

Miracles By C.S. Lewis

Flow of the Argument

Chapter 11:

I. The Big Idea

a. The difference between Tradition and a living faith

II. “Those who make religion their god will not have God for their religion” Thomas Erskine

a. Popular Religion

1. God is abstract

i. God is truth

ii. God is goodness

iii. God is a spiritual force pervading all things

2. Makes God impersonal

i. impersonal gods make no demands

ii. impersonal gods are more “comfortable” than a god who demands of us

iii. hence, impersonal gods are more preferable

3. this kind of religion is really pantheism

i. “the fact that the shoe slips on easily does not prove that it is a new shoe” (131)

ii. pantheism is the permanent “natural bent” of the human mind (132)

iii. only religions to refute pantheism

a. Platonism

b. Judaism

c. Christianity (the only truly formidable opponent)

4. Pantheism leads to immoral behavior

i. racism

ii. German racial nationalism (Sprach Zarathustra)

5. Christian vs Pantheistic view of God

i. Pantheists believe that God is present everywhere because he is diffused or concealed within everything

ii. Christians believe that God is totally present at every point of space and time but not locally present anywhere (no place or time can contain the fullness of God)

6. Good theology is a nuisance to the fancies of popular religion

i. true historian is a nuisance to one reminiscing about the “good old days”

ii. real musician is nuisance to one indulging in self-taught music

iii. truth vs. preference

iv. “IF God is the ultimate source of all concrete, individual things and events, then God himself must be concrete and individual in the highest degree. Unless the origin of all other things were itself concrete and individual, nothing

else could be so; for there is no conceivable means whereby what is abstract or general could itself produce concrete reality.” (138-9)

- v. God “is not a universal being: if he were there would be no creatures, for a generality can make nothing.
- vi. The Limpet analogy (142-143) –note that a Limpet is a marine slug
- vii. must have a conception of what something is to say what it is not
- viii. the ultimate spiritual realities are more real, not less real than physical existence
- ix. Note that this is the Rubicon that you cross—once you reject pantheism, you find yourself crossing into Christianity

Chapter 12:

I. The Big Idea

- a. Are Miracles “acceptable” to a mighty God?

II. Would God break his own scientific laws

- a. difference between elementary rules taught to schoolboys and deeper rules employed by the masters for the purpose of style
- b. God created the universe intentionally for a relationship with himself
- c. Science is not the rule that constrained God’s creation; science is the byproduct of God’s orderly creative work
- d. “if miracles do occur then we may be sure that not to have wrought them would be the real inconsistency” (155)
- e. we don’t understand God’s deeper plan because “it is a very long story, with a complicated plot; and we are not, perhaps, very attentive readers.” (158)

Chapter 13:

I. The Big idea

- a. The probability of miracles is not the question, it is how fit miracles may seem to one’s mind

II. Nature and uniformity

- a. “the fact that a thing had happened ten million times would not make it a whit more probable that it would happen again” (162)
- b. “Experience therefore cannot prove uniformity because uniformity has to be assumed before experience proves anything” (163)
- c. we have a sense of “fitness” about the way things go, so all things must be consistent with that fitness if our minds will readily accept them
- d. If God is “a rational Spirit and we derive our rational spirituality from it, then indeed our conviction can be trusted. Our repugnance to disorder is derived from Nature’s creator and ours.” (168)
- e. “Even those who think all stories of miracles absurd think some very much more absurd than others: even those who believe them all (if anyone does) think that some require a specially robust faith. The criterion which

both parties are actually using is that of fitness.” (171)

Chapter 14: The Grand Miracle

I. The Big Idea

- a. the Incarnation is the grand miracle of all from which all other miracles stem from or lead up to

II. The Incarnation is the Grand Miracle

- a. greatest importance
- b. the supernatural coming down and becoming part of nature for a time

III. Patterns of this in Nature

- a. Descent/ascent (death/rebirth)
 1. the corn god motif
 2. phoenix
 3. life and rebirth in nature
- b. chosen-ness/God's selectiveness
 1. selectiveness in nature
 2. selectiveness in redemptive history
- c. Vicarious nature
 1. exploitation and oppression
 2. kindness and gratitude

IV. How other religions respond to these themes

- a. Natural religions deify them
- b. anti-religions deny them
- c. Christianity explains them as illuminated by supernatural

V. Original vs. Imitation

- a. Christianity is the original pattern from which all other cultic religions get their start, not the other way around
- b. Christianity as the one true “myth” that really did happen

Chapter 15&16:

I. The Big Idea

- a. Miracles can be divided in many different ways
 1. classes
 - a. fertility
 - b. healing
 - c. destruction
 - d. dominion over inorganic
 - e. reversal
 - f. perfecting/glorification
 2. Old and New creation
 - a. Old Creation= a reflection of what God has already done in nature on a vast scale
 - b. New Creation= pointing toward that which is to come
- b. note importance of these chapters for apologetic arguments

Chapter 17:

I. The Big Idea

a. You are now prepared, having dealt with the philosophical aspects, to deal with the historical question. Yet, if you do, make sure that you re-teach yourself what you have been taught for so many years by the culture. Reject Everythingism as something that offers nothing.

Appendix A:

The different usages of the term “Spirit” and we must define our terms and say what we mean by the word spirit when we use it in dialogue

Appendix B:

On Providential matters—understand the difference between first and second causes and how Lewis is defining Providence as the miraculous and thus rejects providence.

Also understand Lewis’ analogy of the curved lines running parallel to one another and how God views history from the outside, not being bound to it.