

GOD – ANYTHING BUT THE EVIDENCE!

The best-selling book *God the Evidence* which boasts that it has reconciled faith and reason in a post-secular world was written by Patrick Glynn. It is a pity he wasn't a lecturer in logic at the George Washington Institute for Communitarian Policy Studies or he might have done better. He was an atheist and then an agnostic for years. He should have stayed an atheist because the evidence that shook his atheism and extinguished it is not evidence at all. He displays many of the current scurrilous religious prejudices against atheists. Page 5 admits that as an agnostic he always hoped that he would be proved wrong. What he should have been hoping for was that some evidence for a life after death would come up. Who cares if God exists or not? He has practically admitted to being biased in making God seem to be a likely story.

The only argument that has any substance to it in the entire book is what amounts to the design argument for the existence of God. This time we are told that the chances of the universe produce life and having the right conditions to make life are so minute that it would be as good as impossible for life to have emerged without some intelligent God making, or planning for, the universe to produce it (page 8). It is complained that the theory of parallel universes had been set up by scientists to explain that there are so many universes and have been so many that chances are that one of them would have the capacity to make life while there is no evidence for these universes. But the parallel universe is not just about solving that problem. It is the fact that on the subatomic level things seem to be both something and the opposite at the one time that has principally led to the theory which seeks to solve the seeming contradiction. There are other reasons as well. The book admits later that the argument for parallel universes from the subatomic level is the reason why these universes are believed in (page 50). Then it moves away from this admission and decides that God is the explanation for our universe. What we are not told is why God would make something that is X and not X at the same time so the parallel universes is a better explanation. He never tried to show that God would be a simpler explanation so he was wasting paper.

The book *The Road Less Travelled* by M Scott Peck a notoriously gullible researcher is held up for our approval for being an attack on the psychiatric profession for being hostile to religious belief and trying to make mental health a separate entity from spirituality and morality and religious faith (page 11). I agree that you cannot have mental health without living the best and most helpful life you can but to let religion tag along as well is not on.

The introduction in *God the Evidence* states that faith is a gift of God and that you cannot reason your way to faith in God. He thinks that when you open your mind to God you see the evidence God offers and then you encounter God in a relationship and the result is faith and is a gift that God gave you. Witches say the same thing about faith in magic. Magic is the denial of God for it is us controlling fate. So the evidences contradict one another. Besides let us pretend that the argument does work for God. Then what God? Whose interpretation of God? Arguments like his are futile. What Glynn is really doing is assuming the evidence backs his interpretation and it is assuming because the interpretation is just assuming. He quotes the Bible as backup which shows that the Bible is a load of drivel. His belief is that reason cannot show there is a God but shows that there no objection to belief in God and makes way for it (page 19). You could believe in an impersonal intelligence instead of a God and since reason asks you to take whatever is simplest to be what is true, reason cannot therefore be said to leave the way open for God. It shuts the door and puts the bars in.

He says as an unbeliever in God he regarded conscience and living honourably as the components of a stable identity (page 15). So he found a reason to live a good life and yet he maintains that only God can be used as the ground of morality.

Chapter 2 explores his belief that the universe is far from being random for there are not many nearly impossible coincidences in it and that shows that it was made by an intelligent being. He stated that there was nothing at all random in the universe for it was all directed to produce human life (page 25). That statement is obvious nonsense for life could have been produced in a smaller universe and what do all those other galaxies in the universe have to do with life on earth? Their unnecessary existence is a sign of randomness. The universe could exist without them. Page 28 speaks of the evolution of the universe. But it does not tell us that the fact that the universe had to evolve is a far better proof that there was no intelligent creator than it is that there was such a creator. And this remains so no matter what unbelievable coincidences can be found in the universe. Here is an example. It is how even the most unimaginable minuscule difference in the substances that resulted from the big bang would have made the universe unfit for life. Even the spot on Jupiter could be thought of as an amazing coincidence though it is just the product of chance. One could say the chances of it being where it is when the universe is so big are almost nil. But such logic is obviously flawed no matter where the spot was and Jupiter was you could say the same thing. If you pretend that nothing at all exists you could say that the chances of that happening are almost nil because there is something rather than nothing therefore it was easier for there to be something rather than nothing.

Despite this, Glynn is to be commended for attacking the creation scientists' claim that the earth is very young as preposterous (page 34). Such science is more worried about making the Bible seem to be without error than about the truth.

He tells us that the physicists who seek the theory of everything – the theory that explains it all without God of course – are able to give a theory to explain three out of the four fundamental forces that make the universe the way it is but are bogged down with the fourth force which is gravity (page 39). Since gravity is the outsider he feels entitled to drop the theory search and turn to God as an explanation. What this is really saying is God is needed to explain gravity! Very confused for Glynn would like to go further than that! The assertion that scientists are presently struggling with the God theory (page 40) is preposterous for many call God what cannot be God and an intelligent designer spirit need not be a God or person. That lie is just put in for making a false good impression. The book itself never uses the standard proofs for God that Aquinas used and only makes use of the design argument.

The book argues that David Hume and the Epicureans argument that there is infinite time which gives plenty of scope for the universe to take the developed form it has today is ridiculous. The argument says that if time is long enough extremely unlikely things will happen on their own eventually and by chance. The book deplores this observation saying that infinite time would be more likely to result in one disorder and disarray after another.

The book says that it is silly to think that if a monkey was writing without beginning and without end eventually it would produce all the works of Shakespeare by pure coincidence (page 46). This misrepresents what Hume and the Epicureans were thinking. The monkey of course could develop the power to improve itself given long enough and get smart enough to write exactly what Shakespeare wrote. The result is a coincidence that is possible not nearly impossible. We must remember we may be assuming that no Shakespeare existed so we are not talking about the monkey managing to match his work for there is no work for it to match. But even then the monkey could reproduce the works of Shakespeare given long enough without knowing of him.

The next claim made by this silly book is that non-Church goes are four times more likely to commit suicide than regular worshipers, and the more spiritual people were significantly more happy in general and in their sex-lives and were less likely to divorce page 62-65). This is just a scam to smear atheism and turn society against it and similar philosophies. The unscientific nature of the book comes in these scandalous declarations because it wants to link spirituality and divine assistance with mental health without checking what other factors might explain the figures. For example, maybe the reason religious people divorce less than non-religious is because they are more influenced by people in Church who frown on that type of thing and don't want the shame. It is just worrying about what the neighbours and the congregation will say. People who live in more self-righteous communities or who know mostly people like that are generally prone to engaging in such worry. And if people are so happy because of going to Church then why are they generally so bored during the service and so reluctant to go? More often they are of a happy disposition anyway and the more religious ones will put it down to God without thinking. Most of the people in Church are hypocrites and bigots so the book is really telling us is that these qualities are healthy and good for you. Even Jesus himself said that most people would be unspiritual and damned so this research calls him a liar.

Later in the book, Glynn returns to the nonsense to which we have become accustomed. An unnamed 1972 study is outlined as a case for the healthiness of religion. Why can't he name this study? Why can't he name who undertook it and how many people were involved? And yet it is cited as showing that people who attended church have a 61% less chance of taking heart disease (page 80). Irresponsibly, we are then informed that smokers who regularly go to Church are a great deal healthier than those who do not have less chance of killing themselves with the weed (page 81). This might show that religious practice is healthy but it certainly cannot be used to prove there is a God or stand as evidence that there might be God. It evidence for mind over body and that is all. This is like a Christian Scientist who would point to the fact that Christian Scientists are happier than Christians and then take this as a clue that there is a God and that the Christian Science version of him is true. Such logic is no good for Christian Scientists are happier because they believe that evil does not exist and is an illusion and they help themselves to "see" that evil is harmless for it is not real. The help is not because of God at all but down to delusion.

The book later admits that meditation puts your brain into the state of alpha which gives of well-being and that many people mediation using non-religious and religious mantras can have an increased spiritual feeling (page 85). Church services can be very relaxing and hypnotic as can prayer especially the rosary. We cannot assume that prayer is what is to be thanked for these benefits for they could be replicated and improved by other techniques. The mantra functions at its best when it is accompanied by a religious faith we are told (page 87). But faith is no good without optimism so one may as well be optimistic in the first place without appeal to religious faith or any specific faith.

The next hilarious claim of the book is that some illusions are beneficial for mental health and cites optimism as one. Yet it agrees with Freud that a mentally healthy mind is a mind that is free from illusions (page 72-73). Optimism is not an illusion for life is more good than bad and it is even better if you find a cure for at least most of your negative feelings. Books like Tony deMello's Awareness and The Gospel According to Atheism show how this can be done without illusions. God the Evidence is trying to get the God belief encouraged even if it is an illusion. It is trying to make a case for legitimate insanity. But legitimate insanity is a contradiction in terms.

The books tries to claim that praying for people even when they don't know that they are being prayed for helps them and is a clue that there is a God. It admits that the studies that demonstrate this are requiring mechanical prayer (page 92). To pray for some people and not others and some part of an experiment seems plain evil. Prayers like that would be black magic if they worked. And nobody really knows if the ones who are not being prayed for are being prayed for by someone who is not in on the experiment or involved. If they are, the experiment fails.

Next on Glynn's agenda is to show that near death experiences prove there is a God. These experiences all contradict each other and there must be a huge number who come around after nearly dying and imagine AFTERWARDS that something happened. Some people just make it all up. The contradictions show there is something wrong. The vision of a being of light who does not care what evil you have done in life shows that the experience is spiritually unreliable. The cases where Jesus is sending somebody to Hell and then sends them back to their body for a second chance ignores the fact that they were not actually dead! And Christian doctrine is firm - you damn yourself forever if you die in serious sin and even God cannot give you a second chance. The Bible says you die once and are judged then. The problems with these visions are absolute proof that visions are not reliable.

Glynn then says that reason is not the source of moral value and is not a reliable guide to what is right (page 166). He then says it does not free the mind from the desire to be cruel. We get bad desires because we don't or can't think carefully enough before we form judgements and how we are going to live in the world. The Gospel According to Atheism plainly shows that reason does verify the truth about right and wrong and does it without God so reason gives us sensible perception about what is right and what is wrong. Although reason will not make you good it should for evil is nothing more than a misperceived good anyway. And is the point of thinking you are unless you have reason to be sure what good is? Reason is a reliable guide. It is the way it is twisted that is bad and that is anti-reason.

God the Evidence, Patrick Glynn, Forum, California, 1999

GOD A GUIDE FOR THE PERPLEXED Keith Ward, OneWorld, Oxford, 2003