

## **AN ASSESSMENT OF DAVID HUME'S IMPOSSIBILITY OF MIRACLE**

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### **Abstract**

Miracle is an occurrence that is above nature and above man; not capable of being discerned by the senses, designed to authenticate the intervention of a power that is not limited by the laws either of matter or of mind. As an act which reveals God to humanity and depicts His intervention in human affairs, miracle has been a subject of philosophical debate. Some exponents of miracle opine that the biggest problem raised by miracles is the belief in God. They are of the view that if God exists, His morality is questionable while others maintain that God would not do miracles, to do so would be irrational and immoral. David Hume dismissed miracle as pious fiction and rationally unjustifiable to believe. The paper assesses the Achilles' heel of David Hume's arguments against the possibility of miracle. It adopts a critical evaluation approach to critique Hume's argument against miracle especially his argument from the laws of nature. The paper concludes that Hume's arguments are unjustifiable to refute the possibility of miracle, being that miracle as a paranormal phenomenon could not be subjected to empirical investigation.

**Keywords:** David Hume, Miracle, Law of nature, Possibility, Explanation

### **Introduction**

Miracle has been defined variously and differently by many scholars; ranging from philosophical approach to sociological approach, scientific approach and religious approach. It fascinates the thought of the religious and non-religious alike, prompting them to seek to discover the possibility of miracles and invariably establishing whether or not God exists.

Among philosophers, some exhibit some belief in miracles while some raise serious doubt about its possibility. For instance, Aquinas<sup>1</sup>, Swinburne<sup>2</sup> and Tillich<sup>3</sup> share common belief in the possibility of miracle, while Overall<sup>4</sup>, Spinoza<sup>5</sup>, Strauss<sup>6</sup> and Hume<sup>7</sup> deny the possibility of

miracle. The latter are of the view that miracles are unrealistic. Aquinas, like some other philosophers in the Middle Ages, ascribed a religious significance to miracle. He identified three types of miracles under his definition of miracles as “those things done by divine power apart from the order usually followed in things”. Firstly he considered those things that God did that nature could not do for example stopping the sun or the reversal in the course of the sun (Joshua 10:13). This may be considered the most traditional approach to defining miracle as it is effectively a breach of natural law, which contradicts regular experience about how the world works. Secondly, Aquinas identified those acts that God did that nature could do, but not in the same order for example the recovery from paralysis, or perhaps from a terminal illness (Mark 1:31). It is not logically impossible for these things to happen, but they are not usually expected. Nature can bring about a spontaneous remission or recovery, but we would not expect this to happen and if it does then it may be attributed to the direct intervention of God. Finally, Thomas Aquinas defined as miracles those things done by God that nature could not do, but that God did without using the forces of nature. An example of this type of miracle might be the recovery from a flu or cold. This type of illness is more likely to get better without the help of God or nature but if this had recovered quicker than usual with a help of prayer; then we might suggest that it was a miraculous intervention done by God.<sup>8</sup> Aquinas’ definitions of miracle may not be without their loopholes but they depict miracle to be seldom and unusual intervention of God in human affairs.

Miracle skeptics on their own part opine that the biggest problem raised by miracles is the belief in God. Some skeptics are of the view that if God exists, His morality is questionable. For miracle depicts God to be partial; favouring only few. As it would seem that God would have favourites to allow 6 million people to die in the holocaust and yet allow one man to be cured of cancer.<sup>9</sup> Hence, they are of the view that God would not do miracles; to do so would be irrational and immoral. Christine Overall on her own part argues that Christian God would not perform miracles because that would violate the natural order. As she sees it, miracle would mislead human beings and confound human abilities to understand the world.<sup>10</sup> She argues further that miracles are incompatible with the existence of God, because if they occur, miracles will increase the amount of evil in the world. A miracle would be an ontic evil, a cognitive evil, and a moral evil.<sup>11</sup> Her reasons perhaps as McCormick apologetically proposed are that God, if he exists, would value an orderly nature, expanded human knowledge, and goodness to such an extent that he

would not tolerate the occurrence of any anomalies in the natural order whatsoever performed by any supernatural entity. So if a miracle occurs, we can be sure that God doesn't exist.<sup>12</sup>

For David Hume (1711-1776), a Scottish philosopher, respected as one of the three prominent figures in British Empiricism (the other two being George Berkeley and John Locke), a skeptical agnostic, miracle is unfeasible, unrealistic and unreliable.<sup>13</sup> His critical and animosity nature towards religion particularly Christianity earned him the appellation of being irreligious and consequently, an atheist. As an empiricist who uses evidence to build his picture of the world and won't draw conclusions about anything for which there is no evidence, Hume sought to talk about the evidence for miracles and the probability of their actually having happened. He believes all knowledge came through sense experience. For him however, some knowledge is *a priori*, but they are merely analyses of concepts and do not concern questions of fact. True knowledge comes from the reflection of past sense experiences.

Hume's arguments against miracle anchor largely on his epistemological principle; majorly on two assumptions. Firstly he believes that law of nature provides us with decisive reason to believe that any testimony of a miracle is false; experience has proven laws of nature to be inviolable and the occurrence of miracle will mean violation of a law of nature. Secondly, that miracles have not been experienced by other people but are only mere testimonies. And according to the empiricist tradition what is true should be proved by the senses and by experience not by mere testimonies of some persons. As such the thrust of this paper is to provide an assessment of Hume's argument by critically evaluating his arguments against the possibility of miracles to determine the validity or otherwise of miracles.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

Etymologically, miracle is from Latin *miraculum* ("object of wonder"; in Church's parlance, "marvelous event caused by God"), from *mirari* "to wonder at, marvel, be astonished."<sup>14</sup> In the New Testament these four Greek words are principally used to designate miracles: *Semeion*, "sign", *Terata*, "wonders;" *Dunameis*, "mighty works;" and *Erga*, "works".<sup>15</sup> The English Oxford Living Dictionary defines miracle as an extraordinary and welcome event that is not explicable by natural or scientific laws and is therefore attributed to a divine agency.<sup>16</sup> Defining miracle either as a concept or phenomenon is not without some challenges. Recalling the challenges in defining miracle,

Hick<sup>17</sup> affirms that scholars throughout the centuries have been divided in their views on the definition of a miracle, although there is broad agreement that a miracle must contain three basic attributes:

- The event must be against regular experience, sometimes referred to as breaking the laws of nature
- The event has a purpose and significance
- It is possible to ascribe religious significance to the event.

For clarity purposes, it is imperative to distinguish two main dimensions of defining miracle; the general (usage) dimension and the theological dimension. The general dimension suggests common (popular) usage of the word miracle which has multiple definitions; very wide to include any event which, insofar as it defies manifest explanation. The theological dimension takes cognizance of supernatural cause to be a necessary condition for an event to be called miracle. In other words, miracles from theological point of view are of religious significance, authenticating divine intervention. Thus, Clarke writes that the true definition of miracle, in the theological sense of the word, that it is a work effected in manner unusual or different from:

the common and regular Method of Providence, by the interposition either of God himself, or of some Intelligent Agent superior to man, for the proof or Evidence of some particular Doctrine, or in attestation to the Authority of some particular person.<sup>18</sup>

Tillich defines miracle as an event which is astonishing, unusual, shaking without contradicting the rational structure of reality, an event which points to a mystery of being. This definition is also similar to the definition of a miracle given by Holland.<sup>20</sup> According to Holland, a miracle is an unexpected event which has fortunate results and is recognized as a divine activity. The definition of Cook<sup>21</sup> takes a more theological approach of miracles when he defines miracle as the unexpected and the unusual manifestations of the presence and power of God whereas Mackie<sup>22</sup> defines a miracle as happening as when the world is not left to itself, when something from supernatural order intrudes.

Omogbe<sup>23</sup> sees miracle as an unusual occurrence which defies any explanation in terms of known scientific law and which is attributed to divine intervention. Omogbe opines further that by its very nature therefore a miracle involves the intervention of the supernatural in human affairs, usually in man's favour. Collins & Farrugia<sup>24</sup>, see miracle "as an event caused by God's special intervention, which is beyond the normal laws of nature and brings some religious message for the believers, both for the present and the future." New Standard Encyclopedia<sup>25</sup>, defines miracle as "a marvel wrought by God, who as a Creator is able to interrupt the operation of ordinary natural laws." From all the above definitions of miracle, one can conveniently confirm that miracle is an exceptional phenomenon caused by God among human race to make mankind stand in awe of Him.

### **Hume's Argument of impossibility of Miracles**

Hume, like every philosopher, is a child of his epoch and he philosophized according to the spirit of his age. The Enlightenment period of Modern Age being a great humanistic and scientific movement was skeptical about religiosity and critically questioned spiritualism. Among the topics of skeptical discussion within the circuit of the educated elite is the issue of Miracle. In Book X of his famous book *Enquiries Concerning Human Understanding*, titled 'Of Miracles', first published in 1748, the 18th-century Scottish philosopher (Hume) offers two definitions of miracle:

1. Miracle is a transgression of a law of nature by a particular volition of the Deity or by the interposition of some invisible agent.
2. Miracle is a violation of the laws of nature which are firm and unalterable experience. In other words, given the regularity, habitual, sacrosanct and unalterable of the laws of nature, Hume contends that miracles are very questionable events. This means that by its very nature a miracle is opposing to the natural course of things. If an event is in line with the normal course of nature, it cannot be tagged miracle. This he illustrates with an example when he writes that, "it is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die suddenly: because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed, in any age or country, for it is contrary to the natural course of things and contrary to human experience. There must, therefore, be a

uniform experience against every miraculous event; otherwise the event would not merit that appellation”<sup>26</sup>

In explaining what law of nature is, Hume associates the concept of laws of nature with human experience. In other words, law of nature is an observable constancy relating to natural phenomena. According to him, it is human experience that establishes the regularity, constancy and the uniformity of nature over the world which in all ages is infallible. As such any conclusion based on this infallible human experience enjoys the highest degree of certainty. Thus, for Hume, no proof can be superior to that of the collective human experience which is infallible, inviolable and irrefutable. In other words, no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle unless the testimony be of such a kind that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it tries to establish. And so,

when anyone tells me, that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it be more probable that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact, which he relates, should really have happened, I weigh the one miracle against the other; and according to the superiority which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle.<sup>27</sup>

The implication of this according to Hume is that every claim to miracle should be scrupulously scrutinized; for such claim could be due to delusion or calculated to deceive. Thus he notes that, if somebody tells me he has witnessed a miracle (for example, that he saw a dead man rise again to life) I would ask myself: Is it not possible that this man is under an illusion or he is deliberately trying to deceive me? Would it be a miracle for this man to be under an illusion or for him to deliberately try to deceive me? Is that not possible? Would it be a miracle? Even if such would be a miracle, would it be a greater miracle than that of a dead man rising again? Certainly not. It is therefore more likely to be case that this man is either under illusion or is deliberately trying to deceive me. If this would be a miracle it would certainly be a lesser miracle than that of the dead man rising to life again, which would be a greater miracle.<sup>28</sup>

For Hume, the greater miracle (that dead man rose again) is therefore to be rejected in favour of the lesser miracle, namely, that this man is either under an illusion or is trying to deceive me. Hume here points to Ockham's razor (a problem-solving principle proposed by

William of Ockham in the fourteenth century) as support for this, which basically states that the simplest explanation is usually the correct one. Thus, in order for a miracle to be true, denial of the miracle would have to be more miraculous than its acceptance. If we took the example of Jesus being resurrected, Hume would suggest that we consider what is more likely: that those making the claim are mistaken, or that Jesus actually came back to life? Here Hume would argue we must logically choose the first option.<sup>29</sup> In this way, Hume contends that no testimony is enough to establish the credibility of any miracle. It will always be found to be the case that anybody who claims to have witnessed a miracle is either under an illusion or he is intentionally trying to deceive, as a means, for examples of propagating his religion.

The source of miraculous stories is other basis of Hume's criticism of possibility of miracle. In Part 2 of Section X, Hume states that testimony for miracle is not very good evidence. He provides three arguments that testimony is an appalling evidence of miracle. Firstly, according to him, miracles often come from "ignorant and barbarous nations", making accounts of miracles unreliable. For example, many of the claims of miracles within the Bible are made by poor, uneducated fishermen and peasants who were ignorant of the laws of science, which Hume argues that it is not an adequate source. Miracles are generally made by people whose education, learning and good sense are not unquestionable so that such claims are always the results of delusion. Thus the witnesses to miracles are unreliable.

These barbarous populations should not be fully faulted; they were ignorant of the laws of science, and they believed nearly every event was miraculous. The enlightened world has been freed of these childish assumptions, and now the world must cast off the miraculous vestiges of that pre-modern world.<sup>30</sup>

Obviously two requirements emerge from this particular argument; the first has to do with the witness, and the second concerns the location of the event witnessed. First, in order to have his testimony accepted, the witness has to be educated, truthful, reputable, and must have something to lose if found deceptive. Second, the witness must testify to facts that were publicly witnessed in a reputable city. Unless every one of these conditions is met, a wise man does not have to accept the testimony.<sup>31</sup> To be accepted, testimony of a miracle must be given by multiple people who are honest, educated, and have something to lose if they are lying. Also,

the miracle had to be witnessed in a “celebrated part of the world.” As such Brown notes that “the qualifications (Hume) demands of such witnesses are such as would preclude the testimony of anyone without a Western university education, who lived outside a major cultural center in Western Europe prior to the sixteenth century, and who was not a public figure”<sup>32</sup> The implication of this is that Hume believes that those prior to the enlightenment are incapable of testifying to the truth, or at least their understanding of the truth was so flawed that it cannot be trusted. Thus, he writes:

that there has been no case in history of miracle attested to by sufficient number of men of such unquestioned good there is not to be found, in all history, any miracle attested by a sufficient number of men, of such unquestioned good sense, education, and learning, as to secure us against all delusion in themselves; of such undoubted integrity, as to place them beyond all suspicion of any design to deceive others; of such credit and reputation in the eyes of mankind, as to have a great deal to lose in case of their being detected in any falsehood; and at the same time attesting facts performed in such a public manner, and in so celebrated a part of the world, as to render the detection unavoidable: all which circumstances are requisite to give us a full assurance in the testimony of men.<sup>33</sup>

Secondly, Hume opines that man by nature enjoys surprise and wonder, which gives him the tendency to believe unusual things when the belief is not reasonable. This passion for surprise and wonder inherent in human nature is exploited by religious people who indulge in telling fantastic stories of miraculous occurrences to promote the cause of their religious beliefs.

A religionist may be enthusiast, and imagine he sees what has no reality; he may know his narrative to be false, and yet preserve in it, with the best intention in the world for the sake of promoting so holy a cause.<sup>34</sup>

Lastly, Hume argues that miracles in other religions cancel each other out because they are often given in explanation of everyday events, such as battles and famine which do not need miraculous explanation. Miracles from Hinduism or Buddhism, he argues, cancels out those from Christianity or Islam. As such, Hume suggests that instead of picking just

one to believe in, we should deny them all. All world religions seem to be based on some miraculous event, yet these religions contradict one another and can't all be true. If one religion says there is one God, another that there are many and both use miracles to prove these facts then one must be wrong. It is possible, then, that all religions are wrong and that no miracles actually happen. Hence, Even if miracles were proved, all other miracles would prevent it from establishing the religion it was purported to support.<sup>35</sup>

In all, the arguments that Hume employed to sustain his conviction that miracle is impossible could be summarized under the following arguments in syllogism forms:

**A. Argument from the inviolable law of nature**

Pr 1: Reasonable people always proportion their beliefs to the strength of their evidence.

Pr 2: Every law of nature is such that the evidence that it has never been violated is stronger than the evidence that it has been violated.

Pr 3: If a miracle has occurred, it is a violation of a law of nature.

Conclusion: Therefore, reasonable people will never believe that a miracle has occurred.

**B. Argument from the uniformity of experience**

Pr 1: The principle of regularities (constant repetition) and uniformity of experience form the testimony of mankind are premised on constant repetition and uniformity of human experience

Pr 2: Miracles are not always repeated

Conclusion: Therefore, there is uniform experience against every miraculous event which does not form the testimony of mankind. (And the collective experience of mankind is always greater and always outweighs the testimony of one man or a group of people who claim to have witnessed a miracle).

**C. Argument from the barbaric and ignorant nations**

Pr 1: People with good education, learning and good sense are never deluded

Pr 2: Claims of miracles are generally made by people whose education, learning and good sense are not unquestionable.

Conclusion: Consequently, reasonable people will never believe that a miracle has occurred.

**D. Argument from passion for surprise and wonder**

Pr 1: There is a natural tendency in man for passion for surprise and wonder

Pr 2: Religious people indulge in telling fantastic stories of miraculous occurrences

Conclusion: Therefore, religious people exploit this natural tendency to promote their religious belief

**E. Argument from contradiction from various religions**

Pr 1: All world religions seem to be based on some miraculous event

Pr 2: Yet these religions contradict each other

Conclusion: Therefore, all religions are wrong and that no miracles actually happen.

**Critique of Hume's Arguments of Impossibility of Miracles**

His definition of miracle is misleading. If this definition were to be generalized, it will mean every observable new phenomenon will be violation of natural law simply because such lacks universal experience. And such would be tagged miracle on Hume's principles. As Wallace notes, that would mean that no new phenomenon could ever be admitted to be true, since it would be ruled out by the weight of prior human experience. Hume's critique of miracle does not create the possibility for new experience. If Hume's definitions of miracle are to be taken sternly true, as Wallace further argues, scientific advance would not be possible; for an event which contradicts a law of nature- an event which the occurrence has not been repeated- would be discountenanced. Put differently, to deny the logical possibility of miracle based on inviolable repeated natural phenomena is to claim a comprehensive and thorough knowledge of nature.<sup>36</sup> Omoregbe is thus apt stating that:

the continuous advancement of science however shows the limitation of man's knowledge of nature at any given time. Man lives in a universe which he does not fully understand but which he continuously tries to understand by the means of science. At no point in history was mankind ever in a position to claim a comprehensive and thorough understanding of the workings of nature, and it is unlikely that mankind will ever have such thorough understanding of nature in the foreseen future. This limitation in man's understanding of the working of nature leaves room for the possibility of certain unusual occurrences which cannot be

scientifically explained in terms of known laws of nature. Thus, to deny the possibility of miracle is to deny any limitation in man's understanding of the working of nature, and to accept the possibility of miracles is to acknowledge limitation in man's knowledge of nature.<sup>37</sup>

Hume's arguments against miracle are inconsistent with scientific and empirical principle he set out to defend. Generally, the doctrine of miracle is unacceptable to science because it (science) is rooted in the principle of regularities of nature. A critical look at the Big Bang theory which is accepted as a creditable scientific explanation of the origin of the universe explains that development of life is a onetime event and never repeated.<sup>38</sup> If this is the case, why should possibility of miracle be denied on regularities condition? One can argue in this respect, that miracles are scientific events.

Again, in assessing Hume's argument against miracle it is needful to bring forth his analysis of the principle of causality and uniformity of nature which is embedded in his empiricist principles as Omoregbe<sup>39</sup> has critically analyzed. Hume in his principle of causality<sup>40</sup> challenged the assumption of a necessary connection between a cause and its effects. Hume would say that we could not on the basis of experience that we observed that A was followed by B means that there is a connection between them and whenever there is A, B must necessarily follow. Our mind derives this through our habit of associating things that usually go together. Hume pointed out that we do not perceive any such necessary connection, for it is not part of our empirical experience.

However, the denial of any intrinsic connection (a necessary connection) between a cause and its effect is bound to affect our idea of the law of nature. If the law are seen as invariable, inviolable or inexorable it would imply that there is a necessary connection between a cause and its effect. But if as Hume's principle of causality argues, there is no intrinsic, necessary connection between a cause and its effect, it will then imply that the laws of nature cannot be inexorable, invariable or inviolable. Laws of nature are therefore not statement about the regularity and constancy with which certain things happen under similar conditions. In other words, the laws of nature are not statements about the way certain things regularly follow others in nature under certain conditions.

As such, Hume insists that we cannot make any inference or draw any conclusion from repetition. His analysis shows that scientific truths are not demonstrably certain because they are based on the assumption

that the future will resemble the past; that nature is uniform; that things known to have repeatedly produced the same effects in the past will, under the same condition, produce the same effects any time in the future. This assumption implies the ideas of strict necessity and universality in things.

With Hume's analysis of principle of causality, law of nature can no longer be considered to be absolute or inviolable. Neither can it be regarded as stating what has always happened in the past and will always happen in the future. The laws of nature thus become the statements of what has repeatedly happened in the past with no implication that the same events will necessarily occur in the future. For the repetition of the same occurrence in the past can never be occasion for any belief of assurance. We cannot talk of violation of the law of nature since these laws, derived as they are from human empirical experience, do not involve necessity or necessary connection. They do not, in the light of Hume's analysis, state what will always happen but what has been observed to have happened in the past. Thus, for example, the law of nature, on Hume's terms, do not state that dead man can never rise again (for this would involve strict necessity which is beyond the scope of man's empirical experience), but that men known to have died in the past as a standard for the future and there is no proof that he future will resemble the past, we are not entitled to say with certainty that in future dead men will not rise again to life. If tomorrow a dead man rises again to life, the laws of nature have not been violated. In fact, on Hume's terms, it would be inappropriate to talk of their violation for the reasons we have explained. Obviously, Hume's definition of miracle as "a violation of the law of nature" is inconsistent with his empirical principle. An *a priori* refutation of miracles as an impossibility is inconsistent with his empiricism. One cannot hold to the validity of empiricism while maintaining a skeptical stance at the same time.

Hume's other arguments are as weak as the first argument. His argument that "religions contradict each other yet all use miracles to prove they are true" is not without fault. By asserting that since all religions' testimonies contradict one another there is no miracle; Hume confused the evidence for the fact with the theories to account for the fact. It is thus illogical and un-philosophical of Hume to argue that if the theories lead to contradictions, the facts themselves do not exist. The fact that each religion gives its own different version of miraculous events does not invalidate the possibility of miracle.

There are salient points to be raised here; one is that some religions (such as Buddhism) do not rest their ideas on miracles. No 'miracles'

occurred in the enlightenment of the Buddha. Although, several miraculous events were attributed to him especially prior to enlightenment, but he discourages the working of marvel because it will be an hindrance to *enlightenment*. Omoregbe was apt when he states “His (Buddha’s) philosophy is that of self-help without invoking or relying on any supernatural”. Thus it is not true that all religions rely on miracles. . . Miracles like other events in the world are perceived or/and interpreted in different ways. Similarly, God is experienced by different people in different ways but the greater truth of God remains hidden. If a Hindu chooses to interpret God’s nature in many ways and a Muslim in one it does not mean God does not exist, merely that people understand Him in different ways.

Likewise, Hume’s argument that “miracle is only among ignorant and uncivilized people” is not unquestionable. This is so because in the most civilized and most learned societies today, like those of America and Europe, there are reports of claims of miraculous cures performed by preachers, evangelists and prophets. These miraculous cures are reported to occur during public prayer, sermons or fellowship gathering<sup>41</sup> in these “celebrated part of the world.” Even the miraculous resurrection of Jesus Christ was testified to by a reputable educated secular historian Josephus, when he writes that “*When Pilate ...condemned him to be crucified, those who had . . . come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared ... restored to life.*”<sup>42</sup> it is noteworthy that miracles are rare events, the fact that one has not experience one is not enough evident to deny its possibility or existence. Further, it appears that Paul meets the requirements of Hume as a witness to a miracle. Paul was honest (he did not charge for people to hear his message, and he eventually died for its truth [1 Cor. 9:18; 2 Tim 4:6]), educated (had the equivalent of two doctoral degrees [Acts 22:3; Phil 3:5]), and had something to lose (lost his position in Judaism and eventually his life for the truth [Phil 3:4–7; 2 Tim 4:6]).<sup>43</sup> If Paul does not meet Hume’s requirements for witness to miracle, then it appears that no witness has ever met them.

It would appear that there is a natural tendency in humans for passion for surprise and wonder but it does not follow that people necessarily believe the surprises and wonders. For man also have the natural tendency to be skeptical. Hume’s assertion of human’s love for the miraculous, then, must be balanced by human tendency to skepticism. Hume’s argument against the possibility of miracle based on “the barbaric and ignorant nations” is bias also and the bias is unsubstantiated. True,

people in antiquated times did not know the scientific advances that marked Hume's age. However, it would not be proper for modern readers to dismiss Hume's writings because he lived in an antiquated age among "barbarous" peoples. What Hume seems to miss is that while those before him were not privileged to his knowledge, they certainly knew that a person who could not see was blind (John 9). They knew that the sea does not naturally split at the motion of a hand (Exodus 14:21). Brown explains Hume's problem well when he asserts that, "it is absurd to demand of a witness that he should share the same world view as oneself or have the same level of education and culture." The witness to miracles in the Bible may not have had Hume's education, but that did not prevent them from recognizing the regularity of natural law and the truly miraculous.<sup>44</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In his attempt to take empiricism to its logical and consistent conclusion, Hume exaggerated his claim that all knowledge comes from experience which led him to the fallacy of contradiction. He would advise that a wise man proportions his beliefs to the evidence, yet his evidence against the possibility of miracle which he considered to be overwhelming are not unquestionable, as demonstrated in this paper. How empirical is the empirical principle by which the possibility of miracle was debunked? The key empirical principle on which he debunked the possibility of knowledge cannot be proven by its own hypothesis; the assumption has not been experienced by the five senses (has not been tasted, touched, heard, smelled or seen).

Hume's intention was to postulate arguments against miracles that would be an undying checker to all sorts of religious illusions and chimeras. But some of his arguments end up strengthening the possibility of miracle. If there is any philosopher whose philosophy has strengthened the possibility of miracle, therefore, it is Hume's philosophy.

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