

“Then a Miracle Occurs”

By Brian Bull and Fritz Guy

The conflict between faith and science has gone on for more than three hundred years, and there is no sign that it will abate any time soon. For many people, the conflict centers on the Genesis stories of creation (Gen. 1:1–2:3; 2:4–25).

On one side are those for whom a reading of the text as if it were primarily natural science is necessary to provide assurance that God is the all-powerful Creator. They believe that Christian faith demands assent to a creation of the world and everything in it, or at least all the various forms of terrestrial life, in six literal, twenty-four-hour contiguous days a few thousand years ago.

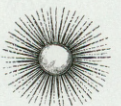
On the other side are those who find compelling scientific evidence that the world is very old and that life has existed on it for a long, long time. The first group accuses the second of placing science above faith, and the second accuses the first of placing unrealistic, scientific demands upon an ancient text whose authors had no such thing in mind.

This is a vexing question for many Christians. But a larger and more fundamental question concerns the way we understand God's relation to the natural

regularities of the created universe. The question of the relationship between faith and science is part of the question of the relation of God and nature.

The Interaction Between Faith and Science

A thirty-year-old drawing by Sidney Harris that has achieved cartoon immortality depicts two scientists standing at a blackboard covered with equations. Halfway along the board the calculations break off and in the resulting gap is the phrase, “Then a Miracle Occurs.” Following this insertion, the calculations resume. The older of the two scientists is looking critically at the blackboard and saying to the younger, “I think you should be more explicit here in step two.” This cartoon has been reproduced thousands of times, and it is reproduced once more here. It is available on T-shirts and coffee mugs. Why



has it had such staying power? What does it have to do with the interaction between faith and science?

Do you find the cartoon funny? Most people do, and it is a reasonable guess that you do, too. That is probably why the cartoon has had such staying power. It is funny because of the unexpected interaction between two worlds that normally do not interact, at least not in this way. Science and faith, the natural and the supernatural, do not normally appear side by side in the middle of an equation where the mathematics has bogged down. Mathematical science and belief in miracles do not exist comfortably together. Yet more than 40 percent of practicing scientists say they are religious believers, so faith and science must interact a great deal—just not in this particular way, at least not any more.

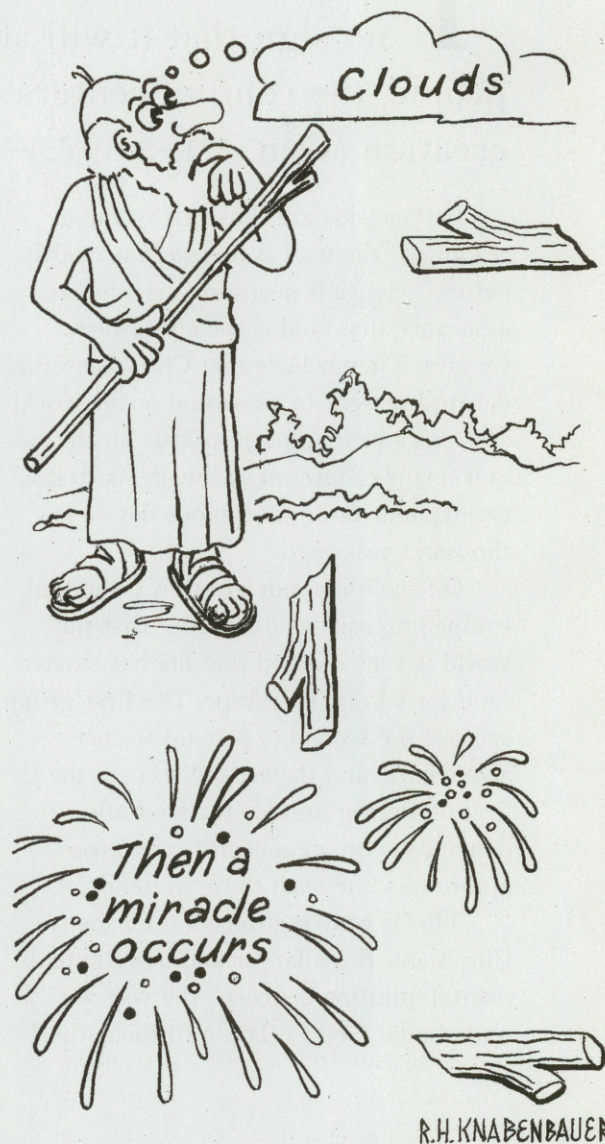
It was not always so. In the biblical world, for example, Sydney Harris's cartoon would not have been funny at all. On the contrary, it would have been completely opaque, impenetrable to anyone who saw it. This would have been the case despite the fact that the words in the cartoon meant then essentially what they mean now. The idea of miracle as divine intervention was taken for granted, and so were numbers. The reason the cartoon would not have been funny was that there was not the unexpected clash between two different worlds that makes it funny for us. In the thinking of the biblical world, whenever it was necessary to bridge a gap in the understanding of a natural, physical process, it was simply assumed that "Then a Miracle Occurs."

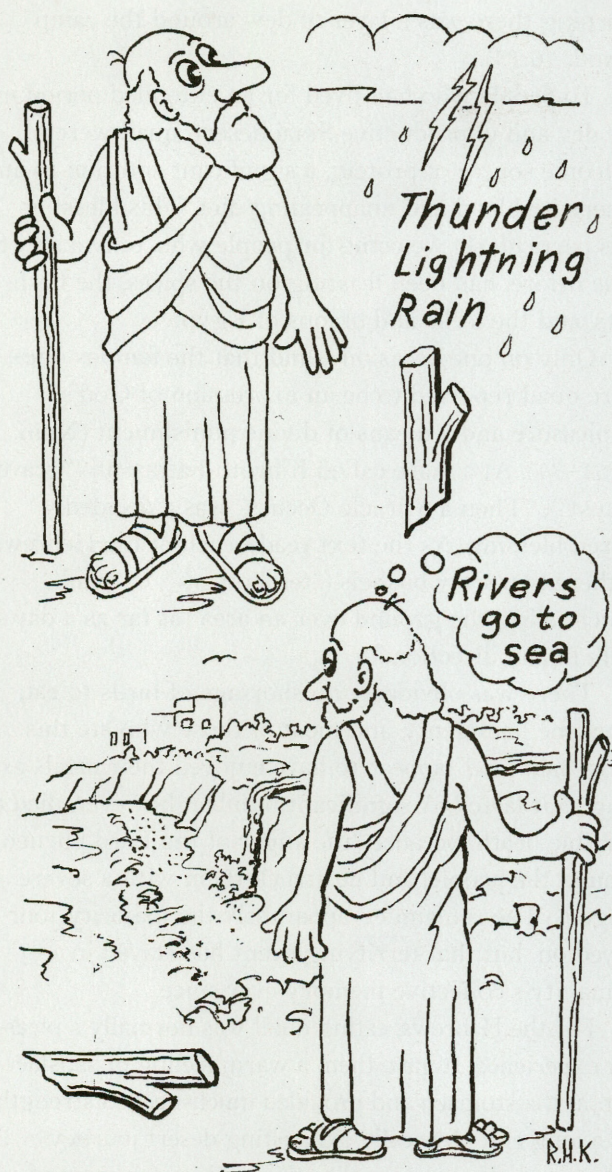
From the time of the ancient Hebrews to the beginning of Christian thought, this was the case: an incomplete understanding of an unobservable physical process was regarded as evidence of a direct act of God. For any unexplained natural phenomenon there was a presumption of direct divine intervention—a presumption we might call a *default to the supernatural* (recognizing, of course, that a contrast between "supernatural" and "natural" is an extrabiblical distinction).¹

In more recent times, under the same kind of circumstances there has been increasingly a *default to the natural*, a presumption that there is a natural causal explanation of the phenomenon, even if we don't know just what it is. Our understanding of the world includes an infrastructure of "nature"—natural regularity, natural order, sometimes called "natural law."² Now (thanks to quantum indeterminacy) we also have the concept of randomness. This combination of natural order and randomness, which undergirds and

informs our current picture of reality, was completely absent from the biblical world.

This undergirding construct does not rule out the possibility of direct supernatural intervention in the natural order—what we usually mean by "miracle"—and it certainly does not limit the activity of God in nature to the supernatural.³ But it puts the burden of proof on the claim of a supernatural occurrence, the claim that an event is, strictly speaking, a miracle. Any attempt we make to think within the very different biblical world always comes up against the unalterable difference between that world and ours, and we often do not appreciate how vast a gulf it is. To enter the prescientific world and see unobservable physical processes as biblical people saw them—as impenetrable, inexplicable events that are direct acts of God—is very difficult. It may well be impossible.





Why, indeed, do we even try to enter that world? Because, however modern and scientific our understanding of the natural order has become, our Christian faith has its ancient roots in the world of the authors of the Genesis stories. If we wish to understand the modern conflict between science and faith, we must try to hear those stories through the ears of the people who first heard them several thousand years ago. Only then can we understand why the conflict between science and faith has persisted so long, and still continues.

Some biblical examples will assist us in the challenging task of reexamining and understanding (without trying to enter) the world from which the Bible and its accounts of creation come to us. It will prove to be a world that is radically different from ours in some respects, yet very familiar and readily understandable

in others. Three illustrations will get us started on our journey: rain, quail, and blood.

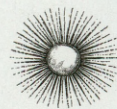
Rain

In the land of Israel, it never “just rained.”⁴ A search of all of the texts that mention rain in the Old Testament will fail to turn up the phrase “it rained.” The coming of rain, a great blessing in a desert land, was usually ascribed directly to God (Gen. 7:2; 1 Sam. 12:17–18; 1 Kings 17:14; Jer. 5:24; and so forth). We may think that the phrase “God sent the rain” is poetic, metaphorical; the ancient Hebrews did not. For them the arrival of life-giving showers was the result of a direct act of a generous God. Sometimes it was even more than that; it was a sign that they were God’s chosen people (Deut. 11:13–14).

Nowadays the hydrologic cycle is known to schoolchildren in the early grades. Clouds gather overhead and rain falls. The water nourishes the earth, then collects into streams. The streams flow into rivers, which make their way to the oceans. From the oceans, the sun’s energy draws up water vapor to form clouds and the cycle is complete.

All of these stages except the last one were visible and readily understood by the ancient Hebrews.⁵ But the last, invisible stage is the one that receives the input of energy that makes the entire cycle function, the action of the sun in drawing up water vapor from the oceans to form clouds. Because that portion of the cycle is invisible, human understanding would wait thousands of years for an explanation. In the meantime, the Hebrews inserted, as a placeholder for a stage that to them was incomprehensible, “Then a Miracle Occurs”; and they thought it not the least bit strange or funny. It was not funny because, in their world, it happened all the time. In their world “Then a Miracle Occurs” was the default explanation for every happening whose cause was not visible.

In our present world, however, when something happens that we do not understand, immediately and without further thought we default to a physical, natural explanation. We may have no idea what that explanation actually is, but we assume that somewhere, sometime, some scientist has figured it out—or will, sooner or later. We assume that we could find it out,



too, if we took the time to inquire and study. This assumption is just part of our worldview. But it was not so for those who lived in the ancient world of the Bible.

Quail

The matter of the quail will bring us face to face with the dark side of that world, the dark side of a default to the supernatural.

Contrary to what most of us remember from hearing Bible stories as children, most of the time the ancient Hebrews considered quail to be a gift from God: "They asked, and [the Lord] brought quail, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven" (Ps. 105:40).⁶ The arrival of quail in the camp was reported in the same way as the arrival of manna from heaven: "That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the

morning there was a layer of dew around the camp" (Exod. 16:13).

To people who had lived for an extended period in the dry and unproductive Sinai desert, quail were a welcome source of protein, a significant addition to an otherwise bland and unappealing diet. This blessing was particularly welcome for people who, only a short time before, had been feasting on the spices, the flesh pots, and the leeks and onions of Egypt.

Only on one occasion—and that the famous one—were quail reported to be an expression of God's displeasure and a means of divine punishment (Num. 11:31–34). At a place called Kibroth-hattaavah ("graves of lust"), "Then a Miracle Occurs" was a decidedly mixed blessing. As the text reads, each of the Hebrews gathered up sixty bushels ("ten homers") of quail, which fell to the ground over an area "as far as a day's walk in any direction."

There was obviously no shortage of birds to eat, everyone had plenty, and most of those who ate this early "fast food" appear to have enjoyed their meals as long as it lasted. A significant number, however, died a horrible death, because "the anger of the Lord burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague." The remainder, apparently the majority, journeyed on, but that terrifying event has stayed in humanity's collective memory ever since.

For the Hebrews, eating quail was normally a pleasant experience. It gave them a warm feeling of satisfaction in the stomach and provided much-needed strength for a long and physically exhausting desert journey. What were they supposed to think when, for some of their company, the quail brought a rapid and horrifying death? Furthermore, the mechanism of death in those who died did not involve the usual symptoms that accompany the consumption of spoiled food—symptoms that were no doubt well known to the Hebrews.

The connection between eating spoiled food and the subsequent gastric pain, diarrhea, and dehydration would not have occasioned even a passing mention in the annals of their history, and certainly would not have achieved the almost mythic status of this particular story. But if it was not food poisoning, what exactly was this plague that struck "while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed"? It must surely have been the case that "Then a Miracle Occurs." Inevitably, they attributed the outcome to God—the same God who was the default cause of all unexplained physical phenomena.



R.H.K.

Now let's fast-forward to our modern world. Today, if the same sort of thing happened to us, we would default to a natural explanation without a second thought—something like food poisoning, we would guess (as the Hebrews might well have done). Even if we could not immediately classify it, we would assume that some researcher somewhere could explain it in due time. As we thought further about it, however, we would recognize that food poisoning was not an entirely satisfactory explanation. After all, the quail were fresh, so bacterial overgrowth would have been unlikely.

It turns out that the quail in question are not native to the Middle East. They are European birds that, twice each year, join with thousands of other species and fly one of the world's great migration routes around or across the eastern end of the Mediterranean. From there, they make their way south into the desert, headed for their winter range in Central and Southern Africa. In the spring, they return by the same route. Given this behavior, they are now known, not surprisingly, as the European migratory quail.

Because they are still hunted and eaten by the populations all along their migration route, the disease that so stunned the Hebrews is now well understood. As we moderns would have assumed all along, there is a completely natural, physiological explanation for the horrible death that occasionally follows the eating of quail.

Sometimes, within hours of quail consumption, there is the onset of severe muscle pain accompanied by myoglobinuria (literally, the red respiratory pigment of muscle in the urine), followed by kidney failure.⁷ The urine turns dusky red because muscle cells throughout the body disintegrate and the respiratory pigment of muscle, myoglobin, enters the blood stream. The myoglobin pigment is excreted by the kidneys, but the capacity of the kidneys for excretion of this pigmented protein is not limitless. If the portion of quail meat has been sufficiently large, the kidneys will fail and, in a society that lacks machines for renal dialysis, death is inevitable.

Such a death accompanied by the pain of disintegrating muscle throughout the body would certainly have been frightening to those friends and relatives who stood helplessly by. Nor are the symptoms in any way similar to those of food poisoning. Still, to have had one's urine turn red, decrease in quantity, and then cease—shortly after a meal of quail—would certainly have left a lasting impression on those who were unaffected by the plague. It would also have had an

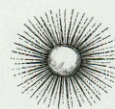
even greater effect on those who produced the ominous red urine but survived.

In the past several years considerable progress has been made in tracking down the reason why the migrating quail sometimes cause the dreaded myoglobinuria and renal shutdown. As the quail migrate southward they will often stop in the Greek islands to feed. Growing on the island of Lesbos and other islands nearby is the red hemp-nettle whose scientific name is *Galeopsis ladanum*.⁸ It blooms late in the summer and sets its seed by the first or second week in September. This seed, ingested by the quail, makes their flesh poisonous to mammals (but not to birds) because an alkaloid in the hemp-nettle seed causes the cell membrane of mammalian muscle cells to disintegrate.⁹ At other times of the year, or if the quail have not eaten the seed of this particular plant, the meat produces no deleterious effects.

Blood

The ancient Hebrews appear to have been obsessed with blood. It is mentioned frequently in the Pentateuch, almost always in connection with the killing of animals and usually as a synonym for life (see Gen. 9:4, Lev. 17:11; 17:14, Deut. 12:23). To watch a sacrificial animal killed on the altar was to see the life ebb away and the heart cease to beat as the bright red fluid flowed out. It was perfectly reasonable for the Hebrews to assume that the escaping blood carried with it the life force, the invisible essence that distinguished a living creature from a dead one. They equated blood with life, quite literally. For them, blood and life were interchangeable concepts.

With this identification of life with blood, it is not surprising that the Hebrews viewed death quite differently from the way we do. For us, death is the cessation of activity across the membrane of cells individually or collectively. Because our idea of death is now very complex, we can talk easily of "brain death," "heart death," and even "programmed cell death." But for the ancient Hebrews, death was simply the absence of blood. So plants did not "die"; there was no Hebrew word for death in the plant kingdom. What we would call a "dead" tree was simply described as a "dry" tree. Animals died, but plants simply went dry. Our compli-



cated notion of cell death would have been utterly incomprehensible to them.

And our view of blood? We see it as simply a transport fluid. It is complex and multifunctional, to be sure; but it is still a commodity that can be bought and sold, transfused from a donor to a patient, frozen and stored, or, if not used within its “best if transfused by” period, discarded.

Were we to enter the ancient biblical world, blood would seem to us, as it did to the Hebrews, synonymous with life itself, the most potent of all fluids. As a crucial element in the Mosaic sacrificial system, blood—the life of an animal—served as an expiation, a means of reconciliation, for sin. To donate blood would have been equivalent to giving to another a significant portion of one’s own life. To remove blood from a person and replace it with blood from another would have

been, quite literally, unthinkable. Blood had a sacramental function in the Hebrews’ religious experience, and in their language and understanding it was synonymous with life itself.

The idea that the blood circulates, moved on its way by the action of the heart, was more than two thousand years in the future.¹⁰ The ancients viewed the contents of the veins and arteries as different. According to the physician Galen in the second century, the veins contained blood, a blend of blood (as we understand it) together with some smoky pneuma (spirit) and carried the food for most of the organs. The arteries contained refined vaporous blood together with a finer pneuma and maintained the vital activities and body heat.¹¹

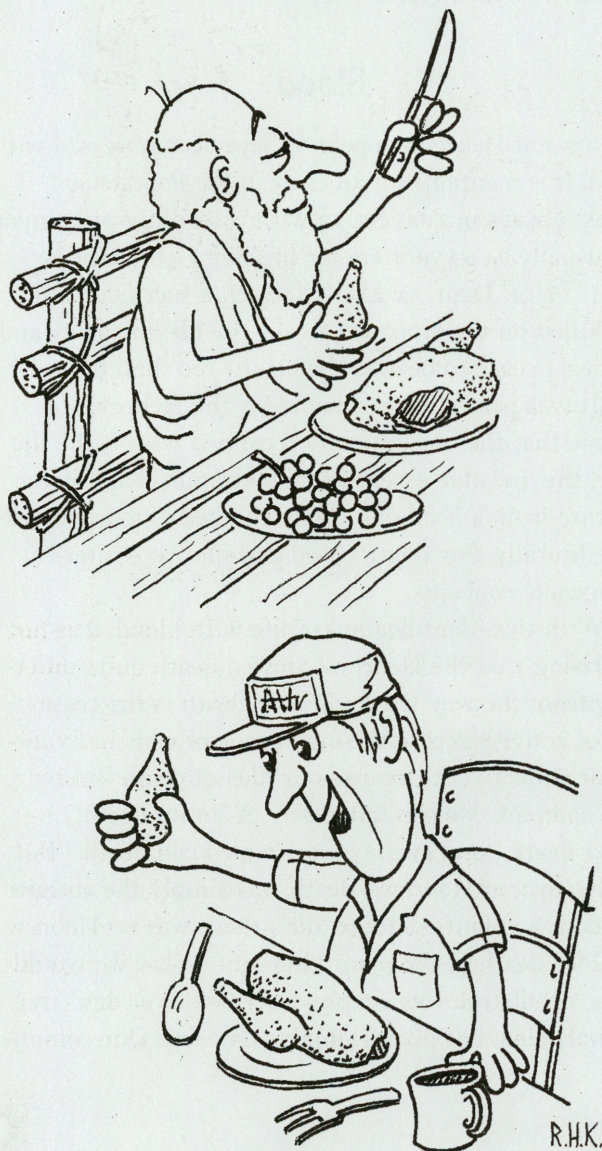
Coming from a world where we are urged to “Give Blood!” can we enter the world of the Bible? We donate blood without a second thought. The people at the donation center imply that eating a chocolate chip cookie and drinking a large glass of orange juice will make amends for the trivial loss that our body has suffered. We take for granted that they are telling us the truth. It is just impossible for us to return to a time when the loss of blood was synonymous with loss of life.

What we can do, however—and, indeed, what we should do—is read the ancient texts not as poetic expressions of our world’s understanding, but as literal expressions of the biblical world’s understanding. Only by so doing can we hear the text of Genesis as it came to the ears of those who first heard it thousands of years ago.

Implications for Science

Actually hearing Scripture through the ears of those who first heard it may not be possible. What *is* possible, however, is careful analysis of the conclusions we reach about God’s activity in the physical world on the basis of our hearing of that text. For those who composed it (and those who heard it), the default explanation of every unexplained physical phenomenon was “Then a Miracle Occurs.”

It is clear that they understood God to be directly responsible for all created reality. It is equally apparent that they had no concept of the intermediate, natural order that, for us, undergirds and explains the functioning of physical reality. As believers, we (like Christians back to the early centuries) ascribe that natural order to God, who created it “in the beginning” (Gen. 1:1) and upholds it now; but we do not—we cannot—picture



God as miraculously intervening every time the rain falls, migrating quail eat hemp-nettle, or blood is transfused to save a life.

We have too much information about the natural order for that to be conceptually possible. We know about the hydrologic cycle; even if we personally have never studied meteorology, we hear about it on the nightly news. We have seen TV specials on the migratory patterns of quail, and have heard experts tell us that the land of Israel lays athwart one of the densest bird migration paths anywhere in the world.

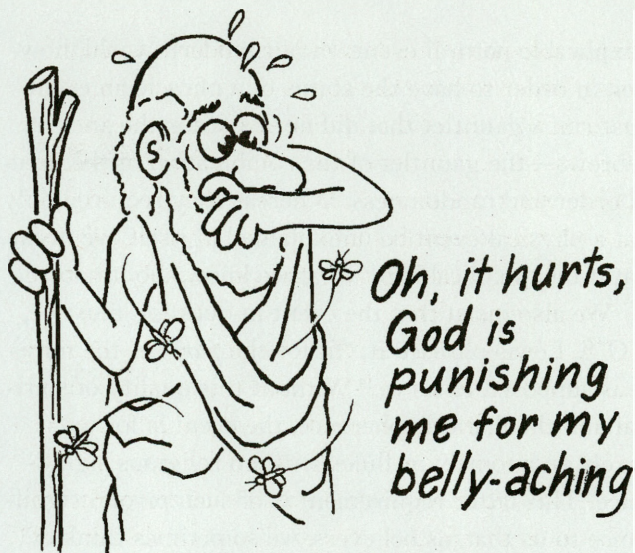
We have heard that other experts have fed hemp-nettle seed to quail, and then the quail meat to rats, and have measured precisely the resulting muscle damage. We do not view blood as synonymous with life. For us, it is merely a transport fluid that, with due regard for the various incompatibilities of blood type, can be taken from one person and placed in the circulatory system of another.

As believers who live in the modern world, we recognize that we default to a natural explanation whenever we incompletely understand a physical phenomenon. How, then, can we read aright the biblical texts upon which our spiritual understanding is based without inappropriately inserting into them our modern understandings of the natural order created and sustained by God?

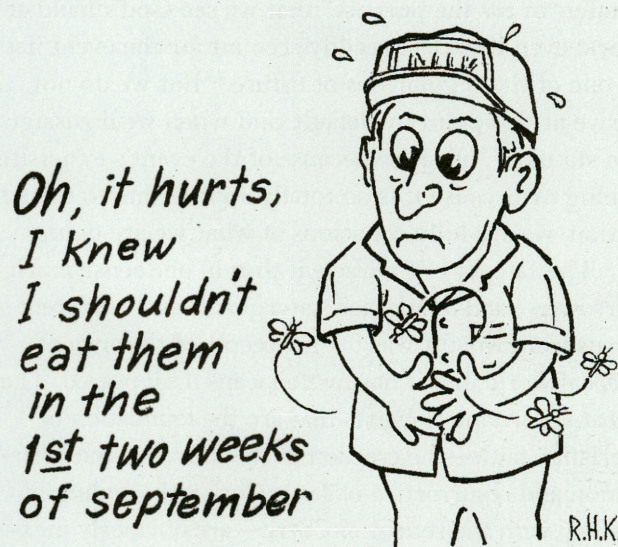
One useful approach is to ask a question of each ancient text, including—and especially—the texts that have fueled the controversy between faith and science. The question is this: If we default to a natural rather than supernatural explanation of the phenomenon described, does that change the fundamental meaning of the text?

Implicitly, we have just addressed this question to the biblical texts on rain, quail, and blood. In our world, all three of these phenomena are entirely natural, whereas in the biblical world all three were supernatural. We have replaced the ancient understanding of rain, quail, and blood by our modern understanding.

The texts, however, are still eminently “able to make [us] wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus,” and are thus “useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:15–16). But we do not attribute to God those acts in the Old Testament that the New Testament assures us contradict the revealed character of our Father in heaven, who “causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matt. 5:45).



*Oh, it hurts,
God is
punishing
me for my
belly-aching*

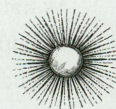


*Oh, it hurts,
I knew
I shouldn't
eat them
in the
1st two weeks
of september*

Implications for Miracles

We have considered the scientific implications of a shift to a modern default to the natural instead of the ancient default to the supernatural. Before considering the theological implications, we need to consider the implications for our understanding of the phenomenon of miracle itself. If both God and nature are real, it follows that a direct, supernatural interaction between them—“Then a Miracle Occurs”—is always possible in principle.

So it is not surprising that people in the ancient biblical world, who knew little of the invisible regularities of nature, described many events as miracles. Indeed, that was their default explanation for every



inexplicable natural event. In our modern world, however, in order to have the status of a miracle an event must run a gauntlet that did not exist for the ancient Hebrews—the gauntlet of the combination of the natural order and randomness. Whereas they required only that a physical event be unexplained in itself, we insist that it be inexplicable by what we know about nature.

We also insist that the event in question must be, as C. S. Lewis phrased it, “fit for the *purpose*” the miracle is supposed to serve.¹² Without this quality of spiritual and theological coherence, the event is for us merely an anomaly or fluke, with no religious significance. This latter requirement is of such pivotal significance to us that, as believers, we sometimes think of an event as “miraculous” if it is too obviously and so totally “fit for the purpose” that we see God’s hand at work, even if we can readily account for the event itself as one of the regularities of nature.¹³ But we do not arrive at this point by default, and when we do assign the status of “miracle” because of the event’s exquisite timing or because it is so totally appropriate to the situation, we are fully conscious of what we are doing.

The category of miracle is thus in one sense much narrower—and in another sense qualitatively different—for us from what it was for the people of the ancient biblical world, but it has by no means disappeared. The great supernatural events that are the foundation of Christian faith—the creation of the universe, the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the ending of history with the return of Christ—are obviously inexplicable in terms of natural regularities and randomness. And they all meet the criterion of fitness for achieving the purposes of a gracious God. So do the “lesser miracles” of Christ’s ministry—healing the sick, feeding crowds of people, quieting the elements of nature.

Once we have acknowledged the reality of both the natural and the supernatural, the possibility that “Then a Miracle Occurs” is always and necessarily present. But this is not for us a default to the supernatural. We recognize a miracle only after rigorous examination of the event in the light of what we know, directly or indirectly, about the natural order. For us who live in a scientific world, it cannot be otherwise.

Implications for Theology

What happens if we address our question—does a default to a natural rather than supernatural explanation change the fundamental meaning of the ancient

biblical text?—to the theological content of the text? In one sense, very little changes. A default to the supernatural in relation to any incompletely understood, invisible occurrence in the province of theology—namely, in the relationship of God to human existence in the natural order—is exactly what happened in the biblical world; and that is what happens in our world, too.

The Genesis accounts of creation still assure us that God is the Creator, the originator of all reality that is not God, and that we exist as the result of an ultimate, generous love. As created beings, we experience our greatest fulfillment and satisfaction in loving, serving, and worshipping our Creator. But these theological truths do not affect our understanding of the causality of events in the physical world—although they remind us that, whatever happens, we are always within God’s unconditional love revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. Conversely, these truths are not in any way changed by the substitution of our modern, natural default explanation of scientific phenomena for the ancient, supernatural one.

This does not mean, however, that there is no theological effect at all. On the contrary, some of the theological consequences are significant indeed. For example, our default to the natural encourages us to read Scripture in ways that highlight its theological (and truly supernatural) content. We do not need to spend time and energy trying to enter the ancient world without leaving our present world. Such an endeavor only diverts our attention from the truly revelatory word that the ancient text was intended to give us.

Besides, such an endeavor is futile. The two worlds are actually so different that they cannot be successfully combined. And most of the time we don’t want to. When we see a doctor, we want and expect more than a prayer for our good health. We want and expect a scientific diagnosis and treatment. So instead of trying to make the ancient text fit our present science, or trying to make our present science fit the ancient text, when we hear the text we can listen for its eternal, supernatural truth. Written by and for a people who defaulted to the supernatural, it cannot, it must not, be read by us who default to the natural as a scientific text—yet that is what we too often try to do. The result has been a three-hundred-year conflict between faith and science.

Our default to the natural also affects our ways of describing God, which both reflect and influence our

conceptions of God. The ancient Hebrews referred to God as the Owner of “the cattle on a thousand hills” (Ps. 50:10), and, very often, as “the Lord of hosts” (1 Sam. 1:3; Ps. 24:10; Is. 1:9; and so forth, NRSV).¹⁴ Again, today we hear these designations as metaphors, but for the original hearers they were literal descriptions.

A God who flung into space a hundred million galaxies each with a hundred million suns (and perhaps as many planets) surely deserves additional titles to complement those of Ultimate Cattle Rancher and General of Cosmic Armies, titles that will reflect (as best we can) our recognition of the greatness and grandeur of God’s universe. At the same time, we retain titles like Father and Shepherd that affirm the immediacy of God’s concern for our everyday lives.

Our default to the natural affects our understanding of the dark side of the ancient Hebrews’ default to the supernatural—that is, their attribution of “bad things” to the direct, punitive intervention by God. Personal disappointments such as a woman’s failure to conceive (1 Sam. 1:5–6) were attributed directly to God. And major calamities such as earthquakes, fires, and floods (not to mention poisoning by quail meat) have continued to be described as “acts of God” until relatively recently. (Now they are so designated, if at all, only in the fine print of insurance policies—which hardly anyone reads.) We think of such events as “natural disasters,” although we think of them also as belonging to the “all things” in which “God works for the good of those who love him” (Rom. 8:28).

At the same time, our default to the natural encourages us to recognize the presence and activity of God in the positive results of physical regularities in nature and in our lives. Medical procedures that alleviate pain and fight malignant cells, fertilizers that facilitate the production of food, electronics that enable more efficient communication of truth and love, new insights into powerful truths about God, nature, and ourselves—all these and other “good things” can be seen as results of God’s grace.

Although we read the biblical text through different eyes and hear it with different ears, so that we cannot default to “Then a Miracle Occurs,” the ancient texts still tell us of a God who created us, loves us, comes to us, and ultimately saves us. What more can we ask? This knowledge of God’s attitudes, involvement, and actions is the most important miracle that occurred in the lives of the ancient Hebrews. If we are willing, it will occur in our lives, too.

Notes and References

1. For the biblical mind, God was directly involved in all events; nothing was exclusively the result of what we today would call “natural law.” What the modern mind would call a “miracle” was understood in biblical times as an extraordinary act of the God who is always active. Thus the distinction we make between the “supernatural” and the “natural” would have been understood instead as a distinction between the “usual” and the “unusual” activity of God.

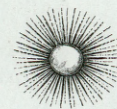
2. See Alan G. Padgett, “The Roots of the Western Concept of the ‘Laws of Nature,’ From the Greeks to Newton,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* 55.4 (Dec. 2003): 213: “The notion of a law of nature (Latin: *lex* or *regula naturae*; Greek: *nomos physeos*) has two sources in the classical period: Hellenistic natural philosophy, especially Stoicism; and the Christian patristic tradition.”

3. By “miracle” we mean an event that is (a) extraordinary, (b) unexplainable by ordinary natural or human factors, and (c) religiously significant. This meaning is not uncommon in current discussion; see, for example, Michael Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Religion*, 3d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 173–93. We do not mean by “miracle” an event that is (a) a “violation of the laws of nature” as claimed by David Hume, “Of Miracles,” in *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1739), and, more recently, by J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and Against the Existence of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 18–29; or (b) evidence of God’s involvement vs. noninvolvement in a particular situation.

4. See Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical and Theological Studies*, ed. Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1952), 272, reprinted from “Predestination,” in *A Dictionary of the Bible*, 5 vols., ed. James Hastings (New York: Scribners, 1905), 4:49: “It is rare to meet with such a phrase as ‘it rains’ ... and men by preference spoke of God sending rain.”

5. Job 36:27 might seem to indicate otherwise: “He draws up the drops of water, which distil as rain to the streams.” Eugene Peterson’s popular paraphrase, *The Message* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 898, elaborates: “He pulls water out of the sea, distills it, and fills up his rain-cloud cisterns.” The Hebrew, however, literally means “He makes the drops of water small.” The Septuagint says simply, “He numbers the drops of rain.”

Modern interpreters have often read into this simple statement the hydrological cycle, but there is no evidence that the Hebrews understood the role of the sun’s energy in evaporation of water from the oceans (though they did see mists arising from the



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earth). It seems most likely that the author of Job was simply saying that God made the drops of water small enough to stay up in the heavens as clouds. The solution to the even more perplexing problem of how snow and hail stayed up in the sky was to ascribe storehouses to God for the purpose (Job 38:22).

6. Unless otherwise indicated, biblical quotations are from the New International Version.

7. A. G. Billis et al., "Acute Renal Failure After a Meal of Quail," *The Lancet*, Sept. 25, 1971, 702.

8. Th. I. Ouznellis, *Journal of the American Medical Association* 211 (1970): 1186.

9. R. Aparicio et al., "Epidemic Rhabdomyolysis Following Quail Ingestion: A Clinical Epidemiologic and Experimental Study," *Clinical Toxicology* 112 (1999):143-36.

10. The circulation of the blood was first described by William Harvey (1578-1657).

11. Maxwell M. Wintrobe, *Blood Pure and Eloquent* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), 6.

12. C. S. Lewis, *Miracles* (London, Geoffrey Bles, 1947), 129-30.

13. Peterson et al., *Reason and Religious Belief*, 174-75, includes the following story related by R. F. Holland in "The Miraculous," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 2 (1965): 43: "A child riding his toy motor-car strays onto an unguarded railway crossing near his house, whereupon a wheel of his car gets stuck down the side of one of the rails. At that exact moment an express train is approaching with the signals in its favor. Also a curve in the track will make it impossible for the driver to stop his train in time to avoid any obstruction he might encounter on the crossing. Moreover, the child is so engrossed in freeing his wheel that he hears neither the train whistle nor his mother, who has just come out of the house and is trying to get his attention. The child appears to be doomed. But just before the train rounds the curve, the brakes are applied and it comes to rest a few feet from the child. The mother thanks God for the miracle, although she learns in due course that there was not necessarily anything supernatural about the manner in which the brakes came to be applied. The driver had fainted, for a reason that had nothing to do with the presence of the child on the line, and the brakes were applied automatically as his hand ceased to exert pressure on the control lever."

14. The New International Version regularly translates the Hebrew *Yahweh sabaoth* as "the Lord Almighty," evidently influenced by its interest in affirming the divine sovereignty but thus disguising the military language.

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