

Letter from Babylon



Reflections on living in a land under judgment

by 'Mishael'

Miracles are quite common here in Babylon. Discernment is much harder to come by.

The 'miracle babies' of Archbishop Gilbert Deya have reached the public consciousness, not only gaining headlines, but triggering investigations into child trafficking both here and in Kenya. Joel Edwards of the Evangelical Alliance even wrote in the last edition of PT to distance Evangelicals from these dubious claims.

The wishful thinking of infertile couples is understandable, but the staunch defence of these 'miracles' by health professionals in Deya's congregation is harder to condone. All kinds of warning signs are there: these pregnancies are undetectable by the normal medical means of chemical tests, ultrasound and good old clinical examination. All the mothers are spirited off to a back-street clinic in Nairobi and deliver their babies without the usual pains of labour. Babies have died soon after birth, and been miraculously replaced within weeks. Birth certificates have apparently been forged. Most telling of all, the babies' DNA bears no relationship to that of the parents. If you're not a scientist that means 'No family resemblance'.

Archbishop Deya's reply to all this is, 'It's a miracle'. The same reply that Guru Maharaj Ji gave years ago when smuggled jewels were found in his luggage. Who would buy a used car from either of them? Many Christians would, it would seem. When a hostile media pours scorn on miracles occurring in church, something in us responds, 'Well, there *might* just be something in it – God can do anything.' I caught myself saying it, and I'm sure I'm not the only one, or Joel would not have felt the need to advise us to use our common sense to judge.

In the 17th century, a farm girl became famous for giving birth to a succession of rabbits and other furry creatures, and convinced many it was miraculous. We don't believe that for a second, of course. But though it seems Deya appointed himself an archbishop, he does give God the glory for the miracles, and on his website the power of the blood of Jesus is extolled. That seems to make us unwilling to condemn him outright.

But actually, **we ought to be proclaiming**

'blasphemous lies!' from the highest rooftop, because the name of Jesus Christ is being brought into disrepute. Almost as bad, while believers are duped by false signs and wonders, the majority of unbelievers see through them and tar all evangelicals by the same brush.

We have only ourselves to blame for this. Many false miracles are claimed as God's work in churches every week, and false prophecies too. We have become gullible because we think that to test the spirits means to lack faith, whereas the opposite is true. We say that a particular ministry must be of God because of the miracles that accompany it. But Deuteronomy 13 tells us that the test of a prophet is not his signs and wonders, but his adherence to the word of God. In other words, doctrine validates miracles – not the reverse! Archbishop Deya's website shows his doctrine to be weak on the cross, on grace and on repentance (except for the sin of doubting archbishops!), but strong on prosperity, exorcism and donations. But is the same not true of many more mainstream ministries? Is Archbishop Deya not identified by the press as 'evangelical' because he resembles some 'evangelicals' too closely?

It is a common expectation in our churches that prophecies will be partly of God, and partly human. Yet Deuteronomy 18 tells us that if a prophecy does not come true, the message is not from God, and the prophet has spoken presumptuously. In Deuteronomy such a prophet is to be put to death – in our churches he's encouraged to try again. **Why are we so much wiser than the Scriptures?**

Jesus warns us in Matthew 20 to look out for false prophets performing miracles and signs in the last days. He's talking about signs done in His name, not by Satanists or pagans. The miracles are false not because they don't occur – though demonic power more often operates through fraud than supernatural agency – but because they support a false version of Christ.

'To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.' (Isai 8:20) It's a telling judgement on Christians nowadays that they rate doctrine so cheaply that they are unable to tell when prophets are speaking from the darkness. 