

University of Notre Dame
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Mr. Lunn Replies To Two Objectors.

Question XXXI. Are you not open to criticism if you use the same word, "miracle," for the miracles which you attribute to Christ and the Saints, and for the miracles which you attribute to evil spirits?

Answer. Yes, I have been criticized by "A Senior" writing in the Notre Dame Bulletin for my definition of "miracle."

I am no theologian and in arguing with non-Catholics, who are uninterested in the niceties of theological definition, I try to follow the excellent advice of St. Thomas Aquinas. "No argument," says St. Thomas, "is possible until you have discovered some common premise which your adversary accepts." Our first task is to persuade the skeptic to accept the common premise that effects outside the ordinary course of nature are produced by discarnate personalities. Though nineteenth-century materialism is dead or dying, most of our contemporaries are still influenced by old-fashioned prejudices against the supernatural, and are still infected by the quaint superstition that there is something unscientific in believing in spirits.

We live in a thought-shy age and it is useless to begin our discussion with the Aquinate proofs of the existence of God. We must begin by trying to convince our non-Christian friends that there exists an immense array of facts which testify to the existence of spiritual beings who can produce effects in the world around us. The evidence for the supernormal phenomena of Psychical Research is more effective in convincing our uneasy moderns that spirits exist than all the arguments of Natural Theology. And once you have convinced a man that spirits, good or evil, exist, you will find it much easier to persuade him to consider the evidence for the Supreme Spirit whom we call God.

I do not, as my critic supposes, make no distinction between the miracles worked by evil spirits and the miracles worked by Christ. One can distinguish between Our Holy Father and Stalin though both

PRAYERS: (deceased) grandmother of Eugene White (Ly.); friend of Paul Smith (Walsh). Ill, Jack McCarthy (Dillon); sister of Father Healy; two friends of Art Gartland; Joe O'Brien's sister (Badin); William Vaughn (former student). Three special intentions.

belong to the genus, homo sapiens. God is a spirit and the Devil is a spirit, and I am not blunting the distinction between the miracles wrought by God and other good spirits, and the miracles wrought by the Devil and other evil spirits, if I use the word "miracle" for all "effects outside the ordinary course of nature produced by discarnate personalities."

Nor are the miracles wrought by evil spirits entirely valueless. They have a certain apologetic value as testifying to an article of the Catholic Faith, the existence of "evil spirits that wander through the world for the ruin of souls."

The Pocket Oxford Dictionary defines a miracle as an "event due to supernatural agency." This definition covers every type of miracle from those wrought by God to those which are due to the agency of evil spirits. Now in arguing with a disintegrated modern, it is sound tactics to apply the Aquinate principle of the common premise to definitions, and to use words, not in the restricted sense current among theologians, but in the general sense in which the man in the street understands them. And for this reason until somebody supplies me with a word which covers all effects produced by all spirits, good or evil, I propose to use the word, "miracle," in the sense given to it by the Oxford Dictionary.

As I am not a theologian I would prefer not to cross swords with "N.D.Man" who criticizes my reference to our Lord as a "discarnate personality." I do not wish to "smell of the fagot" and I trust to the Editor of the Bulletin to censor phrases which are theologically rash. But perhaps some theologian will answer, in the Bulletin, the following question: "What distinction do theologians draw between the incarnation of our Lord on earth and His incarnation in the Eucharist? And do theologians use the term, 'incarnation,' in connection with the Eucharist? And if not, why is it incorrect to refer to our Lord as a 'discarnate person'?"