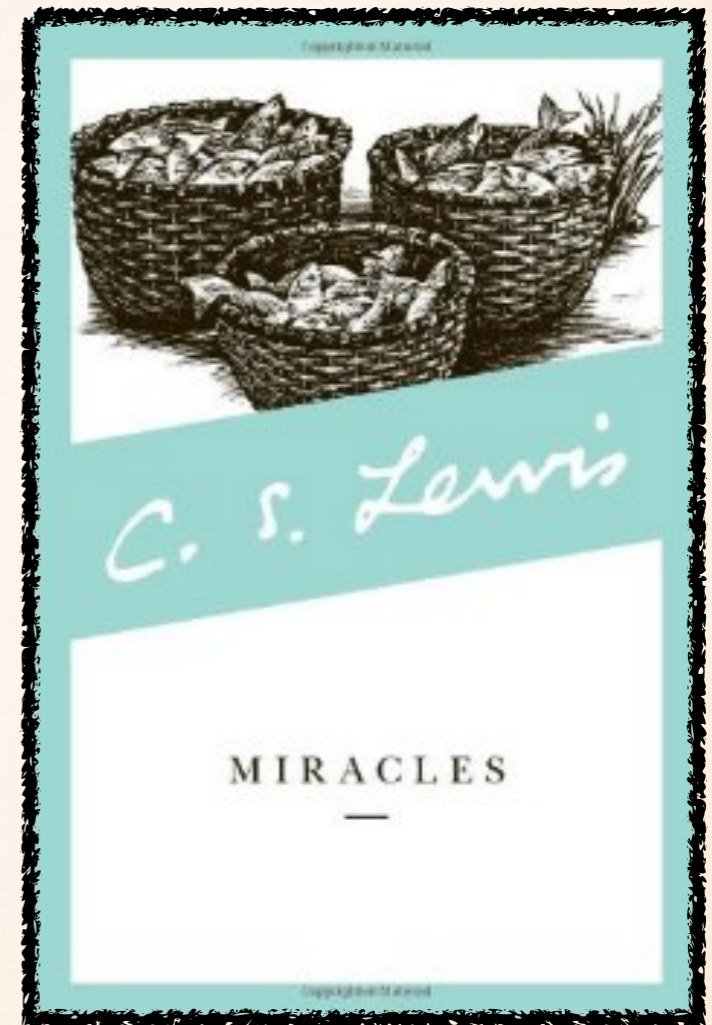
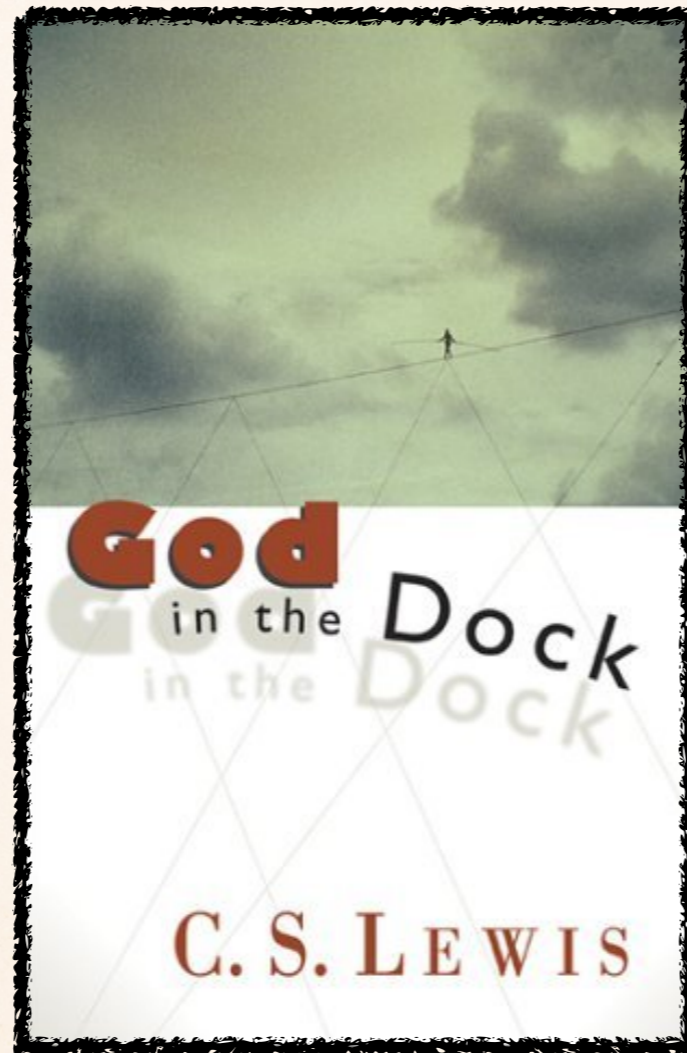
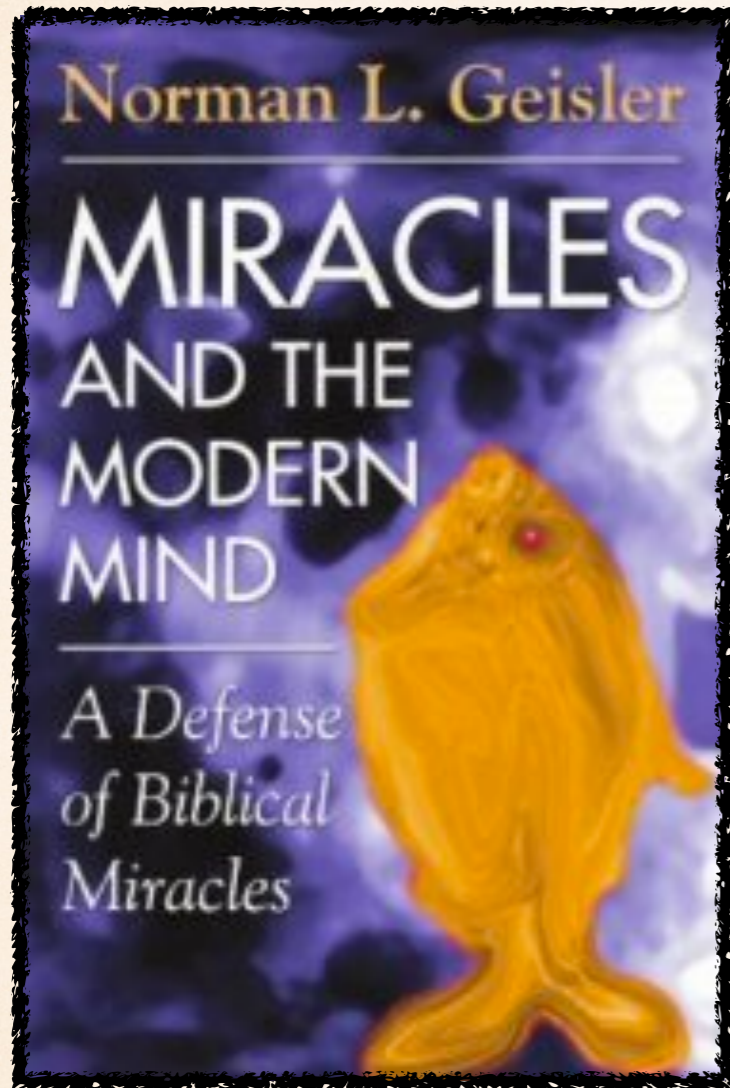


MIRACLES:
THE CONFIRMATION
OF GOD'S WORD

SUGAR LAND, TX
APOLOGETICS CONFERENCE
MARCH 7, 2015



“The virgin birth, the Resurrection, the raising of Lazarus, even the Old Testament miracles, all are freely used for religious propaganda, and they are very effective with an audience of unsophisticates and children.”

—Richard Dawkins

“The most incredible thing about miracles is that they happen.”

—*G.K. Chesterton*

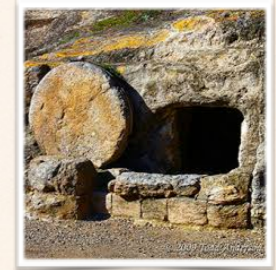
WITHOUT MIRACLES:

- ❖ Bible is not the Word of God
- ❖ Jesus is not the Son of God
- ❖ There is no resurrection
- ❖ There is no salvation



WITHOUT MIRACLES

❖ I Cor. 15:16-19



- ❖ For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. *And if Christ has not been raised, **your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.*** Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

MIRACLES: CONFIRMATION OF GOD'S WORD

1. What is a miracle?
2. Skepticism Regarding Miracles
3. Apologetic Value of Miracles
4. Conclusion

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?



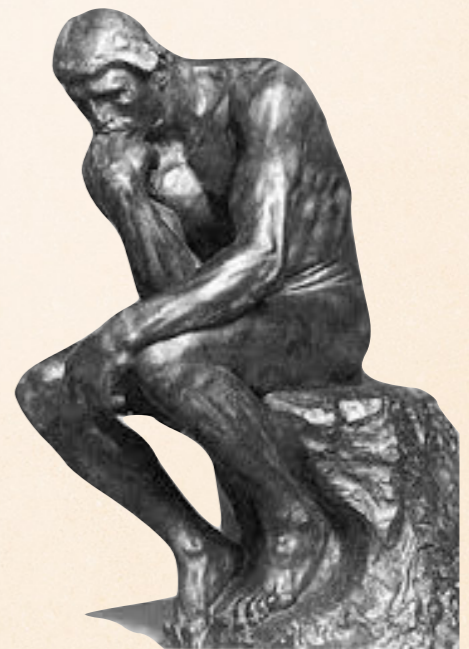
TWO EXTREMES

- ❖ *Under-believing claims of miracles*

- ❖ patronizing biblical miracles

- ❖ *Over-believing claims of miracles*

- ❖ trivializing biblical miracles



TRIVIALIZING MIRACLES

- ❖ If miracles are to serve their traditional function of giving spectacular support to religious claims—whether general theistic claims, or the authority of some specific religion or some particular sect or individual teacher—the concept [of miracle] must not be so weakened that anything at all unusual or remarkable counts as a miracle.

❖ J.L. Mackie

TRIVIALIZING MIRACLES

- ❖ hypnotism, magic, fraud, satanic deceptions, etc.
- ❖ anomalies (bumblebee flight, life in thermal vents)
- ❖ providential events (fog at Normandy)
- ❖ check in the mail, recovery from illness, making your flight, Astros winning season, etc.

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

- ❖ “A natural law is a general description of the usual orderly way in which the world operates. It follows, then, that a miracle is an unusual, irregular, specific way in which God acts within the world.”



Norman Geisler

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

- ❖ “Natural laws describe naturally caused regularities; a miracle is a supernaturally caused singularity.”
- ❖ “An effect *in* nature by a cause *beyond* nature.”



Norman Geisler

WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

❖ “an unusual event (‘wonder’) that conveys and confirms an unusual message (‘sign’) by means of an unusual power (‘power’).”

❖ Geisler



WHAT IS A MIRACLE?

- ❖ “acts of God in a way in which most happenings are not.” (W. Alston)
- ❖ something which would never have happened had nature been left to its own devices (Flew)



FIVE DIMENSIONS OF A BIBLICAL MIRACLE

1. *unusual* - out of the ordinary event
2. *theological* - an act of God
3. *moral* - manifests God's nature
4. *doctrinal* - connected with truth claims
5. *teleological* - glorify God / provide evidence



SKEPTICISM REGARDING MIRACLES



JEFFERSON BIBLE

❖ **The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth:**

❖ LXIX, v.9

❖ There laid they Jesus: and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.



MIRACLES AND MODERNISM

- ❖ “If we take in our hand any volume of divinity or school metaphysics, for instance, let us ask, Does it contain any abstract reasoning concerning quantity or number? No. Does it contain any experimental reasoning concerning matter of fact and existence? No. Commit it then to the flames, for it can contain nothing but sophistry and illusion.”



David Hume

THE MODERN MIND

- ❖ “All the tales of miracles, with which the Old and New Testament are filled, are fit only for impostors to preach and fools to believe”



Thomas Paine
1737-1809

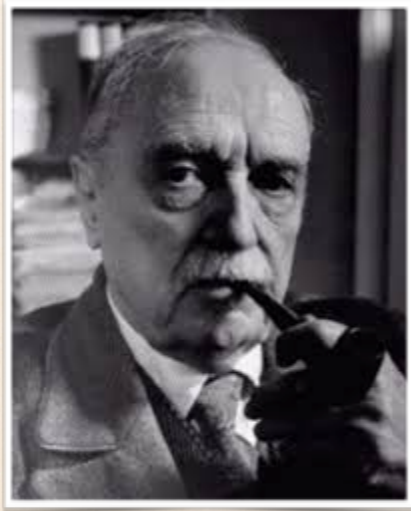
THE MODERN MIND

- ❖ “We may summarily reject all miracles, prophecies, narratives of angels and demons, and the like, as simply impossible and irreconcilable with the known and universal laws which govern the course of events.”



David F. Strauss
1808-1874

THE MODERN MIND



Rudolf Bultmann
1884-1976

- ❖ “The mythological view of the world contained in the Bible [is in conflict with] the modern views of the world which are influenced by scientific thinking.”

THE MODERN MIND

- ❖ “I hope to show that [theistic belief’s] continuing hold on the minds of many reasonable people is surprising enough to count as a miracle in at least the original sense.”



J.L. Mackie
1917-1981

MIRACLES AND MODERNISM

❖ **Benedict Spinoza (1632-1677)**

- ❖ miracles are *impossible* because they are violations of immutable natural laws



❖ **David Hume (1711-1776)**

- ❖ miracles are *incredible* because the evidence for them is always weak relative to the evidence for regular events



“The canon ‘If miraculous,
unhistorical’ is one they bring to
their study of the texts, not one they
have learned from it.”

—*C.S. Lewis*

MIRACLES ARE IMPOSSIBLE...

1. If they are “violations” of immutable natural laws

- ❖ Laws of nature are descriptive, not prescriptive
- ❖ Laws describe what regularly occurs, not what must occur
- ❖ God no more “violates” the laws of nature than an ambulance driver “violates” traffic laws

MIRACLES ARE IMPOSSIBLE...

2. If God doesn't exist (atheism)

3. If God never intervenes (deism)

4. If God indistinct from nature (pantheism)

❖ NOTE: only if it can be *proven* that a **theistic God** does not exist can miracles be proven *impossible*

EXISTENCE OF GOD MAKES MIRACLES POSSIBLE

- ❖ “If we admit God must we admit miracle? Indeed, indeed, you have no security against it.”



- ❖ C.S. Lewis

EXISTENCE OF GOD MAKES MIRACLES POSSIBLE

❖ **Cosmological argument**

- ❖ Whatever had a beginning had a cause.
- ❖ The universe had a beginning.
- ❖ Therefore, the universe had a Cause.

EXISTENCE OF GOD MAKES MIRACLES POSSIBLE

- ❖ “The universe had a beginning. There was once nothing and now there is something.”

Janna Levin (theoretical cosmologist)

EXISTENCE OF GOD MAKES MIRACLES POSSIBLE



Robert Jastrow

- ❖ “Astronomers now find they have painted themselves into a corner because they have proven, by their own methods, that the world began abruptly in an act of creation...”

THE BEGINNER...

❖ **sounds a lot like God:**

- ❖ Is not bound by space (Omnipresent)
- ❖ Is not bound by time (Eternal)
- ❖ Not composed of parts (Infinite, Indivisible Spirit)
- ❖ Is capable of choosing [to create] (Personhood)

EXISTENCE OF GOD MAKES MIRACLES POSSIBLE

❖ **Cosmological argument**

- ❖ If there was ever a time when there was nothing, there would still be nothing.
- ❖ There is something.
- ❖ Therefore, Something has always existed.

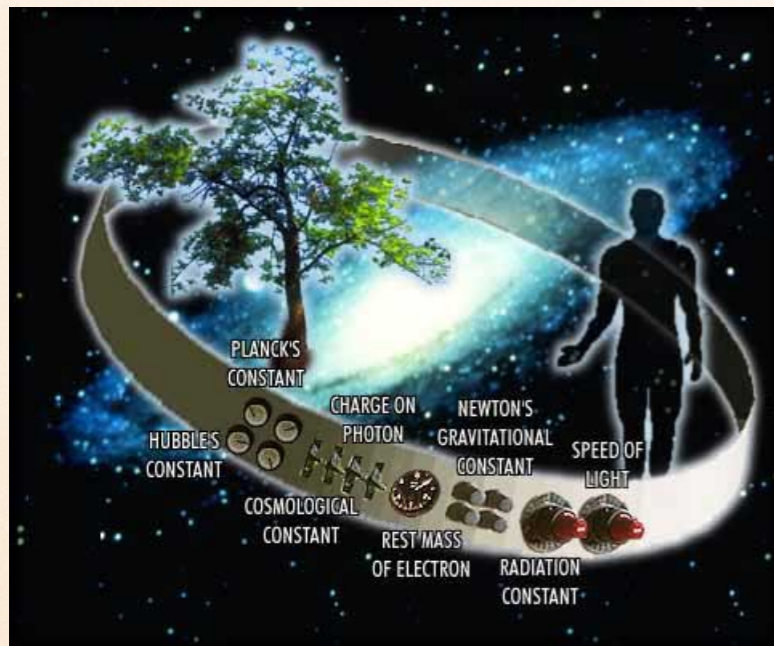
EXISTENCE OF GOD MAKES MIRACLES POSSIBLE

❖ **Teleological argument**

- ❖ Whatever is designed has a designer
- ❖ The universe is designed
- ❖ Therefore, the universe has a Designer

Fine-Tuning of the Universe

- OXYGEN
- ATMOSPHERIC TRANSPARENCY
- GRAVITATIONAL INTERACTION
- CARBON DIOXIDE
- GRAVITY
- TEMPERATURE RANGE
- EARTH'S DISTANCE FROM SUN
- TILT OF EARTH'S AXIS
- RATE OF EARTH'S ROTATION
- WATER-FORMING COMPOUNDS
- IRREDUCIBLY COMPLEX ORGANISMS
- INFORMATION
- LIFE ARISING FROM NON-LIFE:
 - 1 IN $10^{41,000}$
 - ATOMS IN UNIVERSE: 10^{78}



EXISTENCE OF GOD MAKES MIRACLES POSSIBLE

❖ **Moral argument**

- ❖ Every law has a law-giver
- ❖ There exists a moral law
- ❖ Therefore, there exists a Moral Law Giver

IF GOD EXISTS:

- ◆ **miracles are:**

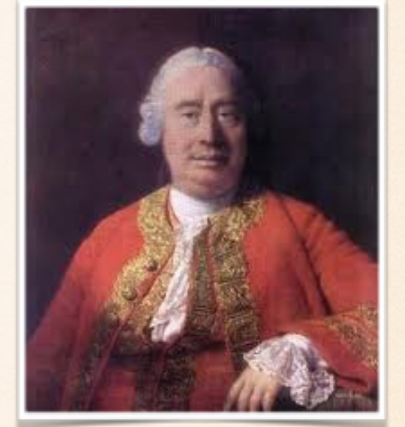
- ◆ possible

- ◆ probable

- ◆ at least one, actual



BUT ARE MIRACLES CREDIBLE?



David Hume
1711-1776

1. A miracle is by definition a rare occurrence.
2. Natural law is by definition a description of regular occurrence.
- X** 3. The evidence for the regular is always greater than that for the rare.
4. Wise individuals always base belief on the greater evidence.
- X** 5. Therefore, wise individuals should never believe in miracles.

IS RESURRECTION CREDIBLE?

1. Death occurs over and over
2. Resurrection occurs with extreme rarity
3. The evidence for death is therefore greater than the evidence for resurrection
4. Therefore, a wise person does not believe in resurrection



David Hume
1711-1776

INCREDIBILITY ARGUMENT ANSWERED

❖ **We should “weigh” not “add” evidence**

❖ *Historical Doubts Concerning the Existence of Napoleon Bonaparte* by Richard Whately

❖ The fact that Thomas Edison failed 1000x more than he succeeded is no reason to conclude that he never succeeded

INCREDBILITY ARGUMENT ANSWERED

- ❖ **“evidence” and “probability” not the same**
 - ❖ The fact that an event is statistically improbable does not make it incredible
- ❖ **By Hume’s criteria, non-repeatable events should not be believed because of their relative rarity**
 - ❖ NB: *history* is non-repeatable

STATISTICALLY IMPROBABLE EVENTS

- ◆ Scoring 100 points in NBA game
- ◆ MLB team coming back to win 7 game series after down 3-0
- ◆ dealt perfect bridge hand: 1,635,013,559,600 to 1
- ◆ life arising from non-life: 1 in $10^{41,000}$
 - ◆ (10^{78} atoms in the universe)

INCREDIBILITY ARGUMENT ANSWERED

- ❖ Now of course we must agree with Hume that if there is absolutely “uniform experience” against miracles, if in other words they have never happened, why then they never have. Unfortunately we know the experience against them to be uniform only if we know that all the reports of them are false. And we can know all the reports to be false only if we know already that miracles have never occurred. In fact, we are arguing in a circle.



C.S. Lewis

ANSWERING THE SKEPTIC

- ◆ Philosophical credibility of miracles:
 - ◆ by God's existence
- ◆ Historical credibility of miracles established:
 - ◆ by reliability of eyewitness accounts

APOLOGETIC VALUE OF MIRACLES



THE LOGIC OF MIRACLES

- 1. If a theistic God exists, miracles are possible**
2. A miracle is a special act of God
3. God is the standard of all truth; he cannot lie or err.
4. God would not act to confirm something that was false.
5. Therefore, true miracles in connection with a message confirm the message and the messenger as true.

MIRACLES AND THE SKEPTICAL MIND

❖ MODERNISM:

❖ miracles are *impossible*

❖ miracles are *incredible*

❖ POSTMODERNISM:

❖ miracles are *relative*

APOLOGETIC VALUE OF MIRACLES

- ❖ Biblical miracles confirm the Bible as the Word of God
- ❖ Biblical miracles confirm Jesus as the Son of God

PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

- ❖ **Miracles** performed in connection with a truth claim are acts of God to **confirm the truth** of God through a messenger of God



MOSES: CONFIRMED BY MIRACLES

❖ Exodus 4:5

❖ **“that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.”**



ELIJAH: CONFIRMED BY MIRACLES

- ❖ *“Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.”* (1 Kg. 17:24)
- ❖ *“let it be known* this day **that you are God** in Israel, and that **I am your servant**, and that I have done all these things at your word.” (1 Kg. 18:36)



JESUS: CONFIRMED BY MIRACLES

- ❖ Mark 2:1-10 - “But *that you may know* that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...”
- ❖ John 3:2 - *We know* that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these *signs* that you do unless God is with him.”



JESUS: CONFIRMED BY MIRACLES

❖ John 6:14



❖ *When the people saw the sign* that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”

JESUS: CONFIRMED BY MIRACLES

- ◆ Acts 2:22 - “Jesus of Nazareth, *a man attested to you* by God with *mighty works and wonders and signs* that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know..”



APOSTLES: CONFIRMED BY MIRACLES



❖ Acts 14:3

- ❖ So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who *bore witness* to the word of his grace, *granting signs and wonders* to be done by their hands.

APOSTLES: CONFIRMED BY MIRACLES



❖ 2 Cor. 12:12

❖ “The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works.”

THE GOSPEL: CONFIRMED BY MIRACLES

❖ Hebrews 2:3-4



❖ It (the gospel) was declared at first by the Lord, and *it was attested to us* by those who heard, while God also bore witness *by signs and wonders and various miracles* and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

CONCLUSION



WITHOUT MIRACLES:

- ❖ Bible is not the Word of God
- ❖ Jesus is not the Son of God
- ❖ There is no resurrection
- ❖ There is no salvation



CONCLUSION

- ◆ If God exists, miracles are *ipso facto* **possible**.
- ◆ “If there’s a God who can act, then there can be acts of God.”
- ◆ If God created the world, at least one miracle (creation) is **actual**.

CONCLUSION

- ❖ If God is powerful and good, miracles within history are **probable**.
- ❖ Because the Word of God is reliable, miracles within history are **verifiable**.

CONCLUSION

- ❖ **contra modernism:**

- ❖ miracles: actual, historical

- ❖ **contra postmodernism:**

- ❖ miracles: confirm Christianity as the exclusive truth



