

The Nativity of the Lord
Monday, December 25, 2017, Year B
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(read clipping, “Leading Atheist Professes Belief”)

Well, yes. I must agree with Professor Flew that if the complexity of the universe can only be explained by a pre-existing super-intelligence, then that super-intelligence must be ... intelligent, and so would do what it does for a purpose, and so could be described as personal. But beyond that Flew will not fly. He is a deist, like Thomas Jefferson. God exists, created the universe, but He then let the mechanism of the universe do its thing. Otherwise, if God were actively involved in people’s lives, if God had any personal expectations of an elderly British philosophy professor such as the God of the Christians or of the Muslims might, why then God would be some kind of omnipotent Oriental despot, a cosmic Saddam Hussein.

But whether God is a tyrant depends not on His power but on His purposes. Why did God create the universe, featuring creatures with intelligence and purpose, being in that respect like God Himself? Was it just to boss them around? Let's start with the God of Islam.

The Koran, and Muslim commentators on the Koran, say that Allah wills everything that happens, good and bad. Every breeze that blows, every move you make, every thought you think is willed by Allah from all eternity. Allah wills that some should believe and so enter paradise, and He wills that others should not believe and so enter hell. His human creatures are but slaves who do not need to know their Master's reasons.

(see “Answering Islam”, by Geisler and Saleeb, 1993, p. 29, quoting Al-Ghazzali)

Some early Muslims theologians argued that humans had free will, seeing no sense in eternal punishment or reward if we are not responsible for our own actions. These theologians were denounced for wanting to make man like God, for if humans could make real choices of their own, they would be creators of deeds, but only Allah can create anything. If humans had free will, intelligence, purpose, they would be like Allah; but nothing can be in any way even remotely like Allah, and so predestination became Muslim orthodoxy. To suggest that humans are in the image of Allah is a terrible sin.

So, what was Allah's purpose in creating if everything in creation is pre-programmed by Him, and you are rewarded or punished for eternity for choices you did not choose? Was it just to boss us around? Please understand that I'm only quoting Antony Flew when I say that this does sound like an omnipotent Oriental despot.

How about the God of the Christian? A despot? The child in the manger? One wonders

what kind of divine despot would humble himself to be born in human flesh; submit himself to the parenting of His own creatures; preach a message of love and forgiveness; reason with His enemies in hopes of winning their free assent; accept persecution, suffering, and death; all in order to follow through on His purpose in creating human beings-- which was to share the joy of knowing and loving with creatures in His image and likeness.

Only an omnipotent God could do this. No tyrant God would do this. God's infinite power and intelligence, his benevolent purpose, His consistent and absolutely reliable love, are all summed up in the child in the manger of Bethlehem. Merry Christmas!