



WHY WE HAVEN'T SEEN ANOTHER BUDDHA, A CHRIST, OR A MIRACLE SINCE?

Yes. Its been 2,500 years since we have seen a Buddha and, a little later, a Jesus Christ. Such considerable and towering personalities lived in times before recording took place. We know they lived. We are far less sure about what really they precisely said as we only have word-of-mouth coming down over a 500 years since their departure from this world.



Making Sense
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Around such a time after that, faithful followers had, at last, been able to put it all together in writing. What is on record, however, is the thread of word-of-mouth and this, we know, can be hopelessly inauthentic.

Christmas Humphreys, in his classic Penguin on Buddhism said, "We do not know what the Buddha taught, any more than we know what Jesus taught."

The important thing for me, however, is not the issues of authenticity. I am prepared to accept tentatively as authentic what theologians and scholastics later wrote about the teachings of these great religious leaders. On the other hand, what arouses my curiosity on a constant basis is why great personas such as them or even close to them have never appeared thereafter. We have not had any religions after Christianity, Jewish, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. We certainly have had and do have sects of

these religions since but sects are subsets. The era of religion has dissipated; not disappeared. It is also a matter of curiosity why only these religions erupted and why at that time and not before or afterwards. Why didn't anyone emerge to guide man before? Why not after? In other words, the timing raises a host of questions. I am aware that there have been other faiths around the same time but the latter are too minor for consideration. We have the Jehovahs Witnesses knocking at our doors today but they are not a distinct religion.

I also ask myself why we hear less and less of the kinds of miracles attributed to Jesus and to his early apostles since the latter passed away. And what of miraculous claims by Buddhists about an ability (Iddi Balaya) to travel through space unaided by a device? For thousands of years we haven't heard of a miracle taken seriously. Turning water into wine? Multiplying bread, raising the dead back into a state of living-before our eyes? How wonderful if I can have the lives of some of my own relatives who were so dear to me resurrected? Tragic-struck parents would give anything to have a dead child restored to live again-wouldn't they, surely? The world would be much free of unfair suffering. And then, if someone could multiply bread for Somalians dying of hunger these days-leave alone doing that miracle for our benefit? We watch in TV and become traumatic when scenes of starving kids are on display, dying without food to eat. We shudder thinking of cancer patients struggling with their lives.

Why oh why cannot someone with divine power perform miracles by intervening in all such instances? We divide into groups and argue whether God as a creator and supernatural supervisor does exist. Arguments and rhetoric flow on both sides of the intellectual divide. In the Middle Ages we had the Christian scholar, Thomas Aquinas who came out with "proofs for God's existence." Since then, there have been refinements to such arguments. With the march of science, many intellectuals took to rebutting Aquinas. The theory of evolution by Charles Darwin seems to undermine the whole traditional belief that this world of ours had been an act of vast creation. That was science's serious deathblow to the belief of Abrahamic religions-Christianity, Jewish, and Islam. Findings of genetic science since Darwin only confirm and elaborate what Darwin had found. Yet, the scientific position is being denied vehemently by creationists. It is a war with science that we observe today in many fields of cognitive understanding.

My position is that this war need not go on and that we need not fight to death over such disputes if only the presumed God can intervene and show his miracle or muscle for the whole world to see. That would be the most convincing sure-shot. Wouldn't that be? But it is not happening.

Perhaps, it is safer to get back to what science says: Miracles cannot happen in nature as they constitute a violation of the very laws of nature. Miracle claims are not common today because the the burgeoning numbers of scientifically thinking, modern, people are on the watch to ask questions and to pry and question any given claim. There are

a number of stories of miracles but they lack wide enough testimony and they typically are personal experiences. David Hume famously said if one were to accept a claim of a miraculous event such a claim must have testimony that looks more probable than the optional scientific view that it can be explained in terms of the natural laws of the universe. Such tall stories are the product of mankind's sense of wonder. The sensations of surprise and wonder lead us to irrational beliefs. To make matters worse for the believers, social media has grown and is growing in an exponential speed undreamt of before. A simple claim of a divine apparition can be caught on a tiny mobile phone and disseminated in lightening speed to the entire world. Be careful, supernaturalists, you are being watched. People all over the world are getting far too sophisticated to arrive at supernatural beliefs of any sort. The days of early religion were pre-scientific days and they were inhabited largely by barbarous and ignorant populations.

The religious explanation having become less and less attractive, the chance of a religious leader claiming divine association is getting bleak. A convincing affirmation of a God, miracle and religion being unavailable, it is unlikely for the world to have another Jesus Christ who claimed to be the Son of God. On the other hand, there are the non-divine aspects in the personality of Christ, which to me is most admirable. Jesus spoke to the poor and spoke against social injustice. He was capable of unbelievable feats of sacrifice. Jesus Christ had been a most compassionate and inspired human being as far as I am concerned. It is possible for us to have more of that kind of extraordinary human being; but not of a divine Jesus. Hopefully, we will as our world needs them.

What of the Buddha? According to popular Buddhism many more Buddhas are to come. But we haven't seen a sign of that and we are unlikely to see that. There is an undeniable supernatural assumption about the theory of Buddhas to come that is devoid of any testimony or evidence. Perhaps, once again, it is more an outcome of the human sense of wonder that was referred to above. A Buddha with this kind of dimension will also not come again because belief in the supernatural is waning fast.

On the other hand, the world has already witnessed great men and women of wisdom and insight like the Buddha. We are likely to see more of them in the future. However, that is not the Buddha of folklore who could perform miraculous feats and alight and walk immediately after birth. Once again to cite Christmas Humphreys, "Buddhism is a spiritual philosophy whose attitude to life is as cool and objective as that of the modern scientist." The philosophy that is Buddhism will live on to produce new dialogue and fresh scholars in the future; but the religion that we know as Buddhism will continue only in name sake. So will Christianity. Islam will take a much longer time before eradication

In the war with science, religion will eventually lose. It is only a matter of time.

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