

MIRACLES: SCIENTIFIC, PHILOSOPHICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

March 1-2, 2024

MAIN SPEAKER SCHEDULE

Friday, 1 March

09:00 | Justin Schembri, OP

“For I am the Lord, Your Healer” (Ex 15,26): Human Flourishing and the Enigma of Biblical Miracles

10:00 | Coffee Break

10:30 | Ignacio Silva

“Aquinas and the Metaphysics of Working a Miracle”

11:30 | Coffee Break

12:00 | Simon Maria Kopf

"Miracles, Powers, and Laws of Nature: Philosophical Explorations"

13:00 | Lunch Break

15:00 | Daniel Bonevac

“The Rationality of Believing in Miracles”

16:00 | Coffee Break

16:30 | Break Out Sessions

Saturday, 2 March

12:00 | Mariusz Tabaczek

“Does Nature Need Miracles?”

13:00 | Lunch Break

15:00 | Denis Alexander

“Can a Scientist Believe in Miracles?”

16:00 | Coffee Break

16:30 | Bernardo Motta

“Stanley Jaki’s Study of the Miracle of the Sun”

17:30 | Coffee Break

18:00 | Roberto Cauda

“Miracles, the Point of View of a Medical Researcher”

BREAKOUT SESSION SCHEDULE

Breakout Room 1 (Aula Minor)

16:30 | Kübra Bahçi

Reasonable Miracles: Islamic Metaphysics of Modalities and Special Divine Action

17:00 | Andrea Ricci

The Notion of Miracle Between Theology, Science and Politics: The Spinoza's Perspective

17:30 | Yesu Karunanidhi

Miracles as Divine Revelation, Accompaniment, and Protection A Study of Miracles in the Life of Pattinathar, a Hindu Śaivite Poet of the 10th Century CE

Breakout Room 2 (Aula 11)

16:30 | Joseph Hudson

The Miracle of the Eucharist. Proof of the Faith?

17:00 | Filip Veber

Miracles as Breaking of the Kingdom of God into our World

17:30 | Márk Dudás

Transhumanism: the postmodern miracle of human rights and science?

18:00 | Ben Tax

Evidence as instrument for Evangelization: A case study of Eucharistic Miracles

BREAKOUT SESSION BIOGRAPHIES AND ABSTRACTS

Kübra Sümeyye Bahçi is a Ph.D. candidate at Medeniyet University in Istanbul and is working on "The Concept of 'Possible' in the Philosophy of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: The Influence of His Philosophical Theology on the Metaphysics of Modalities and the Philosophy of Nature". She is currently a Postgraduate Visitor at the University of Edinburgh. In addition to various projects and editorial work, she is a Research Fellow in the project: "The Sources of Islamic Thought in the 12th Century in Terms of Persons/Philosophers, Works, and Theories: The Case of Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī".

In Islamic philosophical theology (Kalām), the significance of miracles lies in their foundational role, as the credibility of divine scriptures depends on the authenticity of the prophets. Discerning whether an individual is a messenger of God depends on divine confirmation through miracles. However, a crucial question arises: how is the affirmation of miracles compatible with the principle that faith should be grounded on rational justifications? This paper examines the possibility and reasonability of miracles within the framework of Islamic philosophical theology. A reasonable concept of miracles involves two types of modalities: a) rational modalities b) customary modalities. This concept is closely related to the philosophy of nature, which asserts that God's will determines observed regularities and connections in nature.

Andrea Ricci Maccarini currently teaches as an Adjunct professor of Philosophy at the Studio Filosofico Domenicano, is an assistant to the chair of Moral Philosophy and a founding member of

the *International Center for Spinozan Studies “Sive Natura”*, both at the University of Bologna. He obtained his PhD in philosophy in 2022 at the Angelicum University defending a thesis centered on Spinoza’s Theology. His research interests concern the relationships between philosophy, theology and politics in modernity, with particular regard to 17th century (Spinoza, Descartes and Hobbes).

Spinoza’s Tractatus theologico-politicus dedicates a chapter to the emendatio of the miracle, seen by Spinoza as an improper understanding of the Deus sive Natura. The “miracle” seen as supernatural action is contradictory because it would break the identity between God and Nature, although the philosopher admits that we fail to understand the power of God to the extent that we are ignorant of natural causes, so we cannot explain individual things with transcendental terms. Spinoza, in this hiatus between metaphysical logic and empirical evidence, affirms the validity of the prophets Revelation but also denounce the political misuse of the superstition.

Rev. Yesu Karunanidhi a priest of the Archdiocese of Madurai, having obtained an LSS from Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome, Italy (2015), and PhD from Jnana-Deepa, Pune, India (2017), currently serves as the Executive Secretary to the Commission for Bible of the Episcopal Conference of India (CCBI). His doctoral dissertation was on intercultural reading of Sacred Scriptures. He has published widely both in Tamil and English. His list of contributions could be found at www.yesukarunanidhi.in.

This paper delves into the profound exploration of miracles within the context of the life of Paṭṭinattār, a revered Tamil Śaivite poet and saint of the 10 th century known for his unwavering devotion to Lord Shiva. The study employs the lenses of Paritchai (test), Lālai (play), and Sanmānam (honour) to analyze the multifaceted nature of miraculous experiences documented in the life of Paṭṭinattār. Through this study we learn that miracles (a) serve as tests from the divine, challenging individuals to deepen their spiritual commitment and understanding; (b) are playful expressions of the divine in the earthly realm; (c) are acts of divine recognition and acknowledgment of an individual’s devotion and righteousness.

Fr. Joseph Hudson is an American Benedictine priest. Before entering the monastic life he received a Bachelor of Arts from Thomas Aquinas College and a Masters in Philosophy from the Catholic University of America. During his time at CUA he was also the Managing Editor of the Review of Metaphysics. Since 2008 he has been a member of Clear Creek Abbey, located in Eastern Oklahoma. He completed a license in Sacred Theology at the Pontifical University of St Thomas Aquinas, Rome in 2021. After returning home for a few years to teach sacramental theology he has returned to the Angelicum to pursue a doctorate in Sacred Theology.

The Eucharist challenges the conventional understanding of miracles and their role in affirming faith. David Hume, in criticizing the connection between miracles and religious credibility, intriguingly targets the Eucharist, suggesting it reveals the illusory nature of all miracles and so undermines the credibility of faith. This article examines the Eucharist’s unique position among miracles, emphasizing its significance not as a starting point for faith but as a means of perfecting it, making use of insights from thinkers such as Charles De Koninck and St. Thomas Aquinas.

Ben Tax is 26 years old, married to Cecilia, and has two children, Jonah (2 years old) and Boaz (1 year old). They live in The Netherlands. He holds a Master of Science degree in Accountancy. Currently, he is pursuing Theology at the St. Boniface Institute in the Diocese of Haarlem-Amsterdam, an ISSR Institute affiliated to the Pontifical Lateran University, where he is in his first year of study. Despite his early academic journey, Tax brings valuable insights from his role as the chairman and project leader of the Acutis Foundation in the Netherlands. Through his

involvement, he is extensively acquainted with research on Eucharistic miracles, actively contributing to an ongoing book project. For more details about this initiative, please visit: <https://stichting-acutis.com/projects/albertus-acutis/>.

This paper examines the impact of utilizing scientific evidence of miracles in evangelization efforts, focusing on Eucharistic miracles within a Catholic context. Through a discussion of key terms and a literature review, including the Dual Process Model from psychology, it explores decision-making processes. A case study delves into the biological evidence surrounding Eucharistic miracles, analyzing its effects, when used for evangelization purposes, through desk research. Emphasizing the psychological aspects rather than theological discourse, the paper highlights biases influencing religious decision-making.

Filip Veber comes from Slovenia, where in 2021 he completed his master's degree in theology at the University of Ljubljana. He immediately enrolled into the doctoral program and is finishing his doctorate in dogmatics (Thomas Aquinas in the Writings of Anton Strel) in a collaboration between the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia) and the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (Rome). He spoke at several international conferences on different topics such as the nature and grace debate in Aquinas, influence of sexual revolution on Catholic theology, reception of Second Vatican Council in Slovenia, connections between Aristotle, Aquinas and integral bioethics, and different aspects of the theology of Joseph Ratzinger. He was also awarded of scholarships for different summer programs such as the Tertio millennio Seminar in Krakow, Thomistic Seminar at Princeton University (Witherspoon Institute) and Mediterranean Theological Meetings (Croatia). In 2023 he was also the winner of the first student's convention at the Pontifical University Regina Apostolorum.

We will explore some theological dimension of miracles as breaking of the Kingdom of God into our world. First, by introducing Jesus's work of announcing the Kingdom, drawing on Ratzinger's dimensions of the Kingdom. Second, by elaborating on the miracles of Jesus as the primary act of breaking of the Kingdom into this world, drawing on Aquinas's elaboration on miracles. Third, considering that we are in "already but not yet", the presence of miracles is on one hand necessary, and on the other hand something we are looking for as a "proof" of the presence of the Kingdom.

Márk Dudás is a fourth-year law student studying at Pázmány Péter Catholic University. His professional fields of interest encompass research philosophy of law, legal theory, and space law. With his research thesis named *Human dignity as a neuralgic point for transhumanism* he received the 2nd prize in legal theory at the 36th National Scientific Students' Associations Conference in Hungary. He is also interested in international private law, and as a result he ranked second with his team at the Cross-Examination Moot Court, which was organised by the International Chamber of Commerce and Sciences Po in Paris. Albeit he is based in Hungary, he spent his Erasmus exchange semester at KU Leuven in the autumn semester of 2023. He has also taken part in short courses at the University of Cambridge and Harvard University.

The ever-growing prevalence of transhumanism raises more and more ethical questions. The postmodern ideology of transhumanism aims to ameliorate humans by implementing artificial limbs, organs, and microchips into the subjects of the interventions. Transhumanistic operations are perceived to be justifiable from the posthumanistic and utilitarian point of view, however these enhancements prove to be conflicting with human dignity. For this reason, the transhumanistic reformulation of humankind is seen as a marvellous feat both from the aspects of fundamental rights and science. This leads to the extrusion of the theological and philosophical concepts of miracles.

SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES AND ABSTRACTS

Justin Schembri, OP forty-two years of age, was born in Windsor, Ontario, Canada. In 1997, he emigrated to the Island of Malta with his family where he entered the Dominican order in 1999. He was ordained a priest in 2007 and finished his doctoral studies in biblical theology in 2018. He is presently the head of the biblical section at the Angelicum as well as subprior of the community of SS. Dominic and Sixtus. His main interests are the Synoptic Gospels, biblical sapiential tradition, and biblical anthropology.

This talk will seek to unravel the enigma of biblical miracles by emphasizing a contextualized study of miracle narratives in the bible. In this talk, Schembri makes two claims: (i) the theological objective of miracles is human flourishing and (ii) in order to understand biblical miracles, one needs to appreciate (a) how God, as divine agent, works in and through creation and that (b) humanity, to perceive such actions as miracles, must have a simple heart. After providing a definition, Schembri, firstly, presents the signs and wonders in Egypt and the exorcisms of Jesus as emblematic cases of miracles that undo and restore creation, both of which favor conversion and human flourishing. Secondly, Schembri delves into the issue of perception and the question of the simple heart-eye complex. In his conclusion, Schembri emphasizes how miracles are means to enact shalom.

Ignacio Silva is Professor of Theology and Sciences at the Philosophy Institute, Universidad Austral (Argentina) and was formerly a Research Fellow at the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Religion, University of Oxford. He holds degrees in philosophy and theology, and a major theme of his research is the understanding of divine providence in relation to research in science, philosophy, and theology. He is the author of "Providence and Science in a World of Contingency. Thomas Aquinas' Metaphysics of Divine Action" (Routledge 2021) and co-editor with Simon Kopf of "Divine and Human Providence. Philosophical, Psychological and Theological Approaches" (Routledge 2020). He has published articles in philosophy of religion, science and religion, natural philosophy, and medieval philosophy, and is a Fellow of the International Society for Science and Religion, for which he acts as Associate Executive Secretary to the Executive Committee.

Simon Maria Kopf is Associate Professor of Fundamental Theology at ITI Catholic University and Research Fellow at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford. In 2023, he started a new research project on 'Alternative Concepts of God and the Problem of Unconceived Alternatives'. Previously, he was Visiting Research Fellow at King's College London (2020-2023), Principal Investigator on a Templeton project titled 'A Virtue-Based Approach to Providence: Bridging the Analytic/Continental Divide in the Central-European Divine Action Debate' based at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin (2021-2022). From 2017-2019, he worked on the ERC project 'Authority and Innovation in Early Franciscan Thought (c.1220-45)' at King's College London and the Templeton project 'Human and Divine Providence' at the Universidad Austral. Kopf holds degrees in Theology, Philosophy, and Science and Religion from the Universität Innsbruck and the University of Edinburgh, and a DPhil from the University of Oxford. Dr Kopf received the Expanded Reason Award 2023 from the Francisco de Vitoria University in collaboration with the Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI Foundation. Select Publications: Reframing Providence: New Perspectives from Aquinas on the Divine Action Debate (OUP 2023); Vorsehung und Handeln

Gottes: Analytische und kontinentale Perspektiven im Dialog (Herder 2023); and Divine and Human Providence: Philosophical, Psychological and Theological Approaches, co-editor (Routledge 2021).

Daniel Bonevac (PhD Pittsburgh) is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin. The author of seven books and editor or co-editor of four others, he is currently writing, with Robert Koons, a book on Thomas Aquinas's Five Ways.

Believing in miracles, and in God on the basis of miracles, is in principle rational. The number and context-sensitivity of miracle reports add to their credibility; the same factors apply to first-hand experiences of miracles and to inferences to divine agency.

Mariusz Tabaczek is a friar preacher from Poland. He holds a PhD in philosophical theology from the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, CA, USA, a Licentiate in theology from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland, and a Dr. habil. in philosophy from the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland. He currently works as a professor, vice-dean of theology, and researcher of the Angelicum Thomistic Institute. He is also a lecturer at the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology in Krakow. He specializes in science-theology dialogue and the issues concerning divine action and natural sciences, in particular. He is interested in systematic, fundamental, and natural theology, philosophy of nature, philosophy of science (philosophy of biology, in particular), philosophy of causation, and metaphysics. He published a number of articles on metaphysics and the issues concerning the relation of theology and science in *Zygon*, *Theology and Science*, *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, *Nova et Vetera*, *Forum Philosophicum*, and *Scientia et Fides*. He is the author of three books: *Emergence: Towards A New Metaphysics and Philosophy of Science* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2019), *Divine Action and Emergence: An Alternative to Panentheism* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2021), and *Theistic Evolution. A Contemporary Aristotelian-Thomistic Perspective* (Cambridge University Press, 2023). He also co-authored two chapters in the second edition (2017) of *Science and Religion: A Historical Introduction* (ed. by Gary Ferngren).

Thinking about miracles we usually see them as (1) manifestations of God's love and presence in our life – usually in response to our prayers (e.g., miracles of healing); (2) unique signs that God gives us to strengthen our faith (e.g., eucharistic miracles, stigmata of the saints); or (3) special ways in which God conveys his message to us (miraculous apparitions). However, there is one more category of special divine action that at least some thinkers (e.g., David Oderberg, Edward Feser, and William Carroll) suggest should be added to this list. These are direct God's interventions that were/are necessary at major (evolutionary) transitions as the one from non-life to life. Similar is the Intelligent Design proponents' argument with respect to emergence of higher levels of complexity in nature. In my talk I will offer a critical evaluation of the claim that nature needs miracles, in reference to Aquinas's conviction about the character and dignity of causal agency bestowed on creatures by God.

Dr. Denis Alexander is the Founding Director [Emeritus] of The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion, Cambridge, where he is Emeritus Fellow of St. Edmund's College. He is a past chair of the Molecular Immunology Programme and Head of the Laboratory of Lymphocyte Signalling and Development at The Babraham Institute, Cambridge. Dr Alexander was previously at the Imperial Cancer Research Laboratories in London (now Cancer Research UK) and spent 15 years developing university departments and laboratories overseas, latterly as Associate Professor of Biochemistry in the Medical Faculty of the American University of Beirut, Lebanon, where he helped to establish the National Unit of Human Genetics. From 1992-2013 he was Editor of the journal *Science and Christian Belief*, and Dr Alexander also served as a member of the executive committee of the

International Society for Science and Religion. Having given the Gifford Lectures at St. Andrews University in 2012, these lectures were published by CUP in August 2017 under the title 'Genes, Determinism and God'. Dr Alexander's latest books are 'Is There Purpose in Biology?' [Oxford: Lion, 2018] and 'Are We Slaves to Our Genes?' [CUP, 2020].

A secular narrative assumes that scientists are not supposed to believe in miracles. However, those who established the foundations for modern science nearly all did. Furthermore, scepticism often stems from the philosopher David Hume's definition of miracles, but his definition is very different from the biblical understanding of miracles. This paper explores these issues and concludes that it is rational for a scientist to believe in miracles within the biblical understanding of the term, whilst at the same time encouraging critical assessment of miraculous claims that are poorly supported by evidence.

Bernardo Motta was born in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1976. He is married with three children and is an Electrical Engineer (Control and Robotics) from the Technical University of Lisbon (2000). Motta has authored two books, "Do enigma de Rennes-le-Château ao Priorado de São" (Lisbon, 2005), which explains the historical roots of the Priory of Sion fraud and "O Milagre do Sol segundo as testemunhas oculares" (Parede, 2017), which collects 150 first-hand accounts of the phenomenon that occurred around Fátima, Portugal, on October 13, 1917. In 2011-2012, he first taught a Course on Christianity and Science at the request of the Diocesan Institute of Christian Formation of the Patriarchate of Lisbon. Since then, he has been regularly lecturing on Christianity and Science to various audiences.

On October 13, 1917, around Fátima, Portugal, approximately 50,000 people saw a unique phenomenon in the skies that became known as the "Miracle of the Sun". The phenomenon had been predicted three months in advance by Lúcia, the oldest child-seer of Fátima, and was taken by most eyewitnesses as an impressive validation of the apparitions of Our Lady at Fátima. But what sort of phenomenon was this? Was it a miracle? Is there any natural explanation for what was seen? We will give special attention to the study by physicist and priest Stanley Jaki (1924-2009), who wrote that «any reasoned account of the miracle of the sun depends on making available the written record of what eyewitnesses have stated». Thus, we will evaluate the multiple interpretations of the Miracle of the Sun in light of how they match up against the extant eyewitness accounts and suggest how further investigations of this phenomenon could be carried forward.

Roberto Cauda graduated with honors in Medicine and Surgery in 1976 from the University of Genoa. He is specialized with honors in Hematology and in Infectious Diseases at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart and in Viral Immunology at the University of Alabama in Birmingham (UAB), USA. He is PhD (honorary) in Public Health at the University of Trnava (Slovakia). Fellow (FESCMID) of the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID) (2017). He has been awarded an Honorary Degree in Public Health - St. Elizabeth University, Bratislava (Slovakia) (2017). Professor of Infectious Diseases at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart (2000-2023), Director of the University Department of Safety and Bioethics (2019-2023). Adjunct Assistant Professor of Continuing Medical Education at UAB. Adjunct Professor of Microbiology Immunology at the Tech University (University of Texas). Since 1990 he has been a lecturer in Public Health, Infectious and Tropical Diseases at the University of Trnava, Trnava and St. Elizabeth's University in Bratislava, Slovakia. Official representative of the Pontifical Council for Health Pastoral Care (SCV) to the World Health Organization for "Medicine

de la Migration” - Geneva February 1990. He is an adjunct professor at the University Campus Bio Medico in Rome and Catholic University Milan, University René Descartes in Paris (now Université de Paris Cité), the University of Edinburgh, (UK), the University of Antwerp (Belgium) and the University of Hamburg (Germany). He was Director of the Centro di Ateneo per la Solidarietà Internazionale (CeSI) of the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milan. He has been a medical consultant to the Congregatio de Causis Sanctorum (SCV) since 2009. Since December 2021, he has been a member of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAG) Infectious Diseases of EMA, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Columnist for “La Stampa”; web and the online magazine InTerris (health and general culture topics). Prof. Cauda is the author of 535 scientific publications that can be consulted at the National Library website, pubmed.

All features concerning the procedures for recognizing the inexplicability of a healing from illness are reviewed. In particular, the parameters established by Pope Benedict XIV are recalled, which retain their value even in the present day. The characteristics peculiar to the diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment of a single morbid event are analyzed to demonstrate the non-explainability of healing. The process for the recognition of the non-explainability of healing begins at the diocesan level with the collection of testimonies, clinical documentation and culminates with the judgment that is made by the medical experts of the Medical Board. The non-explainability of a healing is the pre-requisite to begin this process. Essential element then is the manner in which the healing takes place and how durable it is over time.