
CAN ‘HUME’S ARGUMENT’ BE CONSIDERED A VALID DENIAL OF MIRACLES?

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Abstract

An important direction of theologians’ efforts to implement the task of renewing the doctrine of miracles is an attempt to give it a theoretically argued and psychologically convincing content, as well as such features that would not devalue it in the eyes of those who approach religion openly critically. Within this trend, a number of theologians are trying to highlight not only those issues that are on the agenda of today’s theological debates, but also those that have been inherited by theology from previous centuries. One of such important questions, in the refutation of which theologians prefer to rely on a reliable intellectual basis, is the so-called ‘Hume’s argument’, aimed at proving the obvious impossibility of miracles. The study of the works of the ideological opponents of the Scottish philosopher and the analysis of the specifics of the theoretical measures they resort to in opposition to D. Hume’s judgments allow us to understand the specificity and extent of the use of the ideological weapons possessed by the defenders of faith and which are aimed at refuting D. Hume’s thesis. In general, the criticism of the philosopher’s arguments is focused on two main directions and aims, first of all, to show the flaws in the fundamentals of his approach to the issue of miracles and, accordingly, their inability to act as a basis for a valid denial of miracles, as well as to clarify the purely intellectual dimension of the issue already from the standpoint of logic compliance and provide opportunities to establish judgments about the purely formal legitimacy of the philosopher’s claims to truth.

The theoretical work of theologians in this area is quite significant, and although in general their claims to show the complete ideological bankruptcy of D. Hume’s argumentation are somewhat exaggerated, yet the considerations of a number of authors are directed against Hume’s position on the issue of miracles, which are generally focused on revealing the fallacy of his views and lack of evidence them, are sufficiently argued and theoretically justified. All this allows us to speak about the fact that theologians have quite strong theoretical grounds to disagree with D. Hume’s evidence and to recognize them as incapable of being a valid denial of miracles.

Keywords: theology, theism, God, faith, miracle

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1. Introduction

Formulation of the problem. The current state of the Christian religion, which tries to be adequate to the advanced intellectual standards of the era and to feel comfortable in modern culture, forces it, nevertheless, to deal with rather acute questions formulated by the times. The powerful challenges of the secularized world again and again push to the agenda of ongoing discussions difficult questions for religion: to what extent are the statements about God justified, what is the status of theological terminology and whether it fully possesses factual content, whether religious ideas can finally get rid of the signs of subjectivity and relate yourself to the object. It is necessary to note that the problems discussed above, to the greatest extent, concern Christianity itself, since it is precisely Christianity that has faced and is currently facing various secular alternatives. The specified set of problems prompts leading theologians to modify the leading concepts of the church time and time again, to find new intellectual resources for the defense of faith. However, this process should not be understood as a search for new religious truths, says the author of ‘liberation theology’ H. Gutiérrez, because they are always *semper idem* [always the same (lat.)], on this path, efforts should be focused on finding the right words for ‘true prayer’ [1, p. 205]. Within the framework of this trend, Christian theology tries to answer not only those questions that have been pushed to the surface of theological debates today, but also those that have been inherited by theology from previous centuries. One of the serious issues for theology, in the coverage of which its representatives prefer to rely on a reliable intellectual basis, is the so-called ‘Hume’s argument’.

2. Presenting main material

It is known that the Scottish philosopher D. Hume expressed doubts about the reality of miracles, and his arguments were widely recognized as proving the obvious impossibility of a miracle. Although, as it was reliably established by the means of impartial research, the majority of the ideas presented by D. Hume regarding the miracle were already found in the works of other authors who studied the miracle earlier. A well-known Catholic theologian, professor of philosophy and theology at the University of Oxford, Brian Davies, notes this: “... all the points about miracles argued by Hume can be found in the work of writers working before the publication of ‘Of Miracles’ ” [2, p. 249]. In his work ‘An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding’, D. Hume showed that in the absence of modern analogs of ancient miracles, we are forced to rely exclusively on human testimony about them in their evaluations. However, D. Hume runs the red thread through all his statements about miracles that human evidence can never be solid evidence in favor of belief in the reality of supernatural events [3, p. 75-91]. The principled position of the philosopher regarding miracles, as well as his carefully selected objections to certain supernatural actions, force theologians to gather an appropriate counterargument and finally give an answer to D. Hume’s ideas. All the more so, since in the public consciousness, to this day, D. Hume’s studies are

considered the most authoritative and most often discussed interpretation of the miracle. The seeds of doubt sown by the philosopher in the minds of his contemporaries and descendants about the legitimacy of testimony about miracles bore their own fruits, and his hypercriticism in matters of assessing the supernatural was actively inherited later. A little later the eminent French orientalist and historian Ernst Renan, in the preface to his famous work *The Life of Jesus*, categorically stated: "None of the miracles with which the old histories are filled took place under scientific conditions. Observation, which has never once been falsified, teaches us that miracles never happen but in times and countries in which they are believed, and before persons disposed to believe them" [4, p. 29]. The German philosopher David Friedrich Strauss, in his seminal work *The Life of Jesus*, noted on this occasion: "... Hence we need not wonder that rationalistic commentators [of Gospels] have attempted to free themselves at any cost from a miracle ... and we have only to see how they proceed in this undertaking." [5, p. 115].

As is known, the beginning of the systematic criticism of the Christian doctrine of miracles was laid a century earlier by the Dutch philosopher Benedict Spinoza [6]. It is known that B. Spinoza's recognition of the impossibility of miracles is generally conditioned by his rationalized pantheism. Thus, rejecting the supernatural nature of the divine and accepting at the same time the thesis of the ontological identity of God and nature, B. Spinoza comes to identify the first and the second. And since God is immutable: "For I am the Lord, I do not change," God informs about himself through the prophet (Malachi 3:6), and the laws of nature, as an expression of his divine will, represent the modal qualities of God, so they are immutable. Hence, the miracle, according to the philosopher, is 'pure absurdity', since it unfolds contrary to the natural order, and therefore, ultimately, contradicts the will of God. Being progressive in his era, B. Spinoza's mechanistic materialism eventually revealed its historical limitations. In addition, the researchers questioned the flawlessness of the philosopher's procedure of proving the impossibility of miracles, since B. Spinoza changes the subject of discussion during the proof (the 'miracle' thesis).

David Hume's *nervus probandi* [the essence of proof (lat.).] and the general offensive against the miracle is connected with the presentation of the so-called 'fundamental principle': "A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature; and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined. Why is it more than probable, that all men must die; that lead cannot, of itself, remain suspended in the air; that fire consumes wood, and is extinguished by water; unless it be, that these events are found agreeable to the laws of nature, and there is required a violation of these laws, or in other words, a miracle to prevent them? Nothing is esteemed a miracle, if it ever happens in the common course of nature. It is no miracle that a man, seemingly in good health, should die on a sudden: because such a kind of death, though more unusual than any other, has yet been frequently observed to happen. But it is a miracle, that a dead man should come to life; because that has never been observed in any age or country. There must, therefore, be a uniform

experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full proof, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle; nor can such a proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered credible, but by an opposite proof, which is superior” [3, p. 79-80]. However, did D. Hume successfully formulate the premises for subsequent conclusions? “There are deep philosophical disagreements regarding the nature and even the existence of natural laws. On Hume’s own ‘regularity’ view of natural laws, it is difficult to see what it would mean for a natural law to be violated. If the natural laws are simply compendious statements of natural regularities, an apparent ‘violation’ would most naturally be an indication, not that a supernatural intervention in the course of nature had occurred, but rather that what we had thought was a natural law was, in fact, not one... And on the view that there are no natural laws whatsoever, the set of events satisfying the Humean definition of a miracle is, trivially, empty” [7]. As can be seen from the above opinion of the authors of the article ‘Miracles’ of the famous Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Timothy McGrew and Robert Larmer, there are sufficient grounds for criticizing the fundamentals of D. Hume’s concept, which is aimed at proving the impossibility of miracle.

In this regard, it is worth emphasizing that D. Hume’s fundamental principle unites two arguments that are closely related to each other, moreover, in such a way that they are sometimes considered as one. The first of these is based on the uniformity of nature: a miracle is a violation of the laws of nature, and since they are established by solid experience, the objection to a miracle is as reliable as any argument based on experience; the second concerns the sameness of experience: what happens in the general development of nature is not a miracle, so a real miracle must be contrasted with a uniform experience, otherwise the event will not be considered miraculous. Let us add that the principle in general, in any completed system of knowledge, is the main and defining one, as it organically connects all other elements of this system into integrity and unity. It is from the formulation and substantiation of his own key position, which would unite and organize the rest of the components of his concept, that D. Hume’s ideas about the impossibility of a miracle begin to spread. It is not surprising that theologians’ criticism of D. Hume’s argumentation is aimed primarily at this principle. Subjecting D. Hume’s position on miracles to a thorough analysis, theologians immediately attack his initial positions with criticism, preferring to reveal the theoretical incapacity of the latter. They seek to show that the cognitive value of D. Hume’s theorizations is generally low, because they are based on a false principle. Refuting miracles, D. Hume contradicts himself, his opponents claim, because the philosopher’s judgments about miracles are directed in different directions. “His readers have often been uncertain about the precise nature of his position. And that is not surprising, for his remarks seem to pull in different directions”, - notes the Catholic theologian, Professor B. Davies [2, c. 196]. However, such a situation in any research that claims universal recognition, authority, is, as you know, unacceptable, since the duty of any researcher and thinker is to fight against any inconsistency and contradiction in thinking; for there is no more striking objection to any system of opinion than to point out the

contradiction existing in it. Theologians are trying to discover the latter in D. Hume's theory. There is a need to consider in more detail how legitimate their claims are and whether their criticisms of D. Hume's studies are actually grounded.

Therefore, D. Hume does not recognize the reality of miracles, since they are not subject to the laws of nature and do not agree with them. This approach in the criticism of miracles is not new, but D. Hume takes this statement as basic, that is, he considers it self-evident to a certain extent, the truth of which is beyond doubt. However, later, along with the content of his 'fundamental principle', D. Hume expresses doubt about the uniformity of nature and, in fact, denies the possibility of predicting it: "Though experience be our only guide in reasoning concerning matters of fact; it must be acknowledged, that this guide is not altogether infallible, but in some cases is apt to lead us into errors. One, who in our climate, should expect better weather in any week of June than in one of December, would reason justly, and conformably to experience; but it is certain, that he may happen, in the event, to find himself mistaken. However, we may observe, that, in such a case, he would have no cause to complain of experience; because it commonly informs us beforehand of the uncertainty, by that contrariety of events, which we may learn from a diligent observation. All effects follow not with like certainty from their supposed causes. Some events are found, in all countries and all ages, to have been constantly conjoined together: Others are found to have been more variable, and sometimes to disappoint our expectations" [3, p. 76-77]. D. Hume is probably overly circumspect and careful in establishing inductive generalizations (being well aware of the main problem of induction - whether a sufficient number of observations or experiments have been carried out), which is sometimes expressed in his doubts.

However, the ideological opponents of D. Hume hold on to them like Ariadne's thread, which, according to their conviction, should bring such considerations to light, under which the unconvincingness of the philosopher's thoughts will become obvious. Since, according to D. Hume, past experience does not fully provide grounds for drawing conclusions about the future, the philosopher undermines, according to D. Hume's passionate critics - Academician David Willoughby Gooding and Professor John Lennox, the very basis on which his denial of the possibility of a miracle rests. Here is their general assessment of D. Hume's method of proof: "In spite of this fundamental inconsistency, Hume's argument has been, in large part, responsible for the widespread contemporary view (at least in the western world), that we have a straightforward choice between mutually exclusive alternatives. Either we believe in miracles, or we believe in the scientific understanding of the laws of nature, but not both." [8, c. 117]. Refutation of the philosopher's thesis by critics occurs together with the involvement of his own foundations. So, let's assume, following D. Hume, that not a single person in the entire history of his existence has ever returned from the dead. However, again, according to D. Hume, we cannot say for sure that this will not happen now or in the future. If this is so, then we cannot convincingly reject the miracle of the resurrection: "In this instance, Hume holds a self-contradictory position. Hume denies miracle because, as he says, miracles would go against the uniform laws of

nature. But elsewhere he denies the uniformity of nature! He famously argues that, just because the sun has been observed to rise in the morning for thousands of years, that does not mean that we can be sure that it will rise tomorrow. On the basis of past experience you cannot predict the future, says Hume. But if that were true, see what it implies in particular. Suppose that Hume is right that no dead man has ever risen up from the grave through the whole of earth's history so far; then, by his own argument, he still couldn't be sure that a dead man will not rise up tomorrow. That being so he cannot rule out miracle. What now has become of Hume's insistence on the laws of nature and the uniformity of nature?" [8, p. 116-117].

It is known from the field of scientific methodology that the value of any system of thoughts depends on the principle laid in its foundation; from this point of view, the arguments of D. Hume, directed against the miracle, his critics are convinced, have no weight, because they are based on shaky ground. After all, studies in which the researcher cannot find harmony with himself are unlikely to have any cognitive value. "In any case, if, according to Hume, we can infer no regularities, it would be impossible even to speak of a 'law of nature', let alone the uniformity of nature with respect to those laws. And if nature is not uniform, then using the uniformity of nature as an argument against miracles is simply absurd", - critics of D. Hume's arguments rightly note Academician David Willoughby Gooding and Professor John Lennox [8, p. 117]. However, ironically, critics of the philosopher's position point out, in the public consciousness the conviction is firmly rooted that in the matter of miracles we have a choice of only one of two alternatives, with all the consequences that follow: either the unconditional acceptance of the position about the possibility of supernatural events, or adherence to the theory of the laws of nature.

But when causality as such, according to D. Hume, receives a connection only in our thoughts, that is, it is essentially only a subjective thought causality, then can an argument against a miracle, based on such shaky ground, be taken seriously? - theologians wonder. Their answer is completely predictable - no; after all, how can we establish a true judgment about a deviation from the norm (miracle) when we do not know the norm itself (regularity)? The well-known Christian thinker Clive Staples Lewis draws attention to this situation: "There is also an objection to Hume which leads us deeper into our problem. The whole idea of Probability (as Hume understands it) depends on the principle of the Uniformity of Nature. Unless Nature always goes on in the same way, the fact that a thing had happened ten million times would not make it a whit more probable that it would happen again. And how do we know the Uniformity of Nature? A moment's thought shows that we do not know it by experience. We observe many regularities in Nature. But of course, all the observations that men have made or will make while the race lasts cover only a minute fraction of the events that actually go on. Our observations would therefore be of no use unless we felt sure that Nature when we are not watching her behaves in the same way as when we are: in other words, unless we believed in the Uniformity of Nature. Experience therefore cannot prove uniformity, because uniformity has to be assumed before experience proves anything. And mere length of experience does not help matters.

It is no good saying, 'Each fresh experience confirms our belief in uniformity and therefore we reasonably expect that it will always be confirmed'; for that argument works only on the assumption that the future will resemble the past—which is simply the assumption of Uniformity under a new name. Can we say that Uniformity is at any rate very probable? Unfortunately, not. We have just seen that all probabilities depend on it. Unless Nature is uniform, nothing is either probable or improbable. And clearly the assumption which you have to make before there is any such thing as probability cannot itself be probable" [9, p. 71].

At the beginning, as can be seen, Clive Staples Lewis reproduces the tradition of D. Hume's own skepticism regarding the recurrence in nature. However, the logic of his reasoning is directed to the following: when there is no repeatability, it does not exist, that is, it is only a creation of consciousness, a product of the subjective world of a person, then how can one oppose its miracle in such a case? Theologians unanimously consider this remark about D. Hume's argumentation as a sufficient basis for evaluating his 'fundamental principle' as incorrect and really unconvincing. This principle, according to theologians, is fundamentally flawed, and therefore it is unconstructive in relation to the concept of the denial of miracles, although it lies at the heart of this concept, as its systemic basis. "We now have two reasons for concluding that Hume's view of miracles is deeply flawed and inadequate:

1. Since he denies that the uniformity of nature can be established, he cannot turn round and use it to disprove miracle.
2. Since he denies necessary causation, he cannot regard nature as described by laws embodying necessary relationships that would preclude miracle", - this is how the previously mentioned ideological opponents of D. Hume - Academician David Willoughby Gooding and Professor John Lennox formulate the general conclusion [8, p. 119].

So far, we have been talking about the fundamental principles of D. Hume's reasoning about miracles. As apologists show, they have serious flaws. Divergent judgments of the philosopher regarding the miracle ultimately lead to contradictions, which undermines confidence in the validity of his theorizing. However, critics of D. Hume's theoretical explorations try to focus their attention also on the purely logical aspect of the indicated question, to measure, so to speak, its logical significance. Such an analysis, according to apologists, is designed to establish the intellectual dimension of the issue already from the standpoint of logical correspondence and to provide an opportunity to cast a judgment on the purely formal legitimacy of the philosopher's claims to the truth. In this vein, the famous Protestant theologian and expert on the history of Christianity, Josh McDowell, tries to show that D. Hume's position is untrustworthy, as it leads to serious logical misunderstandings. He sees the shortcoming of D. Hume's reasoning in his limitation of an inductive approach to reality "Hume is not arguing that miracles are impossible because the laws of nature cannot be broken. That sort of argument, as we discovered with Spinoza, begs the question. Hume, as an empiricist, is limited to an inductive approach to reality, notwithstanding truisms. And induction yields, at best, probability, not absolute certainty" [10, p. 667]. And although it is not a matter of the method as such (since it is verified by

the practice of knowledge), and not that the conclusions from inductive inferences are only probabilistic in nature (unless, of course, we are talking about full and mathematical induction), but that that D. Hume, ignoring the probability (and not the reliability, as in deductive inferences) of the conclusions of induction, from time to time relies on them with absolute confidence as reliably true knowledge.

This is especially evident in the specific type of argument that a philosopher resorts to when he defends his point of view, known as apagogic argument or *reductio ad absurdum* [driving to nonsense (lat.)]. As you know, the truth of the antithesis is first assumed here, and then all possible consequences are deduced from it. If these consequences contradict some other proposition we previously accepted as truth, then we will be forced to admit that the antithesis from which we derive the consequences is false. If the antithesis is false, then according to the law of the excluded third, the thesis will be true. Hume expresses disbelief in miracles precisely through indirect proof. He accepts as the truth the thesis of his ideological opponents - theists, about the reality of God's works. However, the derivation of consequences reveals the rarity of the miracle (antithesis); its improbability is shown by Hume in the light of the regular arrangement of nature. Since a miracle, Hume reasoned, is opposed to a real, and not just an apparent, law of nature, from which it must be an exception, then the miracle must be exceptionally improbable (which it was necessary to prove). Fundamentally important, however, is the fact, and this is probably what Josh McDowell has in mind when he criticizes D. Hume for his methodological limitations, that the position with which the antithesis is compared and ultimately opposed, and which the philosopher considers authentic true, in reality it is not. Formally, it is a consequence of a plausible inference and gives only partially justified conclusions. Its logical valence is bound by the value of probability and requires confirmation. However, D. Hume, despite what has been said, operates on it as reliably true knowledge, which is opposed to the rarity of miracles. In addition, in this proof, the demonstration procedure is far from perfect, because in fact D. Hume compares two different types of probability. "Hume confuses the probability of historical events with the way in which scientists employ probability to formulate scientific law", - Josh McDowell rightly points out [10, p. 669].

The misunderstanding here also arises due to the fact that the concept of 'probability', in its academic 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 and unlike it. The formulation of a scientific law assumes the repeatability of events, their regularity is tied to the frequency of the case - the more often the phenomenon under study is observed under similar conditions, the greater the probability of the assumption that the law expresses. So, in such a situation, the specifics of studying historical events are ignored by a specialist-historian 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. After analyzing D. Hume's specific style of argument, *summa summarum* [as a summary of everything that was discussed (lat.)], a number of critics leveled accusations at him, the amplitude of which ranges from simply deliberately prolonging the discussion [10, c. 667 - 668], up to sophistic manipulations of the opponent's opinion and his deception. Thus, specialists are sure to draw attention to the fact that D. Hume skillfully manipulates the theist when he imposes on him a belief in the natural order, without which, they say, he has no other way to distinguish a miracle. After all, if there is no order (regularity), then how to determine the deviation from it (miracle)? Miracles are therefore considered the way they are, because they are always considered as an exception to the rule, because what is full of everyday life, hardly anyone will consider a miracle. As faith, according to John Locke, brought to authenticity is destroyed, because it is no longer faith, but knowledge, so a miracle, which is completely regulated by rules, and thus becomes habitual in everyday life, is no longer a miracle. When the theist accepts D. Hume's proposal, the philosopher stuns him with the fact that the probability proposed by the theist of an apparently existing violation of natural laws must always be incomparably lower than the probability that there will be no exception to them, that is, a miracle.

The logic of D. Hume's reasoning in this regard can be reproduced as follows. The laws of nature fix regularities, but miracles as isolated events are exceptions in the usual arrangement of nature, and therefore they are extremely rare. Facts in favor of repeated and regular occurrences should always be weighted more than those of isolated events. Any sane person bases his belief on factual data. Therefore, such a person cannot believe in miracles. But here the opponents of D. Hume rightly point out that, although he theoretically assumes the possibility of a miracle, when a sufficient amount of data is found in favor of it [a miracle], the philosopher is sure from the very beginning that this will not happen - there will never be enough data, and exactly such data that would convince a reasonable person that a miracle happened, because a reasonable person knows that miracles simply do not exist. Of course, the conclusion of this inference cannot be evaluated as true, and the proof itself can be accepted as logically flawless. After all, it is obvious that in this case there is an error in reasoning 'petitio principii', or rather its special form - 'petitio principii - circulus in demonstrando' (circle in proof). This error in proof, as is known, consists in the fact that some proposition is tried to be proved with the help of an argument, which itself is proved through a thesis. His critic Clive Staples Lewis draws attention to the flaw in D. Hume's proof: "Now of course we must agree with Hume that if there is absolutely 'uniform experience' against miracles, if in other words they have never happened, why then they never have. Unfortunately, we know the experience against them to be uniform only if we know that all the reports of them are false. And we can know all the reports to be false only if we know already that miracles have never occurred. In fact, we are arguing in a circle" [9, p. 71].

Critics also consider D. Hume's position regarding the interpretation of the meaning of the concept of 'same experience' when it is opposed to a miracle to be exceptionally biased. While justifying his views on miracles, the philosopher, at the same time, claims persuasiveness based on experiential knowledge, but he

interprets the content of this experience in a rather unique way. D. Hume is sure that a miracle is something that has never happened before, because if it were not so and we had to deal with this 'something' before, then we would hardly call the commonplace a miracle. However, does D. Hume have every reason to say that miracles have never happened before? It is obvious that there are no sufficiently strong grounds for such judgments of the philosopher, and such a direction of thinking does not give reason to consider his reasoning convincing. He simply assumes as a premise what he seeks to prove. But how does he know that the miracle did not happen earlier, because such generalizations require knowledge of every event in the world since the beginning of time, which, of course, D. Hume lacks. Theologians also see a misunderstanding in the position of D. Hume in the fact that his statements against miracles do not have a solid foundation, since he does not try to show the falsity of the testimonies about miracles. D. Hume, critics point out, does not take serious steps on this path, while forgetting that this question is mostly historical, and to a lesser extent philosophical. He does not consider the persuasiveness of testimonies about miracles, but is fascinated by the statistical game. This is a situation where these or other 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, and therefore meaningless, since, as it were, 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 favor of the miracle, but only compiles (adds) evidence against the latter. But 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 favor of it can be quite convincing, and any prudent person in his intentions takes into account not only the probability, but also the facts. "What Hume seems to overlook is that wise people base their beliefs on facts, not simply on odds. Sometimes the 'odds' against an event are high (based on past observation), but the evidence for the event is otherwise very good (based on current observation or reliable testimony). Hume's argument confuses quantity of evidence with the quality of evidence. Evidence should be weighed, not added", - critics of his position also draw attention to this kind of reasoning of the thinker [10, p. 669].

3. Conclusion

In the religious consciousness of Christians at all times, the opinion that some theological provisions are not subject to direct verification and cannot be derived theoretically was quite widespread. After all, true faith does not require and does not involve either sensory visualization or sophisticated theorizing, since its depth is measured by the content of inner experience, that is, by factors of a psychological, not a logical order. And that is why rational proofs of the existence of God, his actions, miracles often did not and still do not arouse keen interest on the part of those who have experienced strong religious experiences, since they only indicate what is already known from religious experience. And this is at the

same time when their (evidence) theoretical failure, as well as the passionate criticism of their ideological opponents, are unable to shake the faith based on this experience. And yet, despite the not too high value given to rational means of confirming the facts of religious experience in the mass religious consciousness and the lack of special interest in them on the part of representatives of a wide circle of ordinary believers, the formation of a coherent and consistent doctrine as a whole and in its individual elements is considered by the clergy not only as a professional and pedagogical duty, but also, sometimes, as a lifelong vocation. Thus, in modern Christianity, much attention is paid to renewing the doctrine of miracles, which in general involves giving it such content that would not devalue it, including in the eyes of those who approach religion openly critically.

The substantiation of a miracle has been a primary task for theological thought throughout the history of Christianity. The special significance and sound of such events of the church is caused by the fact that a specific part of Christian apologetics, related to the person and teachings of God and the Savior of Christians - Jesus Christ, is based on New Testament testimonies about miracles and, first of all, on the miracle of the Resurrection. In this context, one of the directions of work carried out by religious ideologues is an attempt to fight back against those who cast a shadow on the absoluteness and infallibility of religious truths and undermine faith in miracles in the minds of unstable believers. One of the serious external challenges thrown in the direction of the religious teaching about the miracle was, as already mentioned, 'Hume's argument', which raised doubts about the reality of the miracle and was even widely recognized as a proof of the obvious impossibility of miracles.

As it was shown above, theology comes down with sharp criticism on almost every more or less valid statement of D. Hume directed against miracles. In itself, a significant array of literature, meaningfully oriented to the refutation of D. Hume's ideas, testifies to the level of tension of the efforts of religious functionaries and ideologues in the field of defending the truths of faith. After its analysis, it becomes obvious that the deep interest of the apologists here lies in the intention to show the weakness of D. Hume's theorizing and to reveal the amorphousness of his original principles. Of course, we are not talking about large-scale actions by representatives of various Christian churches, which are aimed at ideologically discrediting the position of the philosopher and not about any single program of opposing his proofs, we are talking, for the most part, about what is common in the approaches of his various opponents, which allows us to draw conclusions about the legitimacy of their criticism and the existence of grounds for it.

The thematization of criticism is connected with the intention of theologians to reveal the inadequacy of the original theoretical principles of the philosopher and to show the logical inconsistency of his argumentation, it also includes an appeal to obviousness, which contradicts the consequences that should follow from the reasoning of D. Hume. All this rather specific arsenal of tools used by theologians is designed to ultimately lead readers to the conclusion of the complete ideological bankruptcy of D. Hume's argumentation and to show the inability of the latter to act as a valid denial of miracles.

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