

Our Lady of Fatima: 'Pray the Rosary every day'

by Fr Justin Ford



One of the most famous claimed visions of the Blessed Virgin Mary was in the village of Fatima, Portugal, in 1917. From 13 May to 13 October 1917 Our Lady is said to have appeared six times at noon on the 13th of the month, in the field of Cova da Iria near Fatima, to three shepherd children, Lucia Dos Santos (10) and her cousins Francisco Marto (9) and Jacinta Marto (7). At the first apparition only the children were present, but by the time of the final apparition, the crowd had grown to an estimated 70,000.



Timeline of the Apparitions of Fatima

1916 The children have three apparitions of the 'Angel of Peace' during 1916; at the time they keep these secret.

13 May 1917

First Apparition of Our Lady.

The children agree to keep it secret, but Jacinta lets slip the experience to her family, and knowledge of the story starts to spread.

13 June 1917

Second Apparition. People in the village are divided about whether they believe the children's story, but about 50 people gather with them. In the following weeks, Lucia's mother takes her to the parish priest hoping he will make her take back the story. He is doubtful, but makes no decision.

13 July 1917

Third Apparition. Crowd is about 3,000. Mary tells three 'Secrets' to the children. She promises to work a miracle at the final vision on 13 October so that all will believe.

13 August 1917

The children are taken away and imprisoned by the regional mayor (the government of Portugal at this time was hostile to religion). He bluffs the children with threats of torture and death, but they refuse to take back their story, or to reveal the Secrets, and he releases them. Crowd of about 18,000 back at Fatima witness unusual signs in the children's absence.

19 August 1917

Fourth Apparition. Mary appears to the children at Valinhos following missed apparition of 13 August.

13 September 1917

Fifth Apparition. Many in the crowd of 30,000 witness mysterious signs, such as a luminous globe coming to the children before their vision and leaving them at the end. The Vicar General of Leiria wrote, "I saw, clearly and distinctly, a luminous globe gliding slowly and majestically through space... all those around us appeared to have seen the same thing... But some saw nothing... My companion went from group to group gathering information... all affirmed the reality of the phenomena."

13 October 1917

Final Apparition. The Lady of the vision reveals her name as 'Our Lady of the Rosary'. Crowd of 70,000 people witnesses the great 'Miracle of the Sun', lasting about ten minutes.

Some words of Our Lady to the children

13 May: "I have come to ask you to come here for six months on the 13th day of the month, at this same hour. Later I will say who I am and what I desire... Say the Rosary every day, to bring peace to the world and the end of the war."

13 June: "I wish you to pray the Rosary each day... I shall take Jacinta and Francisco to heaven before very long, but you will stay some time longer. Jesus wishes to use you to make me known and loved. He wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart. To whoever embraces this devotion I promise salvation... Do not lose heart. I will never forsake you. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge and the way which will lead you to God."

13 July: "Continue to say the Rosary every day in honour of Our Lady of the Rosary to obtain the peace of the world and the end of the war... In October I will say who I am and what I want. I will perform a miracle so that everyone can believe... [The three Secrets are then revealed: see below.] Say the Rosary and after each mystery pray: 'O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fires of hell; lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy.'

19 August: "Continue to say the Rosary every day... In October, I will perform a miracle so that everyone can believe in the Apparitions... Pray, pray very much and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to hell because no one makes sacrifices for them." [Sacrifices' here means acts of self-denial, offered to God.]

13 September: "Continue to say the Rosary every day for the end of the war... In October I will perform a miracle."

13 October: "I want a chapel to be built here in my honour. I am the Lady of the Rosary. Continue to say the Rosary every day... People must amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins. They must not offend Our Lord any more for he is already too much offended."

Some of the reports from the 70,000 eyewitnesses of the Miracle of the Sun, 13 October 1917

(From S.L. Jaki, *God and the Sun at Fatima* [GSF] (Royal Oak, MI: Real View Books, 1999); J.M. Haffert, *Meet the Witnesses* [MTW] (Washington, NJ: Ave Maria Institute, 1961); J. De Marchi, *Fatima: The Facts* [FTF] (Cork: Mercier, 1954).)

“There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars...” *Jesus to his disciples (Luke 21:25)*

**“A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun,
and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars.” *(Revelation 12:1)***

**As Our Lady rose into the sky in the final apparition on 13 October 1917,
Lucia cried out, “Look at the sun!”, and the Miracle of the Sun began.**

“The whole immense crowd is seen to turn toward the sun which, free of clouds, is now at the zenith. The sun reminds one of a disk of dull silver, and it is possible to look straight at it without the least effort...a tremendous shout goes up from the spectators...To the astonished eyes of that people...the sun



trembles, the sun makes brusque movements...and beyond cosmic laws, the sun ‘danced’...The great majority confess that they had seen the shaking, the dance of the sun; others, however, state that they had seen the smiling face of the Virgin herself; they swear that the sun had rotated as if it were a wheel of fireworks; that it came down almost to the point of burning the earth with its rays...Another says that he saw it change colour successively.”

**Journalist Avelino de Almeida (who earlier had not believed)
writing in the Lisbon newspaper ‘O Seculo’, October 15, 1917.**

[GSF 31-33]

Report of the Miracle of the Sun in Lisbon newspaper ‘O Seculo’, 15 October 1917.

(Headline ‘Como o sol bailou ao meio dia em Fatima’ translates to: ‘How the sun danced at noon in Fatima’)

“The rain stops falling at the foretold hour, the thick mass of clouds breaks up, and the king of stars – a disc of smoky silver – appears at full zenith and begins to dance in a violent and convulsive dance... with very beautiful and shining colours successively covering the face of the sun...”

**Avelino de Almeida follows up his report with his personal testimony
‘Ilustracao Portuguesa’, 29 October 1917.**

[GSF 103]

“We are referring to the events in Fatima, predicted months ahead of time, to the day and hour in which they were to take place. This happened fully and exactly.”

“1. The phenomena lasted some eight to ten minutes.

2. The sun lost its blinding brilliance, taking on the aspect of the moon, being able to be looked at easily.

3. During this period of time, the sun thrice showed a rotation movement at the circumference; sending out sparks of light from its edge...

4. This rotatory movement of the edges of the sun, thrice manifested and thrice interrupted, was rapid and lasted eight to ten minutes, or less.

5. Next, the sun took on a violet colour, then orange; spreading those colours all over the place. Finally it retrieved its brilliance and splendour, impossible to be looked at directly by the naked eye.

6. It was a little after midday and [with the sun] near its zenith (which is of the utmost importance)...”

Prof. Almeida Garrett, retired professor of mathematics, University of Coimbra [GSF 79, 121]

“Lucia told us to look at the sun...I saw the sun rolling and it seemed as though it were coming down, like the wheel of a bicycle. Then it went back to its place...Our clothes were dry in a moment...

Lucia said that a miracle would happen and we were waiting what might come, but we did not know whether it might be this or that...I do not know of anyone who says that he had not seen.”

Joao Carreira

[MTW 93-95]

“I expected that all was a fancy of the poor children and that we would see nothing...The sun began to spin with circles of every colour. It was like a wheel of fireworks, and coming down to the ground.”

Maria Celeste da Camara e Vasconcelos

[MTW 76]

“This phenomenon must have lasted for about ten minutes, during which there were **two brief interruptions, when the fierce sun threw out more brilliant and flashing rays, and which forced one to look away...** The sun’s disc did not remain immobile...it spun round on itself in a mad whirl. **Then suddenly, one heard a clamour, a cry of anguish breaking from all the people. The sun, whirling wildly, seemed to loosen itself from the firmament and advance threateningly upon the earth as if to crush us with its huge and fiery weight...**

During the solar incident, there were changes of colour in the air...I saw everything a purplish colour... **Worried that perhaps I had damaged my retina,** an unlikely hypothesis, since, if that had been the case, I would not have been seeing things purple, **I turned around, rubbed my eyelids and covered them with my hands to keep out the light. With my back still turned, I opened my eyes and saw that the landscape was the same purple colour as before...** Soon after I heard a peasant who was near me shout out in tones of astonishment: ‘Look, that lady is all yellow!’ And in fact everything, both near and far, had changed, taking on the colour of old yellow damask...Days later I did a test of looking directly at the sun for a few moments. Looking away, I saw after a few moments the forms of uneven yellow spots. You did not see everything the same colour...but rather dots or spots that would follow the movement of the eye.

All the phenomena which I have described were observed by me in a calm and serene state of mind and without any emotional disturbance.”

Dr Almeida Garrett, lawyer [son of Prof. Almeida Garrett, quoted above]

[GSF 135-137; FTF 126-127]

“When Lucia called out: ‘Look at the sun!’ the whole multitude repeated: ‘Attention, to the sun!’

It was a day of incessant drizzle but a few moments before the miracle it left off raining...**The sun began to move and at a certain moment appeared to be detached from the sky and about to hurtle upon us like a wheel of flame”**

Dr Alfredo da Silva Santos

[FTF 128]

“The sun, now without clouds, did not spread its rays over the ground but resembled flames of fading colour. Suddenly, it lost all its light and flames. Appearing before us was a plate of tarnished silver...**There was a rapid and very visible rotating movement as if it was approaching the ground. We were able to stare at it indefinitely without harming our eyes...**”

Fr Jose Curado

[GSF 77]

“I was watching sheep, as was my daily task, and suddenly there in the direction of Fatima I saw the sun fall from the sky. I thought it was the end of the world.”

Albano Barros, who witnessed the miracle as a boy from near Minde, eight miles away. [MTW 61]



Part of the crowd of some 70,000, witnessing the ‘Miracle of the Sun’ (13 October 1917).

(From the journal ‘Ilustracao Portuguesa’, 29 October 1917, from several photographs by Judah Ruah, who had accompanied journalist Avelino de Almeida.)

“I looked fixedly at the sun, which seemed pale and did not hurt my eyes. Looking like a ball of snow revolving on itself, **it suddenly seemed to come down in a zigzag, menacing the earth.** Terrified, I ran and hid myself among the people...Near us was an unbeliever who had spent the morning mocking at the simpletons who had gone off to Fatima just to see an ordinary girl. He now seemed to be paralysed, his eyes fixed on the sun. Afterwards he trembled from head to foot, and lifting up his arms fell on his knees in the mud, crying out to Our Lady...We all ran to the two chapels in the village, which were soon filled to overflowing. During those long moments of the solar prodigy objects around us turned all the colours of the rainbow...When the people realised that the danger was over, there was an explosion of joy...” [FTF 129]

Fr Inacio Lourenco, who witnessed the miracle as a boy from the village of Alburitel, nine miles away. Others from Alburitel, such as Inacio’s schoolteacher Dona Delfina Pereira Lopes, gave confirming reports.

“[I] did not believe in the apparitions. So I sat inside my car. Then all at once, I noticed that everybody looked at the sky...I got out of the car and looked at the sky, too. **I saw in a clear area of sky (where one should not be able to stare at the sun) the very sun.** It was like a disc of smoked glass illuminated behind and turning over itself...**I was sure I had not been the victim of suggestion.** I saw that sun as I never saw it again...moving around and around, and then **gave the impression of falling down.”**

Mario Godinho, engineer

[MTW 87, 83]

“I looked at the sun and saw it spinning like a disc, rolling on itself. I saw the people changing colour. They were stained with the colours of the rainbow. Then the sun seemed to fall down from the sky.”

Antonio Antunes de Oliveira

[MTW 90]

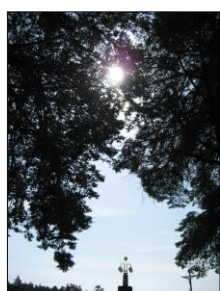
“It poured torrentially...after a while the rain stopped and the sun as we see it every day appeared... I recommenced the Rosary and in the middle of the second mystery I heard a gigantesque sigh from the multitude and someone tells me: “Look at the sun!”...I see a very clear silvery blue disc, without rays, which, without resuming its natural colour, begins to rotate vertiginously, then it takes on different colours... It appears that all witnessed more or less the same thing. The clamour is huge when the sun descends, a move which one notices distinctly, also a movement to the right and the left, or vice versa, but at the regular height of the sun. These last two motions were less evident than the descent of the sun and I cannot affirm that they immediately followed the latter.”

Anna Maria da Camara

[GSF 109-110]

On the whole, the various accounts show agreement concerning the main observed facts, with some variations in detail. This is typical of eyewitness accounts in general, in which variations and inaccuracies in detail do not take away from their substantial agreement. However, another factor to be taken into account is that a difference in experience by different observers is typical of supernatural phenomena in particular: it is God's choice how much is experienced by different individuals. This occurs for example with the luminous globe seen by many (but not all) at the 13 September apparition. Some would also argue it occurs in the 'Miracle of the Sun' itself, with different levels of experience for different observers.

With the 'dance' of the sun, many more people believed Our Lady had truly appeared, as alternative explanations could not account for the factual data. The events were immediately reported in Portuguese newspapers as being experienced by the crowd, and many witnesses told their story. Everyone knew 70,000 people would not lie or simultaneously imagine something like this (especially the many people who had not previously believed in the visions, or those who took precautions to make sure that they weren't hallucinating or that their eyes weren't playing tricks on them).



*October sun at
zenith in Fatima*

People had even seen the dance of the sun from several miles away, which again rules out the idea that the whole thing was merely 'mass hysteria' in the crowd at Fatima. Also, it makes no sense that the witnesses saw the sun 'fall' at the very same time if it was all just in their minds, or the dazzling of their eyes. Once the options of undocumented legend, lies and hallucination are excluded, the remaining logical possibility is that the documented accounts are true and that the witnesses did see something extraordinary (natural or not).

Yet scientifically, everyone knew it was impossible, without God's special action, for the sun to 'move' from its place in the sky as the witnesses described, especially in its final 'fall'. (Presumably the sun did not *actually* move, as the whole world would have seen this: the miracle consisted in God causing the local *appearance* of its motion.)

So is it proven that the event at Fatima was a miracle? Very importantly, the little children had predicted, three months before, the exact time and place of the miracle (without specifying its nature). Even if (which seems impossible) what happened was only some natural event never before heard of, the chance of it happening just by co-incidence at the right moment to fulfil the children's prediction is impossibly unlikely. (On top of that there are further strange 'co-incidences' to account for – the swift drying of rain-drenched clothes and ground during the miracle, again showing this was something objective, not just in people's minds; the 'globe of light' seen by the majority of the crowd on September 13; the incorruption of Jacinta's body 15 years after her death.)

Realistically, the dance of the sun and the prediction were connected not just by co-incidence, but by having *some kind* of causal relation. To predict the event and communicate the prediction, superhuman intelligence would need to be involved. Rationally, the only solution finally fitting all the evidence is that the source of prediction and miracle was God himself, who thereby attested the truth of the children's story and of Our Lady's message. (The stated purpose of the miracle was 'so that everyone can believe' [13 July 1917], so working the miracle amounted to endorsing the message.)

Living Our Lady's Message at Fatima

– Pray the Rosary every day –

This request was repeated at every appearance of Mary, and so belongs unmistakably to the heart of the message attested to by God by means of the miracle. The Rosary leads us through Mary to Jesus. Each 'Hail Mary', while honouring Mary and asking her to "pray for us sinners", has at its heart the name of Jesus: "blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus". (And by calling Mary "Mother of God", each 'Hail Mary' affirms that Jesus is God. A key point here for a non-Christian is that God, by plainly affirming the Rosary, thereby clearly attests also to this central truth of Christian faith.) The mysteries of the Rosary that we meditate on while the fifty 'Hail Marys' of the Rosary are being prayed focus our minds on the central themes of salvation: Christ's Incarnation, Death and Resurrection.

– Do penance –

Besides calling all to "amend their lives and ask pardon for their sins", Our Lady called for the uniting of prayers with self-denial. "Pray, pray very much and make sacrifices for sinners, for many souls go to hell because no one makes sacrifices for them." (The reality of heaven and hell, clearly and repeatedly taught by Jesus himself, is also an explicit and repeated part of the message of Fatima.) In the Third Secret the angel calls for penance from the whole world.

– Devotion to the Immaculate Heart of Mary –

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, already well established in the Church, gains a new dimension with devotion to Mary's heart pure from all sin, totally open to the will of God. Mary is the symbol of the perfect disciple: imitating her faith and her mother's love for her Son, and going to Jesus 'in her company', has been found a swift way of growing in Christian perfection ourselves. Our Lady also requested the Consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart by the Pope in union with all the Bishops. The symbolism here is that the whole Church, led by the Pope and Bishops (Successors of Peter and the Apostles as the divinely endorsed leaders of Christ's Church), should unite in prayer with and through Mary – just as before Pentecost, Peter and the other eleven Apostles united with Mary in prayer, along with all the disciples (*Acts* 1:13-14). (The twelve apostles in union with Mary are possibly symbolised by the '13' in the dates of the Fatima visions; as for the months, May is the traditional month of special honour to Mary, and October the month of the Rosary.) (We can note that the special role given to the Pope in God's plan revealed at Fatima suggests that the papal claims to divinely-endorsed authority over all Christians are legitimate, not usurped; and thus along with various other aspects of Fatima, is indicative of the Catholic Church as being the true Church of Christ.)

– The Five First Saturdays –

Saturday has traditionally been the day of special Marian devotion. Our Lady told Lucia, "I promise to assist at the hour of death with the graces necessary for salvation all those who, in order to make reparation to me, on the First Saturday of five successive months, go to confession, receive Holy Communion, say five decades of the Rosary, and keep me company for a quarter of an hour, meditating on the fifteen mysteries of the Rosary." [The confession can be within eight days; the quarter-hour meditation is in addition to the recital of the Rosary.] So if we fulfil her requests we can have confidence of obtaining the promised graces at the hour of death, and gaining heaven. (And the promise, like the prayers and actions of the Angel [*see below*], reaffirms Catholic teaching on the Eucharist and its centrality.)

Prayers taught to the children by the Angel of Peace in 1916

'My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love you.

I ask forgiveness for those who do not believe, nor adore, nor hope, nor love you.'



Statue of the Angel giving the children Holy Communion

**'Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, I adore you profoundly
and I offer you the most precious Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ
present in all the tabernacles of the world, in reparation
for the outrages, sacrileges and indifference by which he is offended.
And by the infinite merits of his Most Sacred Heart and the Immaculate Heart of Mary,
I beg the conversion of poor sinners.'**



Over the decades since 1917, the Shrine of Fatima has been built, which today is visited by four million pilgrims each year.

The Three Secrets of Fatima

(Translation taken from Vatican document *The Message of Fatima*, 26 June 2000, www.vatican.va)

First and Second parts of the Secret revealed 13 July 1917 (written down by Sr Lucia 31 August 1941)

The first part is the vision of hell. Our Lady showed us a great sea of fire which seemed to be under the earth. Plunged in this fire were demons and souls in human form, like transparent burning embers, all blackened or burnished bronze, floating about in the conflagration, now raised into the air by the flames that issued from within themselves together with great clouds of smoke, now falling back on every side like sparks in a huge fire, without weight or equilibrium, and amid shrieks and groans of pain and despair, which horrified us and made us tremble with fear. The demons could be distinguished by their terrifying and repulsive likeness to frightful and unknown animals, all black and transparent. This vision lasted but an instant. How can we ever be grateful enough to our kind heavenly Mother, who had already prepared us by promising, in the first Apparition, to take us to heaven. Otherwise, I think we would have died of fear and terror.

We then looked up at Our Lady, who said to us so kindly and so sadly:
“You have seen hell where the souls of poor sinners go.
To save them, God wishes to establish in the world devotion to my Immaculate Heart.

If what I say to you is done, many souls will be saved and there will be peace. The war [World War I] is going to end: but if people do not cease offending God, a worse one will break out during the Pontificate of Pius XI.

When you see a night illumined by an unknown light, know that this is the great sign given you by God that he is about to punish the world for its crimes, by means of war, famine, and persecutions of the Church and of the Holy Father.

To prevent this, I shall come to ask for the consecration of Russia to my Immaculate Heart, and the Communion of reparation on the First Saturdays.
If my requests are heeded, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace;
if not, she will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecutions of the Church.
The good will be martyred; the Holy Father will have much to suffer; various nations will be annihilated.

In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph.
The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted,
and a period of peace will be granted to the world.
In Portugal, the dogma of the faith will always be preserved.”

Third part of the Secret revealed 13 July 1917 (written down by Sr Lucia 3 January 1944, made public 26 June 2000):

After the two parts which I have already explained, at the left of Our Lady and a little above, we saw an Angel with a flaming sword in his left hand; flashing, it gave out flames that looked as though they would set the world on fire; but they died out in contact with the splendour that Our Lady radiated towards him from her right hand: pointing to the earth with his right hand, the Angel cried out in a loud voice: “Penance, Penance, Penance!”

And we saw in an immense light that is God: ‘something similar to how people appear in a mirror when they pass in front of it’ a Bishop dressed in White ‘we had the impression that it was the Holy Father’.

Other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious going up a steep mountain,
at the top of which there was a big Cross of rough-hewn trunks as of a cork-tree with the bark;

before reaching there the Holy Father passed through a big city half in ruins and half trembling with halting step, afflicted with pain and sorrow, he prayed for the souls of the corpses he met on his way;

having reached the top of the mountain, on his knees at the foot of the big Cross he was killed by a group of soldiers who fired bullets and arrows at him, and in the same way there died one after another the other Bishops, Priests, men and women Religious, and various lay people of different ranks and positions.

Beneath the two arms of the Cross there were two Angels each with a crystal aspersorium in his hand, in which they gathered up the blood of the Martyrs
and with it sprinkled the souls that were making their way to God.

Timeline of the later history of Fatima and fulfilment of its prophecies

This draws on the 'Timeline' in the book by Cardinal Secretary of State Tarcisio Bertone, *The Last Secret of Fatima* (Foreword by Pope Benedict XVI). The various co-incidences of dates revealed here, taken in isolation, might be written off as 'mere' co-incidence; however, in view of the Miracle of the Sun, we can see in them further confirmation of Fatima, and signs planned by the wisdom of God, who alone gently guides the course of history itself.

7 November 1917 Just 25 days after the Miracle of the Sun, the Bolshevik Revolution takes place in Russia, leading to the establishment of the Soviet Union. The Soviet communist regime will eventually persecute a great number of religious believers, and bring about the deaths of millions. It will turn out that some of the prophecies in the 'Secrets' are about Russia.

11 November 1918 End of World War I.

4 April 1919 Francisco dies in Fatima of influenza. (Our Lady had predicted the early deaths of Francisco and Jacinta.)

20 February 1920 Death of Jacinta in Lisbon (in the same 'Spanish Flu' pandemic, that killed some 50 million).

October 1925 Lucia joins the Dorothean sisters in Spain (moving in 1948 to the Carmelites in Coimbra, Portugal).

10 December 1925 Our Lady reveals to Sr Lucia the 'Great Promise' of the Five First Saturdays. (2nd Secret)

13 June 1929 Apparition to Sr Lucia at Tuy, Spain, in which a specific request is made by Our Lady for the Consecration of Russia to the Immaculate Heart of Mary (as already foretold in the 2nd Secret) by the Pope in union with the Bishops of the world. Until the Consecration of 1984, which fulfils this request, Sr Lucia immediately works to alert successive Popes to the importance of doing this.



Vision at Tuy

13 October 1930 After a commission of inquiry of some years, the Apparitions are officially approved by the Bishop of Leiria. [Church approval of a 'private' revelation such as Fatima "essentially means that its message contains nothing contrary to faith and morals; it is licit to make it public and the faithful are authorised to give to it their prudent adhesion... It can have a certain prophetic character and can be a valuable aid for better understanding and living the Gospel at a certain time; consequently it should not be treated lightly. It is a help which is proffered, but its use is not obligatory." (Pope Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*)]



12 September 1935 Transfer of Jacinta's bodily remains to Fatima; when her coffin is opened before many witnesses, her face is seen to be perfectly preserved. (This is one of numerous inexplicable preservations of bodies of saints and blessed – see Appendix 2 (b).)

← *The photograph here shows Fr Ludwig Fischer at the exhumation in Vila Nova de Ourem cemetery, examining Jacinta's face.*

25 January 1938 An extraordinary aurora borealis (the 'northern lights'), one of the largest in centuries, is seen over a great part of Europe. Sr Lucia sees it as the sign revealed in the 2nd Secret (the "night illumined by an unknown light") that the world is about to be punished by "war, famines and persecutions". (2nd Secret)

12 March 1938 Six weeks later, Nazi Germany annexes Austria, first Nazi expansion beyond German borders. Hostilities of what became World War II really began, some scholars point out, with Japan's invasion of China in 1937 (equally "in the pontificate of Pius XI" – as Our Lady predicted for the *start* of a worse war than World War I. (2nd Secret)) Pius XI died in February 1939; *European* hostilities began on 1 September (the 'conventional' start of World War II).

31 August 1941 With God's permission Lucia writes down the 1st and 2nd Secrets, which are fully made public 13 October 1942.

31 October 1942 In a radio broadcast for the close of Fatima's 25th anniversary celebrations, Pope Pius XII consecrates the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary (though without participation of the world's Bishops that Mary had requested in 1929). The very next day, Germany begins to lose the key Battle of El Alamein (which till then had been in the balance), as Allied troops march out for Operation Supercharge. The Axis has no further major victory till its final defeat in 1945. (Churchill would write, 'It may almost be said, "Before Alamein we never had a victory. After Alamein, we never had a defeat."'") On 8-10 November 1942, French North Africa falls to the Allies; 12-15 November is the decisive phase in the battle for Guadalcanal; 19 November the turning point in the battle for Stalingrad. On 28 February 1943 Sr Lucia writes to a Bishop that God had shown her the war would be shortened because of the Consecration. (Final Allied victory comes with Japan's surrender on 15 August 1945, Feast of Mary's Assumption into heaven.)

3 January 1944 Commanded by her Bishop, Sr Lucia writes down the 3rd Secret, which is sealed in an envelope. (At first she is conflicted whether she is permitted by God to reveal it; but Our Lady appears, telling her to write the vision – but not its meaning.)

1945 End of World War II. After the war, Russia "spreads her errors throughout the world causing wars and persecutions of the Church" (2nd Secret) with the imposition of communist governments throughout Eastern Europe and the spread of communism to China, North Korea, Cuba, Vietnam and elsewhere. With the Cold War between Soviet Russia and America, for decades there is great danger of nuclear war, threatening the "annihilation" of nations (warned of in the 2nd Secret).

30 October 1950 At the time of his infallible proclamation of the dogma of the bodily Assumption of Mary, Pope Pius XII, at 4:00 pm on 30 October, 31 October, 1 November (the day of the proclamation) and 8 November (liturgical octave of the proclamation), experiences a 'personal' repeat of part of the 'Miracle of the Sun' at the Vatican. By his own account, he could stare at the sun without discomfort. "The opaque globe began moving outwards, slowly turning over upon itself, and going from left to right and vice-versa. But within the globe very strong movements could be seen in all clarity and without interruption... Several times, on other days at the same hour and in identical or very similar atmospheric conditions, I tried to look at the sun to see if the same phenomenon would appear to me, but in vain; I could not stare at the sun for an instant." His legate Cardinal Tedeschini reveals the event to the crowds at Fatima at the close of the Holy Year on 13 October 1951. We can see the event as God's

endorsement both of the dogma, and of papal claims to infallible divine guidance in such teachings. (And 13 May 1917, Mary's first appearance at Fatima, was the day Pius XII had been ordained Bishop – one of the two essential factors making someone Pope, along with election by the Cardinals. So by 'coincidence', 13 May 1917 was the exact day the future Pius XII received the essential sacramental component of that papal authority by which he would infallibly declare the dogma of Mary's Assumption 33 years later.)

4 April 1957 The sealed Third Secret is brought to the secret archives of the Holy Office in the Vatican.

17 August 1959 Pope St John XXIII reads the Third Secret. Perhaps because of its image of a pope being shot, the Holy See decides not to reveal it in 1960 (disappointing some expectations).

27 March 1965 Pope St Paul VI reads the Third Secret.



Pope Paul VI with Sr Lucia

13 May 1967 Visit of Pope Paul VI to Fatima for its Golden Jubilee; he meets with Sr Lucia. Publication of his Letter *Signum Magnum* ('The Great Sign'), calling on all Catholics to consecrate themselves to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

16 October 1978 Election of St John Paul II, the first Polish Pope.

2 - 10 June 1979 Pope John Paul visits communist Poland; the huge support he receives begins the movement against the communist regime there, which ultimately helps inspire hopes for freedom throughout Eastern Europe. (Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev would one day say, "Everything that happened in Eastern Europe in these last few years would have been impossible without the presence of this Pope and without the important role, including the political role, that he played on the world stage.")

13 May 1981 On the anniversary of the First Apparition of 1917, Pope John Paul is shot in St Peter's Square by Turkish terrorist Mehmet Ali Agca, bringing him to the very point of death. (Agca goes to prison, where the Pope later visits and forgives him.)

18 July 1981 Pope John Paul, recovering in hospital, reads the Third Secret; he sees in it his own fate – but averted by Our Lady.

13 May 1982 Pope John Paul visits Fatima to give thanks for his deliverance, which he attributes to Our Lady of Fatima; there he meets with Sr Lucia. One of the bullets fired at him is given to the Shrine of Fatima and fitted into the 1942 crown of Mary's statue, under its centre (perfectly matching the empty space).



1984 Consecration

25 March 1984 "In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted..." (2nd Secret). On the Feast of the Annunciation, John Paul II consecrates the world to the Immaculate Heart of Mary (making allusion also to Russia) – and this time in union with the world's Bishops, precisely in accordance with Our Lady's request revealed to Lucia in 1929.

13 May 1984 On the next Fatima anniversary, greatest post-war Soviet naval disaster, with explosions in Severomorsk disabling the Northern Fleet, destroying a third of its missiles. (Sr Lucia said in a 1993 interview that a nuclear war would have occurred in 1985 were it not for the 1984 Consecration; the 'Angel with the flaming sword' in the Third Secret may be an allusion to this.)

11 March 1985 Within a year of the Consecration, Mikhail Gorbachev becomes leader of Soviet Russia; he leads the way to the end of communist rule. The consequent end of the Cold War between Russia and America greatly reduces the nuclear threat.

29 August 1989 A letter of Sr Lucia confirms that the 1984 Consecration had fulfilled Our Lady's wishes: "They then asked me if it was made as Our Lady requested, and I said, 'Yes.'" A letter of Sr Lucia to the Pope on 8 November 1989 confirms this again: "Yes, it has been done, as Our Lady asked, on March 25, 1984."

9 November 1989 Fall of the Berlin Wall marks the fall of communism throughout Eastern Europe, astonishing the world.

1 December 1989 Gorbachev meets with Pope John Paul, first visit of a Soviet leader to the Vatican.

1 October 1990 The Soviet Union passes a law guaranteeing freedom of religion.

25 December 1991 On Christmas Day (exactly 9 months + 7 years from the Consecration, made in 1984 on the Feast of the Annunciation – the conception of Jesus) the Soviet flag is lowered over the Kremlin for the last time and Mikhail Gorbachev resigns, the last Soviet leader. With its freedom from communism, in the following years and decades (despite various ongoing problems) Russia has huge growth in the number of both Christian believers and churches, fulfilling the prophecy of conversion.

13 May 2000 Jacinta and Francisco are pronounced 'Blessed' by Pope John Paul II in Fatima, in the Year of Great Jubilee. At the end of the Papal Mass, it is announced by the Cardinal Secretary of State that the Third Secret will soon be revealed.

26 June 2000 The Third Secret is made public by the Vatican, with Cardinal Ratzinger writing its official interpretation (which he calls "An attempt to interpret the 'secret' of Fatima"). We can see in it a symbolic representation of the countless martyrs of communism, whose blood, in union with the Cross of Christ, is yet the instrument of God's healing, a divine blessing pronounced over a century of suffering and war.

17 November 2001 Sr Lucia states that "Everything has been published; there are no more secrets".

13 February 2005 Death of Sr Lucia in the convent at Coimbra at the age of 97. She receives a message from the Pope on her deathbed. Portugal declares a national day of mourning for her funeral.



Sr Lucia

2 April 2005 Seven weeks later, death of St John Paul II (on the First Saturday of the month and Vigil of Divine Mercy Sunday).

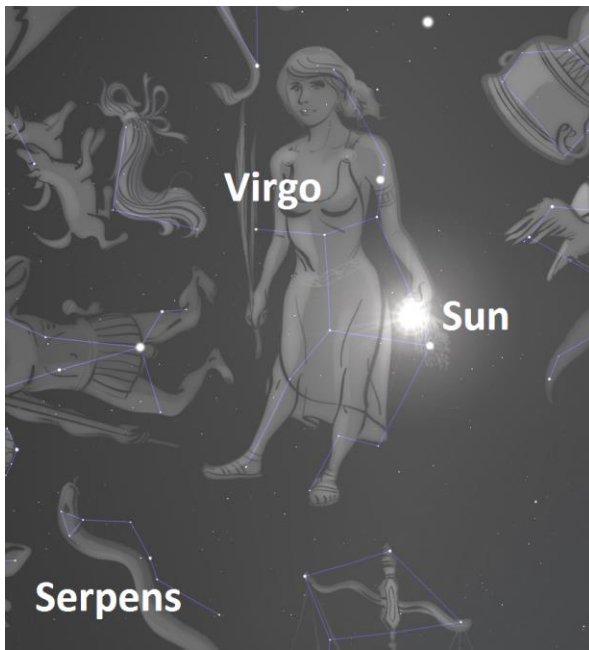
19 April 2005 Election of Cardinal Ratzinger as Pope Benedict XVI; he visits Fatima on 13 May 2010.

13 May 2013 At Pope Francis' request, his papacy is consecrated to Our Lady of Fatima by the Cardinal Archbishop of Lisbon.

13 October 2013 Pope Francis renews the Consecration of the World to the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

13 May 2017 Francisco and Jacinta are canonised as saints by Pope Francis in Fatima: St Francisco & St Jacinta Marto.

Appendix 1: Fatima and the stars



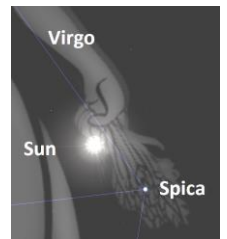
The constellations in the sky at the time of the Miracle of the Sun have not been noticeably commented on in the literature of Fatima, as of course they were invisible due to the sun's light. However, it is interesting to now realise that **the sun at the time of the miracle was in the constellation Virgo, the Virgin.**

In ancient times, this was understood as being a pagan goddess such as the Greek/Roman goddess of agriculture, Demeter/Ceres. However, the medievals 're-interpreted' it as the Virgin Mary. **And by 'random chance', the 'dancing sun' appears to be in the very hand of the Virgin, as though under her control.** Beneath Virgo is the constellation Serpens, the Serpent – recalling the traditional Catholic images of Mary crushing the serpent (symbol of the Evil One).

← Image of the sun's position in Virgo at the time of the miracle, with the artwork showing how the stars were traditionally thought to relate to the constellation image. The images are from the astronomical program 'Stellarium', which scientifically calculates star positions at any point in time. This is not a religious or astrological program, but purely astronomical. Thus the images (a minor program function) are not pre-arranged for 'religious effect' but are the normal working out of the program for that point in time.

Its location, and thus the location of the Virgin's hand, is not arbitrary, since it lines up with the brightest star in Virgo, Spica, which means 'ear of grain'. The goddess of agriculture was imaged as holding this symbol. (Again re-interpreting it with Virgo as the Virgin Mary, Catholics naturally think of the Eucharist, the Bread of Life, which Mary is presenting to us. The Fatima visions also have Eucharistic connections – so here is yet a further unexpected 'chance correlation'.)

(Star images are from the open source program [Stellarium](http://www.stellarium.org); the program's constellation art, by Johan Meuris, is released under the Free Art License: www.artlibre.org.)



Does it all really mean anything?

To state the obvious: constellations do not 'mean' anything in themselves. Astrology has no scientific basis, and the Catholic Church rejects it as a sin of superstition. And yet: there is still something noteworthy in these facts, and God remains free to use the ideas that have arisen in human cultures to give signs of his presence. **For believers in astrology**, who might indeed easily read significance in the data here, the very fact that God is seemingly using these events as testimony to a religion that sternly *forbids* astrology, must stop them in their tracks. **God has up-ended the astrological scheme** – the stars and the pagan 'gods' are not in control: he is the Master. As the Holy See said in its document on 'New Age' beliefs: we must follow the true 'Aquarius' (water-bearer), Christ, who brings living water (Jn 4:10). The real 'new age', the real 'Age of Aquarius', though not yet perfected, began at Pentecost. Christ transforms the pre-Christian imagery.

And for religious sceptics – the point is not that this astronomical event has meaning *in itself*. But it *does derive meaning from human culture, going back to ancient times* – quite independently of the future events of Fatima. So the difficulty is *the precise, yet apparently coincidental, correlation between* **(1) the ancients setting up** certain star groupings and cultural meanings; and **(2) the date, location and nature** of the Fatima phenomena. (The relevant position of the sun within Virgo of course recurs for a few days each year – but there is still very notable coincidence here. Apart from God's design, it was not inevitable that the children predict the miracle for the (roughly five) days in mid-October when the sun might be said to be 'in the Virgin's hand' – or that the Virgin (with the relevant location of her hand), have been (a) a constellation and (b) positioned on the sun's regular path, in the first place. Calculating the odds, one might generously say it is at best a 'one in a thousand' positioning of the sun that has now come to light. *(5 days out of 365: 1/70; that there be a 'Virgin' constellation at all: [generously] 1/2; that it be on the sun's path (12 constellations out of the original ancient 48): 1/4; that one or other of her hands be roughly on the sun's path: 1/2; combined = 1/1120. This is intended as a 'rough illustration' of the improbabilities involved, rather than a claim to strict statistical accuracy, for which we simply do not have the figures.))*

In poker, if on one occasion our opponent is dealt four aces, we will ascribe it to chance; if it happens five times in a row, unless we are very gullible we will conclude the deck is stacked – i.e. intelligent design is arranging the apparent 'coincidences'. **Likewise, with the astronomical 'coincidence' detailed above, one would hardly base much on it taken in isolation.** But even before we bring in the astronomical aspect, as we have seen, there are *already* vast difficulties for the sceptic in accounting in a non-supernatural way for the data of Fatima. The point is already reached where all the 'coincidences' together are too much to rationally accept, and we would be gullible not to realise 'the deck must be stacked'. **This 'astronomical coincidence' simply multiplies the sceptic's problem, by making pure chance a still less likely explanation for the data taken as a whole.** If Fatima is all just random chance, why do the coincidences just keep lining up? Realistically, these are not just random natural events: **there is a guiding intelligence directing them – one able to arrange even the stars themselves, from how He arranged matter and energy in the first creation of the universe.**

Appendix 2: Some other miracles from Catholic history

Christians are very familiar with the miracles of Jesus reported in the Gospels, above all his Resurrection. Yet Jesus promised his disciples that once he had gone back to heaven, they would do even greater miracles than he had done (*Jn* 14:12; cf. *Jn* 10:38; *Mk* 16:17-20). And so over the history of the Catholic Church, there have indeed been many reported miracles.

As part of being a believing member of the Church, Catholics necessarily accept the miracles of Jesus contained in the Gospels (cf. Vatican II, *Dei Verbum* 19). However, reports of miracles in the later history of the Church do not belong to infallible Catholic faith. Indeed, concerning the vast majority of such reports, the Church has said nothing, and there is insufficient evidence to establish with certainty, one way or the other, whether anything supernatural has taken place. Doubtless there are many legends, delusions or hoaxes among the various stories. However, in various cases, the evidence for the supernatural is very strong.

(a) Miracles and the Canonisation of Saints

There are numerous miracles reported in the lives of many saints. And for the canonisation of a saint, the Catholic Church normally requires documented proof of two miracles worked through the saint's prayers after his or her death. (For a discussion of some cases see C. Thunduparampil, *The Role of Miracle in the Process of Canonization* (Dharmaram: Bangalore, 2003); J. Duffin, *Medical Miracles: Doctors, Saints and Healing in the Modern World* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2009).)

(b) 'Incorrupt' Bodies of Saints

A strange but interesting phenomenon recorded in the case of many saints and beati [*i.e.* 'blesseds': being proclaimed 'Blessed' (beatification) is the stage before canonisation] is the preservation of their bodies from decay without artificial means, for many years (in some cases centuries) after their death; many of these incorrupt bodies are preserved even now. With their lifelike state, these 'incorruptibles' are very different from 'mummies'.

J. Carroll Cruz, *The Incorruptibles* (Tan: Rockford, 1977) discusses 102 cases in detail, often quoting from doctor's examinations of the incorrupt bodies, and showing the clear difference of this phenomenon from artificial or naturally-occurring mummies. In particular, the lifelike moistness and flexibility of the incorrupt bodies of saints is quite unlike the dry and rigid state of typical mummies.

H. Thurston's classic treatment of mystical phenomena such as levitation and stigmata, *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism* (Henry Regnery Co.: Chicago, 1952), takes as a sample all 42 saints included in the Roman Liturgical Calendar who lived between 1400 and 1900, and finds that in at least 22 of these cases (52%) there was good evidence of inexplicable incorruption – in 6 cases (14%) for centuries, and another 10 cases (24%) for decades at least.

In none of these cases was the incorruption itself the reason for the saint's inclusion in the liturgical calendar – all 42 were remarkable for some other reason, such as being the founder of a religious order; indeed, as a general rule, incorruption is not accepted by the Church as a miracle in support of canonisation. 52%, or even 14%, is a vastly greater proportion than the proportion even of rigid mummified bodies rarely found in cemeteries, so even supposing (what is most unlikely) that the moist flexible state of the incorrupt bodies of the saints could in itself be explained naturally, statistically it can be excluded that this could occur to so many saints just by coincidence. (Note that incorrupt bodies on public display (and seen in photos) have often been given wax coatings to conceal imperfections that develop over the years even with 'incorruptibles'. This is done for devotional purposes, not deception, and does not affect the solid documentary medical evidence for the inexplicable original phenomena of the untreated bodies.)

(c) The Eucharistic miracle of Lanciano

Other miracles are connected with the Eucharist, and the Catholic belief, based on Jesus' words in the gospels (See *Jn* 6:51-69; *Mt* 26:26-29; *Mk* 14:22-25; *Lk* 22:19-20; *1 Cor* 11:23-29) that the inner reality of the bread and wine, mysteriously but truly, become the body and blood of Jesus during the Mass, with only the appearances of bread and wine that are accessible to the senses remaining.

The most famous of these Eucharistic miracles is at Lanciano, Italy. According to the story, a priest celebrating Mass about the year 700, was tempted to doubt the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. He then witnessed the bread and wine visibly turning to flesh and blood before his eyes; these were preserved and are still on display in Lanciano. Often enough 'miracles' like this might be legendary, but when professors from the University of Siena were given permission by the Church to test the 'flesh' and 'blood' in 1971, it was scientifically found that their chemical form, nearly 1300 years after the apparent miracle, was of fresh human heart muscle (with no preserving agent) and freshly congealed human blood. (O. Linoli, *Histological, immunological and biochemical studies on the flesh and blood of the eucharistic miracle of Lanciano (8th century)* [Italian] (*Quaderni Sclavo di diagnostica clinica e di laboratorio*. 1971 Sep; 7(3): 661-74).)

(d) The healing miracles of Lourdes

Over the history of the Church, many claimed miracles (as at Fatima) have been connected with claims of appearances of Jesus or Mary to individuals. Again, many times claims of such appearances are hoaxes, or are because of mental illness in the person making the claim. So the Church is very cautious in judging these things. Still, in various cases, the evidence is very hard to explain, except than by the power of God.

For example, at Lourdes in France, 14-year-old St Bernadette claimed to see the Virgin Mary in 1858; and where Mary told Bernadette to dig in the ground, a spring started to flow and has flowed ever since. Numerous medically verified healings from the waters of the spring have been recorded, seemingly beyond all scientific explanation. (For detailed discussion of many cases, see R. Cranston, *The Mystery of Lourdes* (Pan: London, 1956); P. Glynn, *Healing Fire from Frozen Earth*, (Marist: Hunters Hill, 1999).)

Claimed cures at Lourdes are investigated by the Medical Bureau, in whose meetings doctors of any religious belief can be take part. To be accepted, any cure must be from a serious illness virtually impossible to cure; the cure must be sudden, complete and permanent, and unrelated to any prior medical treatment.

There is assessment of the patient's personality in order to rule out trickery, acting, illusion, or a possible hysterical or delirious pathology. A study of the medical documents before and after the cure is made, to ensure that there was an indisputable change from a precise medical diagnosis of a known illness to a situation of restored health. Only if the International Medical Committee finds a cure to be unexplained by current medical science might the local bishop of the patient then declare the cure miraculous.

Even if a cure might (in itself) be hypothesised as one day maybe being explicable by *future* science, there is generally also the 'coincidence' of the sudden cure occurring at the very time, for example, of the use of the Lourdes water, or the Blessing of the Sick or Eucharistic Procession at Lourdes.

Generally, the medical conditions in question are accepted as not being psychologically based, so such coincidences are not explained merely by the power of suggestion. The Lourdes water itself has of course been tested, and is basically pure water, with no extraordinary chemical properties.

Over 7000 claimed cures have been presented to the Bureau. Using the above rigorous standards, Church authority has declared only 70 of these cures to be *miraculous*. (Actually, even just one valid proof would indicate that Lourdes was genuine: 70 is abundance.)

This does not mean that none at all of the other thousands of cures were truly miraculous – maybe only that the evidence and documentation presented were not sufficient to *prove* their miraculous nature with certainty. Thus a sceptic, considering any single one of these other thousands of individual cases in isolation, might legitimately say, 'not proven'. And yet, once we have already accepted the miraculous nature of all or at least many of the 70 'official' cures, it is a reasonable supposition that some proportion, at least, of the other thousands of cases may also be miraculous – even though this cannot be strictly proven in the particular individual instances.

Appendix 3: The irrationality of the anti-miraculous prejudice: Is belief in miracles 'against science'?

Often non-believers reject miracles, not because of any lack in the evidence for them, but simply because of an assumption that miracles are themselves impossible 'because they go against the laws of nature' – and so need not be considered as possible explanations of the data. However, this assertion of the impossibility of miracles has itself never been given a valid rational proof.

By definition, miracles don't follow nature's 'ordinary' laws. But the real question is, 'Is there a God beyond nature who created its very laws, and so has the power to suspend nature's ordinary course in view of a higher purpose?' Until this is proved to be impossible, then miracles are not proved to be impossible either, and the automatic ruling out of the miraculous is exposed as mere prejudice.

Yes, the onus is on the supporter of miraculous explanation to rule out as unacceptably improbable the options of legend, lie, mistake or natural causes. To be confident a reported event is truly a miracle, we must show that no plausible natural explanations of the data exist. (The nature of historical evidence means we cannot do this with 'mathematical certainty'; however, sufficient historical evidence can give us certainty 'beyond reasonable doubt'.)

There are only four logically possible classes of natural explanation:

- (1) that the reports of witnesses have not been reliably recorded in the available documents (e.g. legendary reports);
- (2) that the witnesses, though reliably reported, were *lying*;
- (3) that the witnesses, *though sincere*, were **mistaken**;
- (4) that the event, **though occurring just as the witnesses reported**, was not actually beyond the powers of nature.

That covers the logical field. To the extent these possibilities can be ruled out, the remaining logical possibility is that we are truly dealing with an event beyond natural powers.

So the onus is then on the non-believer in miracles to show that the miraculous option is at least equally unacceptable, by proving that there is no God, or that God does not have power over the universe, or that God certainly 'would not do such a thing' as suspend his precious laws for any reason (God being, they assume, more interested in gravitation than salvation). But in the absence of any such proof, the option which is most rational and in touch with reality is to hold the miraculous explanation, which (unlike the other options) has no decisive evidence against it.

(Here we must also be careful not to be swayed by mere non-rational 'feelings' that miracles can't happen. Feelings by themselves don't necessarily line up with the way the real world is. And, in this case in particular, if we've previously ruled out miracles on the basis of mistaken reasoning, then even once we've seen through our logical errors they will still leave at least a temporary residue in our habitual emotional responses.)

Science itself can say nothing for or against the possibility of miracles, since science only investigates what happens when the ordinary laws of nature are in operation, not whether those laws can themselves be suspended by a higher cause. Unsurprisingly then, no 'experiment' disproving the possibility of miracles has ever been carried out, or is even conceivable.

Experiments only reliably predict what will happen in other cases beyond the actual experiment, to the extent that it is presupposed that what has happened in one instance will be repeatable in similar instances. However, this very repeatability presupposes that no higher cause is intervening to forestall the operation of the ordinary laws of nature, which are themselves the guarantee of repeatability. In other words, miracles are impossible *when no higher cause is intervening*: that is, when no miracle is occurring, obviously no miracle is occurring! Any argument against miracles based on this would be purely circular, and logically invalid.

A non-believer might then often take the opposite tack, and appeal to the operation of 'as-yet-unknown laws of nature'. Often enough a moment before, they were saying the purported event was quite impossible according to the laws of science. Seeing the failure of this, they then switch to saying that the event might after all indeed be very possible by the laws of science – scientists just don't know those laws well enough!

Believers in miracles would simply say here, that to the best of our current scientific knowledge, the purported miracle is indeed impossible or exceedingly improbable *if the laws of nature are in full operation*. Therefore, given also the exceeding improbability of all the witnesses lying, hallucinating, etc., the most probable conclusion remaining, and the rational view to take, is that the laws of nature are not in full operation in this instance, being miraculously suspended by a higher cause.

In other words, it is the believers in miracles who trust science. If accounts of witnesses tell us that someone has risen from the dead on the third day from their death, the non-believer, taking their new tack, tells us that rising from the dead is not really against the laws of science, whereas the believer in miracles insists that to the best of our knowledge, *it is against the laws of science, and therefore the laws of science cannot be in full operation in this instance*.

Belief in miracles actually presupposes trust that normally, the regular laws of science are operating – otherwise, we could never tell whether something was a 'miracle' or not. True, we don't know everything about the laws of science. But we know enough to say that science precludes as impossible, or at least immensely improbable, a crucified man spontaneously returning to life a few days later, or the sun appearing to dance in the sky as at Fatima.

In summary, there is no rational basis for 'automatically' ruling out miraculous explanations. We must examine evidence with a mind at least open to the *possibility* of the miraculous, judging each case on its merits. If 'legend', 'lie', 'hallucination/mistake', and 'natural scientific event' are all very improbable given the data; and if on the other hand, the religious context makes it at least somehow plausible that a hypothesised 'Creator God' might have a purpose here for suspending the ordinary laws of science that he created; then that will be shown to be not merely plausible, but also the only remaining solution to a rational mind, and so the true explanation of the data.