

DEMONIC MIRACLES VS. CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS:  
THE BATTLE OF WORLD VIEWS  
JACK COTTRELL – CINCINNATI BIBLE SEMINARY – SPRING 2010

INTRODUCTION. The reality of demonic miracles presents a problem for Christian apologetics. This problem will be explained and resolved here.

I. THE DILEMMA.

A. Christian apologetics relies heavily on the evidential power of miracles.

1. Definition: a miracle is a visible act of God which is obviously contrary to natural law and which therefore functions as a sign or as evidence for the truth of the miracle-worker's claims.
2. The Reality of miracles is interwoven throughout the fabric of Scripture, both in the OT and in the NT. If miracles are not real (especially the resurrection of Jesus), then Christianity is not worth defending. See 1 Cor. 15:14.
3. The Evidential Purpose of miracles.
  - a. The *primary* purpose of a miracle is always to function as a sign (evidence, proof) of something. A main NT word for miracles is *semeion*, or "sign."
    - b. Exactly HOW do miracles function as signs? Usually –
      - 1) They show that the *miracle-worker* is a messenger from God. See Exod. 14:31; 1 Kings 17:24a; Luke 7:20-22; John 3:2; 10:25; Acts 2:22; Rom. 1:4; 2 Cor. 12:12.
      - 2) This in turn authenticates (confirms, proves the divine origin and truth of) the miracle-worker's *message*. See 1 Kings 17:24b; Mark 16:20; Acts 8:6; Heb. 2:3-4.
      - 3) Miracles are often introduced thus: "By this you shall know"; "So that you may know." See Exod. 7:17; 8:22; Deut. 4:34-35; 1 Kings 18:36; Mark 2:10.
    - c. This in turn provides a firm foundation for FAITH.
      - 1) See Exod. 4:30-31; 14:31; John 2:23; 20:30-31.
      - 2) Even the *reports* of miracles are a sufficient basis for faith: Exod. 10:2; Josh. 4:23-24; Psalm 106:7, 21-22; John 20:30-31.

B. How do demonic miracles affect this fundamental aspect of Christian apologetics?

1. The Reality of demonic miracles is established thus:
  - a. Via Biblical testimony: Exod. 7:11-12, 22; 8:7 (see 2 Tim. 3:8); Matt. 7:21-23; 2 Thess. 2:9; Rev. 13:13-14.
  - b. Via the application of ordinary historical method to claims concerning miraculous events in occult contexts in the modern world. Cf. the careers of the American, Edgar Cayce, and the Brazilian healer, Arigo.
2. The Value of demonic miracles for Christian apologetics: their reality shows the existence of a *supernatural* realm, thus disproving the validity of the secular (materialistic) world view.

3. The Challenge of demonic miracles for Christian apologetics: Does not the reality of demonic miracles negate the validity of our apologetical method, given our heavy dependence on miracles—especially the resurrection of Jesus? If demonic miracles are real, this seems to negate our ability to use miracles such as the resurrection as proof of the Christian world view.

## II. THE SOLUTION TO THE DILEMMA.

- A. The concept of Tests for Truth (or methods of proof). There are four such tests by which we evaluate truth claims (i.e., statements) to see whether they are true or not.
  1. Comparison with reality: we compare the statement with the reality it purports to describe, if that reality is available for comparison.
  2. Consistency: we examine the statement (in its context) to see if it contradicts itself or if it contradicts other already-accepted truths.
  3. Conclusions drawn from agreed-on premises (i.e., implication): certain premises yield specific conclusions either by the deductive or by the inductive method.
  4. Coherence (or *systematic* consistency, to use Edward Carnell's term).
    - a. This means that a statement is more likely to be true if it can assimilate and make sense out of more known data. It means that a statement is logically consistent AND "fits all the facts known in our experience."
    - b. This test for truth is valuable especially for testing or comparing world views. I.e., that world view is accepted as true which makes sense out of the most data, or into which the most data fit into a coherent system.
- B. The test of coherence is the Capstone of Christian apologetics. It asks how well the existing data—Christian miracles *and* demonic miracles—FIT consistently into a total world view.
  1. See Gordon Lewis, *Testing Christianity's Truth Claims* (1976), 185: "A 'systematic' hypothesis fits all the relevant facts of experience. Two equally consistent hypotheses could account for a broken window: it was hit (1) by a trailer truck, or (2) by a shot from a B.B. gun. Upon examination, however, only one of these hypotheses fits the facts--there was just one tiny hole in the window! Our experience brings to us certain givens. These data cannot be irrelevant to our formulation of truth about the world. An acceptable truth-claim fits the facts covered by it. All the facts are consistent with one another. It follows that all true hypotheses must likewise be consistent with one another. The 'world-viewish' hypothesis cohering with the greatest number of facts with the fewest difficulties is most systematically consistent."
  2. See also Thomas V. Morris, *Francis Schaeffer's Apologetics: A Critique* (1976), 95-97, 111-112, 117-118. E.g., a "condition which normally must be satisfied in order for a person to take up a new belief is that it somehow must be able to fit in consistently with his other beliefs. We are all much more comfortable when our various beliefs, especially important ones, cohere and are consistent with each other. . . . People normally avoid accepting inconsistent or contradictory claims about the world, and thus demand of their beliefs that they hang together as harmoniously as possible" (111-112). "On the basis of its explanatory power to subsume all the data of human experience--the way the world, and life within the world, is--we can argue that Christianity is confirmed relative to any conceivable contrary religious or philosophical position." I.e., we can show "that there are in the world many things which are better accounted

for, or explained, by the claims of biblical Christianity than by the claims of any other rival religious or philosophical positions" (117-118).

3. When the test of coherence is applied, it shows that the Biblical world view is COMPLETE and COHERENT.
  - a. It makes sense of the data of the universe, with very few (the fewest) unanswered questions. There are solid reasons for accepting its major components: the existence of a supernatural realm, the existence of a designer and creator for the universe, the historical reliability of the Biblical records, the reality of the miracles of the Bible, the reality of Jesus' resurrection, the truth of Jesus' teaching, and thus the truth of the Bible and the existence of the Creator-God of the Bible.
  - b. In response to the challenge of demonic miracles, the crucial point is this: the Christian world view is completely compatible with the reality of demonic miracles; but Biblical miracles, especially the resurrection of Jesus, are completely inconsistent with the occult world view. They do not fit into its total picture of the world, and therefore show that it is a false world view.
  - c. In the battle of world views, the Biblical world view soundly defeats the occult world view.

C. How the test of coherence vindicates the Biblical world view and exposes the fallacy of its rival.

1. Satan and his angels were among the first good free-will beings created by God (i.e., the angels), and they were the first to wrongly use the gift of free will in order to commit sin. (See 2 Peter 2:4.) This explains the ORIGIN of Satan and his angels, the demons.
2. When compared and confronted with divine miracles, Satanic miracles are demonstrated to be qualitatively and quantitatively inferior.
  - a. The miracles of Pharaoh's magicians were surpassed by the divine miracles of Aaron and Moses. See Exodus 7:12; 8:18. The magicians recognized this. When their miracles faltered in the presence of the continuing miraculous manifestations of Aaron and Moses, they declared, "This is the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19).
  - b. Demonic-prophecies are notoriously undependable and inaccurate. E.g., Edgar Cayce, "the sleeping prophet," made many predictions about the future while in his trance state, but very few if any actually have come true.
  - c. Witches and sorcerers may succeed in performing miracles of healing, but those who are healed usually come under Satan's power in other ways. Often they themselves become demonized. Kurt Koch, who was an evangelical expert on occult matters, spoke of the principle of compensation: any "benefit" someone receives from Satan is always outweighed by harm that he causes in other ways.
3. Jesus consistently demonstrated his power and authority over Satan and his demons, especially in the deliverance aspect of his ministry.
  - a. Satan's power was always subordinate to the superior power of Jesus. E.g., Mark 1:23-28; 5:1-13; Luke 10:17-19; 11:14-22.
  - b. The superior power of the name of Jesus Christ continued (and still continues) to be shown in post-gospels deliverances. See Acts 16:16ff.; see modern deliverance ministries.

- c. The triumph and superiority of Christ over Satan and all his powers is decisively demonstrated in the RESURRECTION of Jesus, which is the ultimate miracle. See Eph 1:18-23.

CONCLUSION. The Biblical world view is thus not only positively proved by various lines of evidence; it is also able to assimilate and explain even those aspects of reality that SEEM to contradict it. It passes the test of coherence. All the pieces of the world-puzzle fit within the Christian paradigm--even the difficult and dark pieces. On the other hand, there are masses of data that cannot be assimilated by its rival world views, including the consistent superiority of divine (Biblical) miracles, especially those done in the name of Jesus Christ.