

## THE RELIGIOUS SCEPTICISM OF DAVID HUME IS ONLY COMMONSENSE

Hume tried to point out that a miracle could be true but it remains most likely somebody is lying or making a mistake. That is obvious. But Christians try to avoid it. Some however are nicer towards Hume than others.

“One point on which Hume was surely correct is that we ought to have a powerful bias against the miraculous” quote from Stephen A Davis in Jesus’ Resurrection: Fact or Fiction. Even Christians agree. But then they turn around and turn books that could have been selective with the facts into evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. The gospels do not get the dismissal or neutrality that other similar books would get. The gospels do not even claim to be using the testimony of eyewitnesses. Even if there are many miracles we should believe in, the resurrection is not one of them.

### NO EVIDENCE GOOD ENOUGH?

Did Hume simply assume that no evidence is good enough for miracles?

Religion says that Hume was guilty of saying that no evidence would please him enough before he could believe in a miracle. What else can it say? It is accusing him of being unfair. It says he should look at the evidence before saying that.

He was only saying he has seen no evidence that would suffice. Nothing wrong with that. Hume was not ignoring evidence. He was saying that testimony to a miracle is evidence for it but it is not enough to disprove the thesis that a mistake has been made or a lie been told. He did not oppose evidence for miracles only that the evidence compels you to think a miracle really happened.

He said that evidence says nature works as if it has laws. He was saying the evidence for miracles is overwhelmed by that evidence.

HIS ARGUMENT WAS ABOUT EVIDENCE SO HE ASSUMES SUPERNATURAL INTERFERENCE WITH OR PLANTING OF EVIDENCE DOES NOT HAPPEN. IF IT DOES YOU CAN NEVER TRUST EVIDENCE. THUS IT IS SLANDER FOR RELIGION TO SAY HE ARBITRARILY REJECTED THE EVIDENCE FOR MIRACLES. HE ARGUED AS HE DID TO GIVE THE SEARCH FOR EVIDENCE FOR THE MIRACULOUS OR NON-MIRACULOUS SOME INTEGRITY.

Hume was not denying the existence of evidence for miracles that is good enough. Religion says there is such evidence. Hume was open to that evidence. Religion slanders him by claiming he was saying there is no such thing as evidence that is good enough to indicate a miracle. He was not dismissing evidence for the miraculous arbitrarily or unfairly. He was being fair. It is religion that is unfair.

### METHODOLOGY

Some say Hume was not on about evidences for miracles at all. He was on about methodology in the treatment of evidence. If so then it is about anything like miracles as well as miracles. It would apply to a claim that drinking water from a certain well reduces your biological age by five years. We have to make presumptions before we can work with evidence. One presumption is that the magical does not happen. We could be wrong. But we need the presumption. Without it we will be all over the place and make others as bad as ourselves.

It is false to claim that Hume was saying that evidences for miracles are no good. He says that if they are good then they are not good enough.

Some say the problem with Hume is that he considers the evidence for miracles on its own. He isolates it from other facts and factors and possibilities that can cast light on it.

What they want goes something like this. They say Hume should have reasoned that all things come from nothing which implies a creator. The creator created natural law and so he can suspend or alter it. This does not prove he ever suspends it or alter it but maybe he does.

So we are told that the gist of all that reasoning is that belief in miracles is not illogical. But this is not the gist at all. All things coming from nothing does not in itself prove a creator. Also, if the creator can suspend natural laws, we have no

reason to assume that he does. He might have a reason we don't know of that makes doing miracles illogical. After all he is the smart one and our intelligence is limited. Also, if miracles are logical that still does not mean they happen or have happened.

The believers in God say that the problem with Hume is that he has made up his mind that there is no God outside of nature, no supernatural God, who can do miracles. They say he assumes there is nothing but nature. They say that if he is right that there is nothing but nature then we can indeed believe that it is more likely that a lie has been told or a mistake made when a miracle seems to have happened. We can say the miracle claim is rubbish.

This is not true - Hume's problem is that a miracle is hard to believe by definition so it needs exceptional evidence and human testimony alone however good is not good enough. This does not deny that miracles might have happened.

## HOW UNIFORM IS NATURE?

Is nature so uniform that if a miracle happens we are extremely unlikely to notice it or find it? Obviously yes. You can suggest somebody rose from the dead in the past but nobody noticed for it was away back 5 million years BC or on another world. Thus it is very hard to believe a witness to a miracle.

Some say that Hume apparently assumed that nature is totally uniform or so uniform that the chance of us seeing a miracle even if they do happen is impossible or almost impossible. They argue that he is guessing this and cannot know how uniform or otherwise nature is. They say he would need to be there at every event in the universe no matter how small or otherwise to know that. But he is not saying he knows it. He is merely saying it makes sense to assume nature is uniform and acts like it follows laws. Better to assume that than the alternative.

Believers say that he should assume nature is uniform but not always thus allowing for miracles. But why assume miracles? Why not assume that nature is sometimes disordered or does the opposite of what it usually does? If you assume that the oak tree loses its leaves by the end of October, that does not mean that any leaf that is still there in November is there by a miracle.

The ludicrous Christian book Gunning for God argues that nature might not be uniform thus miracles happen which is totally illogical. Even if it is not uniform, it still does not back up the notion of supernatural intervention or allow for it. Supernatural intervention if possible, will happen whether nature is uniform or not. If nature is not uniform then it follows that if a dead man really rises from the dead then its somehow within nature's power to raise him so there is no need to assume there is a God to do it.

