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Miracle

Miracle (Latin *mirari*, "to wonder at"), an event, apparently transcending human powers and the laws of nature, that is attributed to a special divine intervention or to supernatural forces.

Stories of miracles are a common feature of practically all religions. In some societies, a shaman is believed to have the power to heal through contact with outside forces. Many religious leaders and founders—including Zoroaster, Confucius, Laozi (Lao-tzu), and Buddha—have been credited with miraculous powers. Moses and the prophets of Israel were said to have performed miraculous acts at God's bidding. Muslim tradition includes accounts of the miracles of Muhammad, such as his extraordinary healings.

More attention has been given to miracles in Christianity, however, than in any other religion. Miracles have been ascribed not only to Jesus Christ but also to several of his immediate followers and to Christian saints up to the present time. The miracles of Christ recorded in the Gospels are an integral part of the New Testament narrative and include raising the dead, transforming water into wine, feeding thousands with a small amount of food, casting out demons, and healing the sick and deformed. The most important miracle of the New Testament is the resurrection of Christ. Under the influence of Greek philosophy, Christian writers came to accept the idea that miracles possess evidential value, that is, they provide evidence that God is at work in the world.

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More recently, as a result of the historicocritical method (see [Biblical Scholarship](#)), the Gospel miracles are widely regarded as having been written more to inculcate religious truths than to record historical events. Thus, the significance of the miracle lies in its meaning rather than in the event itself. From this point of view, the primary aim of a miracle story is to show that God directs and intervenes in human history.

Miracles have played an important role in the history of religions. The traditionally close connections between miracles and faith, which tend to reinforce each other, explains why in new religious movements and spiritual revivals, the occurrence of the miraculous, especially in healing, plays such a prominent part.

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