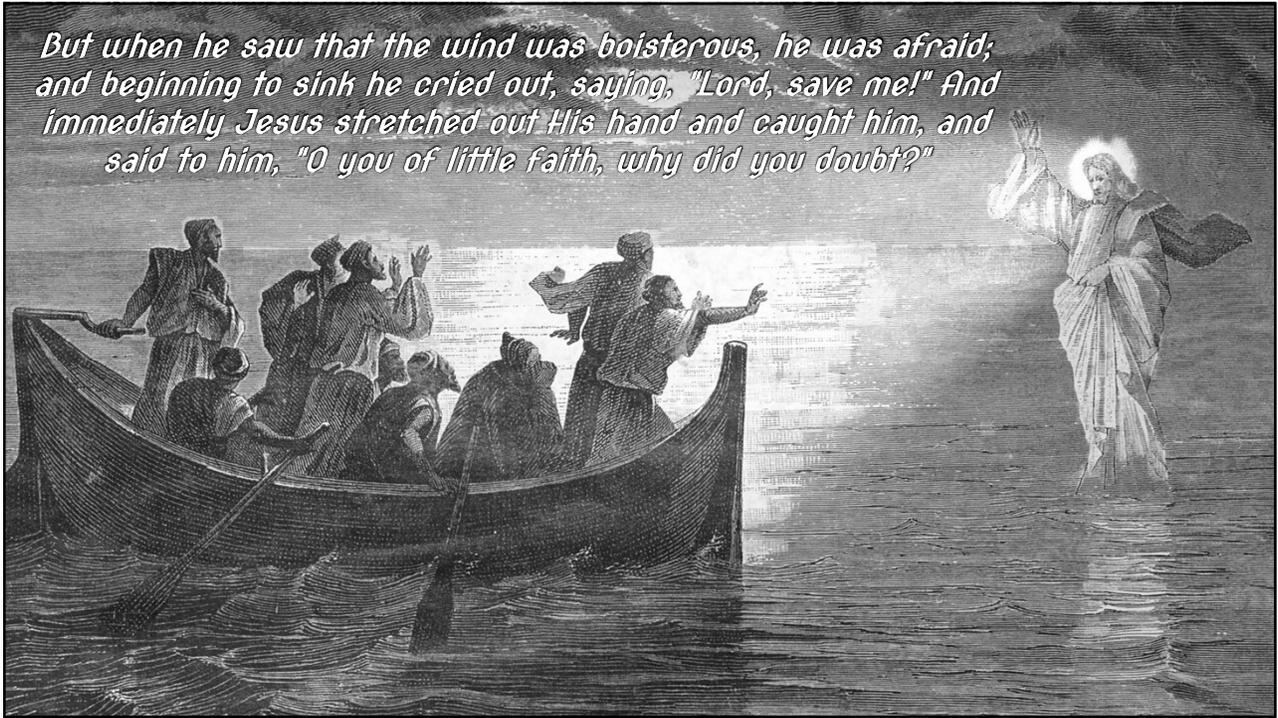
Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."



And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water." So He said, "Come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

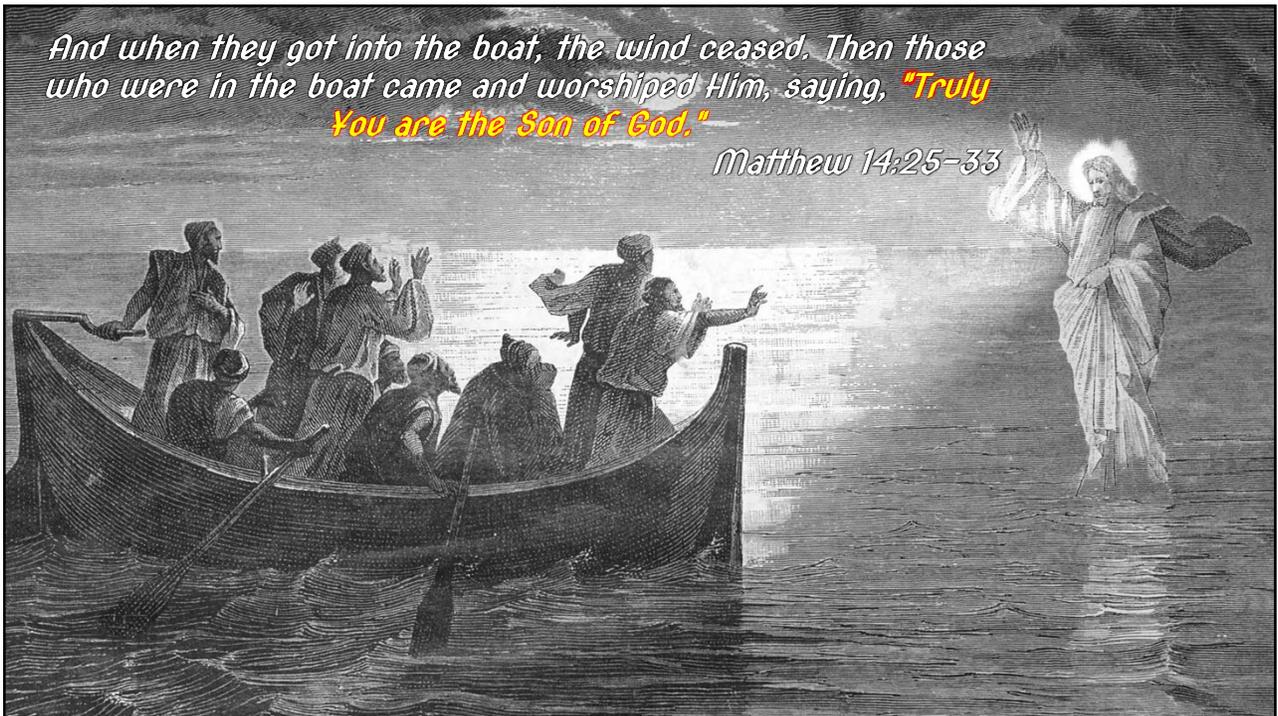


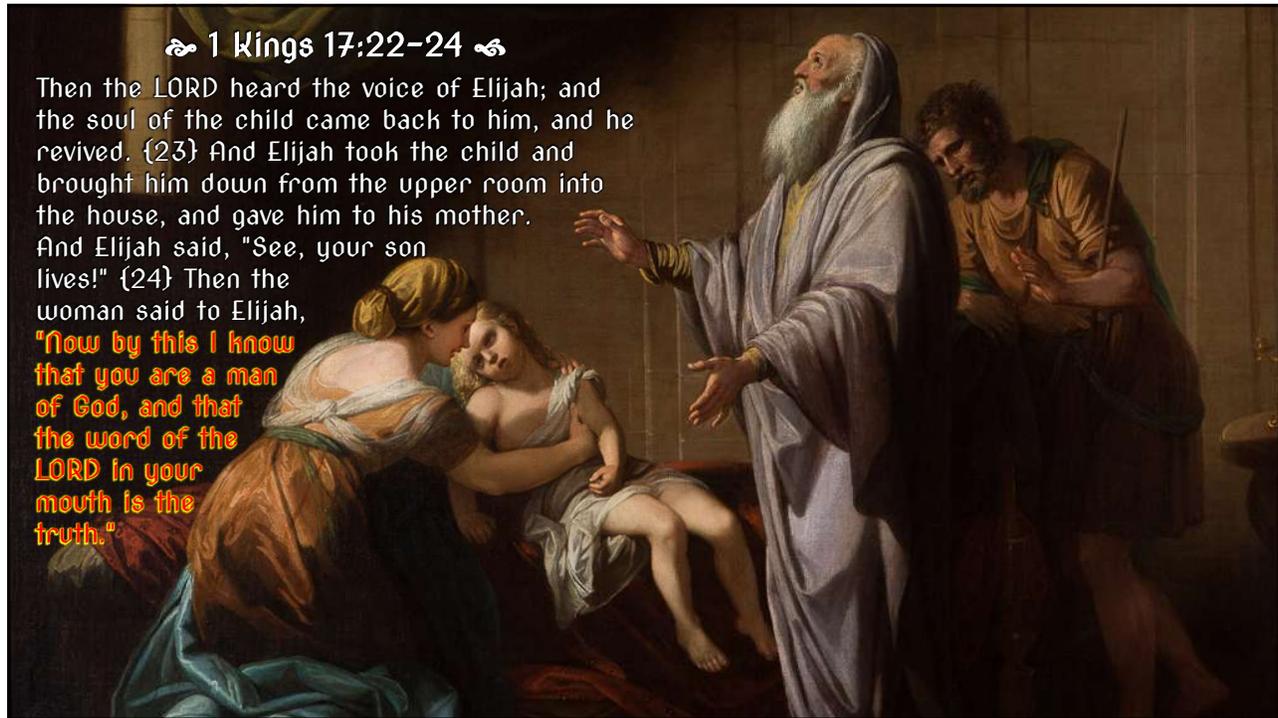
But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!" And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"



*And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "**Truly You are the Son of God.**"*

Matthew 14:25-33

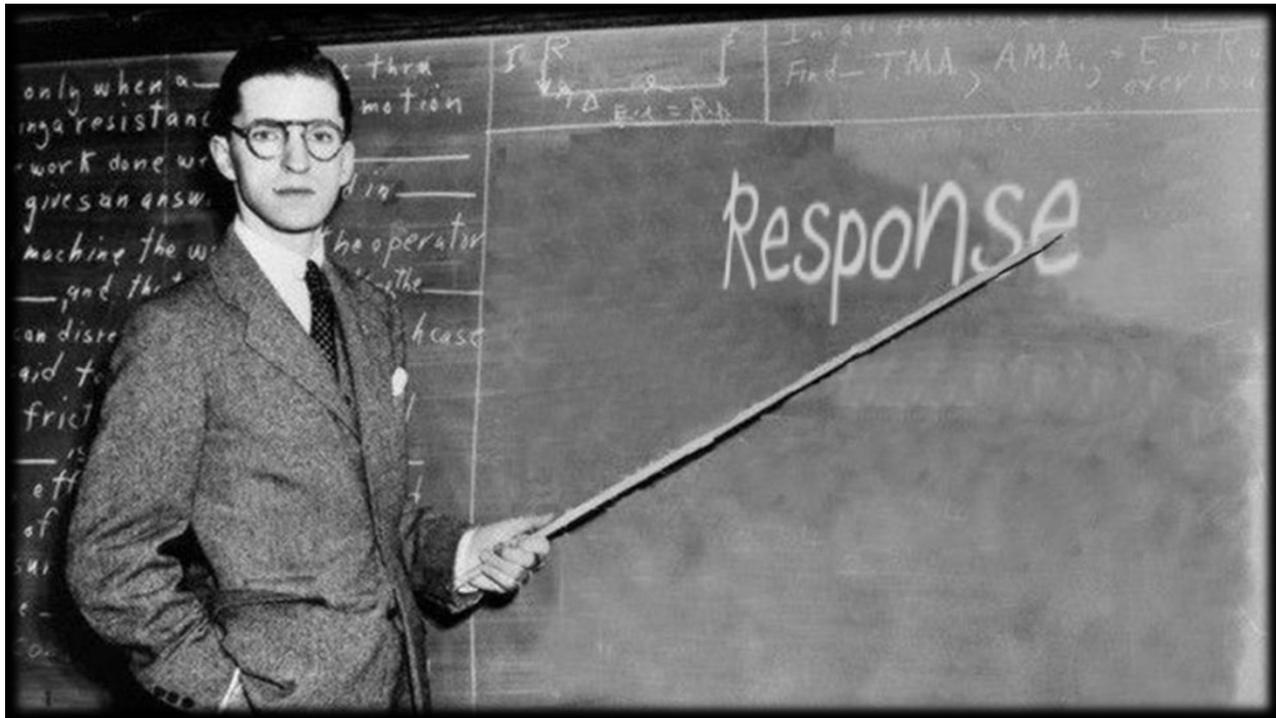






The Challenge of Atheism

**Every event has a natural cause.
Therefore, miracles by definition cannot occur.**

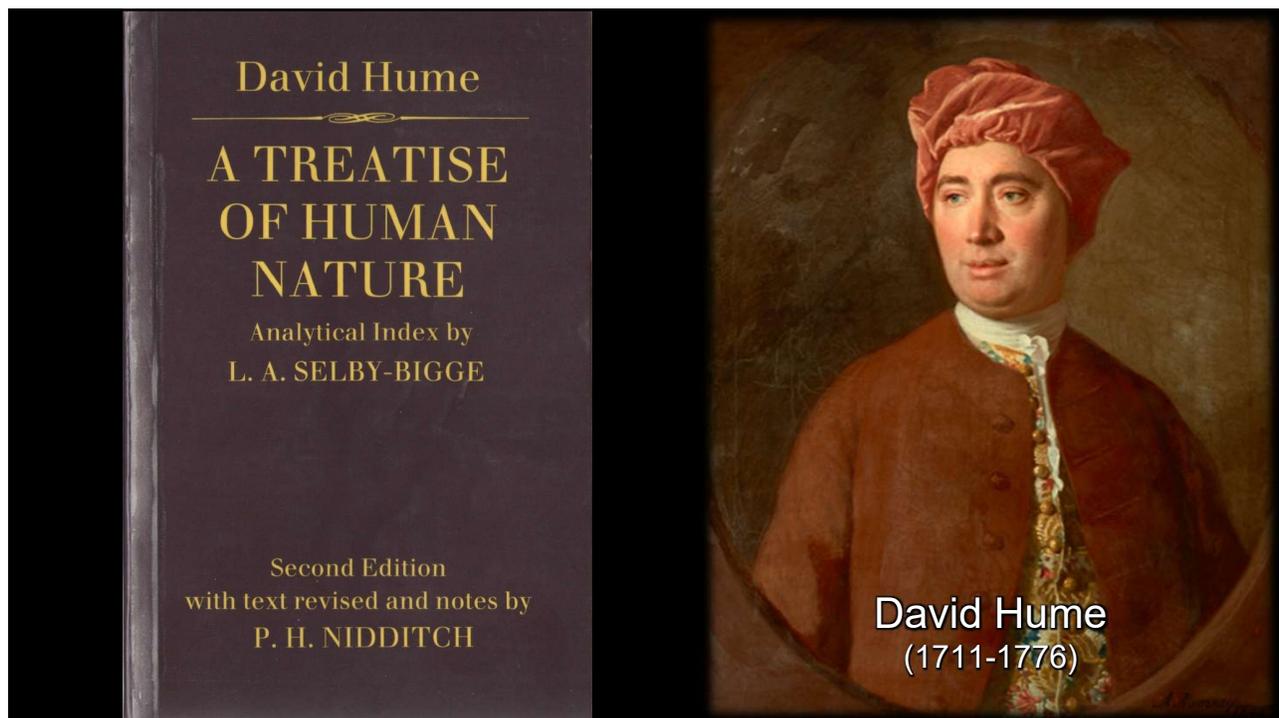


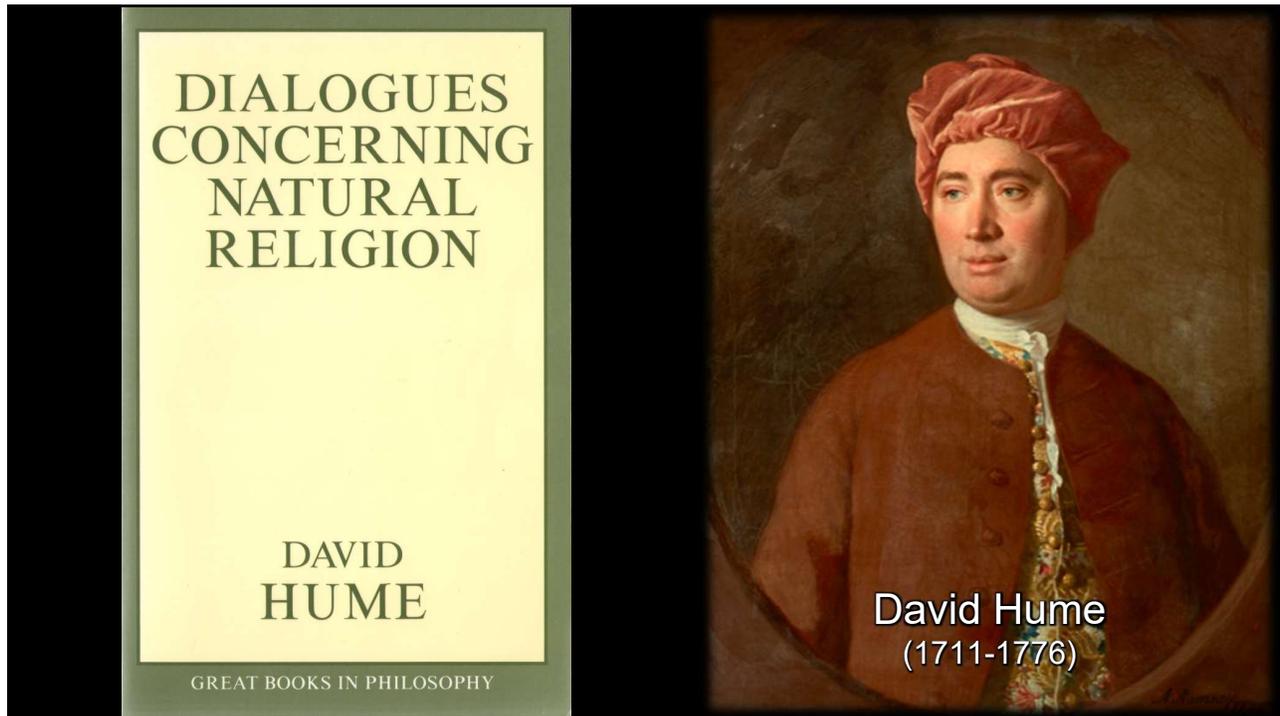
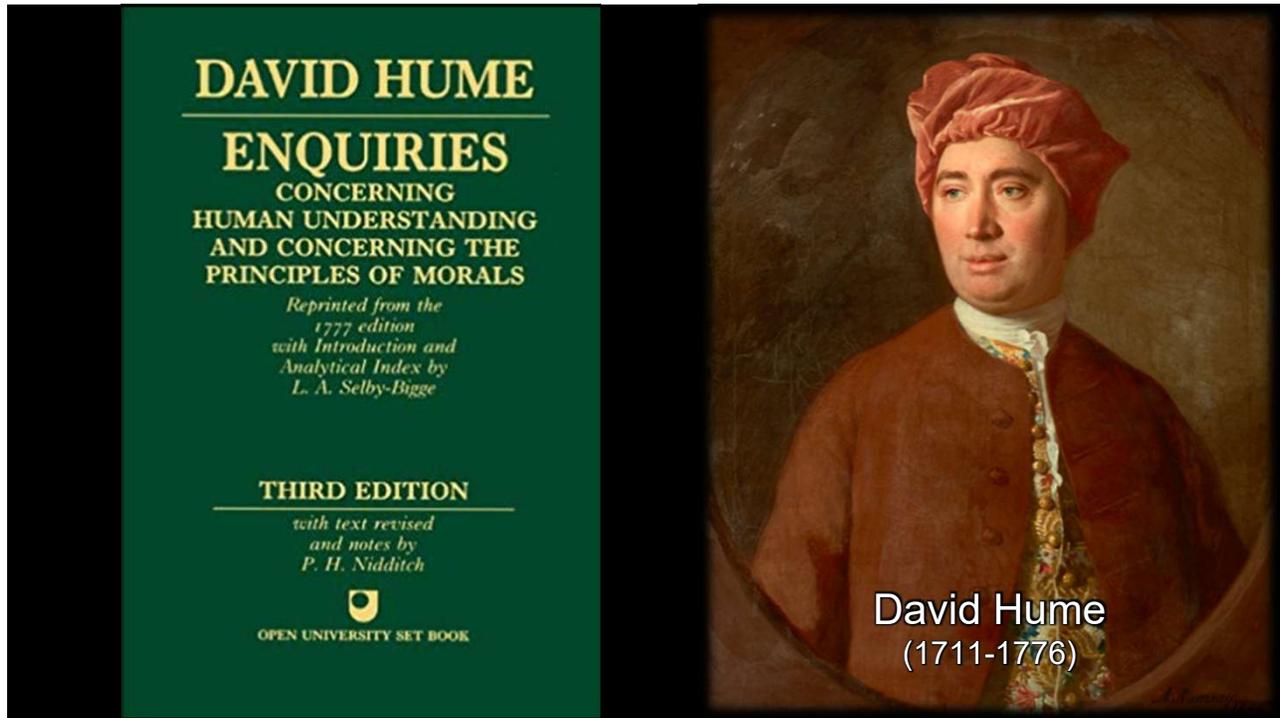
1. *Miracles are by definition an act of God.*
2. *Therefore, miracles are possible if and only if God exists.*
3. ***God's existence has been demonstrated.***
4. *Therefore, miracles are possible.*

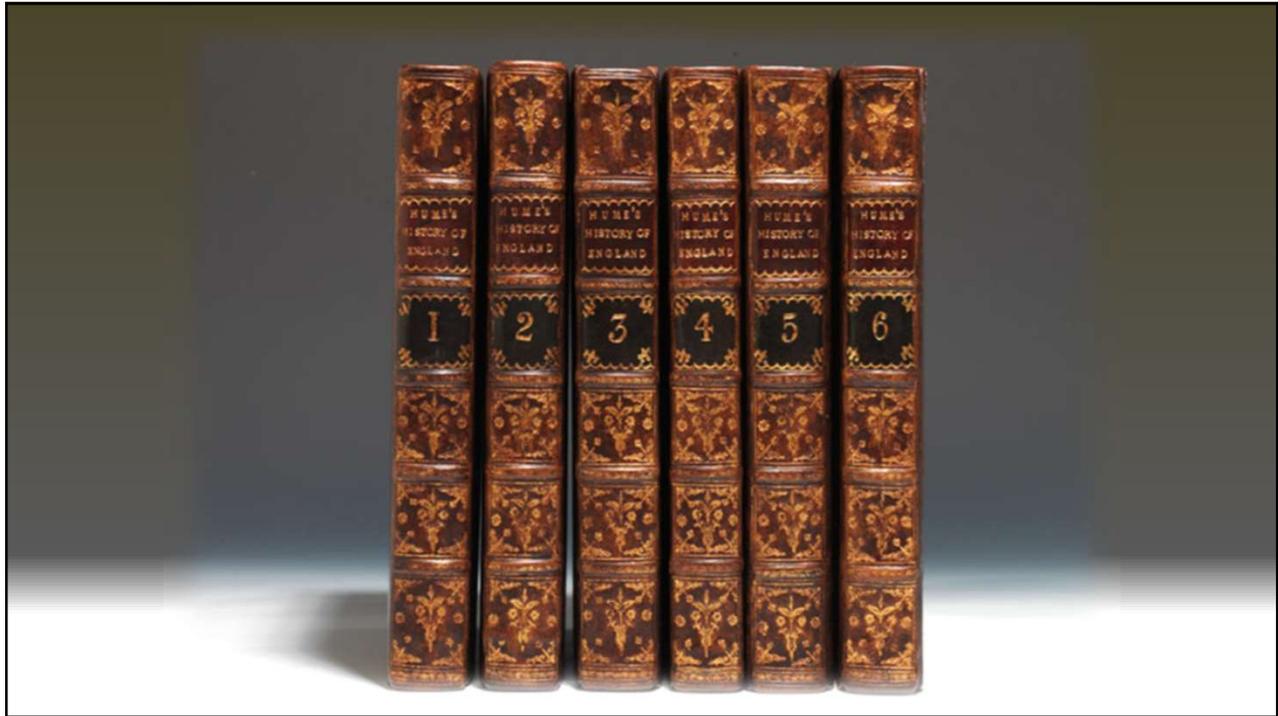
The Challenge of David Hume

David Hume marshalled formidable arguments
against believing in miracles.

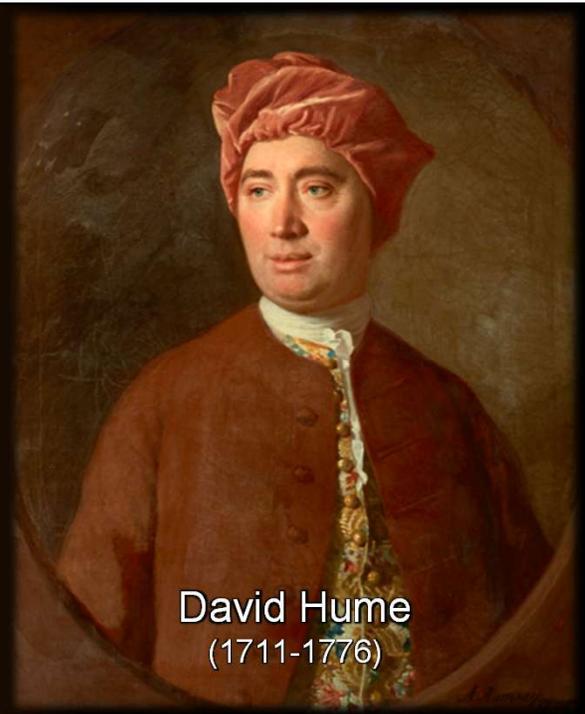
Therefore, it is not reasonable to believe that
miracles have occurred.







Hume challenged the ability of philosophy (as understood in his day) to demonstrate its most central and cherished doctrines such as:

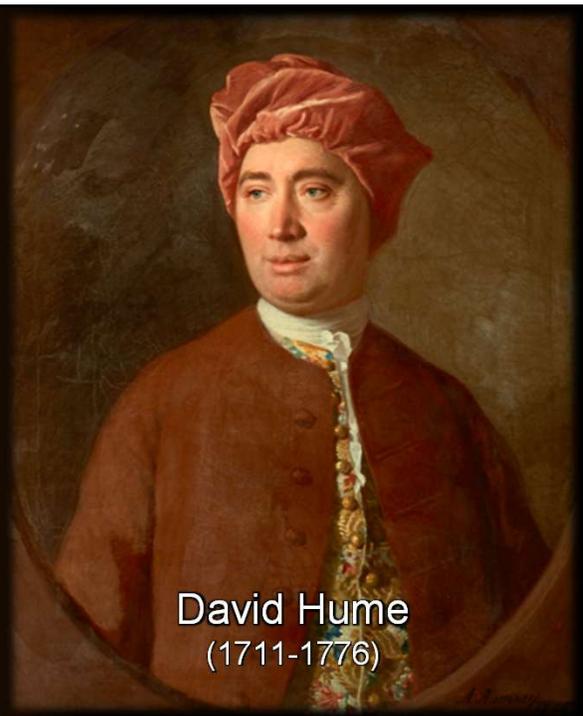


David Hume
(1711-1776)

Hume challenged the ability of philosophy (as understood in his day) to demonstrate its most central and cherished doctrines such as:

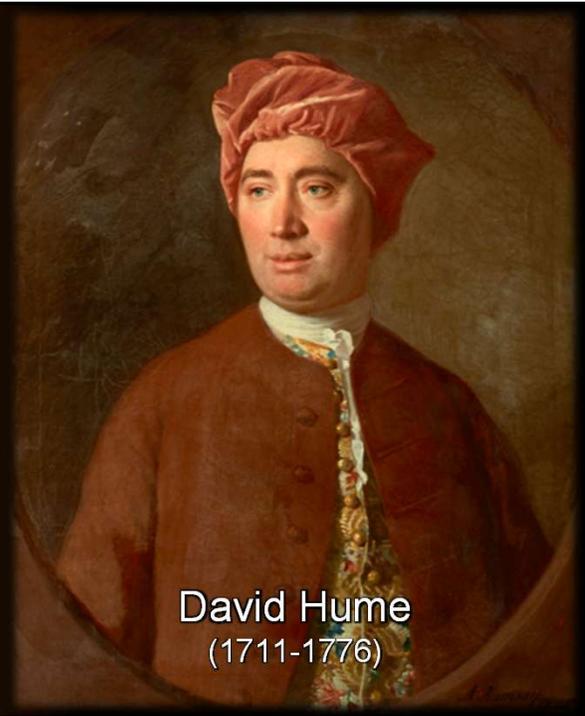
There is a significant difference between the modern empiricism in the tradition of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume and the classical empiricism of Aristotle and Aquinas.

- ❖ ***causality***
- ❖ ***substance***
- ❖ ***the existence of external reality***
- ❖ ***the continued existence of external reality when not being perceived***
- ❖ ***the self***



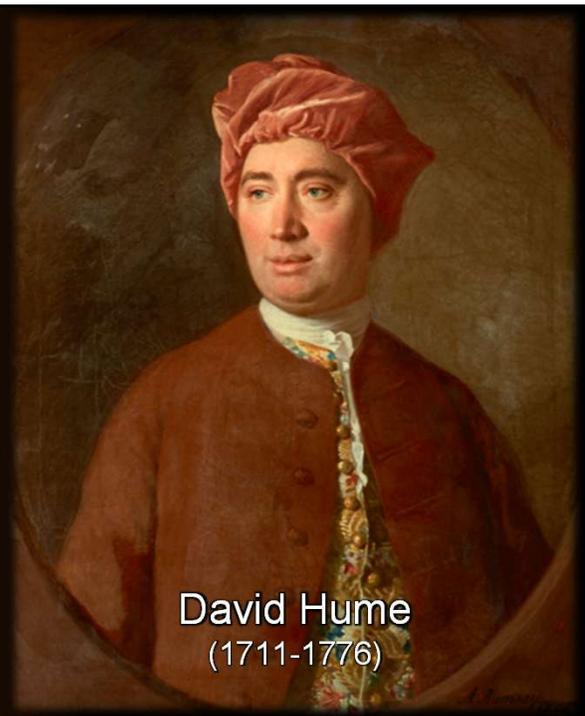
David Hume
(1711-1776)

***What is more, three
issues in
contemporary
Philosophy of Religion
are discussed largely
along the contours of
the influence of
David Hume.***

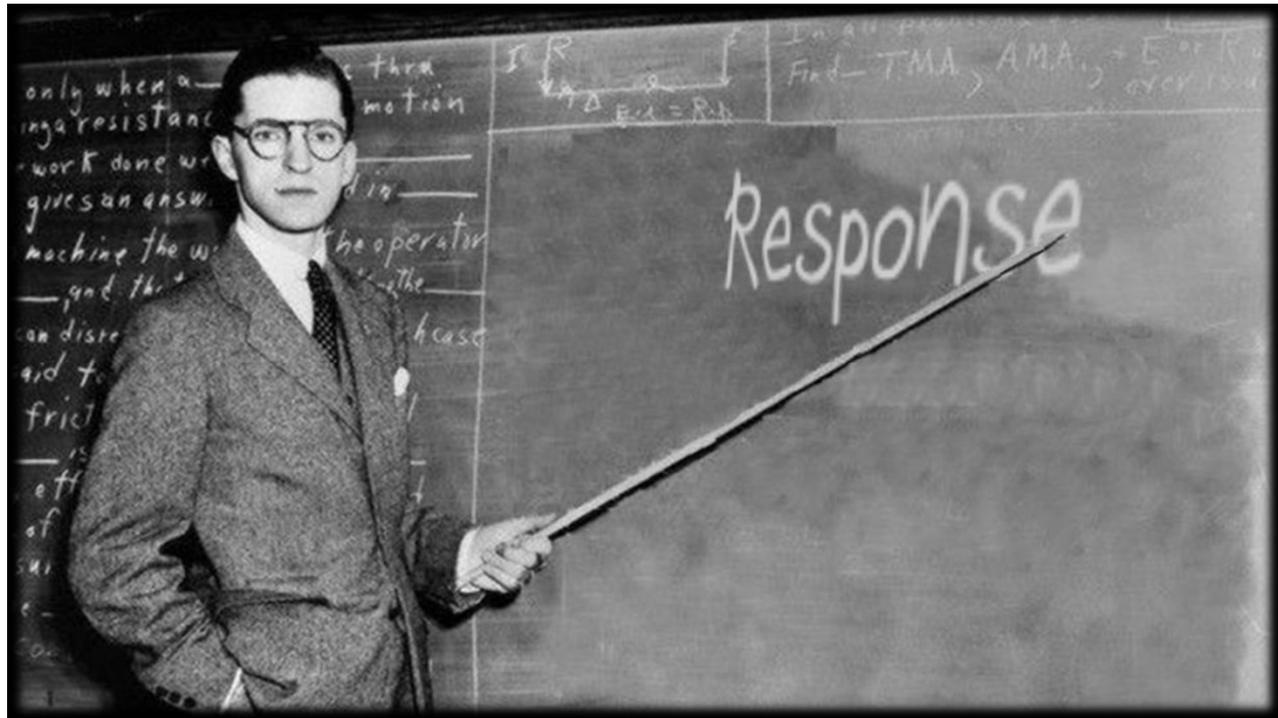


David Hume
(1711-1776)

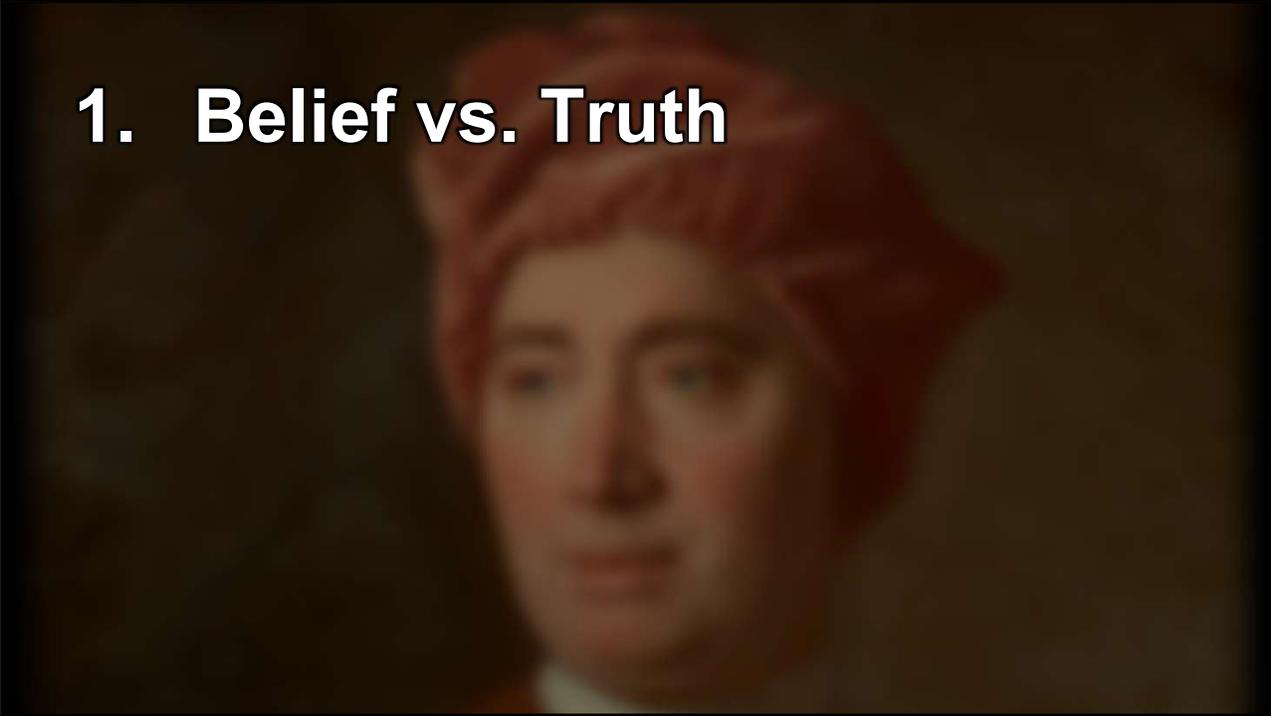
***miracles
the design argument
for the existence
of God
the problem of evil***



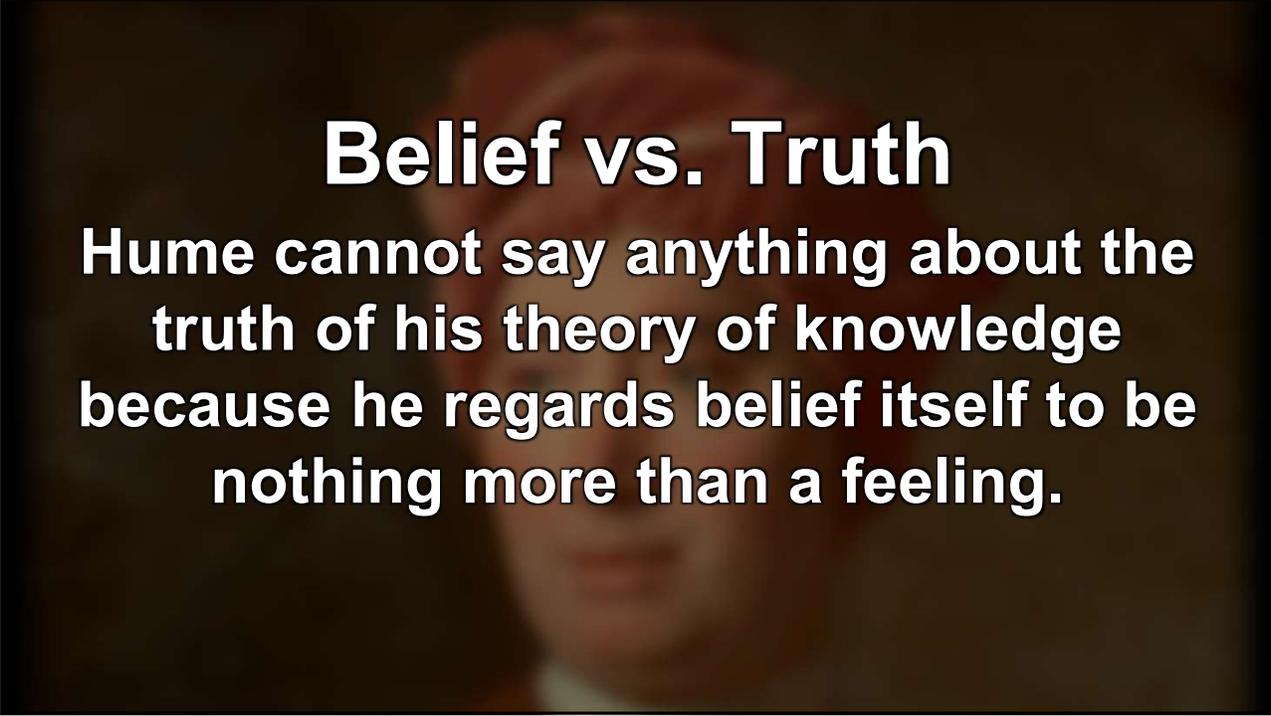
David Hume
(1711-1776)



1. **Belief vs. Truth**
2. **The Truman Show Objection**
3. **Self-Refuting**
4. **Undeniability**
5. **The Missing Shade of Blue**

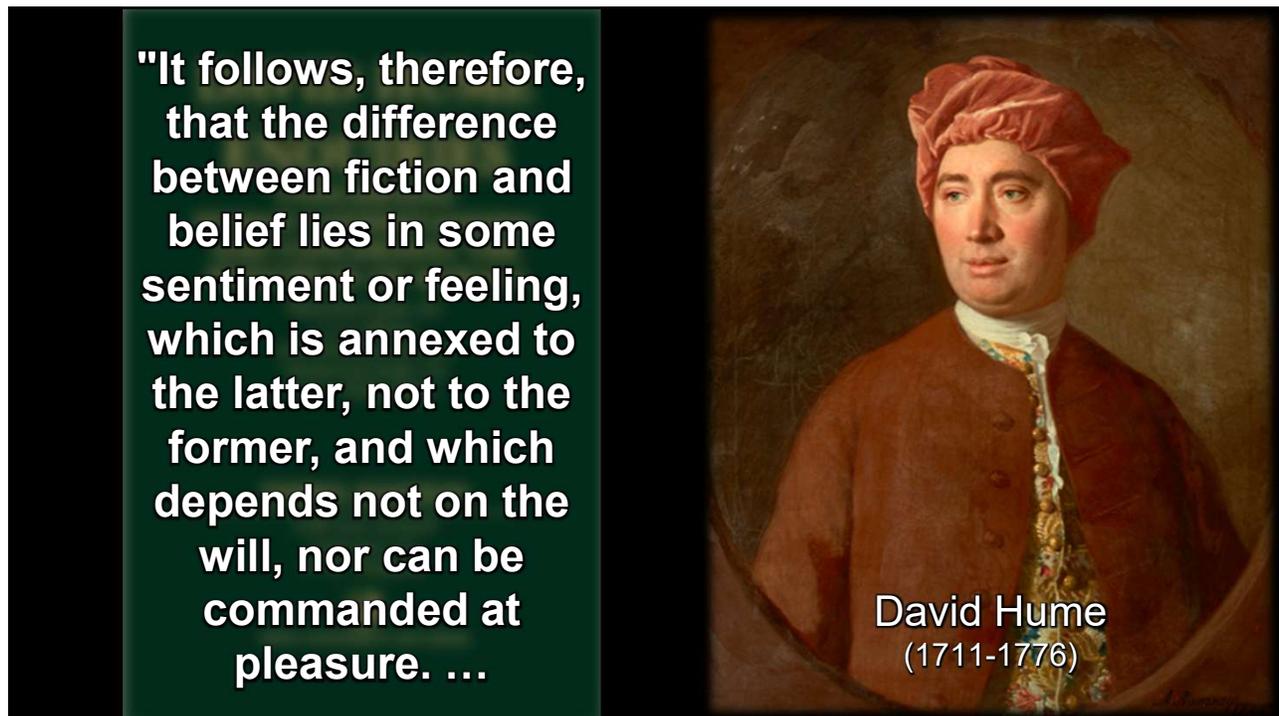
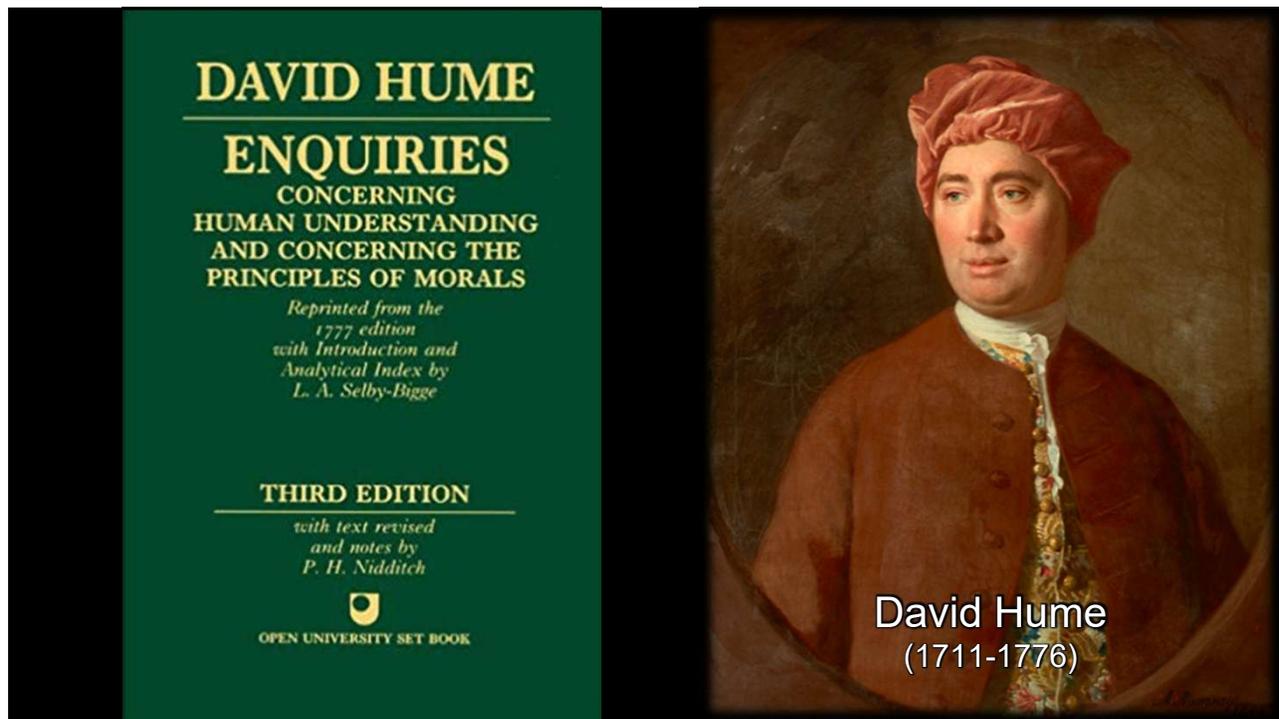


1. Belief vs. Truth

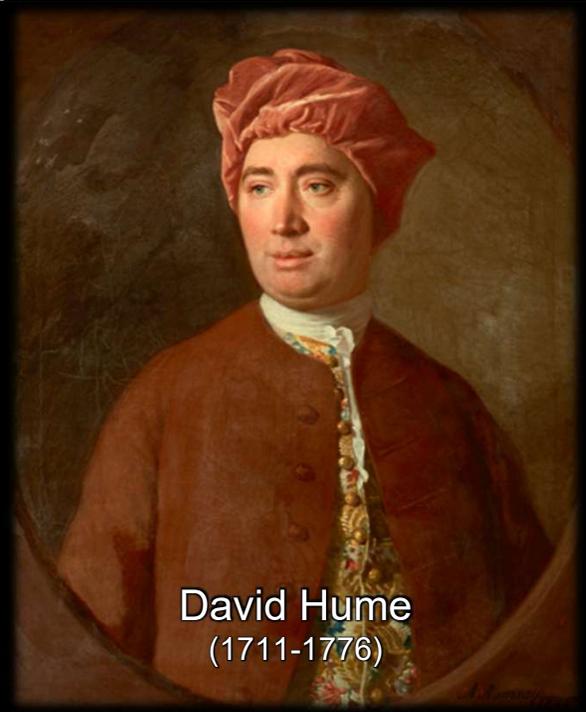


Belief vs. Truth

Hume cannot say anything about the truth of his theory of knowledge because he regards belief itself to be nothing more than a feeling.



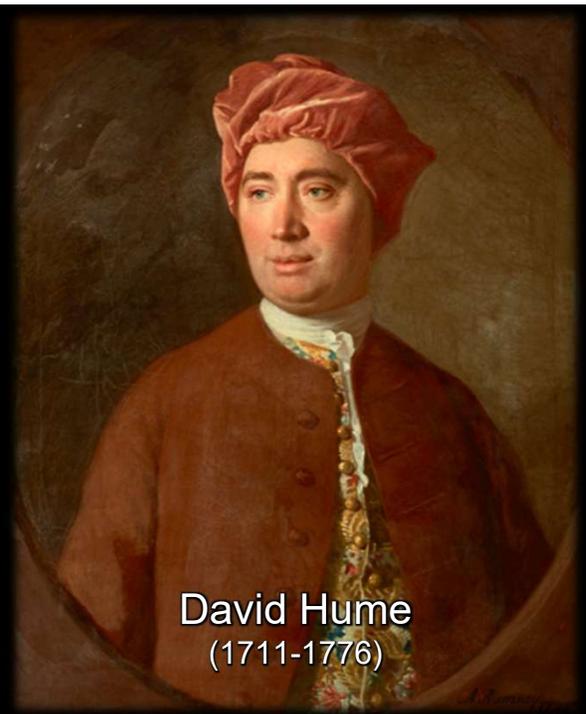
"Whenever any object is presented to the memory or senses, it immediately, *by the force of custom*, carries the imagination to conceive that object, which is usually conjoined to it;



David Hume
(1711-1776)

"and this conception is attended with a feeling or sentiment, different from the loose reveries of the fancy. In this consists the whole nature of belief."

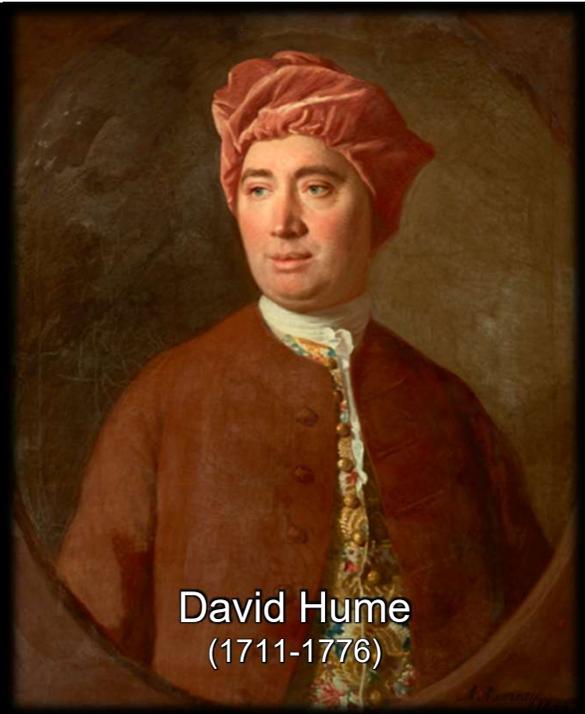
[*Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. L. A. Selby Bigge, 3rd ed. revised by P. H Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), §V, Pt. II, p. 48]



David Hume
(1711-1776)

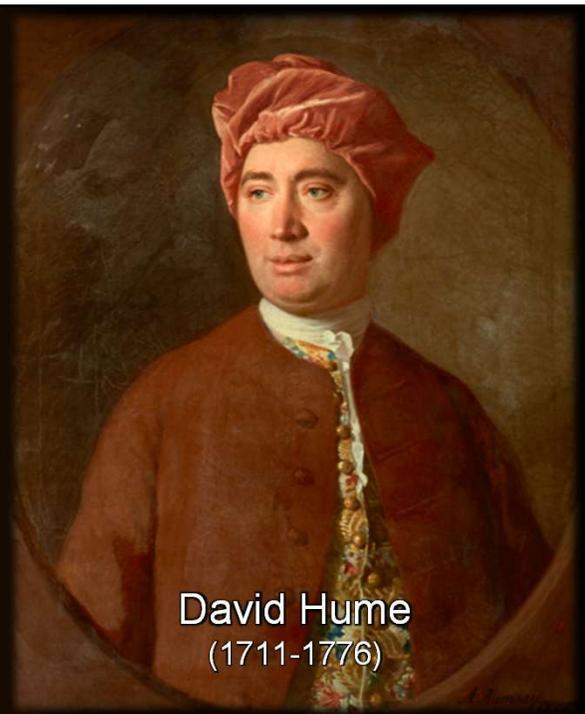
"Belief is the true and proper name of this feeling. ... I say, then, that belief is nothing but a vivid lively, forcible, firm, steady conception of an object, than what the imagination alone is ever able to attain."

[*Enquiries*, Selby Bigge, p. 49]



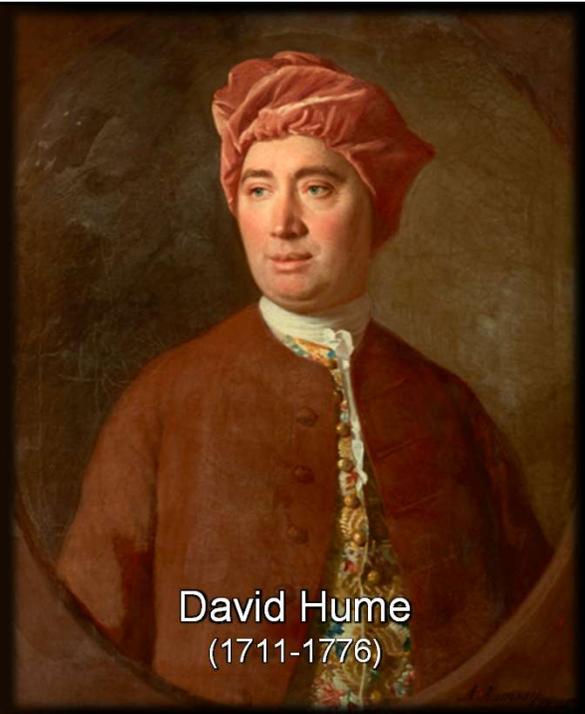
David Hume
(1711-1776)

"By all that has been said the reader will easily perceive that the philosophy contain'd in this book is very sceptical, and tends to give us a notion of the imperfections and narrow limits of human understanding."



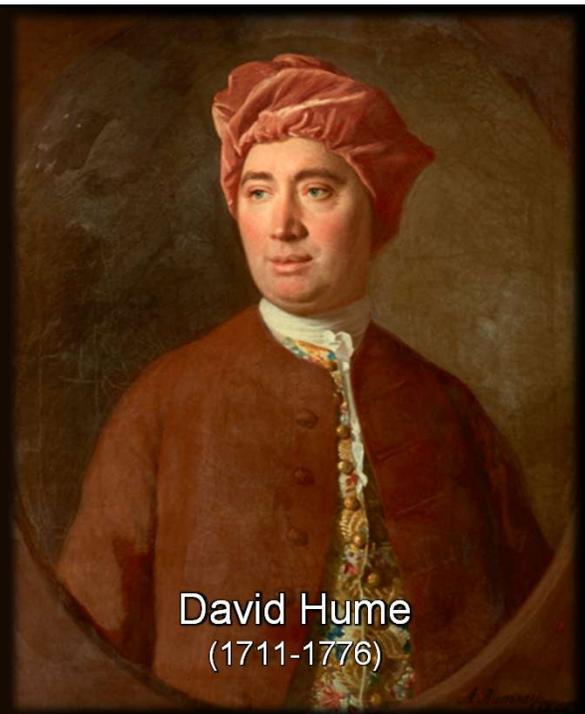
David Hume
(1711-1776)

"Almost all reasoning is there reduced to experience; and the belief, which attends experience, is explained to be nothing but a peculiar sentiment, or lively conception produced by habit."



David Hume
(1711-1776)

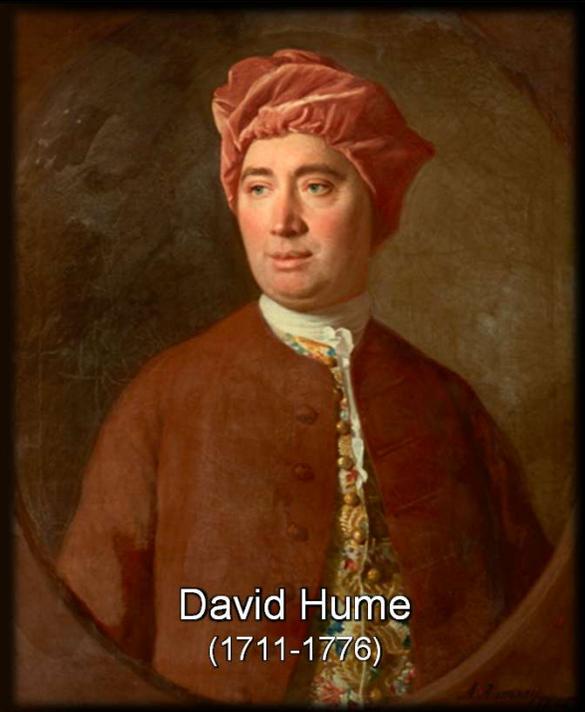
"Nor is this all, when we believe any thing of external existence, or suppose an object to exist a moment after it is no longer perceived, this belief is nothing but a sentiment of the same kind."



David Hume
(1711-1776)

"Our author insists upon several other sceptical topics; and upon the whole concludes, that we assent to our faculties, and employ our reason only because we cannot help it. Philosophy wou'd render us entirely Pyrrhonian, were not nature too strong for it."

[Abstract to the Treatise of Human Nature]

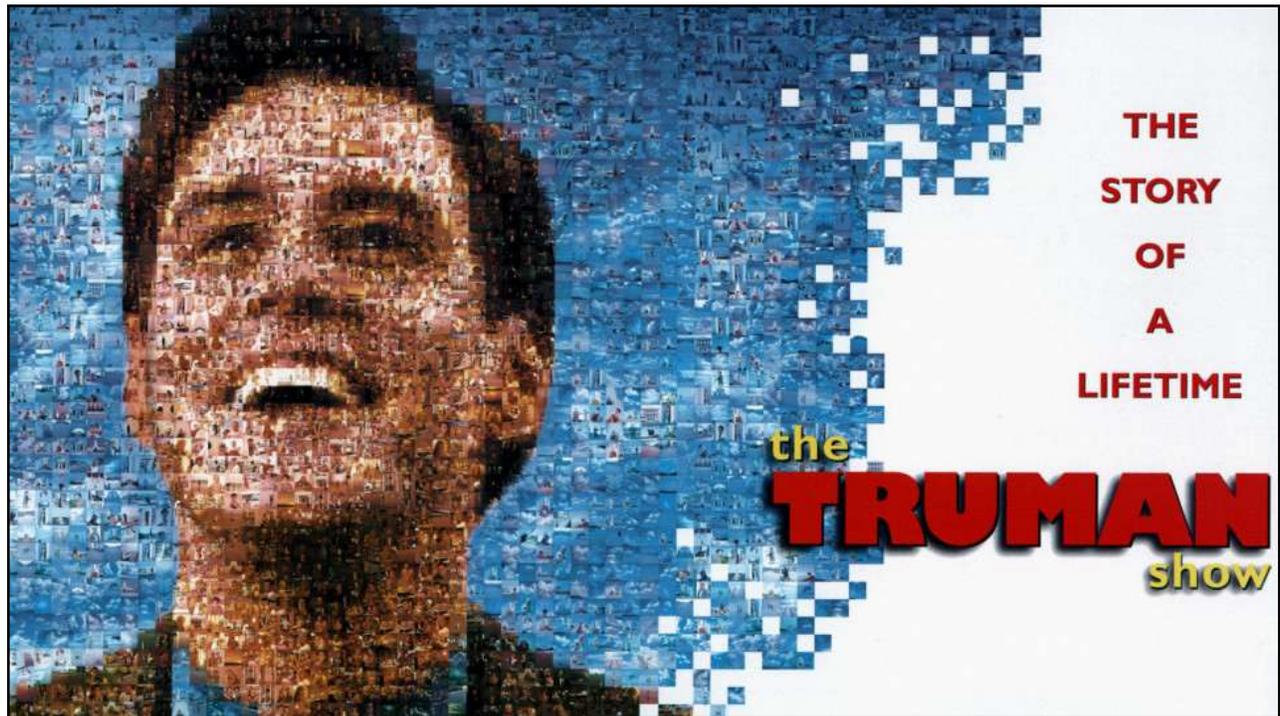


David Hume
(1711-1776)

2. The Truman Show Objection

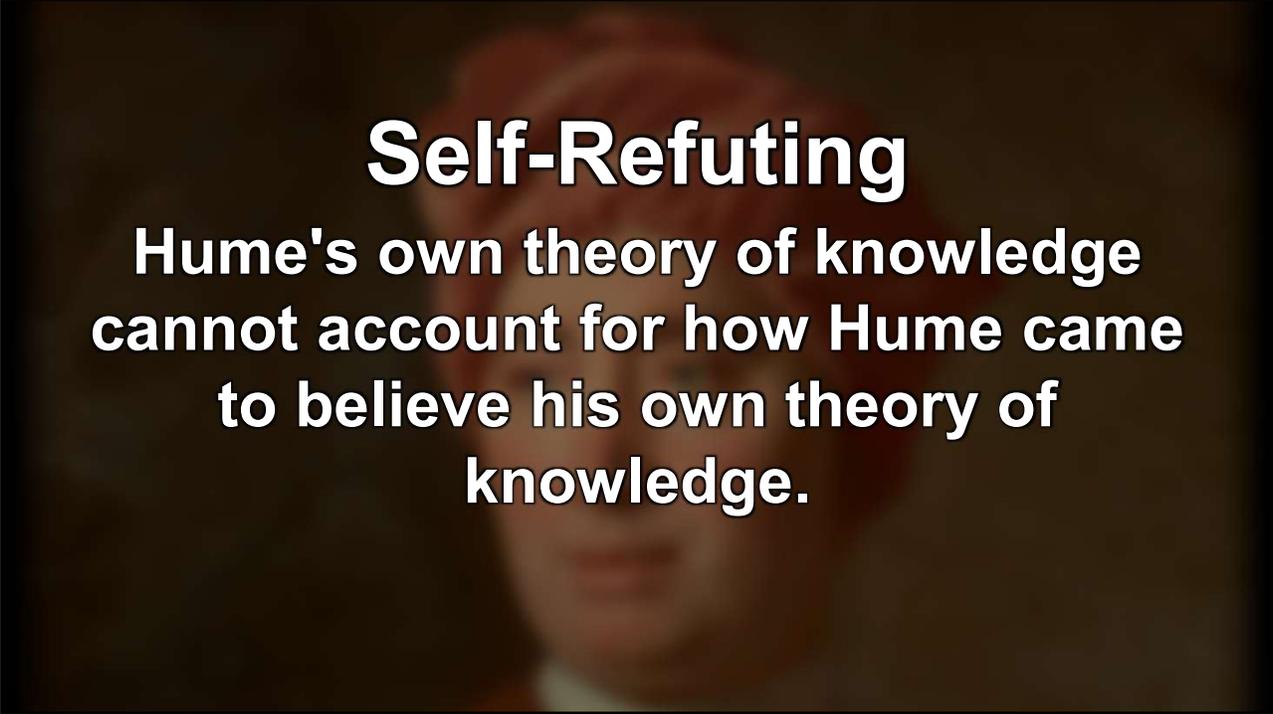
The Truman Show Objection

One could have "uniform
experience" of a fiction.



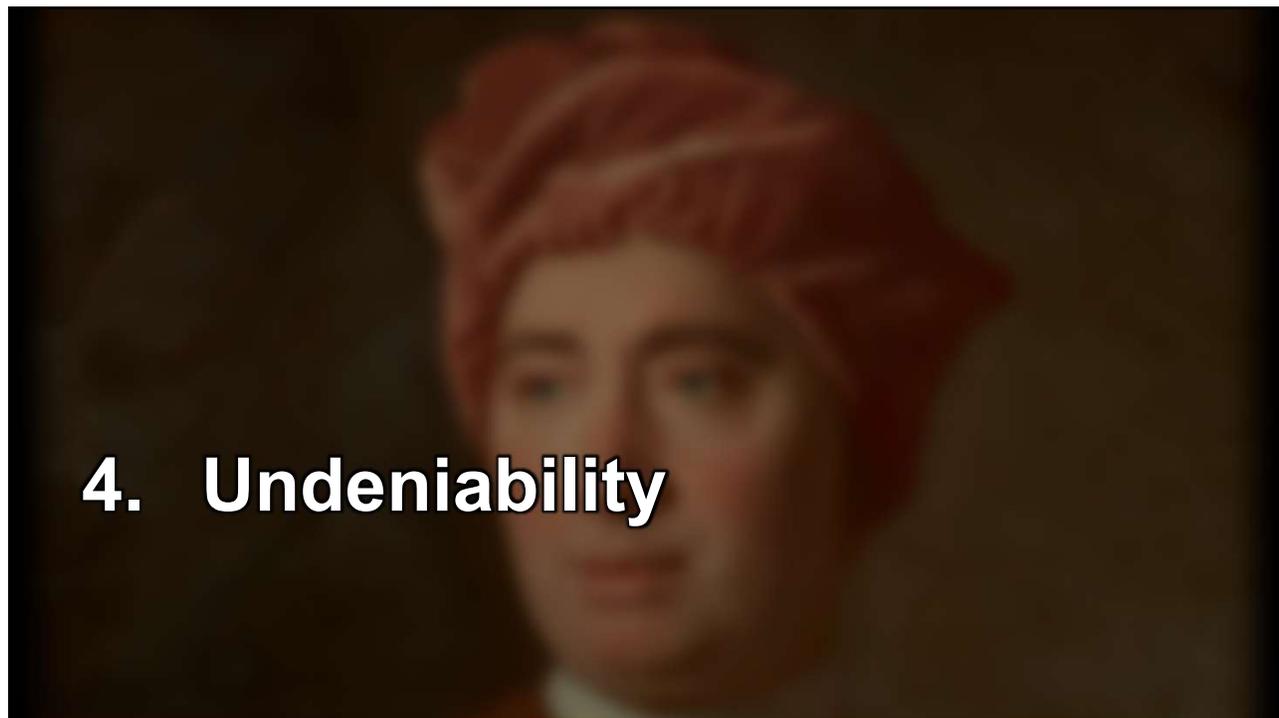
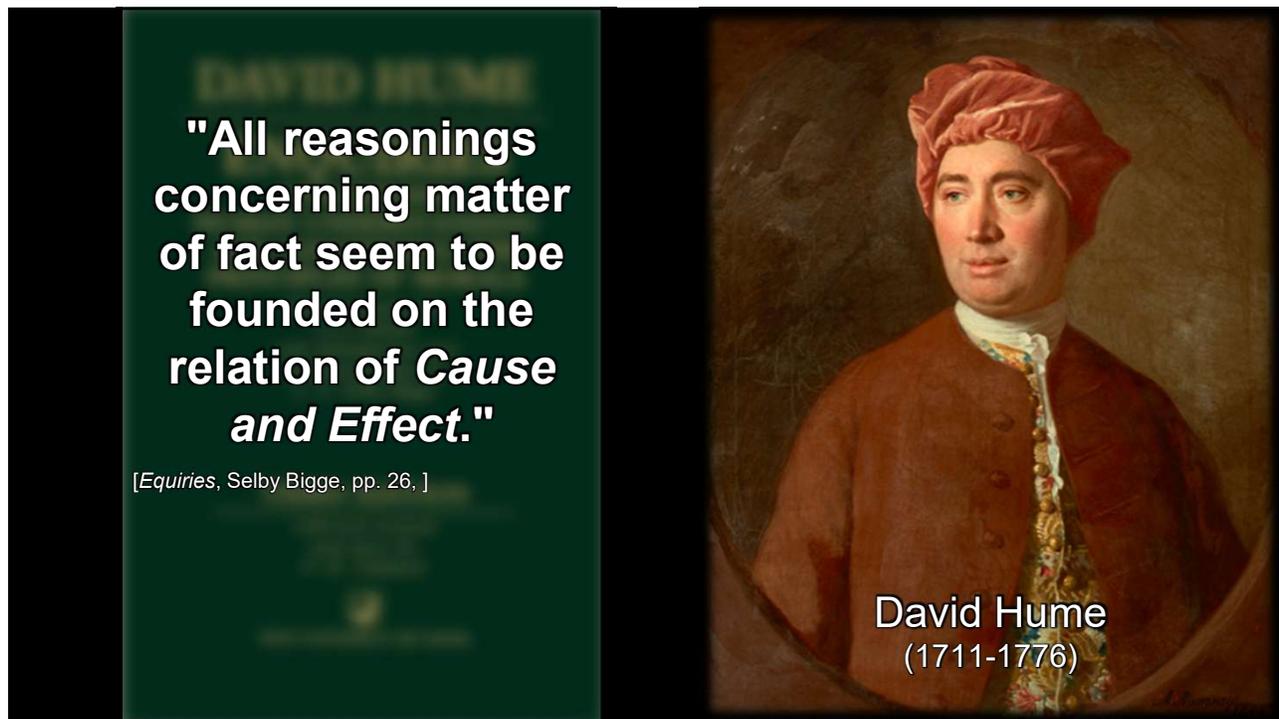


3. Self-Refuting



Self-Refuting

Hume's own theory of knowledge cannot account for how Hume came to believe his own theory of knowledge.



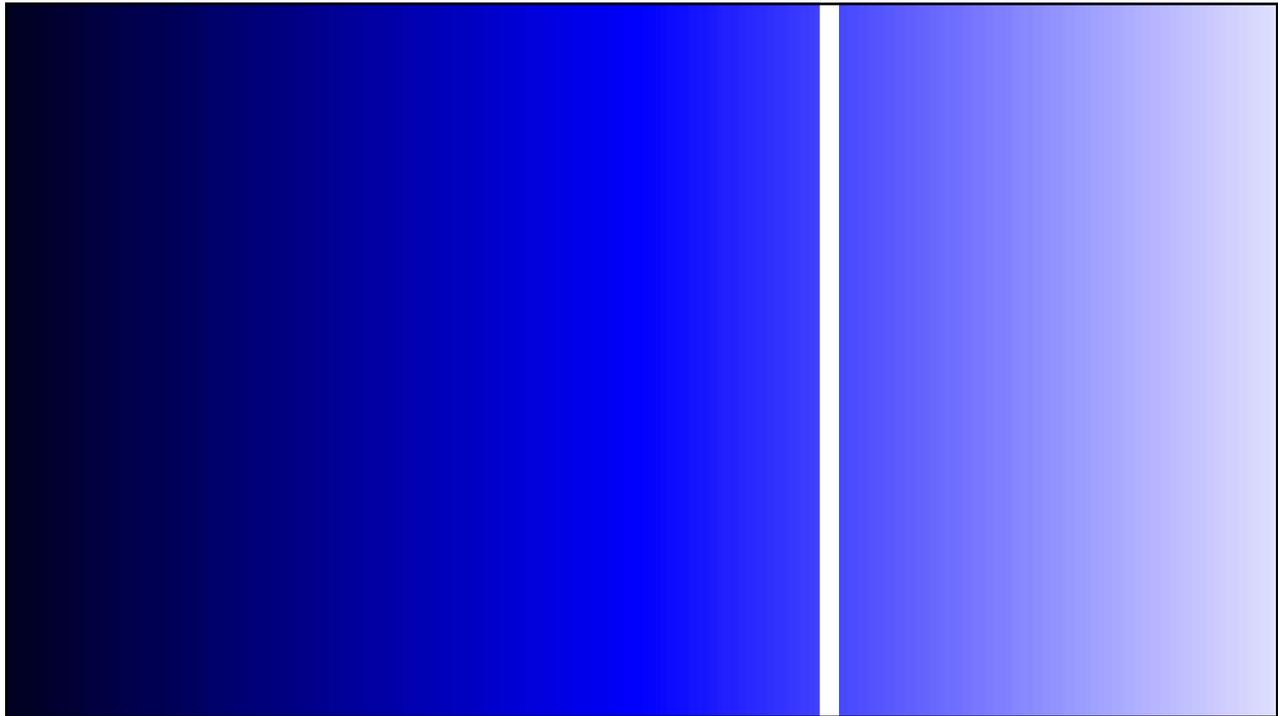
Undeniability

It is undeniable that we have
(at least some) objective
knowledge of reality, e.g., the
laws of logic.

5. The Missing Shade of Blue

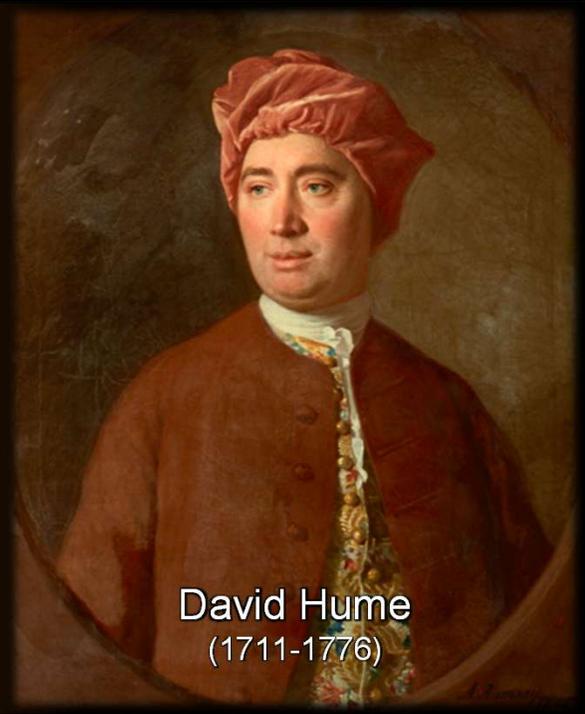
The Missing Shade of Blue

Hume admits a counter-example to a
fundamental element to his entire
epistemology.



"... this instance is so singular, that it is scarcely worth our observing, and does not merit that for it alone we should alter our general maxim."

[*Equiries*, §II, Selby Bigge, p. 21]



David Hume
(1711-1776)

The Challenge of Ancient Pagans

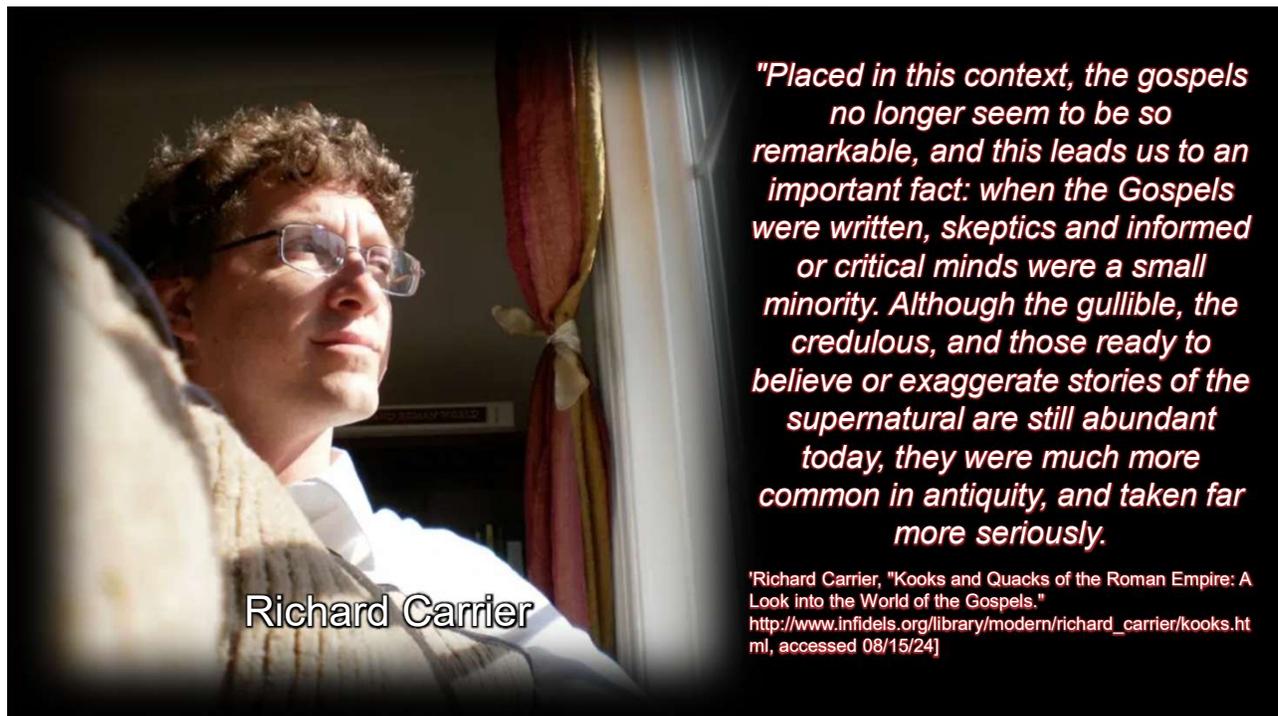
Miracle stories were common in the ancient world.

Therefore the stories of Jesus' miracles are not special.



"We all have read the tales told of Jesus in the Gospels, but few people really have a good idea of their context. Yet it is quite enlightening to examine them against the background of the time and place in which they were written, and my goal here is to help you do just that. ... There is abundant evidence that these were times replete with kooks and quacks of all varieties

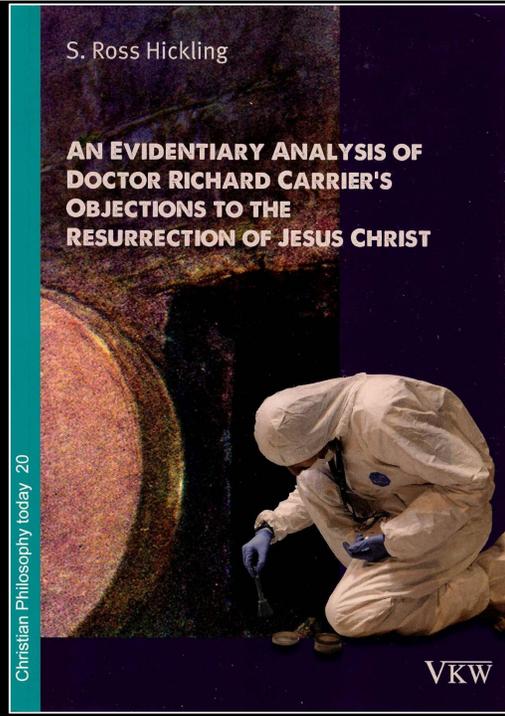
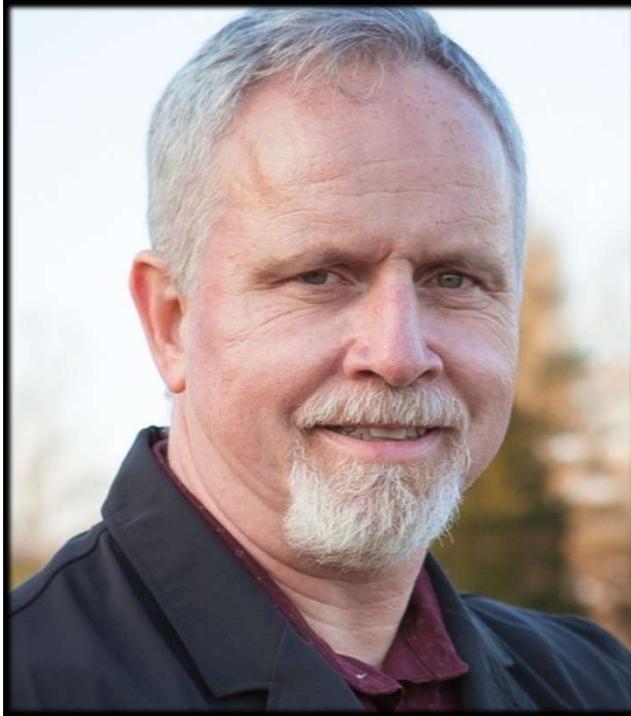
Richard Carrier



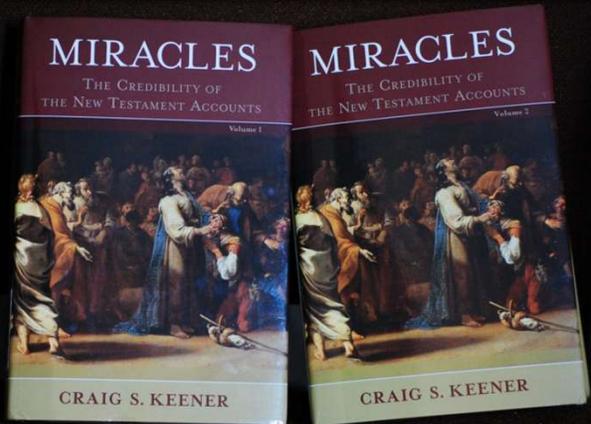
"Placed in this context, the gospels no longer seem to be so remarkable, and this leads us to an important fact: when the Gospels were written, skeptics and informed or critical minds were a small minority. Although the gullible, the credulous, and those ready to believe or exaggerate stories of the supernatural are still abundant today, they were much more common in antiquity, and taken far more seriously.

Richard Carrier

'Richard Carrier, "Kooks and Quacks of the Roman Empire: A Look into the World of the Gospels."
http://www.infidels.org/library/modern/richard_carrier/kooks.html, accessed 08/15/24]



Craig S. Keener





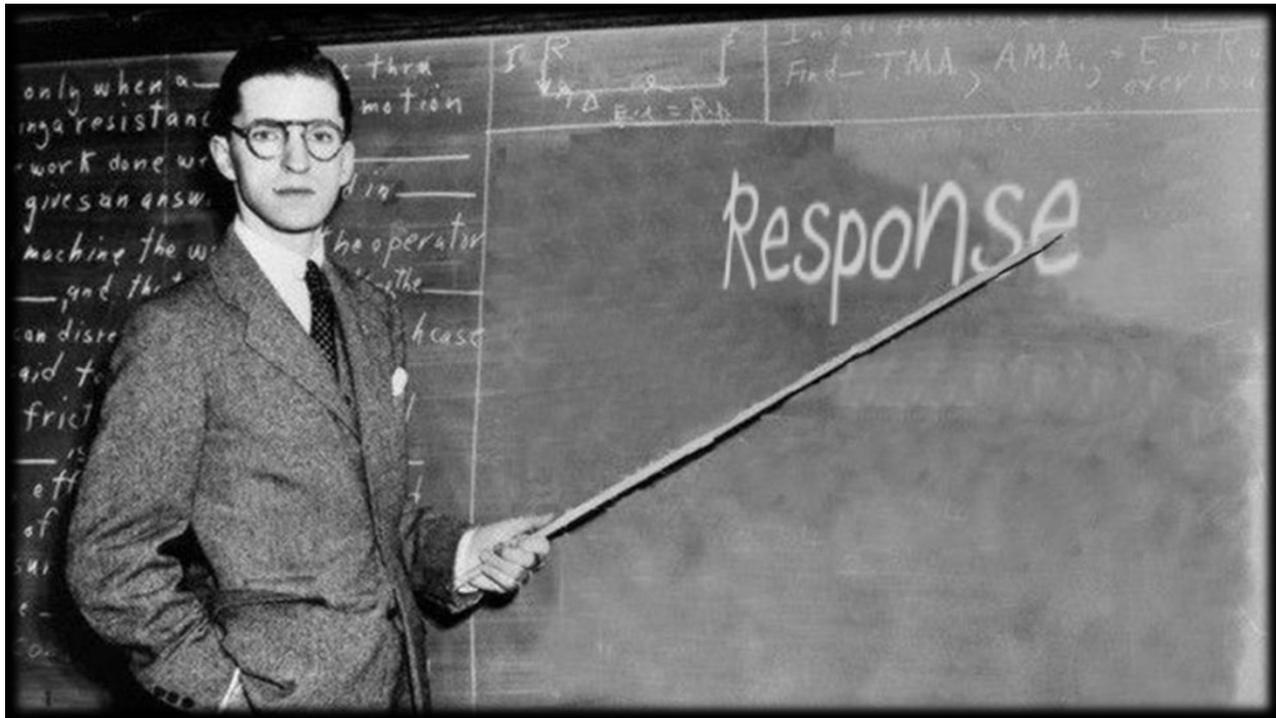
Apollonius of Tyana
(AD 15-AD 100)

Vespasian
(AD 9-AD 79)

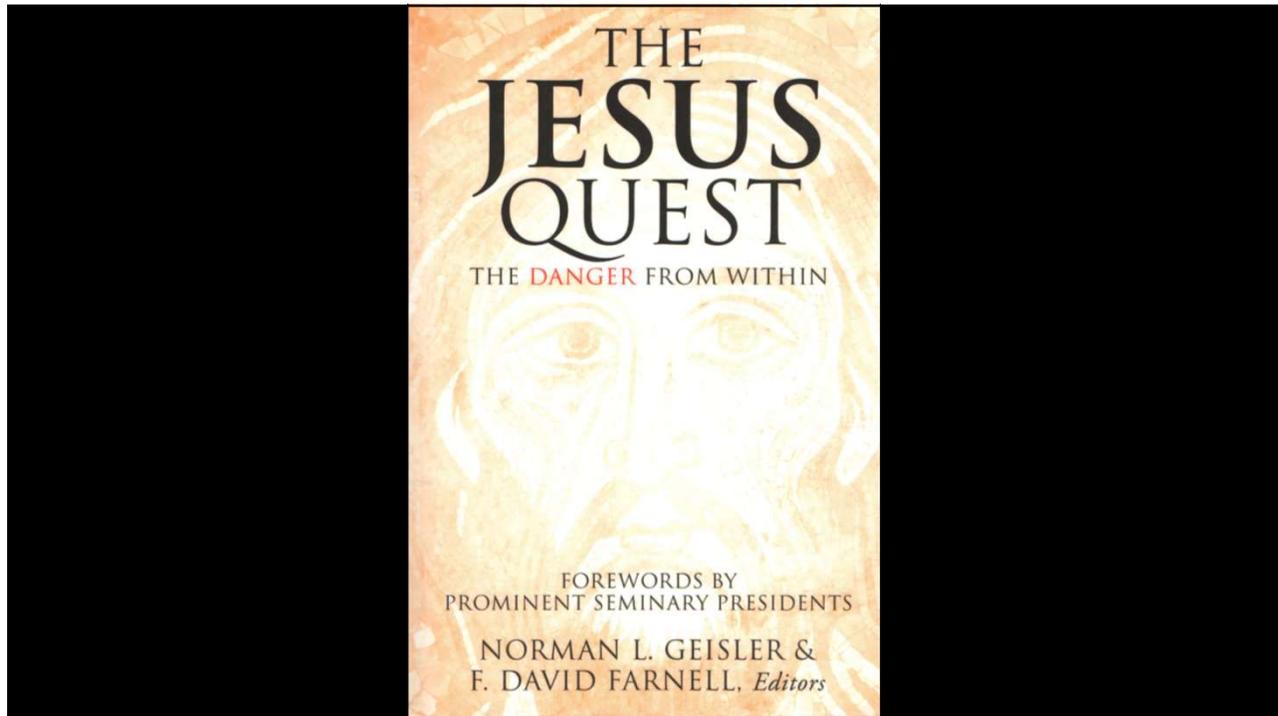


Apollonius of Tyana
(AD 15-AD 100)

Philostratus
(AD 170-AD 247)



- ❖ *The historical accounts of such "miracles" are, for all intents and purposes, non-existent.*
- ❖ *Given that these supposed "miracles" did not occur in the context of theism, they cannot be counted as true miracles.*

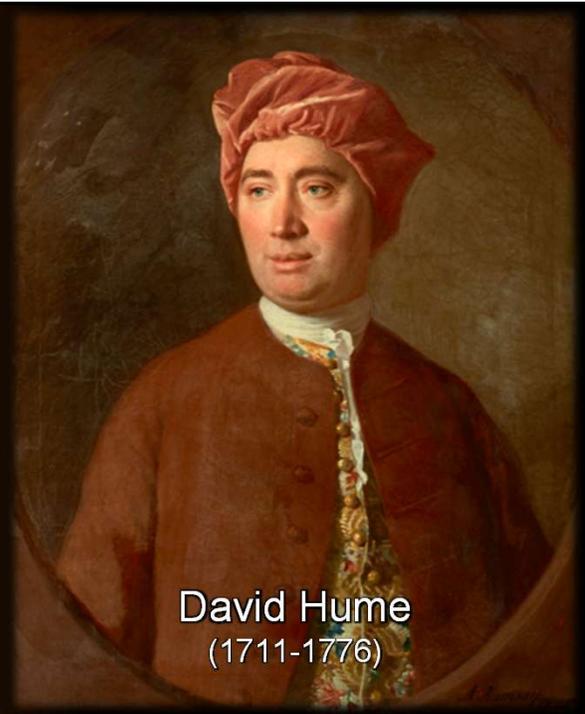


The Challenge of Other Religions

**Many world religions claim
to have had miracles.**

**Therefore, as confirmations of religious truth,
these miracles cancel each other out.**

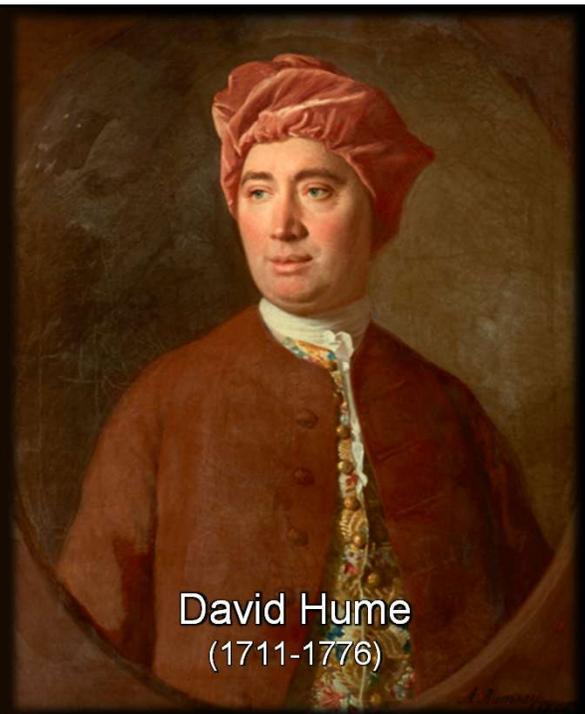
"In matters of religion, whatever is different is contrary; and that it is impossible the religions of Ancient Rome, of Turkey, of Siam, and of China should, all of them, be established on any solid foundation.



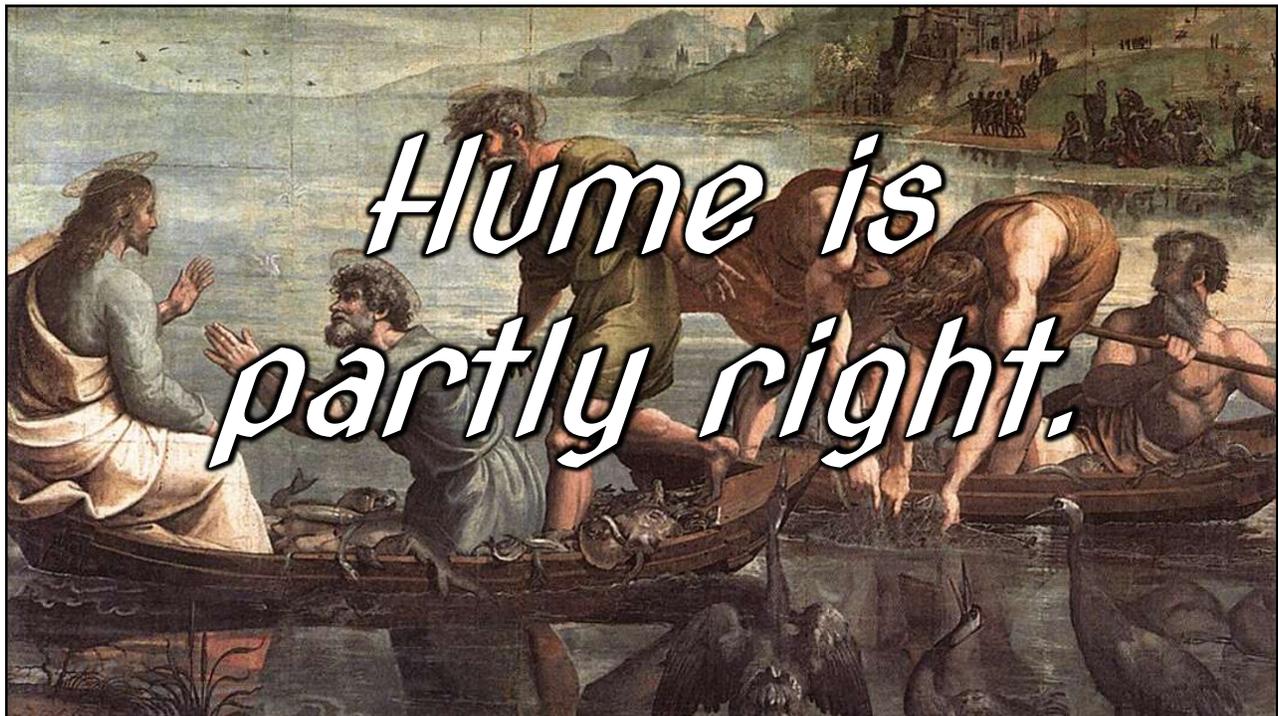
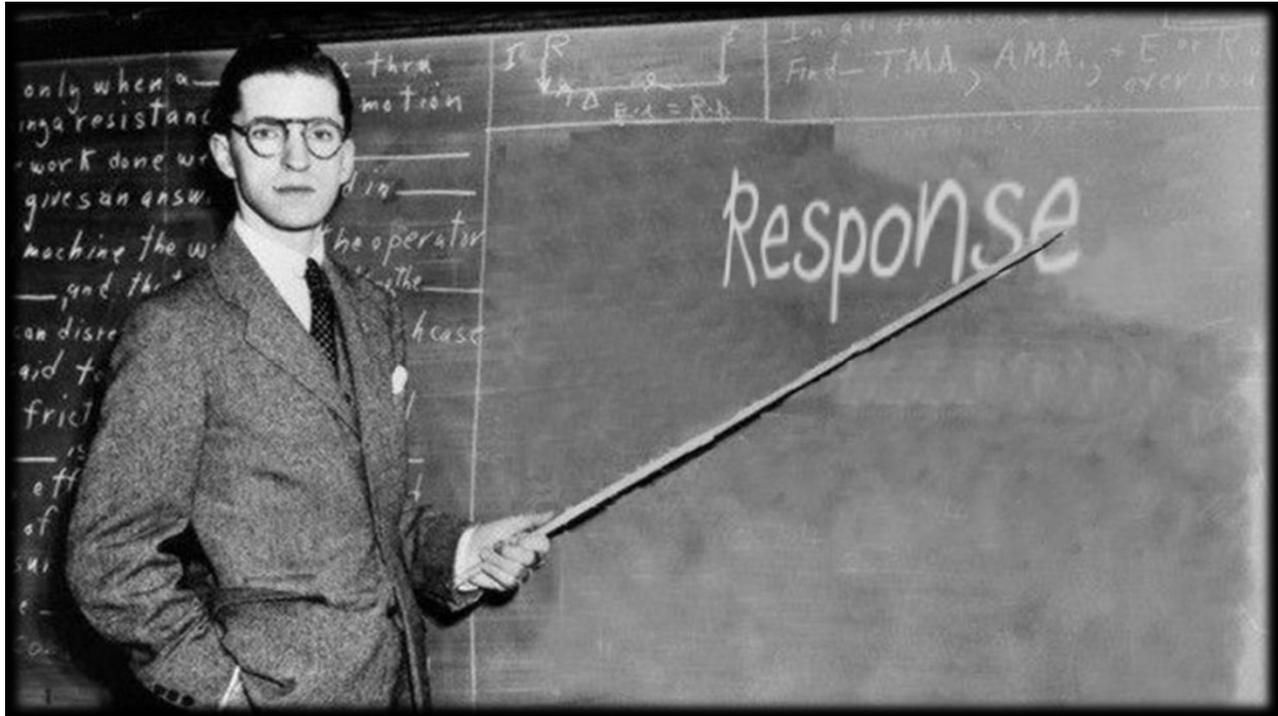
David Hume
(1711-1776)

"Every miracle, therefore, pretended to have been wrought in any of these religions (and all of them abound in miracles), as its direct scope is to establish the particular system to which it is attributed; so has it the same force, though more indirectly, to overthrow every other system.

[Hume, *Enquiries*, §X, Pt. 2, 95, Selby Bigge, 121]



David Hume
(1711-1776)



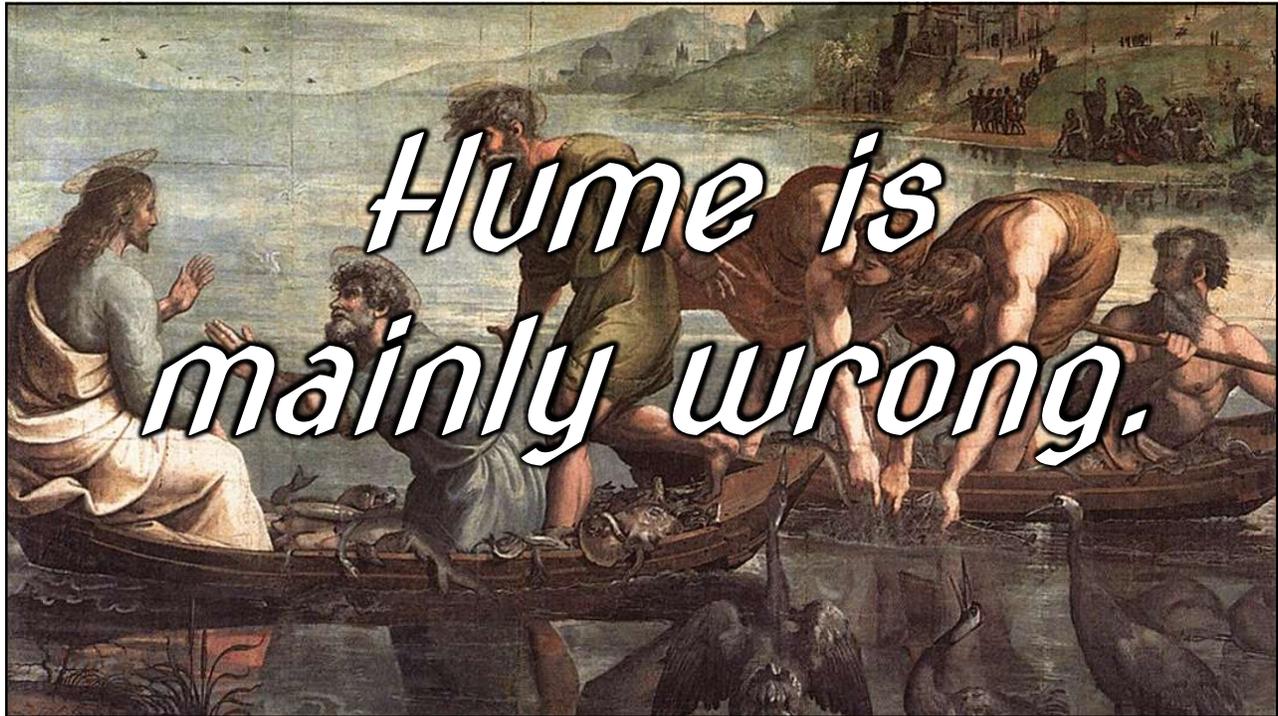
Hume is to be commended for understanding that the world's religions are not all saying the same thing.

Since their claims are at times incompatible, they cannot all be true.

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THEY CAN'T ALL BE TRUE

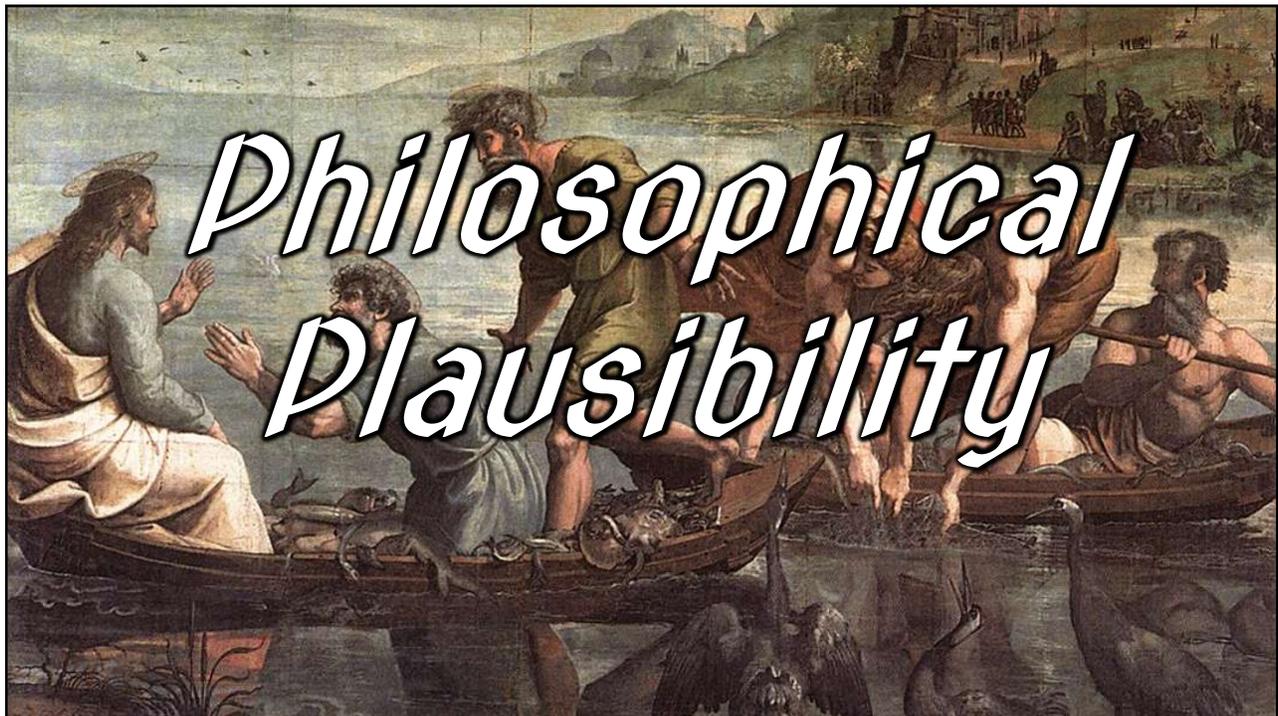
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While it is true that the world's religions cannot all be right, it is simply not the case that "all of them abound in miracles" as Hume would have it.

In critiquing the plausibility of the miracle claims of these religions, one need to consider three things:

1. *the philosophical plausibility*
2. *the historical plausibility*
3. *the theological plausibility*



☞ Philosophical Plausibility ☞

1. Since miracles by definition are the acts of a transcendent God, then any religion which lacks any transcendent realm in its view of reality cannot have any miracles in it.
2. Thus, miracles are only possible within the monotheistic religions.



∞ Historical Plausibility ∞

1. How do the specifics of the accounts stack up under historical scrutiny?
2. Are the documents attesting to the miracles substantial?

∞ Historical Plausibility ∞

This second question is especially interesting when one compares the manuscript evidence of the sacred texts of other religions with those of the New Testament.

∞ Historical Plausibility ∞

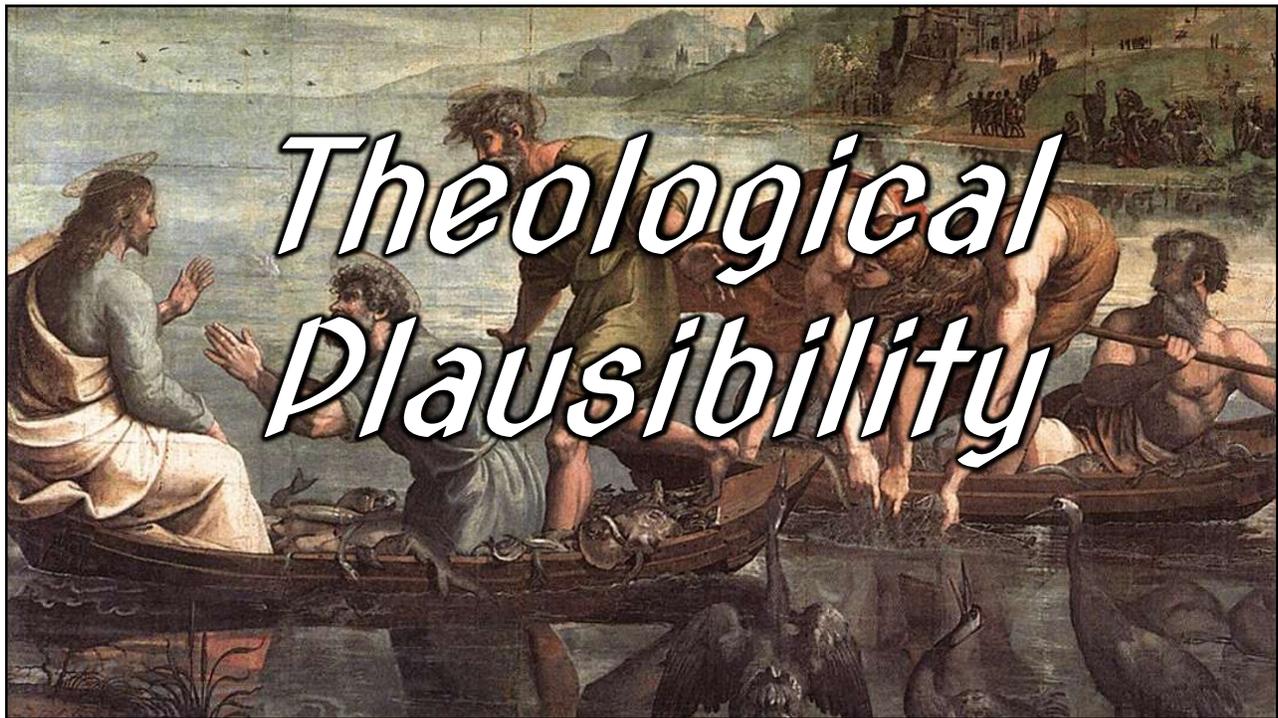
Let it suffice to say that none of these other texts with these other religions comes close to the New Testament regarding its manuscript integrity as these texts have come down through history to us today.

∞ Historical Plausibility ∞

Without confidence in the very documents that relay the accounts and without any corroborating evidence of the miracles (combined with the world view of almost all of these religions which preclude miracles in the first place), it is hard to build too much of an apologetic case for them as compared to the apologetic case that exists for Jesus and His apostles.

∞ Historical Plausibility ∞

If it was the case that the miracle claims of other religions were on philosophical and historical par with Christianity, then there might have been some strength to Hume's argument. The fact is that there is not.



∞ Theological Plausibility ∞

There are four ways a given world religion could regard itself vis-à-vis Christianity.

1. *The religion could say that it is true and Christianity is false.*
2. *The religion could say that they are both true.*
3. *The religion could say that it alone is the true Christianity.*
4. *The religion could say that it is a fulfillment of Christianity (i.e., Christianity is incomplete).*

∞ Theological Plausibility ∞

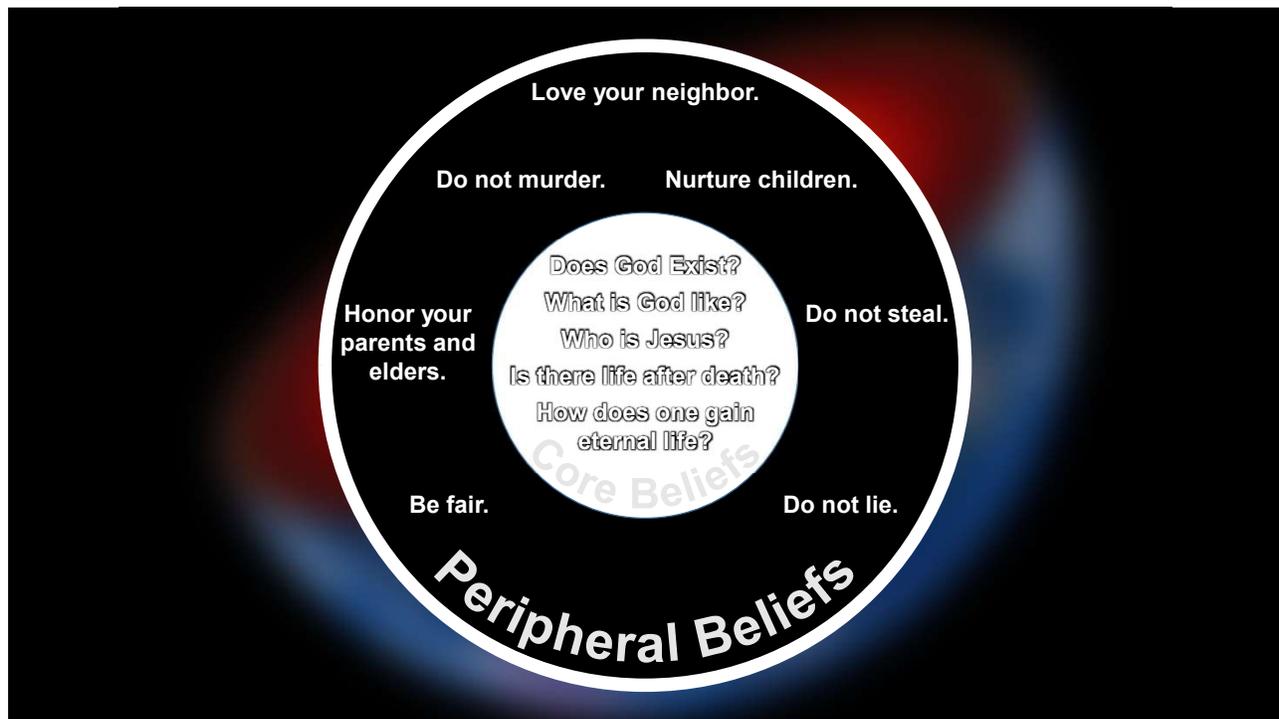
1. *No other religion can refute the evidence that Christianity is true nor marshal the evidence supporting its own claims.*
2. *As we can show, at their core (i.e., in their essential doctrines) no other world religion is making the claims that Christianity makes.*



***Are Not All
Religions the
Same at the
Core?***



***Core Beliefs
vs.
Peripheral Beliefs***



∞ Theological Plausibility ∞

1. *No other religion can refute the evidence that Christianity is true nor marshal the evidence supporting its own claims.*
2. *As we can show, at their core (i.e., in their essential doctrines) no other world religion is making the claims that Christianity makes.*
3. *What these religions teach is incompatible with the findings of sound reason and the teachings of the Bible.*
4. *The Bible has not been corrupted. Thus, there is no reason to think that any religion "corrects" the teachings of Christianity that has been handed down through history.*
5. *Further, since Jesus, as God in the flesh, is the apex of God's revelation of Himself, then Christianity stands complete as the truth of God.*

