



Reflections

April 2013 - *Science and Miracles Go Together*

In rejecting the idea of miracles or supernatural intervention from the realm of possibility, C.S. Lewis argues that some scientists have mistaken a partial system of reality, Nature, for the whole of all that exists. He writes,

“If the laws of Nature are necessary truths, no miracle can break them: but then no miracle needs to break them. It is with them as with the laws of arithmetic. If I put six pennies into a drawer on Monday and six more on Tuesday, the laws decree that... I shall find twelve pennies there on Wednesday. But if the drawer has been robbed I may in fact find only two. Something will have been broken (the lock of the drawer or the laws of England) but the laws of arithmetic will not have been broken. The new situation created by the thief will illustrate the laws of arithmetic just



as well as the original situation. But if God comes to work miracles, He comes “like a thief in the night.” Miracle is, from the point of view of the scientist, a form of doctoring, tampering, (if you like) cheating. It introduces a new factor into the situation, namely supernatural force, which the scientist had not reckoned on. He calculates what will happen, or what must have happened on a past occasion, in the belief that the situation, at that point of space and time, is or was A. But if supernatural force has been added, then the situation really is or was AB. And no one knows better than the scientist that AB *cannot* yield the same result as A. The necessary truth of the laws, far from making it impossible that miracles should occur, makes it certain that if the Supernatural is operating they must occur. For if the natural situation by itself, and the natural situation *plus* something else, yielded only the same result, it would be then that we should be faced with a lawless and unsystematic universe... This perhaps helps to make a little clearer what the laws of Nature really are... They produce no events: they state the pattern to which every event... must conform, just as the rules of arithmetic state the pattern to which all transactions with money must conform... The divine art of miracle is not an art of suspending the pattern to which events conform but of feeding new events into that pattern... The reason (some) find it intolerable is that they start by taking Nature to be the whole of reality. And they are sure that all reality must be interrelated and consistent. I agree with them. But I think they have mistaken a partial system within reality, namely Nature, for the whole... The great complex event called Nature, and the new particular event introduced into it by the miracle, are related by their common origin in God... By definition, miracles must of course interrupt the usual course of Nature; but if they are real they must, in the very act of so doing, assert all the more the unity and self-consistency of total reality at some deeper level.”

An example of Lewis’s logic is the miraculous conception of Jesus in the virgin, Mary, and the natural nine-month pregnancy which followed. Both had their origin in God. God’s natural laws and His miracles go hand in hand.

*Seek the LORD and his strength; seek his presence continually!
Remember the wondrous works that he has done, his miracles.*

1 Chronicles 16:11-12 (ESV)

¹ C.S. Lewis. *Miracles*. Touchstone: New York, 1996, pp. 79-82.