



Between Dogma and Criticism: Christian Faith and the Miracle as a Supernatural Sign of Revelation Divine

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Summary

This article analyzes the phenomenon of miracles from the perspective of Protestant Christian faith, seeking to articulate a critical and historical reflection that engages with philosophy, science, and biblical hermeneutics. The article discusses miracles not only as an apparent rupture with natural laws, but also as supernatural signs that manifest divine sovereignty, sustaining hope and confirming God's revelation in Christ. By revisiting contributions from classical authors such as Augustine, Calvin, and Kierkegaard, as well as contemporary thinkers such as C.S. Lewis, the article reaffirms the supremacy of Scripture as the ultimate criterion of faith and practice. The article concludes that miracles remain real events, acts of God that transcend historical and scientific criticism, remaining essential to the Christian faith.

Keywords:

Faith; Miracle; Protestant Theology; Historical Criticism; Sovereignty of God.

Abstract

This paper analyzes the phenomenon of miracles from the perspective of Protestant Christian faith, aiming to articulate a critical and historical reflection in dialogue with philosophy, science and biblical hermeneutics. It considers the miracle not merely as an apparent breach of natural laws but as a supernatural sign manifesting divine sovereignty, sustaining hope and confirming God's revelation in Christ. Revisiting contributions from classical authors like Augustine, Calvin and Kierkegaard, as well as contemporary thinkers like CS Lewis, the study reaffirms, in the end, the supremacy of Scripture as the ultimate standard of faith and practice.

It concludes that the miracle remains a real event, an act of God transcending historical and scientific criticism, remaining essential to Christian faith.

Keywords:

Faith; Miracle; Protestant Theology; Historical Criticism; Divine Sovereignty.

1. Introduction

Since the dawn of Christianity, the phenomenon of miracles has occupied a central place in theological experience and reflection. Historically, miracles are presented in Scripture as signs that confirm the divine message, manifesting God's sovereign power and revealing essential aspects of the Christian faith. Over the centuries, however, the understanding of miracles has become the subject of intellectual disputes, especially with the advent of historical criticism, Enlightenment thought, and modern science. This tension between dogmatic confession and critical analysis motivates this study, whose objective is to reflect on the meaning of miracles without abandoning the fundamental conviction of Protestant Christian faith: that miracles are real acts of God, superior to any natural or symbolic explanation.

From this perspective, this article proposes a dialogue between the Reformed tradition, represented by authors such as Calvin (1997) and Augustine (2006), and the philosophical readings of Kierkegaard (2010) and C.S. Lewis (2008), without disregarding the contributions of historical criticism and contemporary science. The article seeks to demonstrate that, although human reason is a legitimate instrument for investigating religious phenomena, it encounters its limits when confronted with the reality of the sacred, especially with regard to miracles as divine intervention. In this sense, the centrality of Scripture as the ultimate criterion for interpretation and discernment is reaffirmed.

Interest in the subject of miracles is not limited to the academic or theoretical realm. In Christian communities around the world, testimonies of healings, deliverances, and transformations continue to be reported, fueling hope and renewing the faith of millions of people. These accounts, though often dismissed by skeptical critics, remain a living expression of the communal and personal experience with God. Recognizing the miracle as a supernatural reality does not mean denying the value of reason, but rather placing it in its proper order, subordinate to divine revelation.

This study is therefore based on the conviction that Christian faith does not require the suspension of critical reflection, but proposes a horizon in which reason finds fulfillment by recognizing its own limits. The miracle, in this context, is not a simple inexplicable event, but a sign that points to the transcendent and personal character of God, who intervenes in history through love and grace. This approach allows for the integration of academic reflection and confessional commitment, without sacrificing the internal coherence of faith.

To structure this reflection, the article is organized into seven sections: after this introduction, the concept of miracle in the Christian tradition is examined; followed by a critical and philosophical reading of the phenomenon; the Reformed view of miracles; the challenges posed by secularized modernity; hermeneutical issues; and, finally, the authority of Scripture as the foundation for understanding miracles is reaffirmed. Each section seeks to maintain a balance between academic rigor and fidelity to biblical content.

In the end, it is concluded that, even in the face of contemporary skepticism, miracles continue to be a testimony to God's real action in history, remaining essential to the Christian faith. This conclusion is not presented as a denial of science or historical criticism, but as an affirmation of a



superior truth revealed in the Scriptures: God acts, intervenes and manifests His power on behalf of those who believe.

2. The Christian Faith and the Concept of Miracles

The concept of miracle in the Christian tradition is closely linked to divine revelation and the redemptive work of Christ. In the biblical context, the term "miracle" translates different original words that express the idea of "sign" (σημεῖον, semeion) or "wonder" (θαύμαζον, teras), indicating not only the suspension of a natural order, but, above all, an act that points to something greater: the manifestation of God's glory and sovereign will (John 2:11). Saint Augustine (2006), reflecting on miracles, emphasized that they are not contrary to nature, but to what we know of it, emphasizing that all creation is, in itself, a miracle sustained by divine power. This perspective prevents the reduction of miracles to a mere arbitrary violation of natural laws.

In Protestant thought, especially in John Calvin (1997), miracles have a pedagogical and confirmatory function: they serve to authenticate the revealed message, strengthen the faith of believers, and reveal divine mercy. Calvin saw the miracles recounted in the Bible as extraordinary manifestations of providence, inserted into a greater redemptive plan. Thus, they are not isolated events, but signs ordained by God himself to lead humanity to repentance and trust in Christ. This understanding preserves the transcendental character of the miracle without turning it into a spectacle disconnected from the gospel message.

From this perspective, it is understood that a miracle, from a Christian perspective, can never be reduced to mere curiosity or a demonstration of power. It is linked to God's salvific purpose and the progressive revelation of His character. In the Gospels, for example, the miracles performed by Jesus were not only intended to alleviate physical suffering, but also to demonstrate that He was the promised Messiah, bringing the Kingdom of God within reach of humanity (Luke 7:22-23). This theological dimension centers the miracle on the person of Christ, distancing it from a magical or superstitious interpretation.

Furthermore, the Bible presents miracles as a response to faith, though not as its absolute condition. In Mark 6:5-6, it is noted that Jesus did not perform many miracles in Nazareth "because of their unbelief," indicating that faith opens the way for God's supernatural action.

On the other hand, the absence of miracles does not nullify divine power, but rather reveals a context in which hardness of heart impedes the experience of grace. This tension between faith and miracle is treated by Kierkegaard (2010) as an expression of the Christian paradox: faith is nourished by signs, but at the same time, it is called to believe even without them.

Church history confirms that, from the earliest centuries, the experience of miracles has always been seen as an essential part of Christian life. The Church Fathers reported healings, exorcisms, and extraordinary interventions as signs of God's continuing presence among His people. Even during the Reformation, when abuses and distortions were criticized, the principle of the real possibility of miracles was not denied, but reaffirmed in consistency with divine sovereignty and

sufficiency of Scripture. This Protestant tradition rejects the idea that God is absent or indifferent to human suffering.

Finally, it is important to note that a miracle, in Christian theology, always has a relational character: it reveals not only God's power, but also His love and closeness. In this sense, the faith that seeks a miracle is not motivated by curiosity, but by the desire for communion with the Creator. God's miraculous action is, therefore, a testimony to the continuity of His care, reaffirming the central message of the gospel: God not only created the world, but remains present, active, and compassionate in the history of every person who trusts in Him.

3. Reason, Philosophy and Historical Criticism

The emergence of modernity brought new challenges to the understanding of miracles. With the Enlightenment, absolute trust in reason and science began to question supernatural accounts as incompatible with the emerging "critical spirit." Authors such as David Hume (2009) argued that a miracle was, by definition, the least likely event and should be rejected whenever an alternative natural explanation was available. This approach profoundly influenced Western thought, generating a permanent tension between faith and historical criticism that persists to this day.

Despite its influence, Hume's position was challenged by several philosophers and theologians who argued that it was impossible to invalidate, a priori, any and all possibilities of divine intervention. C.S. Lewis (2008), in his classic work "Miracles," argues that denying miracles based solely on the assumption that "the natural cannot be broken" begs the question: it assumes that God does not exist or does not act. However, if a personal, transcendent, and free God exists, nothing prevents Him from intervening in His creation without destroying the natural order He Himself established.

In the field of historical criticism, especially from the 19th century onwards, currents emerged that attempted to reinterpret miracles as late legends, constructed to legitimize the nascent faith.

The so-called "history of religions" school viewed the accounts as myths or symbols of profound spiritual realities, but not as objective events. This interpretation was reinforced by liberal movements, which sought to adapt Christianity to the rationalist spirit of the time, proposing a faith without miracles. This stance, however, led to a hollowing out of the Christian message itself, by denying one of its central elements.

Christian philosophers such as Kierkegaard (2010) responded to this trend, arguing that Christian faith necessarily implies acceptance of paradox: belief in God's intervention in history, even when it escapes full rational comprehension. For him, Christianity is not merely elevated morality, but news of an extraordinary event—the incarnation of the Word and His miraculous acts, which defy the categories of natural reason. This perspective reclaims the existential character of faith, which includes an inner assent to what is inaccessible through logic.

It is necessary to recognize, however, that historical criticism has made important contributions by encouraging greater rigor in the analysis of documents, dates, and contexts. Today, even among confessional theologians, historical research is seen as a legitimate tool, as long as it does not become

absolute criterion above biblical revelation. Classical Protestant hermeneutics understands that Scripture interprets Scripture itself, maintaining the primacy of the sacred text over any externally constructed hypotheses.

In short, the relationship between reason and faith need not be one of opposition, but of ordered complementarity. Christian faith is not established against reason, but neither can it be reduced to it. Miracles, in this context, remain possible and real not because they contradict science, but because they come from a God who transcends and sustains all created order. This is where historical criticism finds its limit: it can question, analyze, and contextualize, but it cannot nullify divine sovereignty or the testimony of Scripture.

4. The Miracle in the Protestant Tradition

The Protestant tradition, born in the 16th century from the theses of Martin Luther, has always preserved the recognition of miracles as part of God's sovereign action, although it has distanced itself from the abuses and superstitions that arose throughout the history of Christianity. For reformers such as John Calvin (1997), miracles should be understood essentially as confirmation of the revealed Word, not as isolated spectacles or instruments of religious manipulation. In this sense, Calvin saw miracles as part of divine providence, intended to strengthen faith and authenticate the message of the gospel. This perspective did not deny the reality of miracles, but rather reinserted them into their proper biblical and theological context.

By criticizing the excessive emphasis on relics and accounts unfounded in Scripture, the Reformers reaffirmed the sufficiency of the Bible as a criterion for recognizing what is truly a divine sign. This stance prevented faith from being built on human traditions or on expectations of continuous extraordinary manifestations. However, there was no denial of the possibility of miracles after apostolic times. Luther and Calvin admitted that God, in His sovereignty, could perform miracles at any time, but always according to His will and not as a mechanical response to human desires.

In the following centuries, Protestant churches generally maintained a balanced position between belief in God's supernatural power and caution against transforming faith into a cult of the extraordinary. This tension appears, for example, in the reflections of Reformed authors who, while acknowledging miracles, warned against centralizing spiritual life solely on the pursuit of signs. Faith, they taught, must be based on trust in God's Word, which endures even when visible miracles do not occur (Hebrews 11:1).

On the other hand, it is impossible to ignore that, in Protestant history, especially among the revival and Pentecostal movements, there was a vibrant rediscovery of the expectation of miracles. The 18th-century revival in England and the United States brought new reports of healings and supernatural experiences. In the 20th century, with the emergence of Pentecostalism, this emphasis grew even more, with entire communities witnessing miracles as part of their life of faith. This rediscovery was not a complete break with the Reformed tradition, but a renewal of confidence that God continues to act.

In contemporary Protestant theology, many authors have sought to reconcile academic criticism and the communal experience of miracles. Jurgen Moltmann (2002), for example, argues that Christ's miracles are signs of the Kingdom of God bursting into history, anticipating the final restoration of all things. This understanding broadens the meaning of miracles beyond the specific event, seeing them as prophetic announcements of universal redemption. Still, the conviction remains that such signs are real and not merely symbolic.

Therefore, in the Protestant tradition, the miracle serves a dual function: it confirms the veracity of the revealed message and serves as a testimony of divine love and compassion. This perspective preserves the integrity of faith, avoiding both absolute skepticism and the idolatry of signs. Ultimately, the miracle, in the Reformed view, is not an end in itself, but always points to Christ, the author and finisher of faith (Hebrews 12:2), reaffirming the centrality of the cross and resurrection as the greatest of all miracles.

5. Science, Secularization and Contemporary Challenges

Scientific advancement, especially since the 19th century, has profoundly transformed the way societies understand the world and phenomena considered supernatural. The consolidation of scientific methodology, based on empirical observation and repeatable experimentation, contributed to unprecedented technological development.

However, this progress has also reinforced a naturalistic worldview that tends to exclude, on principle, any supernatural intervention. In this scenario, miracles are seen as incompatible with modern knowledge, relegated to the realm of superstition or ignorance.

The process of secularization, which advanced unevenly across cultures, contributed to the marginalization of religious discourse in the public sphere. Faith, which once organized the entire worldview of Christian societies, came to be understood as a private choice, often irrelevant to rational debate. In this context, the Christian doctrine of miracles encountered growing resistance, being criticized as a remnant of a pre-scientific mindset. The attempt to reconcile faith and science, therefore, became one of the greatest challenges for contemporary theologians, philosophers, and Christian leaders.

Despite these pressures, many scholars argue that science and faith are not competing domains, but complementary when each remains in its own field.

While science describes how natural processes occur, theology seeks to understand why they exist, what their ultimate meaning is, and who sustains them. In this sense, miracles are not denied by science: they simply do not fit within its methods, as they are, by definition, a free act of God that transcends the repetition and predictability required by the scientific method.

This distinction appears clearly in authors such as CS Lewis (2008), who argues that divine intervention does not destroy the natural order, but introduces a new cause within it. Thus, a miracle would not be an irrational violation, but the action of a higher will that

holds the power to intervene in the creation that He Himself sustains. This conception reaffirms that miracles do not contradict reason itself, but only the expectations of a closed system that excludes, in advance, the possibility of God's action.

In pastoral practice, modern skepticism poses a concrete challenge: many Christians feel pressured to relativize or reinterpret biblical miracles as mere metaphors, so as not to appear naive before society. This stance, while understandable in a pluralistic academic environment, poses profound risks for Christian theology. If the miracle is reduced to a subjective symbol, the historical character of Christ's revelation and incarnation, the foundation of the Christian faith, is lost. The resurrection, for example, is proclaimed as a real event, not just a powerful idea (1 Corinthians 15:14).

Therefore, even while acknowledging the contributions of scientific knowledge, Protestant Christianity serenely maintains the conviction that God continues to act sovereignly. This faith does not demand the denial of science, but it refuses to subject it to the materialistic reductionism that rejects, outright, everything that does not fit within its methods. The miracle, in this context, continues to be an expression of divine love that surprises, heals, and transforms lives, remaining essential to Christian witness in the contemporary world.

6. Between Hermeneutics and Dogma: The Interpretation of the Miracle

The interpretation of biblical miracles has always been at the center of theological debate, especially since the emergence of historical-literary criticism. This method, which emerged in the 18th century, sought to analyze sacred texts as historical documents, considering author, date, sociopolitical context, and the writer's intention. While it brought important advances in understanding the biblical context, it also raised questions about the historicity of many miraculous accounts, proposing that they were symbolic constructions to communicate spiritual truths. This interpretation strained the balance between faith in the historical reality of the miracle and critical analysis of the text.

In the Reformed Protestant tradition, biblical hermeneutics is based on the principle of the inspiration of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16), which guarantees not only its doctrinal authority but also the essential historical veracity of its accounts. John Calvin (1997) emphasized that the Bible interprets the Bible itself, and that the more obscure parts should be understood in light of the clearer ones. This approach seeks to respect the internal unity of the text, avoiding reducing it to an exclusive product of its time. Thus, miracles are read as real acts of God, integrated into the plan of redemption, and not merely illustrations of moral truths.

On the other hand, even Protestant theologians recognize that literary genre influences how miracles are understood. For example, there are differences between the Gospel accounts, the poetic Psalms, or John's apocalyptic visions. This hermeneutical sensitivity avoids literalist interpretations that disregard metaphors, hyperbole, or each author's own style. However, the conviction remains that, in the Gospels and Acts, miracles are narrated as historical events that confirm Jesus' messianic identity and the action of the Holy Spirit in the nascent Church.

Christian philosophers such as Kierkegaard (2010) point out that faith is always necessary to recognize a miracle as such. The same fact that for the believer is a sign of divine intervention can be explained by the skeptic as a coincidence or a rare natural phenomenon. This subjective dimension, however, does not nullify the objective reality of the miracle, but rather indicates that it does not impose itself as mathematical evidence: it requires an open heart and a willingness to believe. Therefore, a miracle is not a definitive argument to convince those who reject faith, but a sign to strengthen those who sincerely seek God.

Reformed hermeneutics, therefore, balances criticism and confession: it admits questions, seeks to understand literary contexts and styles, but refuses to relativize revealed truth. This position avoids both blind fideism, which rejects any investigation, and radical skepticism, which transforms the biblical text into a mere symbolic human construction. Ultimately, the prevailing conviction is that God acts in history, and that the miracles recorded in Scripture are truthful testimonies of this action, revealed so that people may believe in Christ (John 20:31).

This approach allows miracles to remain essential to the Christian faith without becoming superstition or myth. Read in light of the Bible as a whole, they point to divine sovereignty, confirm the gospel, and proclaim eschatological hope. Ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit who enlightens the heart to understand and believe, overcoming the limitations of a purely critical perspective. Thus, Protestant hermeneutics neither denies science nor criticism, but submits them to the superior judgment of revelation, maintaining miracles as true signs of God's grace.

7. Conclusion: The Bible as Supreme Authority and the Miracle as a Real Act of God

The reflection on miracles throughout this article explored the dialogue between faith, philosophy, historical criticism, and science, demonstrating the complexity of the topic within the Christian tradition. It was observed that, although modern criticism has questioned the possibility of supernatural events, Protestant Christian faith preserves the conviction that God acts in history in a real and sovereign manner. This conviction does not stem from a disdain for reason, but from the belief that reason alone is incapable of grasping the mystery of divine grace revealed in Scripture.

Classical authors such as Augustine (2006), Calvin (1997), and Kierkegaard (2010) emphasize that miracles are not arbitrary violations of the created order, but rather expressions of God's love that intervenes for reasons greater than human understanding. For C.S. Lewis (2008), the denial of miracles often stems from a worldview closed to the transcendent, rather than conclusive evidence against them. Thus, maintaining the possibility of miracles does not imply rejecting scientific knowledge, but affirming that a living, free, and sovereign God exists.

The Protestant tradition, over the centuries, has sought to preserve this healthy tension: recognizing the legitimacy of criticism and historical investigation, without relinquishing the centrality of biblical revelation. The miracle, in this context, is more than an extraordinary fact: it is a sign that confirms the Word, builds the faith of the community, and manifests divine compassion. When read in light of Scripture, the miracle reveals itself not as a myth or empty metaphor, but as a real act of God who continues to act.



In the contemporary world, marked by skepticism and secularization, reaffirming the miracle as divine intervention becomes a courageous testimony. It means proclaiming that ultimate reality is not limited to what is visible or measurable, but opens to the infinity of divine mystery.

This proclamation is based not merely on philosophical or historical arguments, but on the confidence that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

In conclusion, it is reiterated that, for the Protestant Christian faith, the supreme authority is the Bible, which presents miracles as an essential part of God's revelation. Historical criticism and science have value, but they are not the final criterion of truth. It is in the testimony of Scripture, illuminated by the Holy Spirit, that Christians recognize miracles as real signs of divine presence and love. This confession, far from denying reason, transcends it, affirming that God continues to act, transform lives, and confirm His Word.

Thus, even in times of doubt, the miracle remains an expression of Christian hope: God is not an abstract idea, but the living Lord who intervenes, heals, liberates and saves.

This is the certainty that sustains the Christian's faith and gives meaning to the proclamation of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

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