
THEOLOGY OF MIRACLES IN THE AGE OF SCIENCE

REFLECTIONS OF THE CATHOLIC CARDINAL WALTER KASPER

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Abstract

Catholicism today is different from what we might have been dealing with, say, half a century ago. Such a difference was the result of complex processes of renewal and adaptation of Catholicism to the new realities of the current era. Various changes in their specificity and depth did not bypass the ideational element of this creed, including the 'question of miracles'. Declaring its constancy and commitment to tradition, Catholic theology has, by far, undergone important changes in recent times. Trying to show the practical social significance of the Catholic faith, its functionaries, representing it, significantly expand the range of issues that are amenable to theological understanding and exposition. Moreover, at the same time, they often resort to significant transformations of previous religious views and beliefs. Such processes and their theological consequences are the focus of scientific interest of the author of this article. The article analyses the peculiarities of the interpretation of miracles by Catholic Cardinal Walter Kasper, reveals the organic connection between the categories of 'faith' and 'miracle' in Catholic theology, and shows the place and role of miracles in the theological constructions of Catholicism. Also analysed are elements of the traditional teaching of Catholicism about miracles, as well as current attempts to modernize this teaching; the author is also focused on highlighting the specifics of the process of integrating the achievements of modern natural science into the doctrine of miracles.

Keywords: theism, God, science, faith, determinism

1. Introduction - formulation of the problem

For many centuries, the clergy and ordinary Christian believers, without any hesitation, affirmed the miracle as a sign of the presence of God in the world created by Him, and the conscious perception of the miracle not as an illusion, but as a truth of fact has always been too important for Christian theology. That is why the Christian doctrine of miracle, in the persons of its creators,

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popularisers and preachers, sets itself the main goal of proving the truth of the corresponding faith, that is, comprehensively and with all available theoretical resources, theologically justifying and justifying the ontological status of a miracle as a supernatural phenomenon, as a visible the manifestation of the unlimited will of God, who maintains an active presence in the world. It also seeks to give a systematized form to the existing ideas of the miracle, to generalize and convincingly explain them in accordance with the characteristics of the mass religious consciousness and cultural conditions of its era.

Indeed, such are the basic questions raised by the theology of miracles and those fundamental tasks that are put before it on the way of justifying religious truths in the cultural continuum.

The conceptualization of the miracle by one of the prominent Catholic theologians - Cardinal Walter Kasper, former head of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, is indicative in terms of judgments about traditionalism and innovations in Catholicism, about the combination of the Church's efforts to move towards its renewal with the awareness of the danger of losing its identity due to excessive openness.

2. Presenting main material

In general, the concept of 'miracle' has a special place in the class of theological concepts-categories. The key features of the religious worldview are best embodied in the content of this concept. In a miracle, as in a magic crystal, the peculiarities of religious consciousness are refracted, its [religion's] specific nature is concentrated. Mainly through the concept of 'miracle', apologetic thought makes contact with the modern scientific worldview, tries to adjust its positions in accordance with the theoretical achievements of modern natural science. A miracle for religion is the Holy Grail, a matter of the ultimate root cause, and its comprehension is akin to the search for what, according to Michio Kaku, is the 'God equation' - that is, that all-encompassing formula from which all stationary states of the Universe can be derived [1]. A miracle, according to Goethe, is the most beloved child of faith, however, Walter Casper had to admit, it is currently the most vulnerable place of faith. In his fundamental work 'Jesus the Christ', the theologian reveals the most complex and difficult to understand aspects of the 'question of miracles' [2].

First of all, it should be emphasized that Walter Kasper's entire set of techniques and operations for proving the truth of the proposed propositions, criteria for the acceptability of formulated theses, are theological. In other words, the method of the Catholic cardinal is undoubtedly a theological method, however the latter is combined with modern scientific terminology and excursions to the cutting edge of fundamental science. Nevertheless, the process of teaching the doctrine of a miracle, despite all its religious and theological specificity, begins with Walter Kasper emphasizing the dual problematic of a miracle, namely, historical and natural-scientific. The author especially draws readers' attention to the obvious fact that the concept of 'miracle' has left a

specific religious and theological field and entered wide everyday circulation, and modern man is aware of the miraculous in its juxtaposition with the laws of the natural environment. According to the theologian, the peculiarities of the modern experience of understanding reality determine the specifics of a new problematic level of miracle awareness. However, the historical-critical study of the legends about miracles leads the author, as it turned out later, to a whole series of important results. An unbiased approach reveals, in particular in the Gospels, a tendency towards the growth of stories about miracles, in the formation of which, by far, rabbinic and Hellenistic sources are used to a large extent. The author offers an interesting criterion for revealing the religious and kerygmatic meaning of messages about miracles: "The result of all this is that we must describe many of the gospel miracle stories as legendary. Legends of this sort should be examined less for their historical than for their theological content. They say something, not about individual facts of saving history, but about the single saving event, which is Jesus Christ. To show that certain miracles cannot be ascribed to the earthly Jesus does not mean that they have no theological or kerygmatic significance. These non-historical miracle reports are statements of faith about the significance for salvation of the person and message of Jesus." [2, p. 78]

And yet, the author finds it possible to convince his readers, after a thorough historical examination in the Holy Scriptures, it is impossible not to notice a distinct historical core. True, at the same time, he mainly appeals to the authority of individual theologians more than he supports his statements with a real evidence base: "It would nevertheless be wrong to conclude from this view that there are no historically authenticated miracles of Jesus. The opposite is the case. There can scarcely be a single serious exegete who does not believe in a basic stock of historically certain miracles of Jesus." [2, p. 78]

Common to all Christianity is the awareness of the organic nature of faith and miracles. Reliance on the power of a miracle reveals the inner nature of religious faith, because the latter is based on subjective confidence in the possibility of overcoming the limits of nature and all the limitations established by the latter. Their connection is so deep and strong that faith in a miracle is sometimes identified with the essence of faith in general. The category of 'faith' is an indispensable component of the conceptual element of religion and the practice of its [religion] everyday functioning; it includes belief in miracles as a component. "Providence is identical with miraculous power, supernaturalistic freedom from Nature, the dominion of arbitrariness over law", - insists Ludwig Feuerbach [3].

It is reasonable to assume that a miracle acts as an external argument for faith and one of the factors of theological legitimation of the latter. In turn, the miracle itself in the act of faith is assimilated and becomes subjectively significant for a person, that is, it acquires its direct orientation and sufficient value. Thus, a direct connection between faith and miracles is established in Christian theology. However, conceptually framed, this connection reveals an internal tautology: faith needs external foundations for itself, which it mostly finds in a miracle, and a miracle, in turn, presupposes faith, because without the

latter, a miracle will be perceived simply as an unusual event or a strange coincidence of circumstances. As it is easy to see, the theological justification of faith by referring to a miracle moves in a circle - the miracle acts in it as a position-argument, which as such still needs to be proven and the truth of which is substantiated with the help of a proven thesis (a miracle acts as an indication of the existence of the supernatural, and itself the possibility of a miracle is connected and deduced from the existence of the supernatural). In fairly compact reasoning, the logical flaws of such proofs are obvious, although in complex theological constructions, which include entire systems of judgments and chains of mind-blowing inferences, such specifics of theological argumentation are more difficult to notice. It is in Walter Casper's attempt to carry out a historical-critical analysis of miracles that the theological method clearly asserts itself. The theologian openly talks about the fact that the interpretation of certain facts as miraculous depends on the initial attitude - in order to see the acts of God's creative activity in the events, one must have the 'eyes of faith': "It is generally accepted that facts themselves are ambiguous, and only acquire a meaning from the context in which they are put by the language of interpretations" [2, p. 79]. In general, the main consequences of the historical-critical analysis of the miracle by Walter Kasper, namely that, according to the author, it can be considered an event that, despite everything, is included in certain layers of reality, prompt the theologian to move to other levels of its understanding and try to get closer to the natural - scientific issues of miracles.

In general, Theology, being a theoretical reflection of religious consciousness, represents a rather complex branch of theoretical knowledge, the subject of which is the divine world. The understanding of the features of such knowledge, its structure and the main theological disciplines is roughly similar in the main Christian denominations. In general, it is reflected in the specific subject-disciplinary structure of Theology, the distinction of subjects of which is based on three main questions. How, why, in what way should one believe? These questions are a subject for reflection in theoretical theology - dogmatic and basic (or apologetics). How did people believe and still believe? Historical theology deals with this - biblical and Church history, including Patristics. How to live by faith and be an example for others. These questions are a specific subject of practical theology - Moral, Liturgical, Pastoral, Homiletics, Church law, etc. [4]. Key questions of the religious worldview are contained in a significant way in Christian apologetics, which, to a large extent, is a model of theological discourse. Apologetics, which is classified as propaedeutic, 'pre-theological' disciplines, precedes system-forming disciplines, primarily Dogmatic theology, in terms of its problems; its vocation is an actual "polemical dialogue on major worldview issues, using all resources of rationality" [4, p. 43]. Among such important worldview questions, the issue of miracles usually comes first for apologists.

Antony Flew, a significant figure in analytical philosophy and a major specialist in the field of Philosophy of religion, in his famous dictionary 'A Dictionary of Philosophy' gives the following definition of a miracle: "A term

that has been variously understood, but is most commonly taken to mean an act that manifests divine power through the suspension or alteration of the normal working of the laws of Nature. The idea of laws of Nature is thus essential to the idea of the miraculous, but is also, clearly, a major barrier to belief that miracles actually occur.” [5]

In the book of Walter Casper, the traditional apologetic definition of a miracle is presented as an event that is carried out by God’s omnipotence through violation or bypassing the causality existing in Nature: “a miracle was understood traditionally as a perceivable event outside the possibilities of Nature; one brought about by God’s almighty power in contravention or at least circumvention of natural causality, for the purpose of confirming verbal revelation” [2, p. 79]. However, in the meantime, it is noted here that it has mainly polemical value in opposition to the scientific worldview. In addition, the author emphasizes the fact that sometimes apologetic reflections of a miracle turn out to be an empty formula: “On closer inspection, however, this concept of the miracle turns out to be empty” [2, p. 79]. The definition of a miracle seems incorrect to Walter Kasper from the theological point of view. Since the concept of ‘double action’ of God is traditional in Catholicism, when he affects the world structure through the plan of secondary causes and manifests himself not in direct creative acts of intervention in Nature or in the social life of the faithful, but only in the ultimate all-encompassing picture of the world. Views similar to these regarding the effectiveness of God in the world created by him arose as an ideological antithesis to the previously prevailing ideas about God as a transcendent watchmaker and about the world as a clock with a self-sufficient and autonomous mechanism set in motion by the Creator in ancient times. The attempt to protect divine omnipotence from the theoretical proposals of deism, where the sphere of God’s activity was catastrophically narrowed, prompted a number of neo-Thomist authors to turn to the theological heritage of Thomism, where a distinction was made between primary and secondary causes. Later, in Catholicism, the idea of God as a primary cause, which acts through the mediation of secondary causes, whose activity is in different planes of being (for example, in Etienne Gilson’s model - ‘worker-instrument’) crystallized. God only supports and does not impose his order on things, although all events are predetermined by divine design. Walter Kasper, in complete agreement with the established positions of Catholicism, declares: “God can never replace this-worldly causality. If he were on the same level as this-worldly causes, he would no longer be God but an idol. If God is to remain God, even his miracles must be thought of as mediated by created secondary causes. They would otherwise be like a meteor from another world: an alien body completely unassimilable to our world. It is questionable whether such an event is conceivable at all: can we imagine something happening in the world without being subject to natural laws? Quite apart from that, however, a miracle which was unrelated to any this-worldly context of meaning and could still be clearly proved to be a divine intervention, would be no profit to Theology either. A miracle of this sort would compel belief, and would remove its character of free choice.” [2, p. 80] Because such miracles, the author notes, would bind a person to faith or would incline

him to it, but it would not be a free act of a person's choice, his inner spiritual decision.

The long-standing obstacles that appear before the attempts of theologians to present a theoretically grounded and uncontroversial doctrine of the miracle, prompt Walter Kasper to partially abandon the existing sophisticated reasoning in this matter and to testify that adherence to the biblical traditions of the understanding of the miracle for the theologian can sometimes be more useful, and sometimes even life-saving. In this vein, the author, with the help of a series of arguments, proves that the so-called 'traditional understanding of a miracle' as something that opposes the laws of Nature is, in fact, not entirely traditional. Ancient man conveyed the impressions of events that made him wonder and stunned his consciousness rather in the biblical terms of 'signs' and 'mighty deeds' and at the same time directed his views not to Nature, but to God. Moreover, as the famous Catholic theologian - Professor of Oxford Brian Davies proved, the word 'nature' is not characteristically biblical, and, therefore, the Sacred Canonical Structures in no way oppose the miracle to the concept, which modern authors would label as 'laws of Nature'. "The notion of miracle as something which happens in Nature and is contrary to the laws of Nature is a curiously confused concept. In the first place, no such conception can be found in the Biblical sources of the Hebrew-Christian tradition, for those sources did not have the conception of natural law. To call an event a miracle is to call it a 'marvel', and to say that it evokes wonder and awe." [6] Walter Casper obviously completely shares this point of view, which is quite common among theologians, and at the same time notes that the biblical problem of miracles does not raise natural-scientific, but purely religious-theological questions related to faith in God. The strength of his purely theological approach to the perception and evaluation of a miracle becomes unquestionable when the theologian frankly notes: "These and other difficulties have led theologians more or less to abandon the apologetically-based concept of miracle and to rely on the original biblical meaning of miracle. ...The question of miracles can only be properly discussed by taking account of their religious context and of the theological 'language game' from which they cannot be isolated." [2, p. 80]

However, in this case, there is a need to emphasize the following - the opposition of unlimited acts of will of the divine, on the one hand, and the laws of Nature, on the other, which is untenably postulated by some modern authors, is designed to preserve the conceptual integrity and originality of the idea of a miracle, as the triumph of transcendent freedom over natural necessity. In accordance with such efforts, the idea of a miracle is somewhat intellectualized and acquires a certain rational basis, when it appeals to a number of external (non-religious) criteria (namely, natural laws), which are taken as basic, that is, considered to some extent self-evident. Thus, theological excursions regarding the miracle, although they take place within the framework of the traditional biblical presentation of it as something extremely incomprehensible and forever secret, for apologetic purposes, they still resort to some external arguments regarding faith, the purpose of which is to act as a tool for the rational

justification of the miracle in addition to religious ones teachings about the omnipotence of God's power and its undivided dominance in the Universe. It follows from this that the issue of miracles, as manifestations of God's participation in the destinies of the Universe, in the modern intellectual climate is recognized to some extent as dependent on the establishment of the laws of Nature, the statements of which determine specific judgments about the miraculous.

The complete ignoring of the interdependence of these concepts follows, on the one hand, from such an expanded understanding of the scope of the concept of 'miracle' that any natural phenomenon or event is declared miraculous. In this case, the uniqueness and inimitability of the miraculous was emasculated, which provoked relapses of mythological thinking in religious consciousness. On the other hand, the assessment of reality as a direct permanent supernatural creation and the complete ignoring of its natural component, with natural laws, and the acceptance of a miracle exclusively as a sign (a sign of Revelation), sometimes acquired other negative theological consequences, which Walter Kasper draws attention to. Thus, the excessive spiritualization of the concept of 'miracle', in the exclusive interpretation of it only spiritually, as a miracle of faith, deprived the latter of its authentic concreteness and targeted character. The miracle, moreover, was spiritualized and demythologized to such an extent that in the end the question arose - what actually corresponds to a miracle and are not the testimonies of miracles only empty fantasies, and the doctrine of miracles exclusively an ideology?

Neglecting the intellectual aspect of the content of the concept of 'miracle' in favour of the dominance of its own religious understanding and hyperbolizing its (concept of) mystifying function entails an important methodological problem - is it even possible to understand and study a miracle. Close attention to its epistemic status was connected with the existing point of view about the indescribability of experienced miraculous states, the incomprehensibility of the miracle in general, about the impossibility of comparing it with the facts of ordinary experience and explaining what was seen and experienced in terms of human existence. From this, it was sometimes concluded about the exceptional intelligibility of the miracle, which was understood only and only in the act of faith, through mystical intuition, and about the illegitimacy of its philosophical and rational study. The inexplicability of a miracle in the natural and human world, in the end, raised questions about its ontological status - whether the concept of a miracle has a factual meaning, etc. There are many reasons to believe that establishing the *modus operandi* of a miracle is still extremely important for the theologian Walter Kasper: "An adequate theology of miracles meeting all contemporary demands is admittedly in large part still an ideal" [2, p. 82].

It is known that theistic conceptualizations of the 'God-world' relationship do not present God's presence in the world as having a greater measure or fulfilment at any particular time or in any particular place than at another. However, it is believed that the faithful can establish the fact of the presence of a more significant revelation by God of his will and determinations

regarding man or the human community in some events or a series of events in human history. In traditional Christianity, although the presence of God is interpreted as equal and equivalent in any object, a person does not perceive it equally, both in terms of content and depth. Certain divine signs prompt a person to feel more spiritually imbued in a certain situation than in the rest of the others. In this article, the theologian tries to formulate an important theological problem - what is the basis of such human participation in God's affairs, is it about the peculiarities of the interpretation of faith, or is it the experience and awareness of 'something' that is related to reality itself? "If 'miracle' does not include the idea of a 'thing' in the realm of the reality which confronts man, we have to ask whether belief in miracles is not ultimately a mere ideology", - this is how the author of the book poses the question of miracles [2, p. 81].

The intention of the Catholic cardinal to completely convert the 'question of the miracle' into the plane of a purely dogmatic and biblical interpretation of it is still not fully realized. The intellectual clarification of the question of the mode of reality of a miracle, which is key for Theology, to which the theologian is still largely attracted, is obviously impossible at the first level of its awareness due to the very essential specificity of the latter. After all, the stories about miracles here are sensuously visualized, naively naive and designed for direct perception more than for imaginary abstractions. Therefore, even though earlier the author presented his vision of the flaws of apologetic explanations of the miracle, and yet the regression from a purely reflective to an exclusively descriptive-parable understanding of its [miracle] specificity obviously has its limits. The theologian, although apparently, he does not like it, is forced to admit: "As long as there is no clarity about which mode of reality this 'thing' belongs to, talk of God's signs and acts of power will remain, a theological cryptogram, preventing us from looking at the 'hard' core of the problem of miracles, the question of the reality to which the belief in miracles is" [2, p.81]. However, it is obvious to the theologian that such a dialogue with the scientific worldview, designed to reveal the peculiarities of the reality hidden in the miracle, can only be conducted by apologetics.

The author's attempt to demarcate the field of contact between apologetics and the modern scientific worldview does not prevent him from reminding that the absolutization of the idea of determinism by individual scientists, giving the principle of determinism complete universality and subordinating even everything unique and unexplained to it leaves no room for miracles or relevant discussions about it. Discussion of it under such conditions can only lead to a dead end. On the other hand, modern scientific refinements of the principle of determinism, when it comes to regularities between events at the level of the smallest components (at the subatomic and quantum level), which are characterized by statistical and probabilistic specificity, encourage scientists to talk about the unpredictable nature of a number of phenomena. However, the attempt of a part of theologians, in the matter of theoretical justification of a miracle, to use the resource of the 'uncertainty principle' of individual events, according to Walter Kasper, dooms Theology not to success and global

theological perspectives, but to protracted rear-guard clashes with natural and scientific knowledge, which is constantly developing, and to the loss of any trust in preaching and Theology: “If the attempt is made nonetheless, as it sometimes is, to locate the miraculous in the practical impossibility of tracing the causes of certain events, that leads to a dragging rear-guard action against the advance of scientific knowledge and robs preaching and Theology of all credibility” [2, p. 81].

At the same time, the author rightly points out that natural scientific knowledge, in principle, cannot cover the entire set of existing phenomena and processes in their interconnections and relationships, and the human mind is not able to derive all the facts of reality from any single subordinating principle. Therefore, the question about the mode of reality of a miracle, as an event that is deliberately and purposefully called to reality thanks to the specific interaction of God with the world, is ultimately, according to the theologian, a question about the fundamental metaphysical foundations of existence - whether complete randomness reigns in the world or, on the contrary, a solid regularity, is the existence of the world a story of the successive unfolding of God’s providence in reality, or is the world subject to an inexorable fate? In the end, the theologian, especially, however, without resorting to the formal-logical sophistication and ‘intellectualism’ usual for Catholic scholasticism, insists that no matter how much reasoning is used in the matter of understanding a miracle, there is and will always remain an inexhaustible residue for the mind in this area, mystical unknowable core: “On the other hand, Science now accepts that it cannot even in principle encompass the totality of all determining factors. This is to say that the human mind can never get to the source of the facticity of reality. In other words, every event is completely contingent and also completely determined. And because that tension between the contingent nature of the particular and the general nature of its determination is fundamental, it is not possible to find a place for miracles in the over-determination of the particular as opposed to the general.” [2, p. 81] The complexity of the very formulation of this kind of problem was drawn to the attention of relevant specialists: “Research in Science and religion necessarily involves asking what sort of enterprise is the science in question?” [7].

We consider it necessary to add the following regarding this type of attempts at God-knowledge. In the interpretation of theologians, a miracle, its nature, purpose and method of implementation undoubtedly belong to the higher, divine world. However, it would be illegitimate to reduce a miracle only to its supernatural substratum, since it is connected with this earthly world through the providential appointment of a miracle for the salvation of the human soul, which is characterized by susceptibility to this kind of divine actions. However, it is precisely because of this that a miracle cannot be identified with a natural regularity, which is a lower, subordinate level in the divinely established hierarchy of being. And although a miracle is fundamentally predictable and cannot be deduced from purely physical factors, it nevertheless occurs in these earthly conditions, where it reorients the development of the usual phenomenological series. A miracle is a phenomenon that has both a cause and

an effect. The cause is God's act, and the result develops according to the usual, natural scheme. Being, according to the explanations of theologians, intertwined with the events of this world, the miracle thus becomes an elusive object for comprehension, since, in such a situation, it can be difficult to separate the purely religious in the miracle from the non-religious in it. Especially in stunning, impressive, extremely strange, but still, natural events in the world (for example, in the unexpected avoidance of a dire danger, strange healing of a sick person, etc.), which are subjectively perceived as a miracle, and, therefore, it is difficult to understand a miracle in itself as such, in its, so to speak, pure religious dimension.

There is also a need to realize that the very uniqueness and inimitability of each individual miracle, as well as its closedness and clarity, finiteness and inexhaustibility, transcendence and immanence, make it impossible to study and evaluate it impartially. In addition, human cognition, in principle, cannot encompass the entire set of existing phenomena and processes, in their interconnections and relationships, and the human mind does not manage to subject all the facts of reality to deduction and consider them later, from the point of view of a certain subordinate principle. "Just as it is true that we never grasp everything that exists in its absolute totality", Martin Heidegger responded to this, "it is also certain that we still find ourselves in the midst of the totality of being, which one way or another opens up a little for us. The end-to-end grasp of the totality of being is by its very nature different from the feeling of oneself in the midst of being as a whole. The first is basically impossible. The second is constantly happening in our being." [8]

Therefore, a person cannot be completely sure that all the experience available to him will confirm naturalistic generalizations about supernatural phenomena, since he does not have access to all this possible experience, even more so to the future. And therefore, the decisions regarding the question of miracles, which are taken hastily, without taking into account what was said, are the result, speaking in the language of logic, of too hasty generalization (inductive in nature), that is, in fact, they are generally wrong decisions. Therefore, directly formulated judgments of the type 'there are no miracles in the world, but they exist' cannot be accepted unconditionally, since they are only imaginary creations of consciousness, but not the truth of the fact.

An even greater misunderstanding is the situation when certain religious testimonies are not evaluated according to their quality, but are only interpreted from the point of view of the laws of Statistics. Hence, belief in a miracle is declared extremely improbable, since, they say, a person should rely on the most probable, that is, choose the highest odds. The misunderstanding in this situation manifests itself in the fact that the critic of miracles here does not evaluate the evidence in favour of the miracle, but only compiles (adds) evidence against the latter. But experts in the Philosophy of science have long known that plausibility is not necessary for the true, and the truth is not always plausible. Besides, human experience and the practice of common sense have long made it obvious that sometimes the odds against an event are quite significant, but the evidence

in favour of it can be quite convincing, and any prudent person in his intentions takes into account only probability, but also the facts. Let's mention here at least an ancient Latin maxim that characterizes the purity of thesis argumentation - *argumenta ponderantur, non numerantur* (the strength of evidence is determined by its significance, not its quantity).

The misunderstanding here also arises due to the fact that the concept of 'probability', in its academic-scientific meaning, when probability is used in the formulation of scientific laws, is beginning to be applied to some historical events. As you know, the specificity of the latter, and miracles are conditionally included among them, is unique and unrepeatable, one historical event is unlike another. The formulation of a scientific law assumes the repeatability of events, their regularity is tied to the frequency of the event - the more often the phenomenon under study is observed under similar conditions, the more likely the assumption expressing the law is. So, in such a situation, the specifics of studying historical events by a specialist-historian are ignored and evaluated exclusively from the point of view of the laws of statistics and the probability of repeated events, which is nothing more than a distorted understanding of probability and an improper extrapolation of the signs and principles of one cognitive practice to another. According to the Catholic theologian, the global worldview choice associated with making a decision in favour of a religious worldview is able to bring clarity to the 'question of miracles', although an adequate theology of miracles, able to satisfy all modern requirements, is a matter of a distant perspective: "Natural science alone cannot settle the question of miracles one way or the other, because this is a question which involves the meaning not just of this or that event, but the meaning of reality as symbolized in a particular event. This means that the encounter between Theology and Natural science does not ultimately take place in the area of observable facts. It takes place at a point which involves the ultimate presuppositions of natural science, the transcendental question, the question of the whole of reality and its meaning." [2, p. 82]

The attempt of a prominent Catholic theologian to expose the age-old cryptogram of the doctrine of miracles to the light of rational understanding turned out to be quite innovative and undoubtedly original. It is obvious that the author is trying to broadly integrate into the theological context and refract through the prism of a religious worldview certain modern significant achievements of Science and at the same time not lose the theological attitude and not go beyond the theological method. However, Walter Kasper's devotion to the fundamental theological principles of miracle assessment does not allow him to unequivocally answer the important question regarding the mode of reality of a miracle and to formulate the main provisions of the relevant doctrine that would meet all modern intellectual requirements. Moreover, the balance between the stability of fundamentalism and innovations and the dangerous flexibility of modernism ultimately leads an experienced theologian into the field of complex theological problems, which sometimes force the author to give evasive answers to important questions of the religious worldview. The author, tired of intellectual journeys through the endless and complex labyrinths of the

miracle doctrine, in the end, must admit that all the existing misunderstandings and ‘white spots’ in the matter of miracles can finally gain clarity and transparency when a person looks at them with the pure eyes of the true faith.

3. Conclusions

In general, the reflections of the Catholic intellectual undoubtedly testify to the fact that he analysed the main content of the Christian doctrine of miracles in its traditional, canonical version. It is this that prevents the spread of deviations, and even outright heresy, in relation to the ideas of miracles generally accepted in Christianity, it allows us to make a fundamental distinction between a miracle and what is not a miracle in the theological sense. Moreover, the traditional doctrine of miracles provides theoretical grounds for avoiding ideas that are unacceptable in the light of Christian orthodoxy. It is this teaching that acts as the infallible yardstick or standard, compared to which it becomes possible to establish judgments about the content of theological-doctrinal debates, in which the peculiarities of certain interpretations of a miracle are revealed. In connection with such a teaching, there are grounds for a critical assessment of various theological positions, where the essential, specifically Christian understanding of miracles is sometimes lost. However, despite all the debates and theological discussions of the miracle, the core of this teaching remains unchanged, more or less similar in all Christian confessions and the theological systems justifying them.

In this sense, it should be recognized that the thematization of the miracle in Walter Kasper’s theistic knowledge of God, when the theologian argues for the constant active presence of God in the realm of His own Creation, allowed him to reproduce, in the process of unfolding and further analysis of the content of faith, a truly Christian understanding of the miracle.

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