

# Miracles . . .

Miracles are the one means through which God has always chosen to make Himself and His will known to men. Those who want to reject God go to great pains to reject all miracles.

**AGNOSTICS DO NOT** think there is any evidence of "miracles" in the sense of happenings contrary to the natural law.

At Lourdes certain diseases can be cured and others cannot. Those that can be cured at Lourdes can probably be cured by any doctor in whom the patient has faith.

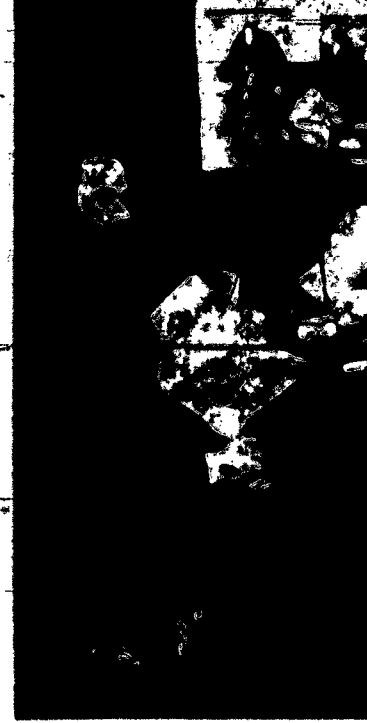
So says Bertrand Russell.

In reference to this interesting and curious statement of

## By Rev. Louis Miller, C.S.S.R.

The British sceptic Bertrand Russell, we would like to explore a little further into the subject of miracles, explaining the Catholic view of them, and perhaps giving a small commentary on Mr. Russell's words.

The word "miracle" is given a wide variety of meanings.



**EMILE ZOLA**  
"I would not believe"

glad to cooperate, and they introduced Zola to Marie Lemarchand, an invalid whose case was described officially as follows:

A case of lupus had preyed upon her nose and mouth. Ulceration had spread and was hourly spreading and devouring the membranes in its progress.

The cartilage of the nose was almost eaten away, the mouth was drawn all on one side by the swollen condition of the upper lip, the whole was a frightful, distorted mass of matter and coagled blood.

Both lungs were tubercular, and she had open sores on her legs.

This is the medical record, testified by the doctors who examined her at Lourdes before she was placed in the bath of water from the Lourdes spring. A Dr. d'Hombres, who had seen her immediately before her immersion, afterwards followed her to the hospital and testified:

"I RECOGNIZED her quite well, although her face was entirely changed. Instead of the horrible sore I had lately seen, the surface was red, it is true, but dry and covered with a new skin. The other sores had dried up in the bath. The doctors who examined her could find nothing the matter with her lungs."

We shall have more to say about Zola's reaction to this cure later. Meanwhile, here is a second example of a miracle in the strict sense of the term:

**STUDYING FOR** the priesthood in an eastern seminary at our last information is a young man, an ex-G.I., named Peter Smith. He was born in 1921 in Columbus Hospital Extension, New York City.

This hospital is run by the order of sisters founded by St. Francis Xavier Cabrini, who died in 1918, reputed a saint by all who knew her.

Shortly after the birth of Peter Smith, the attendant nurse, following routine procedure, introduced a few drops of a silver nitrate solution into



**ALEXIS CARREL**  
facts must be admitted

and of course people are free to use the word in any sense they please.

You can, for instance, say if you like of your old pastor: "It will be a miracle if he ever preaches less than half an hour on Sunday." Remarkable as such a thing might be, to describe it as a "miracle" is to use the word in a very wide sense indeed.

But for our purpose in this article we use the word in a very strict sense, and we define it as a happening which involves the clear suspension of the ordinary laws of nature, and therefore postulates the intervention of God.

Thus for example the term miracle in this sense would be applied to the case of a man with an advanced case of tuberculosis (clearly ascertainable by X-rays), who suddenly and instantaneously found himself completely cured.

LET US EMPHASIZE that we exclude from our definition of a miracle happenings which may indeed be remarkable, but which lack the note of a clear suspension of nature's laws.

It may indeed be remarkable that a man on the very brink of death from pneumonia should rally and gradually regain his strength and health, but this is not a miracle in the strict sense of the word.

Nor can the cure of nervous disorders qualify as miracles in this strict sense, because such a cure may have a purely natural explanation.

Nor if there is any possibility of coincidence can we use the term miracle in the strict sense.

Thus you may call it a miracle if you lose \$100 and later, under very unusual circumstances, find the money again. Even though it may well be true that St. Anthony helped you to find it, the finding of the money would not qualify in the strict sense as a miracle.

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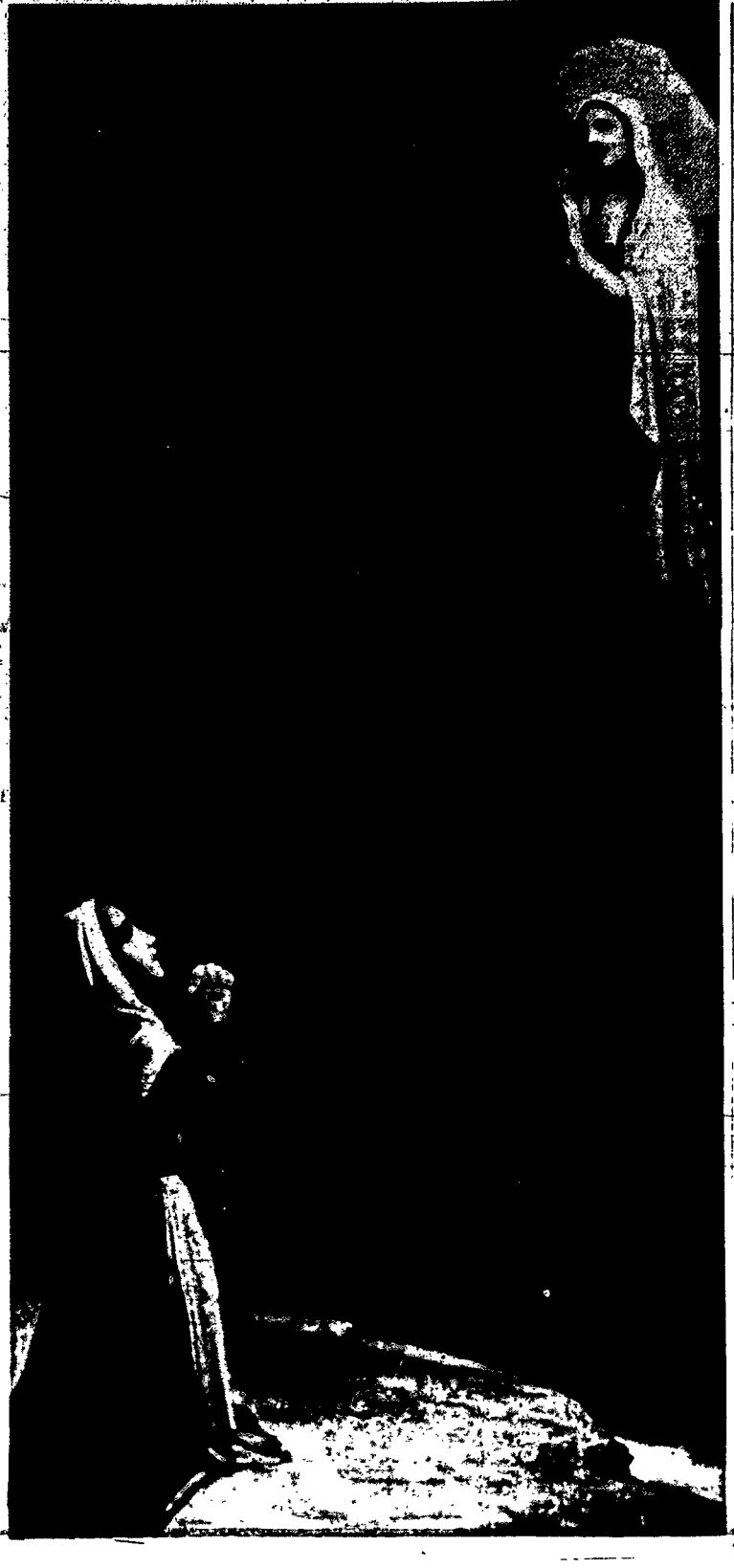
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Our Lady appears to Bernadette at Lourdes in 1858. Famous spring in front of saint still flows at Lourdes shrine, site of modern day miracles.

a standard requirement for the canonization of Mother Cabrini.

Two such clear, unmistakable, "first-class miracles" (as the Church calls them) must be worked through the intercession of a candidate for canonization before the Church will declare such a one to be a saint.

THERE ARE, it would seem two separate aspects of such cases which a fair, unbiased observer must take into account.

FIRST, there is the question of whether such happenings are possible.

The secularist, "liberal" agnostic frame of mind begins by denying the bare possibility of miracles; this of course is a logical consequence of denying that there is a God, or at least denying that God has any power or influence in the world.

"A miracle," wrote Hume, one of the early British agnostics, "is a violation of the laws of nature, and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle from the very nature of the fact is as entire as any from experience can be."

Even a so-called agnostic, one might suppose, would have to admit at least the "possibility" of miracles; since, by his own credo, he isn't sure of anything, how could he be sure that miracles are impossible?

WHICH BRINGS us to the second aspect of our subject. Granted that miracles are possible, what evidence is there that actually they do happen? We have already described two well-authenticated cases out of many that might have been used.

The evidence is at hand; how does the agnostic react to it?

PERHAPS THE CLASSIC example is that of Zola, when brought face to face with Marie Lemarchand.

Zola, as we have said, had professed a great interest in Lourdes, where such strange and wonderful things were said to take place.

"I only want to see a cut finger dipped in water and come out healed," he had said, "and I will believe."

We have already described the condition of Marie Lemarchand; Zola saw her before she was immersed in the Lourdes water, and he was present in the hospital when the girl was brought there, immediately after her cure had taken place.

"Behold the case of your dreams, M. Zola," said the president of the medical board.

"Ah, no," said Zola. "I do not want to look at her. She is still too ugly," alluding to the red color of her skin.

Then a little later in memorable words he stated to the presiding doctor what might be taken as the agnostic "credo":

"Were I to see all the sick at Lourdes cured, I would not believe in a miracle."

THIS IS THE TYPICAL agnostic attitude and few of this type scientists though they may call themselves, seem able to break through the iron ring of native bias and examine the facts for what they are.

THIS ATTITUDE, carried to the final degree of ridiculousness, is reflected in the action of the British Pension Board towards another celebrated Lourdes cure, that of John Traynor in 1923.

Traynor was a veteran of World War I, and had been badly shot up; the muscles of his right arm were completely severed, and there was a hole in his head through which his brain could be seen pulsating. The British War Pension Ministry had declared him 100 percent disabled, and was paying him a full pension.

More dead than alive, Traynor was taken to Lourdes, and on July 25, 1923, to the amazement of all, was suddenly and completely cured and healed of all his ailments.

Returning to his home in Liverpool, this man went into the coal and hauling business, and had no trouble lifting 200-pound sacks of coal.

Now comes the ironic phase of the story. Since he was able to earn a good living for himself after his cure, Traynor thought it only just that his pension be discontinued. This, however, the British War Pension Ministry solemnly refused to do.

Their doctors had examined him and found him incurable, and had no trouble lifting 200-pound sacks; the 100 percent

disability pension was continued for an able-bodied Traynor down to the time of his death in 1943.

It is doubtful whether blindness of this density can be matched by any future generation of official or unofficial agnostics.

ONE GREAT SCIENTIST, at first an agnostic, but willing to sit down humbly before the evidence, was Alexis Carrel, Nobel prize winner and author of "Man the Unknown," best seller of a decade past. In this wise and penetrating study of man's makeup, Carrel has this to say of miracles:

"Miraculous cures seldom occur. Despite their small number, they prove the existence of organic and mental processes that we do not know. They show that certain mystic states, such as that of prayer, have definite effects."

"They are stubborn, irreducible facts, which must be taken into account... science has to explain the entire realm of reality."

After stating his belief that miracles do not occur, he goes on to say:

"At Lourdes certain diseases can be cured and others cannot."

Is this supposed to strengthen Mr. Russell's argument against miracles? No one ever contended that all the sick at Lourdes are cured. A miracle in the very nature of things is a rare and exceptional happening, which in itself adds to its proving force.

## The Bell Tower

**Sweet Suds**  
"Mamma," said little Elsie, "I do wish I had some money to give you for the poor children."

Her Mother, wishing to teach her the lesson of self-sacrifice, said "Very well, dear; if you would like to go without sugar for a week, I'll give you the money instead, and than you will have some."

The little one considered solemnly for a moment and then said "Must it be sugar, mamma?"

"Why, no darling, not necessarily. What would you like to do without?"

"Soap, mamma," was Elsie's reply.

**No Calories**  
Visitor: "How's your baby?"  
Mother: "He's really making progress. He's eating solids now newspapers, pencils, keys."

**19th Hole**  
A golfing clergyman had been badly beaten by a parishioner, 30 years his senior. He returned to the clubhouse rather disgruntled.

"Cheer up," his opponent said. "Remember, you win at the finish. You'll probably be burying me someday."

"Yes," said the clergyman, "but even then it will be your hole."

WHAT I MEAN is, there are two key questions, the answers to which I would much appreciate hearing:

- Why is it almost invariably a communist who gets an invitation from some student group to address a campus gathering, thus acquiring a kind of aura of spurious respectability?
- Why is it nearly always a communist whose civil liberties the ACLU leaps to defend, beating its breast with self-righteous Americanism?

Not long ago, we had Alger Hiss speaking at Princeton. Alger Hiss, convicted of lying when he denied having betrayed his country. And of course the air was filled with solemn thunder about academic freedom and all that.

More recently, we have had the case of John Gates, editor of the Daily Worker; a man convicted under the Smith Act of having plotted to teach and advocate overthrow of the U. S. government by force and violence.

The Student Senate of Queens College, New York, a city-owned institution invited Gates the other day to speak on campus during Academic Freedom Week.

The Queens College provost promptly countermanded the invitation.

With what seems to be nothing short of studied insipidity, the Student Government Public Affairs Forum of City College likewise city-owned, then invited Gates to speak there.

THE UPSHOT WAS that the heads of the five New York city-owned colleges — Queens, City, Hunter, Brooklyn and Staten Island — voted to bar Gates from speaking on any of the five campuses, for the simple reason that "there is complete agreement — in our unequivocal condemnation of communism (and) we are now of one mind in refusing to extend campus courtesies to persons convicted under the Smith Act."

Whereupon the American Civil Liberties Union mounted its white charger and galloped into the fray, in the person of Osmond K. Frankel, ACLU counsel.

Quoted Sir Knight Frankel: "Students should be allowed to hear all speakers—wise men and fools."

This, of course, is the reason we pay taxes to support schools — in order that young people receiving educations largely at public expense may have opportunities to listen to fools, and may feel free to invite convicted enemies of their country to enjoy the hospitality of our colleges.

THAT'S NOT the way we want it, but that seems to be the way the ACLU wants it. This being so, we have every right to suggest that the ACLU be consistent. Let the ACLU insist that equal right on campus be given to all the brands of fools—including Jim Crowists, fascists and antisemites.

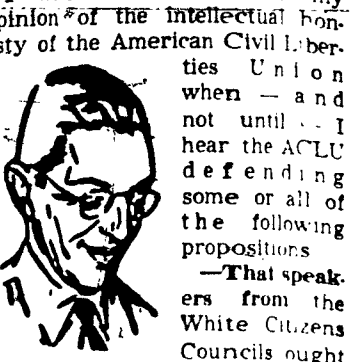
If we send young men and women to school to soak up imbecilities, they might as well get the works.

We hardly dare hope that the ACLU might sometime start talking sense. That day seems well in the past. But we ought not to close our eyes to the touching selectivity of the ACLU's concern for civil rights.

We will do well to bear in mind that even after Hungary, the ACLU's energies remain strangely concentrated upon the defense of one certain kind of foolhardiness.

## JOSEPH BREIG

Let's Hear All the Fools



I will consider revising my opinion of the intellectual honesty of the American Civil Liberties Union when — and not until — I hear the ACLU defending some or all of the following propositions:

- That speakers from the White Citizens Councils ought to be invited to preach their Jim Crow propaganda on the campuses of American colleges.
- That anti-semitic rabble-rousers ought to be turned loose to spew hatred of Jews among students.
- That the courtesies of boy-covered halls ought to be extended to people who advocate a return to nazism and fascism.
- That the headhunters, cannibals, dope peddlers and white slavers should be requested to expound their philosophies before university gatherings.

AS I RE-reading the Liberator's fishy, one-sided account of the important cause it was for one of us talks that gave up on the Bleed the... He was... for a gre... On the... a miracle... to estab... He ha... was g... day. He... for a gre... On the... a miracle... to estab... He ha... was g... day. He... for a gre... On the... a miracle... to estab... He ha... was g... day. He... for a gre...

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## Home For Beck

Businessmen across the nation are probably going to have to pay their next union dues. The members rightfully resent losses like Dave Beck's. Funds to purchase silk shirts, 15000 cars, 100000 houses with adjoining swimming pools.

Business and professional groups, political parties and labor unions are plagued with their own Dave Beck's. They work for their own private profit breaching the trust placed in them.

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It had to be that a man who dishonored the office entrusted to him would stand condemned by an indignant nation. These days who is there to stand up to speak in defense of virtue and honor? It's easier to slump in a sofa and watch TV.

Grafting business men, unprincipled labor leaders, unscrupulous politicians take this public function as their cue to look for new ways to easy profits — comforted by the fact that few will condemn their conduct.

This moral collapse characterizes all levels of our nation's conduct — from the juvenile crime growth to the senseless crushed concepts of freedom to make a fast buck.

Anti-union groups can be expected to pily up these Beck cases to discredit the whole labor movement in this country. Pressure groups streamlining for Beck's scalp are already pushing for more states to adopt so-called right-to-work laws to crush union progress.

These heads will realize that impetuous decisions benefit nobody. Despite the Beck scandal and the similar discouraging examples in other fields, it still remains true that there are vast numbers of honorable and faithful businessmen, labor leaders, and government officials. They say to their lives of dedicated service don't rate headlines but these are the men who will suffer if hasty legislation is crushed through our state or federal congresses.

There are still, thank God, men of character and honor on both sides of the management-labor fence, and by the aid of a conscientious government, justice can be attained if only two things are willing to speak out clearly in support of public servants who are loyal to their trust, and maintain a steady effective voice any who betray their rank to which we may have elected them.

## Eternal Consequences From A Hamburg

"You'd think God's Ten Commandments weren't enough! Why does the Church have to add six more!" complained a meat salesman in the diner.

Lenten restriction to meat once a day left the lunch hour with less choices, but the waitress told her customer, "Yes, I'm a Catholic too. But it's not hard. If you break one of the Ten Commandments, it's a mortal sin. It's only a venial sin to break the Church's laws, so go ahead and have hamburger if you want it."

We are sure that neither customer nor waitress in the conversation we couldn't help overhear was a Courier reader or both would be better informed in details of their faith.



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