



UDC 130.2

<https://doi.org/10.24833/2541-8831-2024-2-30-169-182>

MIRACLES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Mathew Chandrankunnel¹, Maria S. Lyutaeva²

¹ Team for the Integral Development of North East India, New Delhi, India

chandrankunnel@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6165-4831>

² Vladimir State University, Vladimir, Russia

liutaeva@yandex.ru

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9972-6674>



Abstract. The article delves into the concept of miracles from the perspective of the Catholic Church, tracing the evolution of human consciousness from fear to awe to curiosity, leading to the phenomena of mythologization, religious experiences, philosophical explanations, and rational understanding of everyday events through science and technology. The relevance of the study is due to the great influence and role of the Catholic Church in the modern world. Miracles as one of the key phenomena related to Catholic values are examined. By

means of categorial and discourse analyses, along with the case study method, the work highlights the theological interpretation of miracles, distinguishing between official Christian doctrines and vernacular religious practices. It explores the process of institutionalization of religion and the significance of miracles within the context of Catholicism, emphasizing their role as divine revelations and signs of the supernatural. The article discusses the theological views on miracles of such thinkers as Augustine of Hippo and St. Thomas Aquinas, underscoring how miracles attest to faith and the resurrection. Contemporary examples of miracles recognized by the Catholic Church, such as those at Lourdes and involving figures like St. Padre Pio and Carlo Acutis are outlined. The process of canonization and the phenomenon of stigmata are described. The discussion extends to the philosophical debates on miracles, contrasting rationalistic criticisms from figures like David Hume and Baruch Spinoza with the religious significance attributed to miraculous events. The article also critiques the positivist perspective that subjugates religion to reason and science, emphasizing the enduring nature of miracles in religious discourse despite scientific advancements. In conclusion, the study advocates for a reconnection with the miraculous, religious, and metaphysical realms, positing that embracing mystery and awe can imbue life with meaning, wonder, and purpose, countering the secularization thesis that diminishes the role of miracles and spirituality in the modern world.

Keywords: miracles, spirituality, Catholic church, Augustine, Padre Pio, Miracles at Lourdes, Carlo Acutis, stigmata, canonization

For citation: Chandrankunnel, M., Lyutaeva, M. S. (2024) 'Miracles from the Perspective of the Catholic Church', *Concept: Philosophy, Religion, Culture*, 8(2), pp. 169–182. (In Russian). <https://doi.org/10.24833/2541-8831-2024-2-30-169-182>

ЧУДЕСА С ТОЧКИ ЗРЕНИЯ КАТОЛИЧЕСКОЙ ЦЕРКВИ

Мэтью Чандраканнел¹, Мария Сергеевна Лютаева²

¹ Команда комплексного развития Северо-Восточной Индии, Нью-Дели, Индия

chandrakunnel@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-6165-4831>

² Владимирский государственный университет им. А.Г. и Н.Г. Столетовых, Владимир, Россия

liutaeva@yandex.ru

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9972-6674>

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается концепция чуда с точки зрения католической церкви. Прослежена эволюция развития эмоционального отношения к этому феномену: от страха к трепету и любопытству, ведущему, с одной стороны, к мифологизации религиозного опыта, а с другой — к попыткам философского объяснения чудесного на фоне увеличения удельного веса рациональных подходов к событиям повседневности (последнее сопряжено также с усилением социальной роли науки и технологий). Актуальность исследования обусловлена большим влиянием католической церкви в современном мире, что требует не только внимательного отношения к обновлению повестки, на которой строится послание этой церкви своей пастве, но также предполагает детальный разбор «вечных» вопросов, лежащих в основе католической проповеди, тех базовых концептов, на которых она строится. Чудо относится именно к таким базовым концептам, выступая вместе с тем одним из ключевых явлений, связанных с католическими ценностями. С помощью категориального и дискурсивного анализа, а также метода тематического исследования в работе освещается теологическая интерпретация чудес, проводится различие между официальными христианскими доктринами и народными религиозными практиками. Исследуется процесс институционализации религии и значение чудес в контексте католицизма, подчёркивается их роль для верующих, перед которыми чудеса предстают в качестве божественных откровений и знаков сверхъестественного. В статье обсуждаются богословские взгляды на чудеса таких мыслителей, как Августин и св. Фома Аквинский, которые акцентировали роль чуда как свидетельства о вере и воскресении. Описаны современные примеры чудес, признанных католической церковью, — например, чудеса в Лурде, а также события, связываемые с такими личностями, как святой падре Пио и Карло Акутис. Обсуждается процесс канонизации и феномен стигматов. Дискуссия распространяется на философские споры о чудесах; рационалистическая критика феномена чудесного со стороны таких «отцов» философии свободомыслия, как Дэвид Юм и Барух Спиноза, противопоставляется повышенному религиозному значению, приписываемому чудесным событиям в народном сознании и теологическом дискурсе. Также в статье критически рассмотрена позитивистская точка зрения, основанная на тезисе превосходства науки как формы знания, и тем самым требующая подчинения религии разуму и науке. Выделен непреходящий характер уважительного отношения к одобряемым христианской церковью чудесам в религиозно ориентированном дискурсе, причём это уважение не смогли поколебать несколько веков научных достижений. В заключение обоснован тезис о vitalной необходимости воссоединения современного человека со сферой чудесного, религиозного и метафизического, подкрепляющей его готовность противостоять секуляризации (интерпретируемой как одна

из форм отказа от поисков человеком духовного измерения своей жизни). Не только с позиций теологии, но также с точки зрения религиозной философии, не является бессмысленным утверждение о том, что тайна и трепет могут наполнить жизнь смыслом, а чудо — задавать вектор движения к высокой цели, наглядно связывая поиски такого смысла с его духовным и телесным воплощением.

Ключевые слова: чудеса, чудо, духовность, Католическая церковь, Августин, Падре Пио, чудеса в Лурде, Карло Акутис, стигматы, канонизация

Для цитирования: Chandrankunnel, M., Lyutaeva, M. S. Miracles from the Perspective of the Catholic Church // Concept: Philosophy, Religion, Culture. — 2024. — Vol. 9, No 2. — Pp. 169–182. <https://doi.org/10.24833/2541-8831-2024-2-30-169-182>

Introduction

At the very beginning of humanity's existence, people encountered every phenomenon with trepidation due to the fear of the impending wrath that might befall them. The rituals that evolved in various religions such as the worship of snakes, large rivers, and huge mountains in India and other places as well as the cham dance among the Tibetans and such practices alike in many other cultures illustrate an experience of fearfulness, bewilderment, and hence a practice of appeasement in encountering the natural phenomena and other unknown forces. As the human consciousness evolved through space and time, fear turned into awe which later transformed into curiosity which empowered humanity to pass through the phases of mythologization, religious experience, philosophical explanation, and ultimately towards a rational understanding of everyday events known in terms of science and technology. These four phases of humanity, were envisaged by positivist philosophers like August Comte¹ which was reformulated by sociologist Emil Durkheim [Durkheim, 1974; 1995] through structural functionalism and ultimately by scientism established by leaders like philosopher Daniel Dennet [Dennett, 1996; 2007], journalist Christopher Hitchens [Hitchens, 2009; 2007], evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins [Dawkins, 2016a; 2016b]

and physicist Stephen Hawking [Hawking, 2015; Hawking, Mlodinow, 2011] who rejected all spiritual and metaphysical explanations. Some of these advocated for the gradual elimination of all other stages and argued that there would be a gradual evolution where science and technology would be the only rational scientific meaning-giving mechanism. Others argue that all four ways of explanation still exist in human consciousness and are needed for a meaningful human existence.

One of these phenomena, which defies rational reflection, but acts as a key one in the context of most religious cultures, is a 'miracle'. This study examines the theological concept of a miracle from the perspective of the Catholic Church. The relevance of the study is due to the authority of Catholicism among world religions; as well as the growing influence of Catholicism on the sociocultural processes of the modern world through active participation of believers and the Catholic clergy in the transformation of social relations. Receptiveness of Christian values shows adaptability and depends on the national and cultural contexts. To carry out a religious analysis of the miracle phenomenon the methods of categorial analysis, discourse analysis, and the case study were used.

S. I. Ryzhakova notes that "faith in miracles, as well as miracles that have become the basis of faith, is found in almost all peoples of the world, although they are recognized,

¹ August Comte proposed that there is a theological stage, metaphysical stage and a positive stage or scientific stage which were illustrated in and through his many volumes of books, which are abridged and translated by Harriet Martineau [Comte, 2009].

described and explained in different ways” [Рыжакова, 2020]. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* gives the following definition: “A miracle is an extraordinary event, perceptible to the senses, produced by God in a religious context as a sign of the supernatural”². It should be noted that since the time of early Christianity, the Church has recognized, as a problem, the difference between a miracle as a divine revelation, a sign, and a miraculous as surprising in its strangeness, acting as an object of interest and value outside the theological interpretation and religious context [Арнайтова, 2023: 6]. As explained by J. Le Goff, “the miraculous remains with God and is expressed in a divine act that defies the laws of nature,” while differing from the magical, which is always condemned and associated with the activities of sorcerers and witches [Ле Гофф, 2011: 16].

In carrying out a religious analysis of the miracle phenomenon, we come to the distinction between official Christianity, fixed in dogmatic documents, and its vernacular version. The term *vernacular* was proposed by the folklorist L. N. Primiano to describe religion in its lively, spontaneous, and original manifestation. According to the American anthropologist, this approach especially takes into account what people say, think, worry about, and practice with regard to religion. “Understanding religion as *vernacular religion* does justice to the variety of manifestations and perspectives found within past and present religiosity” [Primiano, 1995: 42]. In studying the miraculous in a theological interpretation, one can trace the process of institutionalization of religion [Островская, 2005], the theory of which was developed by sociologists M. Weber, E. Durkheim, T. Parsons, N. Luhmann, when living religious practice, experience through dogmatic decision-making procedures is included in the official doctrine. Thus, the study, which is more related to the anthropology of religion,

at the same time covers all four dimensions of religion, highlighted by religious scholar W. P. Alston: intellectual, practical, experiential, and social [Kessler, 2006: 30]. So the phenomenon of the miracle is considered from the point of view of the evolution of Christian dogma, the inclusion of the presented cases in the practice of church life, and the theological interpretation of examples of religious experience of believers. The purpose of the work does not include a critical analysis from the standpoint of the natural science worldview, but the emphasis is on the explication of the theistic approach to the phenomenon of miracles.

Augustine of Hippo in *On the City of God Against the Pagans* (*De civitate Dei contra paganos*) formulates the meaning of miraculous events for the Christian Church: “Miracles were necessary before the world believed, in order that it might believe”³, after the realization of the main and great saving miracle, the resurrection of Christ, unusual events act as a sign of divine power, “even now, therefore, many miracles are wrought, the same God who wrought those we read of still performing them, by whom He will and as He will”⁴. Thus, according to Augustine, all miracles made by martyrs, saints, and the blessed “attest this faith which preaches the resurrection of the flesh to eternal life”⁵. St. Augustine also notes that it is necessary to record miracles for the memory of them to be a testimony of divine grace (*Gratia Dei*). Later, the concept of a miracle formulated by Augustine was supplemented and clarified by St. Thomas Aquinas and became a model of classical speculative theology⁶. As St. Thomas believed, a miracle surpasses the powers and expectations of all created nature substantively, subjectively, and qualitatively, it is transcendent and can only be produced by divine omnipotence (*miracula stricta*)⁷. Since the 10th century, special commissions (canonization commissions) have

² Pater T.G. Miracles (theology of) // *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol.9. — Farmington Hills: Gale, 2003. — P. 664.

³ St. Augustine. *The City of God*. Book 22. Chapter 8. — URL: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Nicene_and_Post-Nicene_Fathers:Series_I/Volume_II/City_of_God/Book_XXII/Chapter_8

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ St. Augustine. *The City of God*. Book 22. Chapter 9. — URL: https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Nicene_and_Post-Nicene_Fathers:Series_I/Volume_II/City_of_God/Book_XXII/Chapter_9

⁶ Fr. John A. Hardon, S.J. *The Concept of Miracle from St. Augustine to Modern Apologetics*. — URL: http://www.thereal-presence.org/archives/Miracles/Miracles_003.htm

⁷ Ibid.

been created in the Church, headed by papal legates, who investigated and registered the facts of veneration of local miracle workers [Арнаутова, 2004: 340]. Since the 16th century, faith in miracles has become the object of sharp criticism not only by the ideologists of the Reformation of the Church (M. Luther, J. Calvin) but also is subjected to philosophical criticism from the intellectual elite (D. Hume, B. Spinoza, G. Leibniz, I. Kant, G. Hegel), in the polemic with which the dogmatic position of the Church is formed. In the 18th century, the concept of a miracle was adjusted by Pope Benedict XIV. As miraculous phenomena, *miracula relative* / *miracula minora*, i.e. miracles of angels, as well as inexplicable from the point of view of the material and visible nature of the deeds of Christian saints during life and after death, were included in it⁸. Such clarification was a necessary step in the context of the legal formalization of the beatification and canonization processes. In the modern Catholic concept of miracles, recorded in the documents of the First Vatican Council it is believed that “in order that the submission of our faith be conformed to reason, God willed that, joined to internal help of the Holy Spirit, there be external proofs of His revelation, namely divine acts, especially miracles and prophecies”⁹. The Council condemned the position of scepticism regarding the possibility of miracles, as well as statements denying miracles described in the Holy Scriptures¹⁰.

The four Gospels of Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John illustrate 26 miracles of Jesus, like the raising of the dead, healing incurable diseases, curing blindness, repositioning of a cut ear, multiplication of loaves, calming the sea, etc. Tracing back to the first-century experience of the evangelists, it might be difficult to examine critically now, how all these narrations of faith experiences could be placed under a rationalistic analysis of how they could be explained in terms of the perspective of natural sciences or beyond it which were evolved only recently. These miracles were written by the evange-

lists as the confirmation of the divinity of Jesus as Christ and Messiah which were accepted by the first Christian communities [O'Neill, 2022]. So, these miracles wouldn't be fit for the test of scientific veracity and investigation as only recently the test of scientific scrutiny evolved.

Many of the miracles experienced recently can be placed under six major categories of miracle claims continuing the tradition of miracles conducted by Jesus: sacred relics (like the Shroud of Turin); miraculous images (such as weeping icons); miracle healings (like at Lourdes); visionary experiences (including near-death experiences); saintly powers (such as stigmata); and *the devil's work* (such as demonic possession).

The following are cases of modern and most resonant miracles in the media space, recognized by the Catholic Church: Miracles at Lourdes, Carlo Acutis' Intercessory Miracle, and Padre Pio's Stigmata.

Miracles at Lourdes

Mother Mary's apparitions, known as Marian apparitions, itself are miracles. Most of the important apparitions are the Lourdes (1858) in France, Fathima in Portugal (1917), and Medjugorje (1981) in Croatia-Herzegovina. In Southern France, at a place called Lourdes, Mother Mary had appeared 18 times to a 14-year-old girl named Bernadette Soubirous (was beatified in 1925 and canonized in 1933)¹¹, in a Grotto from February 11 to July 16, 1858, which was initially received with scepticism and believed to be superstitious. Later this Marian apparition was confirmed by the Church authorities as a true apparition of Mother Mary. In the 9th apparition, Blessed Mother asked Bernadette to drink water from the pool under the rock of the Grotto. However, she couldn't find the pool, and hence she scratched the earth with her hands, and gradually water trickled down three times she threw it away because it was so muddy and the fourth

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Dogmatic Constitution Dei Filius on Catholic Faith. Third Public Session, April 24, 1870. Pius XII. // Documents of Vatican Council I by John F. Broderick. — 1971. — P.43.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 50.

¹¹ Casey T.F. Lourdes // New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol.8. — Farmington Hills: Gale, 2003. — P. 819.

time, she found clear water and drank it. In 1862 Bishop Lawrence confirmed the apparitions and approved the public cult of Our Lady of Lourdes. Gradually many visitors arrived at this place and it became a pilgrimage centre. Pilgrims with diseases and afflictions used to wash, drink, and smear with water collected from this pond experiencing miraculous power. Many healings have been continuously happening at Lourdes which couldn't be explainable from a scientific perspective. A Medical Bureau was established in 1905 by Pope Pius X to verify the claim of the so-called incidents termed as miracles. From 1883 onwards there were more than 7 000 incidents of healing that were reported and they were selected and scrutinized by the Medical Board. Out of this large number of claims, 70 were confirmed by the Medical Board as inexplicable after medical scrutiny and analysis. These cures were further examined by expert medical scientists from all over the world who, after prolonged examination confirmed that they are inexplicable in terms of medical science and rational analysis. Among these, one of the prominent healing processes was that of Marie Bailly examined by the atheist medical scientist Alexis Carrel¹² [Carrel Lindbergh, 1956]. Alexis Carrel was a Nobel Prize winner born and brought up in France, became a medical scientist who developed perfusion pumps that enabled open heart surgery and organ transplantation. He was also instrumental in developing innovative techniques for suturing blood vessels, known as vascular surgery. He worked at the Rockefeller Institute of Medical Research, New York where he did significant work on tissue cultures. Born into a Catholic family, and hence baptized as a Catholic, Alexis lost faith while studying at the University, and thus, became an atheist. His transformative experience at Lourdes of observing the healing of two persons was confirmed by him as medically and scientifically inexplicable, which journeyed him from an agnostic to an ardent believer. As a secular, atheist, and medical scientist, Alexis

Carrel witnessed these inexplicable healing processes. After prolonged analysis and medical scrutiny, he ultimately confirmed that medical science had no rational explanation for how the healing took place and pronounced them as miracles. As Alexis Carrel was a medical scientist crowned with a Nobel Prize who was also an atheist, his affirmation gives more credibility to the healing as a miracle because had nothing to gain or prove in siding with the Catholic Church in pronouncing this healing process as a miracle.

Patients were usually taken to the Grotto of Lourdes from all over the world. In 1902 a special train with patients was moving from Lyons towards Lourdes. A doctor friend of Alexis requested him to accompany the patients on that train and he joined the team of doctors with the interest of examining what was happening at Lourdes because as an agnostic he couldn't believe that miracles were happening. Marie Bailly¹³ was a patient in that train suffering from acute *tuberculous peritonitis* having considerable abdominal distension with large hard masses and only semi-conscious because of the acute pain. According to Alexis, she would die even before reaching Lourdes on account of the severity of the medical issues with which she was affected. Alexis' diagnosis was accepted by other medical doctors who accompanied her on the train. Marie was taken to the Grotto and three pitchers of water were poured over her distended abdomen. After the first pour, she felt severe pain and after the second it was less, and after the third Marie experienced a pleasant sensation. All this time Alexis was standing behind her, keenly observing what was happening to her. Alexis wrote in his documentation that soon after the third pouring of water "the enormously distended and very hard abdomen began to flatten and within 30 minutes it had completely disappeared. No discharge whatsoever was observed from the body." Her pulse became normal and the swollen abdomen began to flatten by itself. Marie sat up in bed, had dinner

¹² This is a fictional account of "Dr. Lerrac" and his visit to Lourdes in which he witnesses the miracles and healing of the sick there, based on Dr. Carrel's own experiences.

¹³ Fr. Robert Spitzer S.J. This Lourdes Miracle led to the Conversion of Alexis Carrel // Magis center. — 2023. — 20 Oct. — URL: <https://www.magiscenter.com/blog/alexis-carrel>

without vomiting, got out of bed, and dressed herself the day after. Perfectly she walked and took the train, lay down on the hard benches of the train, and reached Lyons refreshed and felt perfectly fine. Marie was monitored by a physician and a psychologist for the next four months and nobody could diagnose any afflictions or anything wrong with her. Marie Bailly after her healing joined the religious congregation of the Sisters of Charity and lived a very meaningful life till 58 years old and died in 1937. The details of these accounts were published in a fictional book, based on the true experiences of Alexis Carrel. The event was rapid, complete, and medically inexplicable that it had a long-standing impression on Alexis that as an agnostic, non-believer medical scientist, witnessing this miracle, leaped from the known to the unknown, he re-established his Catholic faith before his death.

**Miracles in the context
of the canonization process.
Carlo Acutis' Intercessory Miracle.**

The Catholic Church through the centuries organized a tedious process called canonization¹⁴, for the proclamation of a person through four stages as Servant of God, Venerable, Blessed, and ultimately as Saint. In all these processes there is historical documentation on the sanctity of the heroic virtuous Christian life, which is known as holiness, and how the person intervened in the life of the faithful through miracles. Only when the person, who can be either a male or a female, intercedes, and only if a miraculous intervention in the life of a living individual occurs will it be examined by the medical board formed to verify whether the incident, often a curing or any other miraculous event, occurred. Most of the cases in these intercessory miracles are curing from diseases or infirmities which the medical board affirms and confirms as medically unexplainable. In every stage of the above steps, up to the proclamation of the person as a saint, there needs to be at least a confirmed miracle

to substantiate the heroic virtuous Christian life. Otherwise, the cause of the candidate for the sainthood will be rejected. Also, there will be an advocate who will try his or her best to argue and prove that this person is not worthy of proclaiming publicly as a saint in order not to get an easy proclamation towards any of the above-mentioned positions of holiness. Very rigorously this examination of the incident is evaluated and only then the process of proclaiming a candidate to sainthood and other steps of holiness will be made. Thus, miracles are the differentiating markers for proclaiming a candidate to the different levels of holiness by the medical and other rational and ecclesiastical boards established by the Catholic Church. Therefore, let us examine a few cases of intercessory interventions confirmed by the Catholic Church through its various boards of examinations which has to be affirmed by the Pope himself.

Carlo Acutis was a young boy, known as a whiz kid or a computer geek, on account of his superb skill in manipulating computers and utilizing the internet, who effectively lived only for 15 years (3 May 1991 – 12 October 2006) but was known to be a very holy child who devoted himself for Eucharistic adoration¹⁵. At a young age, he was known to be a web designer and presented the Eucharistic miracles and the apparitions of Mother Mary on self-created websites. He was confirmed with the disease of acute promyelocytic leukaemia on October 1, 2006, and had no chance of recovery. When he was asked by the doctors, how was his pain, he always said that many people suffer more than him. He used to tell others that he offered his suffering for Pope Benedict XVI and the Catholic Church. He also informed and consoled his mother saying that death “is a passage towards life”. On the evening of October 12 2006 he died and was buried according to his wish in Assisi, Italy. During the funeral, a barren woman who was 44 and wanted to have children had a child the next year, and a woman who had cancer was cured of that cancer. Both these women attrib-

¹⁴ Molinari P. G.B. O'Donnell. Canonization of Saints (History and Procedure) // New Catholic Encyclopedia, vol.2. — Farmington Hills: Gale, 2002. — P. 61-66.

¹⁵ The miracle details are taken from this book [Gori, 2021], written by the Postulator of Acutis.

ute the conception and delivery of the child and the curing of cancer to the intercession of Acutis.

For the beatification of Carlo Acutis, the following miracle was considered by the medical board and the ecclesiastical authority. Mathew, the son of Luciana Vianna from Brazil was seriously affected by a pancreatic disorder from birth. Vianna took her son Mathew to a prayer service of Acutis touching his relics and praying for recovery. Immediately following the prayer service, Mathew informed his mother that he felt healed and asked for solid food when he came home. Until that time, he was only having liquid food. After a thorough investigation by the medical and ecclesiastical authorities, this cure of Mathew was affirmed and confirmed as a miracle. The miracle's authenticity was documented by Pope Francis on 21st February 2020 by affixing his signature and paving the way for the beatification of Acutis as Blessed. The medical board examined the case and promulgated that the healing was inexplicable according to the medical practice and proposed that some higher power intervention was required to have such a sudden and long-standing recovery. Thus, miracles which are simply because the human understanding of such extraordinary healing couldn't be explained in terms of our rationality, skepticism, and scientific perspective happen. Such kind of numerous miracles are happening all over the world and very few will be examined to the extent as was in the case of the pancreatic disorder of Mathew from Brazil. For the beatification and canonization of every saint, such miracles need to be affirmed by the medical and ecclesiastical authorities.

Padre Pio's Stigmata

Jesus was crucified on the cross, he was nailed to the cross, two nails piercing both the hands and a nail placed together and piercing the legs. His chest was pierced by a spear by a Roman soldier while checking whether he was dead or not. He was already dead and hence blood and water oozed from his chest confirming that he was dead. Jesus' body was washed and buried in a new tomb cut out on the rock in a nearby garden on Golgotha or Calvary where he was crucified (John 19: 39-

42). After the resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples and called the doubting Thomas to place his finger in the wound in his chest and Thomas became a believer in Jesus as Resurrected as revealed in the Gospel of John 20:27. After resurrection in all the appearances of Jesus amidst the apostles, it was confirmed by apostles that he appeared with the five wounds and thus the five wounds were becoming an element for special reverence and devotion. Jesus appeared to many believers with the five wounds. It is said that Jesus specially gifted the five wounds to St Francis of Assisi during a Lenten season of forty days of fasting and prayer conducted by the saint. Francis carried these stigmata for many years. St Francis (1181– 1226) with his stigmata is considered to be a second Christ due to his very close following of Christ's life and ideals [Dalarun, Cusato, Salvati, 2006] many received these stigmata in their lives, in the twentieth century Padre Pio a Capuchin priest in Italy is the most famous. He was so popular and now elevated as a canonized saint because of his holiness. Padre Pio belongs to the congregation founded by St Francis of Assisi. So let us examine, the stigmata claim of St Padre Pio (25 May 1887 – 23 September 1968).

Born as Francesco Forgione in Italy to poor peasants, Padre Pio from the very beginning had health issues and had visions and ecstasies [Rega, 2012; Luzzatto, 2010]. He joined the Capuchin Order in 1903 and received the name, Pio. Due to sickness, he had to return home, recuperate himself, and rejoin the order during his formation times. It was reported that during his formation time, he was affected by loss of appetite, insomnia, fainting, migraines, and continuous vomiting. Due to this he transferred to monasteries in the mountains thinking that a change of the weather might help him. In 1910, he was ordained as a priest, and from 1916 onwards he was in the Capuchin Friary of Our Lady of Grace, San Giovanni Rotondo, in the province of Foggia, Italy, and remained there till his death. It was here Padre Pio got the stigmata and became a world-famous name synonymous with sanctity and miracle. He did simple things in his friary such as celebrating mass, helping the people with confessions, and praying for them, and the visitors increased from

1918, the year he received the stigmata. Padre Pio celebrated the golden jubilee of the reception of the Stigmata on 22 September 1968 and after that, he collapsed. The next day early morning at 2.30 AM he passed away after receiving the sacraments, having confessed and renewed his vows. It was assumed that more than 100 000 people attended his funeral on the 26th of September.

Many spiritual and mystical gifts were attributed to Padre Pio. He could easily read the spiritual status of people, ability to bilocate, ability to heal sicknesses, have celestial visions, and ecstasy, and communication with saints and angels, etc., are some of them. These attributions of supernatural phenomena surrounding Padre Pio attracted fame and amazement, and the Catholic Church in the beginning saw these incidents and events with skepticism and ordered ecclesiastical and medical investigations. Some of these investigations approved the stigmata and the spiritual gifts of Padre Pio. Some other investigations were conducted by eminent priests and scientists who criticized and evaluated the miracles as fabricated rather than spiritual gifts. Initially, Padre Pio was prohibited from saying mass because of these controversies and was not allowed to conduct confessions. However, later he was allowed to conduct all the ceremonies of the Church and celebrated his life as a person of spiritual gifts and heroic sanctity. He was visited and acknowledged by Popes as a living saint. After his death, he was promoted to various levels, and on 2nd May 1999, Pope John Paul II beatified him in Rome during the homily he expressed thus: "His body, marked by the 'stigmata', showed forth the intimate bond between death and resurrection which characterizes the paschal mystery. Bl. Pio of Pietrelcina shared in the Passion with a special intensity: the unique gifts that were given to him, and the interior and mystical sufferings that accompanied them, allowed him constantly to participate in the Lord's agonies, never wavering in his sense that 'Calvary is the hill of the saints'." His beatification was at-

tended by more than 300 000 faithful in Rome. An Italian boy named Matteo Pio Colella was in a coma and through the intercession of Padre Pio he was brought to normal life. This incident was studied by the medical and ecclesiastical authorities and confirmed and affirmed as a miracle that paved the way for the canonization of Padre Pio as Saint Padre Pio by Pope John Paul II on 28th February 2002. The promulgation was conducted by St John Paul II on 16th June 2002 in St Peter's Square with an estimated 300 000 people attending the canonization ceremony.

In the initial years of 1920, just two years after the reception of the stigmata, the Vatican was involved in strict actions against Padre Pio such as prohibiting saying mass publicly, hearing confessions, guiding people spiritually, showing the stigmata to people, and even communicating with his spiritual director. Church authorities even tried to relocate Padre Pio to another Friary which was objected to by the local people and due to their protest, the decision was shelved. He was prevented from 1921 to 1922 very strictly from publicly performing his priestly duties and from 1924 to 1931 the Vatican denied the events that took place in the life of Padre Pio were of any divine cause. However, Padre Pio accepted, all preventions, prohibitions, and sanctions against him silently without any protest accepting all of them as a divine test.

Medical studies were conducted under the order of his Provincial superiors or other ecclesiastical authorities. Dr. Luigi Romanelli, chief medical officer of the civil hospital of Barletta, conducted a study on Padre Pio on 15 and 16 of May 1919¹⁶. The observations and the inference given after his investigation confirmed that the stigmata were genuine and there was a vacuum existed between the front and the back part of the palm. Another medical examination was conducted by a pathologist named Amico Bignami who thought that the wounds were skin necrosis that was hindered from healing by chemicals such as iodine tincture [Luzzatto, 2010: 39]. George Festa, a

¹⁶ Religion: The Stigmatist // Time Magazine. — 1949. — 19 Dec. — URL: <https://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,855088,00.html>

medical doctor who investigated the wounds in 1919 and 1920 thought that these wounds were stigmata [Castelli, Messori, 2011].

Franciscan Friar, medical doctor, psychologist, and neuroscientist Agostino Gemelli investigated medically and psychologically Padre Pio by the suggestion of the Vatican officials. It looks like Padre Pio was not so cooperative with Gemelli, that might be because of Gemelli's attitude that he was there officially to investigate the matter, and hence Padre Pio asked for official papers from the Vatican for the medical examination of himself by Gemelli. This led to a contention between Gemelli and Padre Pio who was supported by his superiors and hence couldn't subject him to medical investigation. Therefore, Gemelli theorized that Padre Pio was manipulated by his spiritual directors, and because of his weakness of mind and hysteria, the suggestions of his spiritual directors were the cause of the stigmata. However, in 1925 Gemelli re-examined Padre Pio and he was cooperative but confirmed that these wounds were self-inflicted and treated by a corrosive substance. Gemelli wrote several times to the Vatican reiterating his observations defaming Padre Pio. Some of the other investigators meanwhile contested against Gemelli, reaffirming the wounds of Padre Pio were genuine stigmata [Luzzatto, 2010: 59].

The Vatican then officially authorized Bishop Raffaele Rossi to make a canonical investigation on the matter which he undertook from June 14, 1921 onwards till October 4, 1921, when he sent his official report to Rome. He confirmed that Padre Pio was a good religious person and his activities were not of the devil, the stigmata were unexplainable and indeed it was not fraud but a real fact [Castelli, Messori, 2011: 21]. Carlo Maccari investigated Padre Pio in 1960 and came up with a slightly different version of Gemelli [Luzzatto, 2010: 277]. However, many were supportive of Padre Pio and affirmed his genuineness and the sanctity of Padre Pio. In 1933 Pope Pius XI ordered a reversal of the prohibitions against him and allowed him to conduct public celebrations of Mass, confessions, etc. Pope Pius XII encouraged devotees to visit and receive blessings from Padre Pio. Pope Paul VI dismissed all accusations against Padre Pio. Pope John Paul II, Pope Benedict, and Pope Francis visited the

Friary where Padre Pio lived and were admirers of the Saint.

Pope Francis visited the Friary to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the death of the saint on 17th March 2018 and proclaimed Padre Pio as Saint Confessor to inspire people to receive the sacrament of confession and renewal. Though there were detractors, Padre Pio never confronted them and as a model religious person accepted the criticisms but was never depressed because of them and continued his life in helping people to keep balance in their lives and achieve life transformation. Thus, the wounds of Christ, stigmata which he bore in his life was a symbol of the hope of the people in encountering their frustrations, disappointments, and failures in life. Strangely, a few days before his death, the stigmata had disappeared and the doctors who attended on his deathbed confirmed that the wounds of the stigmata completely healed without even the trace of a scar [Rega, 2012: 257]. Though initially there was scepticism about the stigmata of Padre Pio, publicly and ecclesiastically it was confirmed gradually that these wounds were inexplicable in terms of contemporary medical or scientific studies and that Padre Pio was a normal human person without any physical or psychic problems and hence confirmed that it was indeed a miracle. Padre Pio is not the only person to have the stigmata, there were and are many others. Scientific studies were conducted and are being conducted now. Due to these scientific investigations, some of them are exposed as frauds while others are confirmed as genuine.

Conclusion

Having considered the cases of modern miracles, we can draw some conclusions. The phenomenon of miracles persists in religious discourse, despite rationalistic criticism, and the growth of scientific and technological progress. Comparative religious studies provide examples of miracles in the universe from the beliefs of ancient cultures to modern ones, including world and national religions. In the Catholic tradition, to identify a phenomenon as a miracle, both its admiring transcendence and its religious purpose are taken into account. The value of every miraculous event,

from the point of view of Catholic doctrine, lies in the Divine plan, the expression of His power, wisdom, justice, goodness, and the strengthening of true faith. A miracle becomes a manifestation of the connection between man and God (deriving the etymology of *religion* from *religare* – ‘to bind’ in the definition of Lactantius and Augustine), a “divine response” to a person’s call for help, to prayer (as in the example of miracles in Lourdes). A miracle can act as a testimony, a sign of a person’s special holiness and his closeness to God (Padre Pio stigmata). The examples of miracles given in our study originated initially as a living practice, and only after going through the process of investigation and official approval were they evaluated as true miracles and included in official veneration in the Catholic Church. It is necessary to agree with Fr. John A. Hardon that “whatever other properties are possessed by the physical laws of nature, one at least is universal. Physical laws are areligious... In complete contrast to the areligious charter of natural operations, miraculous phenomena are regularly and remarkably religious in every phase of their occurrence”¹⁷.

Miracles are unexpected or unanticipated events that create a sense of amazement, wonder, and awe in the individual and society. Such events interrupt our order of the causal world and lack scientific explication. Usually, such events are not explicable in terms of the scientific categories and thus, go beyond our rational comprehension. It can also generate gratitude towards what is beyond nature or creation enabling the human consciousness to ascend towards the mystery often termed as God. However, philosophers like David Hume and Baruch Spinoza claimed that believing in miracles was sacrilegious. According to them, “a miracle is impossible because it would mean a rent in the immutable web of the laws of nature... the claim, therefore, that God interrupts the order of things for the sake of human beings is sacrilegious” [Latourelle, 1988: 25]. They based their arguments on the power of the nascent science evolved in the seventeenth

century and today though, as science and technology so much advanced. Humanity is aware of the limits of science and technology through the experience of the COVID-19 pandemic shut down and still baffling under the other great mysteries of the universe like the beginning and the end of the universe where science couldn’t explain how the universe was confined into a tiny atom and why it exploded, what was driving it and where it expands, where dark matter exists, etc. The original wonder and awe experienced by humanity from ancient times, where everything for a human was a miracle. As gradually, human rationality evolved wonder and awe paved the way for curiosity and the scientific disciplines developing and instilling an intrinsic power within humanity that it can control, manipulate, and engineer everything. Hume, Spinoza, Hawking, and Dawkins are the adherents of this ideology while many other scientists and humanists couldn’t understand that there are things inexplicable in terms of the scientific temper of cause and effect.

Charles Taylor in his book *A Secular Age* denounces this attitude of euphoria and explains that due to four major eclipses, humanity lost its awe wonder, and belief in the mystery and the miracle [Taylor, 2007]. The first shift took place in the 17th century, just after the fifty years of scientific revolution whose proponents were Hume, Spinoza, La Place, etc. The purposiveness of every action in the universe, emphasized and highlighted by Aristotle onwards was outrightly eliminated. Taylor confirms that “the eclipse of this sense of further purpose; and hence of the idea that we owe God anything further than the realization of his plan.” [Taylor, 2007: 222-223]. Self-reliance generated from the power of reason was superimposed on notions of something beyond and thus, the concept of creator and the mystery merely eclipsed. The eclipse of grace was the second shift eliminating the admiration of nature as the creation of God and simply interpreting through the sociobiological explanations of evolution and genetics. The merciful

¹⁷ Fr. Hardon Archives — The Concept of Miracle from St. Augustine to Modern Apologetics. — URL: http://www.thereal-presence.org/archives/Miracles/Miracles_003.htm#_ednref14

and compassionate nature of God was eliminated to create a focus on self-interest, self-motivation, and independence rather than dependence on God and His plan. Thus, the third shift was the fading of the concept of mystery and God's Providence resulting in a self-reliant, independent human capable of choosing and creating one's destiny. The fourth one was the denial of "God's planning for a transformation of human beings" [Taylor, 2007: 224]. Thus, humanity replaced God with an apotheosis, that they are the creators of their future and destiny, denying altogether, purpose, grace, mystery, and transformation, that are related and driven by God. Religion must retreat before reason and science, is the obstinate claim of the positivist thinkers like Comte, and Durkheim and recently advocated by Hawking and Dawkins as scientists. Thus, when the miracu-

lous and the religious were eclipsed under the rise of scientific temper everything that was unobservable and denied under the positivistic avalanche of science and technology would drain humanity from the meaningfulness and purposiveness of life. Thus, the secularization thesis proposed by Taylor is the reason for the overarching reliance of humanity on science and technology and the rejection of the miraculous, the religious, and the metaphysical for the secular by contemporary civilization. Perhaps, it is high time that humanity needs to embrace the miraculous, the religious, and the metaphysical to have meaning and regain the wonder and awe and experience the splendour of creation that may once again catapult us towards purpose, mystery, grace, transformation, and God.

Список литературы:

Арнаутова Ю.Е. «Истинные» и «ложные» чудеса глазами средневековых авторов: границы средневековой веры в чудо // Одиссей: человек в истории. — 2023. — Т. 30, № 1. — С. 5–34. <https://doi.org/10.32608/1607-6184-2023-30-1-5-34>

Арнаутова Ю.Е. Колдуны и святые: Антропология болезни в средние века. — Санкт-Петербург: Алетейя, 2004. — 398 с.

Ле Гофф Ж. Герои и чудеса средних веков. — Москва: Текст, 2011. — 220 с.

Островская Е.А. Религиозная модель общества: Социологические аспекты институционализации традиционных религиозных идеологий. — Санкт-Петербург: Изд-во С.-Петерб. ун-та, 2005. — 377 с.

Рыжакова С.И. Чудо: опознание, описание, отношение // Studia Religiosa Rossica: научный журнал о религии. — 2020. — № 3. — С. 11–39. <https://doi.org/10.28995/2658-4158-2020-3-11-39>

Carrel A., Lindbergh C.A. The Voyage to Lourdes. — Garden City: Catholic Family Book Club, 1956. — 447 p.

Castelli F., Messori V. Padre Pio Under Investigation: The Secret Vatican Files. — San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011. — 311 p.

Comte A. The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte. Vol. 1. — Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. — 524 p.

Dalarun J., Cusato M.F., Salvati C. The Stigmata of Francis of Assisi: New Studies, New Perspectives. — New York: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2006. — 108 p.

Dawkins R. The God Delusion. — London: Black Swan, 2016. — 496 p.

Dawkins R. The Selfish Gene. — Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. — 464 p.

Dennett D.C. Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon. — London: Penguin Books Limited, 2007. — 464 p.

Dennett D.C. Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life. — New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996. — 586 p.

Durkheim E. Elementary Forms Of The Religious Life. — New York: Free Press, 1995. — 464 p.

Durkheim É. Sociology and Philosophy. — New York: Free Press, 1974. — 97 p.

- Gori N. Carlo Acutis: The First Millennial Saint. — Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor, 2021. — 144 p.
- Hawking S. A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes. — South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015. — 86 p.
- Hawking S.W., Mlodinow L. The Grand Design. — New York: Bantam Books, 2011. — 250 p.
- Hitchens C. God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything. — New York: Twelve, 2009. — 336 p.
- Hitchens C. The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever. — New York: Hachette Books, 2007. — 288 p.
- Kessler G.E. Studying Religion: An Introduction Through Cases. — New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006. — 345 p.
- Latourelle R. The Miracles of Jesus and the Theology of Miracles. — Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1988. — 371 p.
- Luzzatto S. Padre Pio: Miracles and Politics in a Secular Age. — New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2010. — 384 p.
- O'Neill M. Science and the Miraculous: How the Church Investigates the Supernatural. — Gastonia: TAN Books, 2022. — 152 p.
- Primiano L.N. Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife // Western Folklore. — 1995. — Vol. 54, No 1. — P. 37–56. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1499910>
- Rega F. The Truth about Padre Pio's Stigmata: And Other Wonders of the Saint. — South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012. — 146 p.
- Taylor C. A Secular Age. — Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007. — 874 p.

References:

- Arnautova, J. (2004) *Kolduny i svyaty: Antropologiya bolezni v seredine veka* [Sorcerers and Saints: The Anthropology of Disease in the Middle Ages]. Saint Petersburg: Aleteia Publ. (In Russian)
- Arnautova, J. (2023) 'Metaphors of Society: "True" and "False" Miracles through the Eyes of Ecclesiastical Authors: the Limits of Believing in Miracles in the Middle Ages', *Odysseus. Man in History*, 30(1), pp. 5–34. (In Russian) <https://doi.org/10.32608/1607-6184-2023-30-1-5-34>
- Carrel, A. and Lindbergh, C. A. (1956) *The Voyage to Lourdes*. Garden City: Catholic Family Book Club.
- Castelli, F. and Messori, V. (2011) *Padre Pio Under Investigation: The Secret Vatican Files*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press.
- Comte, A. (2009) *The Positive Philosophy of Auguste Comte. Vol. 1*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dalarun, J., Cusato, M. F. and Salvati, C. (2006) *The Stigmata of Francis of Assisi: New Studies, New Perspectives*. New York: Franciscan Institute Publications.
- Dawkins, R. (2016a) *The God Delusion*. London: Black Swan.
- Dawkins, R. (2016b) *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dennett, D. C. (1996) *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Dennett, D. C. (2007) *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*. London: Penguin Books Limited.
- Durkheim, E. (1995) *Elementary Forms Of The Religious Life*. New York: Free Press.
- Durkheim, É. (1974) *Sociology and Philosophy*. New York: Free Press.
- Le Goff, J. (2005) *Héros & merveilles du Moyen Age*. Paris: Seuil. (Russ. ed.: Le Goff, J. (2011) *Geroi i chudes srednikh vekov*. Moscow: Text).
- Gori, N. (2021) *Carlo Acutis: The First Millennial Saint*. Huntington: Our Sunday Visitor.
- Hawking, S. (2015) *A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes*. South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Hawking, S. W. and Mlodinow, L. (2011) *The Grand Design*. New York: Bantam Books.

- Hitchens, C. (2007) *The Portable Atheist: Essential Readings for the Nonbeliever*. New York: Hachette Books.
- Hitchens, C. (2009) *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything*. New York: Twelve.
- Kessler, G. E. (2006) *Studying Religion: An Introduction Through Cases*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Latourelle, R. (1988) *The Miracles of Jesus and the Theology of Miracles*. Mahwah: Paulist Press.
- Luzzatto, S. (2010) *Padre Pio: Miracles and Politics in a Secular Age*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- O'Neill, M. (2022) *Science and the Miraculous: How the Church Investigates the Supernatural*. Gastonia: TAN Books.
- Ostrovskaya, E. A. (2005) *Religioznaya model' obshchestva: Sotsiologicheskiye aspekty institutsionalizatsii traditsionnykh sovremennykh ideologiy* [Religious model of society: Sociological aspects of the institutionalization of traditional religious ideologies]. Saint Petersburg: Izdat. S.-Peterburgskogo Univ. Publ. (In Russian)
- Primiano, L. N. (1995) 'Vernacular Religion and the Search for Method in Religious Folklife', *Western Folklore*, 54(1), pp. 37–56. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1499910>
- Rega, F. (2012) *The Truth about Padre Pio's Stigmata: And Other Wonders of the Saint*. South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Ryzhakova, S. I. (2020) 'Miracle. Identification, Description, Attitude', *Studia Religiosa Rossica: Russian Journal of Religion*, (3), pp. 11–39. (In Russian) <https://doi.org/10.28995/2658-4158-2020-3-11-39>
- Taylor, C. (2007) *A Secular Age*. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

Information about the authors

Mathew Chandrankunnel — Doctor of Philosophy, Professor, Director General, Team for the Integral Development of North East India, Director of Foundation for Environment and Economics Development Services (FEEDS) Group of Institutions, Hengbung, Kangpokpi, Manipur, 795129 (India)

Maria S. Lyutaeva — PhD in Philosophy, Associate Professor at the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies of Vladimir State University, 87, Gorky Str., Vladimir, 600000 (Russia)

Conflicts of interest. The authors declare absence of conflicts of interest.

Информация об авторах

Мэтью Чандраканнел — доктор философских наук, профессор, генеральный директор Группы комплексного развития Северо-Восточной Индии, 795129, Манипур, Хенгбунг, Кангпокпи (Индия)

Мария Сергеевна Лютаева — кандидат философских наук, доцент кафедры философии и религиоведения Владимирского государственного университета имени Александра Григорьевича и Николая Григорьевича Столетовых, 600000, Владимир, ул. Горького, 87 (Россия)

Конфликт интересов. Авторы заявляют об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

The article was submitted 09.03.2024; approved after reviewing 20.04.2024; accepted for publication 12.05.2024.

Статья поступила в редакцию 09.03.2024; одобрена после рецензирования 20.04.2024; принята к публикации 12.05.2024.