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### Winfried Corduan on Miracles and the Laws of Nature

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# Memory, Meaning & Faith

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March 24, 2011

## Winfried Corduan on Miracles and the Laws of Nature

By Martin Hanna, Department of Theology and Christian Philosophy, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.



### Levels of Divine Intervention and Types of Miracles

To identify an event as a miracle because it appears to be an act of God is . . . ambiguous. . . . We can point out three possibilities:

- a. Providence. Believers may give credit to God in a situation in which nothing discernibly supernatural occurred. . . .
- b. Direct nonmiraculous intervention. Believers may say that God has acted in answering a prayer, even when the answer to prayer followed completely natural and unsurprising processes. . . .
- c. Direct miraculous intervention. Believers would probably say that a miracle had occurred if an event happened which could be best explained as a direct act of God. . . .

Believers may explain why they regard a particular event as a miracle by pointing out that it seems to be a violation of a law of nature. But it is unlikely that they would do this in all cases. We can identify two instances in which a miracle might be said to have occurred.

1. “Constellation miracles.” Sometimes an event can be explained in terms of natural laws, and yet believers may claim that it was a miracle. In many such cases, it is the coming together of certain natural events—their “constellation”—that makes the event unusual. . . . This type of miraculous event is what R. F. Holland has called a “contingency” miracle. Norman Geisler refers to it as a “class two” miracle. . . .

2. “Violation miracles.” The label for this type of miracle refers to the idea that apparently a law of nature has been violated. We are here concerned with events that go counter to what is normally expected or considered to be plausible. . . .

..

## The Necessity of Divine Agency

Both of these two [proposed] types of miracles have this in common: believers identify an event as a miracle when two features come together—the event is unusual enough to point them in the direction of expected divine agency, and (given their worldview) there is enough reason to believe that God has in fact intervened in this particular case.

. . . . [Going beyond the two types of miracles proposed above] [Douglas K. Erlandson](#) maintains that believers recognize a miracle primarily because they see God involved in an event as agent, not because the possibility of scientific explanation has been circumvented, but alongside all scientific investigations. Similarly, [Robert Young](#) states that “when a miracle occurs, God is an active agent-factor in the set of factors . . . which actually was causally operative. His presence (*ceteris paribus*) alters the outcome from what it (perhaps) would have been if, contrary to fact, he had not been present.”

Winfried Corduan, “Recognizing a Miracle,” *In Defense of Miracles: A Comprehensive Case for God’s Action in History*, eds., Douglas Geivett and Gary R. Habermas (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1997), 103-106.


## Questions

- Are miracles rare events? Or do miracles happen every day? Does God work miracles which no one recognizes as miraculous? Or do miracles only take place when there is someone prepared to be surprised by them?
- Are God’s miracles limited to his actions within the framework of the laws of nature? Or is the creation of the laws of nature also a miracle of divine action? Is the sustaining of the laws of nature a miracle of divine action?

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Miracles seem to be a requirement to existence. To exist is a miracle in and of itself. Consciousness and awareness are also miracles. I think to say that miracles ia rare event is to miss the point and to not really understand the nature of who we are and how we are. If existence itself is a miracle the event part of existence tangible and intangible are are embedded with and a consequential part of miracles and their expressions.

Posted by: [Claudius R. Rodgers](#) | [April 25, 2011 at 10:59 AM](#)

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