

MIRACLES IN THE LIGHT OF "THERE IS A GOD" BY ANTONY FLEW

Antony Flew one of the great philosophers argued for atheism and soon before his death in 2010 brought out the book *There is a God* in which he advocated what amounts to an argument for a designer God. It falls short of what Christians want to believe in but they still hail him as evidence that their belief is not as silly as many think. The work has implications for belief in such miracles as the creation and others. A miracle is something that nature cannot do. So it is presumed that some God or magical being can do it.

Here is a look at what the book says.

Xxi rejects Dawkin's view that nobody deserves the name of scientist if he believes in God.

I SAY, If a scientist believes that God is to be loved and obeyed with your entire mind then he is saying that God not science has the final say. If God contradicts science then science must be dumped. A scientist who says God is a plausible scientific theory which can explain all things is talking nonsense and is not being a scientist. The whole point of saying God made all things from nothing is to use miracle, the impossible, as an explanation! If something cannot come from nothing, it explains nothing to say a miracle of God brought something out of nothing. All you are doing is contradicting yourself for there is nothing there for it to be made of. You are tricking people by making it look like you are giving an explanation. It is like saying, God has made a square triangle. How can we explain this? Its a miracle. There is no explanation for what is a contradiction!

If creation is a miracle so what does that mean? It means we should say we don't understand it and say no more. We need pretend that miracles don't happen even if they do. If we believe in miracle, then what if we do a once for all science experiment? How do we know what we can learn from it if there is any chance a miracle interfered and ruined the results? It may be very unlikely but if miracles happen rarely before they could start becoming regular events or maybe have done. Science assumes that after enough experiments have been done the same results will come up again.

Believers in miracles have the dishonesty to assume miracles are rare. We don't know if miracles are really rare, assuming miracles happen. If people see the chair coming to life and dancing around the room they are not likely to broadcast it. The believers in miracles complain that atheists assume miracles don't happen. They complain that some people assume they happen so often that they become mad and fanatical. So they want to avoid both extremes.

Why is it bad to assume say that miracles don't happen? Is it because they do? But if you assume miracles are rare, you are possibly assuming that many real miracles did not happen. So why not go a step further and agree with the atheists that all miracles are false? When the believers have to assume to teach us that miracles happen but rarely, why do they think atheists should not assume miracles don't happen at all? Nobody can tell anybody what they should assume for assuming really like guessing. The fact that they criticise atheists for assuming something they don't like shows that bigotry, haughtiness and acceptance of miracles all go together.

It is more honest to assume with the atheists that miracles don't happen than to assume they occasionally happen. If you believe miracles are rare, you are picking out the miracles you want to believe or that fit your religion and discarding the rest. It is not miracles you care about but what you want to believe. The atheist position has the advantage of avoiding this dishonesty. It is wrong to state things as evidence for your faith when your wish to believe is the real reason to believe not them.

To say a miracle happened is to say something very very serious. It is more serious than saying somebody committed a murder for a murder is natural but a miracle is not natural and very very bizarre. You should not then be assuming they happen at all. You should say you just don't know what kind of error or trickery was involved. Religion just guesses that miracles can't all be error and trickery. The believer will say a miracle occurred in situation A because the witnesses could not be misled or mistaken. This is wrong when they have no case just as convincing that they know was a hoax in which no evidence was left that the witnesses were mistaken or tricked. They just guess that a miracle happened and then they expect us to believe the event was a miracle and evidence for God.

Its bad to assume miracles are common and that miracles are rare. So clearly the only alternative is to assume they never happen. You may say that it is hardly honest to assume that miracles don't happen when many of them may have happened. But then you may say that believers are dishonest for saying miracles sometimes happen for they don't happen or happen more than that. So no matter what you say you can accuse of dishonesty! Anyway, as we have seen, we can't assume miracles may have happened. If you say you should assume nothing one way or the other then you are saying that miracles

may happen or may not.

Hume said that no evidence for a miracle is ever sufficient for a miracle is so extraordinary that you need evidence for it that is just as miraculous. This is true. Nature says a bleeding statue is a contradiction. Miracles are contradictions. You would need extreme evidence and perfect evidence before you could justly say such a thing happened. Religion accuses Hume of making an assumption in saying the evidence for miracles is never enough though it is plain he is not making an assumption. You may as well say that it is an assumption that you need very strong watertight evidence to convict somebody of murder for murder is such a serious crime. Believers in miracles are forced to tell the lie that Hume is assuming there isn't good enough evidence by their very belief in miracles. How decent and honest are they? If the miracles happen, whatever is doing them is unworthy of worship.

We need to ignore miracles for the sake of being able to trust the milk in the fridge to remain milk and not turn into blood. Belief in miracle destroys the value and the meaning of science. For Flew to start claiming that science indicates the possibility of God is to make an inexcusable and dangerous mistake. That is making science contradict itself.

Influenza

Flew stated on page 2 that he does not believe in an afterlife.

It is good that Flew tries to weed out a fallacious danger in the thought of many philosophers. This thought claims that we can know nothing for sure in matters of philosophy. It claims it on the grounds that there is always somebody who won't be persuaded or convinced (page 41). They think that there is no way to know that one philosopher is right and another wrong. He reminds us that a proof is still a proof even if people don't accept it. Creating a proof is a different thing to persuading a person that the proof works.

Page 46-47 is where Flew mentions the seeming incompatibility of the existence of evil with God. He mentions the view of Mascall that evil counting against God's goodness may not mean that God and evil are incompatible.

I object to Mascall for the evil is so serious that it does mean evil and a perfect God are incompatible. Mascall would make sense if he was thinking of a scenario where the husband's love for his wife is not diminished or to be questioned because of his small mistakes in his treatment of her. Religion and belief in God, whether they mean to or not, trivialise gross evil.

Suppose you have a suspect for a murder who really is guilty of it. Mascall would say that his good deeds will count against his guilt but will still be compatible with his being guilty.

They are not completely compatible with his guilt. In so far as the good deeds do count against his guilt they are incompatible with it. Just because he really was guilty will not prove that the good deeds did not count against it or were not compatible. There is always some doubt when we give evidence for something. What is important is that the evidence be analysed so well that the doubts will be very much diminished and made unimportant.

A man can be guilty but his good deeds can cast some doubt on his guilt. That is because he is an imperfect man. With God it is different because he is supposed to be all-perfect. A single evil that cannot be called tolerable in any sense or be said to have a purpose disproves God even if there is nothing else but good. God himself set a very high standard in the Bible when he said that a predictor of the future who is speaking for him must make no errors at all. One error entitled the people to reject the prophet for God makes no mistakes. Evils are errors - they are what should not be.

Flew's Deism

Flew is a Deist not a Theist. A Deist believes in a God who makes all things but who does not do miracles, give revelations or answer prayer. A Theist believes in a God who does all these things. Deism is more rational than theism. Theism has the stupid idea that God loves us though he hides himself and that this is good for us for it requires us to have faith and not knowledge. If God is love that means it must be bad for us to know that love. That of course is crazy.

Deism tends to reject the idea of a God doing miracles but this is weakened if they say God could do that. He has the power. And it is weakened if it takes to saying he has done one miracle - create all out of nothing.

For Christianity Today to award Flew's book and promote it and for Christians to be boasting that Flew agrees with them on God is scandalous. He does not. The God of Deism is not the God of Jesus Christ. Flew does say at the end of the book that God might give revelation for God is all-powerful. Many Deists have said and say the same but they hold there is no convincing evidence that any religion is really based on what God has revealed. Flew has let himself be turned into a banner for a faith when he is not a proper banner at all. The Christian faith is lying and giving false impressions about him.

