

Faith&Thought



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In this issue:

**Christian belief in the afterlife in the light of
Science & Philosophy**

Reg Luhman



FAITH and THOUGHT

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Editorial

When you receive this copy of the journal Christians throughout the world will be remembering the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It seems appropriate, therefore, that our main article in this issue should concentrate on the question of the Christian belief in the afterlife. The study started out as a response to a previous article by one of our council members, the Rev. Dr. Robert Allaway. Perhaps you have been challenged or provoked by something that has appeared in the journal or, like our honorary secretary, by what is happening in the world about us. If so, why don't you write to the editor? We are always looking for contributions - either letters or full-blown articles on issues relating to Science and the Christian Faith.

We have back numbers of both *Faith and Thought* and of *Science and Christian Belief* for sale. Please apply to the editor.

October Special Edition

We will be publishing a special edition of *Faith and Thought* in October 2007 which will consist of the papers given in October 2006 at the symposium 'Christian Perspectives on Pain'. In addition we intend to publish a number of the papers given at the 2004 'Symposium on Biblical Archaeology'. This will be given free to all subscribers to the journal and will be available for purchase by others.

Joint Symposium on Sustainability

The papers given at this symposium in 2005 are to be published in book form. The book will be entitled *When Enough is Enough* and will be edited by Professor R.J.Berry and published by IVP in April 2007. (pb. 192pp. £11.99 ISBN 978.1.84474.180.9)

New Members

Robert Bradshaw B.Sc.	West Wickham, Kent
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Mrs. M.E.Richards	Windsor, Berkshire
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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

Although in this publication Christian faith issues are mainly focussed upon new discoveries in and around science, papers have been presented to the Institute on other topics, e.g. Reasoning Towards Moral Truths - May 1970; Moral Education and the Education of Character - February 1971; Sex Education and Counselling - May 1978. As many will appreciate, these titles speak to the challenge an amoral government poses for Bible believing Christians in 2007 through its Equality Act and Sexual Orientation Regulations.

Its aim: to eliminate discrimination in the supply of goods and services to single sex partnerships. Unfortunately, because the government prefers the pursuit of equality over the grace of tolerance, many Christians in Northern Ireland will suffer criminality and fines as lesbians and gays lodge complaints that some continue to refuse to aid and abet their chosen lifestyle, one which Bible believing Christians know is not authorised within scripture. What a sorry situation for a nation to be reduced to; Britain, once known as the cradle of democracy, with a noble heritage of Christian reformers and missionary enterprise, reduced to a tussle between government and

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judiciary over the right to free speech and conscience with integrity. At the time of writing It is not certain what the outcome will be and it may not be known by the time you read this. What is certain, the same situation is planned for England and Wales within weeks.

The leader of the Catholic church challenged the government with the statement that what it has brought into law is contrary to its doctrine and teaching. What a pity the opportunity for a joint statement with the Catholic and Anglican churches, with the evangelical churches throughout the land was missed - and that it related solely to the issue of adoption.

This anti-discrimination legislation discriminates against Christian believers who will not act contrary to their conscience in everyday life. We do not condone or condemn civil partnerships but seek to remain true, in our teaching and manner of life, to what scripture teaches us, and adhere to the grace of tolerance, which in a democracy until now, has been the means by which opposing convictions peaceably coexist.

At the heart of this issue lies the early revelation in the book of Genesis, restated by our Lord Jesus Christ, that we are made in God's image, made for relationships, made male and female, for love and constancy, that a man will leave his parents and is to cleave to his wife and to no other. The state has enacted civil partnerships, but God has given us marriage - holy and honourable.

Brian H T Weller

FAITH AND THOUGHT

(THE VICTORIA INSTITUTE)

**ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE
NEW TESTAMENT**

OPEN SYMPOSIUM

Saturday 6th October 2007

The First Christians-Archaeologically Invisible?
Palestinian Archaeology and the New Testament
Who Were the Philippians?
Paul and the Corinthians in the Light of Archaeology.

Professor Alan Millard
Dr. John Kane
Dr. Peter Oakes
Dr. Paul Winter

10.00 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.

**Methodist Church House 25, Marylebone Road,
London NW1**

Registration fee £15.00 (Full Time Students £7.00) including coffee and tea.

Lunch: there are restaurants in the area; sandwiches are obtainable locally; a room will be available for packed lunches.

The registration fee will be refunded to anyone joining the Institute (FAITH AND THOUGHT) on the day of the symposium.

Booking: The Rev. J. Buxton, 15 The Drive, Harlow Essex CM20 3QD
Tel: 01279 422661 Email j.buxton@virgin.net

Christian Belief in the Afterlife in the Light of Science and Philosophy

Reg Luhman

In his stimulating article, "A Pastor's view of 'the Mind'" Dr. Bob Allaway abandons the traditional Christian teaching of 'body and mind' (dichotomy/dualism) or 'body, mind and spirit' (trichotomy) in favour of a monist view. The popular (dualist) view is that we have a body that will die, but we also have a soul that lives on. He claims that, "... both science and the Bible contradict this." (1) In taking this viewpoint he joins a growing number of influential members of the Victoria Institute and Christians in Science. A two year project (The Portraits of Human Nature Project) was undertaken by a number of these scientists, who explored a monist alternative which they hoped would faithfully reflect current thinking in neuroscience and yet still be true to the Bible. The results were presented at a joint meeting of *Christians in Science* and the *American Scientific Affiliation*. Monism is often presented as a reductionist thesis, that is to say that all talk about mind or soul can be 'reduced' to talk about brain events. One of the perceived consequences of this is hard determinism, which is the view that every thought and action is theoretically predictable and there is no such thing as human free moral choice. Christians involved in the project wanted to avoid such conclusions and advocated a view, which they called 'nonreductive physicalism'. This claims that, "...it is not necessary to postulate a second metaphysical entity, the soul or the mind, to account for human capacities and distinctiveness. Soul (mind) is physiologically embodied. However a 'non-reductive' version of physicalism presumes that human behaviour cannot be exhaustively explained by analysis at lower levels (neurobiology). Higher level explanations supervene on lower levels."(2) Put more simply what they are saying is that, although thinking and deciding are dependent on neural processes, they are also causal in their own right. As our brains become larger and more complex new forms of information processing and behavioural regulation emerges.

One of the problems involved in abandoning the traditional Christian teaching is to make a good case for post-mortem survival. The object of this essay is not to evaluate the relative merits of dualism or the various interpretations and shortcomings of monism, which I briefly attempted some time ago (3), but rather to focus on the Christian belief in the afterlife in the light of criticisms levelled against it from science and philosophy.

Exorcising the 'Ghost in the Machine'

The term 'ghost in the machine' was coined by Gilbert Ryle (4) to describe the dualism of Rene Descartes (Cartesian Dualism). Descartes thought that a person consisted of a body and a soul. The body is a complex, unconscious machine extended in space, whereas the soul is the seat of reason, emotion, will and consciousness and is a non-physical, indivisible entity. He acknowledged that the mind affects the body and is

affected by the body and that mind and body interact with each other in the pineal gland. Ryle believed that Cartesian dualism results from a logical confusion and that mind has no independent existence. For Ryle the mind functions as a collective noun defining what we do, or are disposed to do, with our bodies.

Malcolm Jeeves, a professor of psychology and a vice-president of the Victoria Institute, has presented the case for a monist interpretation of mind-body relationship in a number of articles. He believes the case for monism is overwhelming but nevertheless admits that, "There are certainly no knockdown arguments that prove conclusively that mind-brain dualism is wrong and that a more nuanced view of mind-brain independence is right." (5) The case for the dependence of mind events on brain events was first noted by the Roman anatomist Galen and can be demonstrated in numerous ways. Allaway gives various examples, such as the effect of alcohol, the results of physical damage to a part of the brain and the changes in personality that result from dementia. Jeeves shows that the effects can be two-way, the brain influencing the mind and vice versa. He calls the first the 'bottom-up' and the latter the 'top-down' approach. One can demonstrate the former by implanting electrodes in the brain, which results in a change in behaviour. There are also clinical examples, which show how behavioural changes come about as a result of structural changes in the brain. There is the case, instanced by Jeeves, of a schoolteacher, who became addicted to pornography and was arrested for child molestation. It was found that the cause of his changed behaviour was a tumour pressing on the right frontal lobe of his brain. Examples of top-down events are when mental activity changes the structure of the brain. Jeeves gives the example of the enlargement of the brain's hippocampus in London taxi drivers as a result of their two years' intensive study of 'the knowledge' in order to navigate London's roads. Indeed it has been maintained that emotional and religious experiences, once thought to be the preserve of the soul can be explained by damage and disease in the brain. Epilepsy, schizophrenia and Parkinson's disease have been adduced as causes of people having visions and hearing voices. David Parkes, a Christian professor of clinical neurology, wrote, "To find the 'soul,' we would do better to go to a memorial service for a great doctor, to see his patients remember him with affection and love, than to look at the structure of the brain or read Descartes." (6)

In Defence of Dualism

A number of notable scientists in recent years, such as Sir John Eccles and Sir Charles Sherrington have adopted a dualist position. The former, following in the footsteps of Descartes, not only saw the soul/mind as a separate entity from the brain but also postulated that there was a point of interaction between the two within the brain. A most spirited defence of traditional dualism is made by Richard Swinburne, who served as a professor of the philosophy of religion at Oxford university. (7) He maintains that a person consists of body and soul (interestingly he consistently uses the term 'soul' rather than 'mind'). Physical properties belong to the body, mental properties belong to

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the soul and 'mixed' properties belong to both. An example of mixed properties is the writing of a letter. The intention to write the letter is a mental (soul) property and the actual writing is a physical (body) property. He argued that the soul has a structure and gave a detailed account of how he sees soul and body interact during a person's lifetime. Swinburne wrote, "What I mean by claiming that the soul has a structure is very roughly that the determinants of change of belief and desire are in part soul-states, not mere brain states, and that if body and soul were separated, some character would remain with the soul." (8) The soul functions when it has conscious episodes, like thoughts and sensations. A conscious person is aware of his own soul, but others will only be aware of it by observing that person's behaviour, which will include his speech. He believes that the soul will not function without a brain, but could exist without one. Swinburne argues that it cannot be demonstrated that the soul cannot survive without the brain. All that can be shown is that there are correlations between one kind of brain event and a particular kind of mental event. The fact that souls cannot be located after the death of the body and brain does not mean that they do not exist. He writes, "Someone may argue that failure to find something when you have looked for it is evidence that it does not exist. But that is only so if you would recognise the object when you found it, and if there is a limited region within which the object can exist and you have explored quite a lot of the region... But that is hardly the case with souls whose brains have ceased to function... Failure to find souls who have survived death shows no more than if they do exist, they are not in the very few places where we have looked for them or that if they are, the marks of their identity (e.g. apparent memories of past lives) have been removed." (9)

Post-mortem Survival

Unlike the dualist, who can argue that after the death of the body, the soul/mind can continue to live, the monist seems to be forced to accept the death of the body and brain as the end of personal existence. Professor Jeeves quoted Francis Crick, the co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, as saying, "In the fullness of time, educated people will believe there is no soul independent of the body, and hence no life after death." However neither Jeeves, nor his fellow Christian psychologists and neuroscientists, want to subscribe to this. How then is it possible to maintain their monism and yet still believe in the afterlife? The answer lies in the belief that God will re-create the dead person and bring her back to life. Bob Allaway uses the analogy of a computer. Our minds are just patterns of electrical signals in the brain, of which, "God, who knows all things, can keep a backup copy in his memory, retaining all that is worth preserving (and leaving out whatever is not). When this body has died, he can create a new and better body for me, that shall never die, and in which my mind can run forevermore." (10)

Identity and Replication

The late Professor Donald Mackay asked, "Does our view of the unity of mind and body make this (belief in the afterlife) more difficult to take seriously Today? I think

not.” He uses the illustration of a message on a blackboard which can be rubbed off and reinstated the next day or reproduced in a different medium. What matters is not the chalk or other medium in which the message is embodied, but the message itself. So it is with the human person. He argued, “If it is God’s will that, although these bodies of ours have been rubbed off the scene, we shall nevertheless be re-embodied in the world to come, this possibility in no way conflicts with our scientific knowledge.”(11)

These comments raise a number of issues. If God were to reprogram our brains would we be the same persons as the ones that existed before our death? Is an exact copy or replica identical to the ante-mortem person? The questions are important because Christians believe that in the afterlife everyone will have to appear before God to be judged or rewarded for what he has done in his mortal life (2 Corinthians 5.10). Many years ago Anthony Flew pointed out that “...personal identity is the necessary condition of both accountability and expectation; which is only to say that it is unjust to reward or punish someone for something unless (as a minimum condition) he is the same person who did the deed.”(12) Frank B. Dilley accepts that on a retributivist view of punishment this would be true, but argues that on a utilitarian or instrumentalist view, punishment of a replica could be justified if the intention of the punishment is to educate or reform (13) This, however, will not help the Christian case because the final judgement in the Bible is concerned with retribution and not with reform. There is also the issue of the status of Jesus. Was the incarnation not a case of the spiritual uniting with the physical body? Did God the Father reprogram Jesus after his death? If He did, does this mean that the two natures of Jesus are separable; Jesus’ human nature would have ceased to exist between death and resurrection and we would, in effect, have a second incarnation. The Christian creeds, which state that Christ is one person with two inseparable natures, would then be false. (14)

Biblical Psychology

It is now generally agreed that one cannot simply translate Hebrew and Greek words in the Bible and assume that they have the same meaning as the equivalent terms in English. Words may have different meanings in different contexts. For instance the Hebrew word *nephesh*, which is frequently translated as ‘soul’ can also refer to the neck or stomach or, more generally, to the ‘life force’ or the whole person. The Hebrew concept of human beings is a united living entity and not, as the Greeks believed, a soul imprisoned within a body. Psalm 30.3 speaks of God having brought his *nephesh* up from the grave. This, however, refers to escape from death, not to resurrection. What makes us humans unique is not their possession of *nephesh*, which animals also have or are, but our being created in the image of God. (15)

Joel Green, a New Testament professor and one of the participants in the Human Nature Project, is insistent that the Bible reflects a monist position. He claims that popular writers like John Cooper (16) see the Bible through the eyes of Cartesian dualism and represent, at best, a minority view among biblical scholars. (17) It might be equally

argued that Green has allowed the findings of neuroscience to influence his interpretation of the biblical evidence. He claims that the Old Testament deals only incidentally with death. For the writers of the Old Testament human existence is finite and death marks the end of fellowship with God. He argues that in the Old Testament, “Even in those texts that speak of those who dwell in Sheol [Hebrew for the abode of the dead], we find no suggestion that some essential part of the human being (whether a soul or a spirit, or some other) has survived death. Rather death is envisaged as ongoing persistence in a woeful, obscure state, cut off from one’s own people and from community with Yahweh [Hebrew name for God]. This isolated shadowy state constitutes death.”(18) Those who dwell in Sheol are called in Hebrew *rephaim*, which is often translated as ‘shades’. Green writes, “No suggestion is found in any of these texts (Psalm 88.11; Isaiah 14.9; 26.14,19 etc.) that the *rephaim* might be regarded as ‘alive’ or ‘living’ or otherwise as having some form of ‘personal existence’.” (19) How can this be when Isaiah 14.9 states that Sheol is excited and the rephaim (the spirits of departed world leaders) cry out to the king of Babylon who joins them? Isaiah 26.19 proclaims, “Those who belong to God will live; their bodies will rise again. Those who sleep in the earth will rise up and sing for joy! For God’s light of life will fall like dew on his people in the place of the dead!” (New Living Translation) How can Green declare that this says nothing about being alive or having some form of personal existence?

It is certainly true that the Old Testament does not give clear teaching on the afterlife. Many Old Testament scholars have argued that only Daniel 12.2 (‘Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt’) gives any clear teaching about the resurrection of the person,. Other passages, such as those in Isaiah and Ezekiel, they believe refer to the revival of the nation of Israel. (20) It is generally agreed that this passage from Daniel is late and may reflect the diverse teachings that flourished in the era before the coming of Christ.

During the period between the Old and New Testaments there were a number of different views held regarding the afterlife, Modern scholars are divided as to how much these views influenced the writers of the New Testament. Some of the views, however, were reflected in the major religious groups that existed in Jesus’ day, at least according to the Jewish historian Josephus (21). The Pharisees believed that at death the souls of the righteous left their bodies and continued to exist in an intermediate state to await the coming of the Messiah. When the Messiah appears the righteous will rise and ascend to God (see Jubilees.23.30). What kind of body do they have? According to some it will be their earthly bodies restored to life. (Sibelline Oracles 4.181-2; 2 Maccabees 7.11; 14.46) For others the bodies will be transformed so that they will be like angels, not needing food and drink and will shine like the stars (see 1 Enoch 56; 104; 2 Esdras 7; 2 Baruch 31; 49-51 cf. Daniel 12.3). The Sadducees, by contrast, denied the resurrection and believed that the dead remained in silence for ever in Sheol (cf. Ecclesiasticus.17.27-28)

The Resurrection of Jesus

Central to the Christian belief in the afterlife is the resurrection of Jesus, which has been the centre of extensive and exhaustive recent study. (22) Jesus' resurrection, according to Paul, is the 'first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again' (1 Corinthians 15.20 New Living Translation). The use of the term 'first fruits' has several connotations. It stresses priority in time but also, on analogy with Jewish harvest ritual, indicates the part that was offered to God in anticipation of the full harvest to follow. So Jesus' resurrection is the prototype that anticipates the resurrection of all believers.

The Gospels accounts, by stressing both the fact of the empty tomb and that Jesus appeared to the disciples in a physical form, seem to indicate a continuity between the Jesus of history and the resurrected Christ. Some writers, like the popular systematic theologian Wayne Grudem, maintain that although the resurrection body was transformed, it was still the same physical body as the one he had before. The Gospel accounts relate how Jesus ate with his disciples (John 20.42), was touched by Mary Magdalene (John 20.17) and possibly by Thomas (John 20.27) and that he insisted that he was not a spirit because a spirit does not have flesh and bones as he had (John 20.39). Jesus appeared and disappeared at will. This could mean that Jesus' body did not remain on the earth and had a different nature to his ante-mortem body. Grudem believes that Jesus remained on the earth during the forty days when, according to Luke, he appeared to the apostles from time to time before his ascension (Acts 1.3)(23). The late Professor F.F.Bruce disagreed. Commenting on the passage in Acts he says, "The ascension here recorded was not the first occasion when he (Jesus) vanished from his companions' sight after his resurrection. He did so after he made himself known in the breaking of bread to the two with whom he walked to Emmaus (Luke 24.31). Nor are we intended to suppose that the intervals between the resurrection appearances during the forty days were passed by him in some earth-bound state. The resurrection appearances, in which he accommodated himself to the disciples' temporal condition of life, even going so far as to eat with them, were visitations from that eternal order to which his 'body of glory' now belonged." (24)

In what sense is the believer's resurrection body like that of Jesus? Many Jews of Jesus' day, as noted earlier, and many Christians throughout history believed that for the resurrection to occur the ante-mortem body, or at least some part of it, had to continue to exist. One rabbinic text claimed that all that was needed for God to raise the dead was the coccyx bone. There was a famous debate in the works of Athenagorus, Augustine and Aquinas about the flesh of a human eaten by a cannibal. Would the victim be raised to life or was he now part of the cannibal? Such questions may seem bizarre to us. After all we know that our bodies are continually changing and that the body we now possess is not the same as the one we had seven years ago. It seems, nevertheless, reasonable to ask how anyone would know that he, or anybody, had survived the death of the body. Jesus was recognised because he had a body identical

to the one that had been mutilated on the cross. If, as Mackay and others have suggested, God recreates our physical bodies then they may appear like our previous ones and we might believe them to be the same bodies because we have memories of a previous life in a similar body. However these memories would not be true memories, but quasi-memories, because God would have just re-programmed them into us. Neither would it be the same body because God would have just created it anew and, unlike Jesus, our body would be in the grave or in the incinerator.

The Nature of the Resurrection Body

Two of the questions believers in Corinth asked Paul were, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" Paul devotes considerable space to answering them (1 Corinthians 15.35-50)(25) He does so by contrasting the natural body with the spiritual body and by using the analogy of seeds being sown and the resulting plant, which is considerably different. He also contrasts the physical, earthly man, represented by Adam with the spiritual, heavenly man Jesus Christ.

It is important to pay attention to Paul's vocabulary. The term flesh (*sarx*) (v.39) denotes the whole person from the point of view of his external physical existence. The difference between *sarx* and *soma* (body) is that the former emphasises the material aspect (the stuff) of the created form whereas the latter stresses its form or character. In his analogy of sowing, Paul contrasts the 'natural body', which is sown, with the 'spiritual body', which is raised to life. By natural body (*soma psuchikos*) Paul means the whole person as created and capable of eternal life. The spiritual body (*soma pneumatikos*) is the whole person redeemed by the Holy Spirit and endowed with eternal life. In order to bring out the full meaning, Anthony Thiselton translates v44 as, 'It is sown an ordinary human body; it is raised a body constituted by the Spirit. If there is a body for the human realm, there is also a body for the realm of the Spirit.' The spiritual body is imperishable because it is renewed by the Spirit and is not subject to physical decay (*phthora* - a reference to increasing weakness ending in exhaustion and stagnation). It is glorious and powerful, no longer marked by dishonour (*atimia* = indignity). It is also immortal, no longer subject to death. Paul does not specify how the natural body will become a spiritual body, but he does see it as some form of transformation. He refers to the perishable being clothed with the imperishable and the mortal with immortality. In his second letter to Corinth, Paul uses similar vocabulary when he refers to the afterlife as a naked person being clothed and of having a new building from God to replace the one that is destroyed (our body) (2 Corinthians 5.1-8)

The Believer's Heavenly Home

Although the Bible invariably uses figurative language in its descriptions of heaven and hell, evangelical Christians have generally believed that these descriptions should be taken literally. Heaven is seen as a world not unlike our own, or even as the present world renewed and restored to its original glory (see Romans 8.19-21) where Christians

with resurrection bodies will live for ever. Wayne Grudem, for example, writes of heaven as "...a spiritual dimension of reality which God has hidden from us in this present age, a dimension which nonetheless really does exist in our space/time universe, and within which Jesus now lives in his physical resurrection body, waiting even now for the time when he will return to earth... In this very material, physical, renewed universe, it seems that we will need to live as human beings with physical bodies, suitable for life in God's renewed physical creation."(26)

Professor John Hick, who rejected the Christian concept of hell as scientifically fantastic, morally revolting and self-contradictory (27), surprisingly envisages heaven as a physical place where resurrected persons go. Hick imagines someone dying and 'waking up' to find himself in a different world, which occupies a space distinct from that of earth (for instance not only is the environment different but the sun, moon and stars have been replaced by other planetary bodies.) He would know this was a post-mortem world because he would remember being on his deathbed. He would also discover that the world he is now in is inhabited by people, some of whom he would know had already died. Hick envisages this world as occupying real space. It could be on a planet of another star in our universe or perhaps even in a parallel world. Hick is a universalist who believes that mankind is gradually being perfected and everyone will ultimately go to 'heaven' and puts forward the possibility that we have many lives in different worlds. As we grow 'older' memories of the earlier lives fade and we ultimately reach perfection when we are lost in God. (28)

The idea that in a future life we will have physical bodies in a different world raises many difficulties. For instance a planet would only support a few generations of the earth's dead, so we must suppose that heaven consists of many planets. If this is so, how are we forever in the presence of the risen Christ? Will we have to stand in line and wait our turn to see Jesus and then only have half an hour with him or could Jesus be located in all resurrection worlds at the same time? (29) Real bodies, even if they did not grow old, would need food and drink and would presumably perform the normal bodily functions. In the Middle Ages scholars speculated at what age our bodies would be in heaven and suggested about thirty as this was the age when people are at their prime and the age at which Jesus was crucified. Hick wonders if, having been recreated at this age, we would not lose the memories of what it was like being old. He suggests that we enter heaven at the age of our death and in the new environment are subject to healing and repair, perhaps actually growing younger until we reach an optimum age! Actually the problem of longevity is a modern one and almost entirely restricted to the developed western world. Throughout most of human history and in the developing world today one in five children die before their first year. If humans do not become persons until they are at least five what is their status in heaven? The more one thinks about heaven as a part of a space-time universe the more difficult the concept becomes. (30)

Disembodied Existence in a Resurrection World

What alternative way can we envisage post-mortem life in heaven? In 1953 Professor H.H.Price published a famous article on disembodied survival in which he likened the afterlife to a dream world (31). In dreams the image-producing powers of the mind are released from the inhibiting power of sensory stimuli of the outside world. Thus we have experiences which often defy the laws of physics, but are not disconcerting for all that. These visual images could be related to one another with front, back and side views fitting together as ordinary visual appearances do now and they may also contain tactile, taste and auditory images.

One obvious problem is that dreams are private experiences and if the future world is like this then we seem to be locked into our own private 'heaven' or 'hell', which are based on our own mental projections. One way out of the problem is to appeal to telepathy. There is evidence that some people, and perhaps all of us at some times in our life, have a direct 'mental link' with another person. In this case it would be possible in a post-mortem existence to have a telepathic link with other 'dead' people and possibly also some people, who are still 'alive' on earth. Spiritualists believe that the dead do communicate with the living. It may even be that there exist communities of like-minded individuals in the post-mortem world whose minds are telepathically linked and correlated to sustain a shared environment. It might be argued that dreams are not 'real' and that such a world would be equally illusory. However dreams are only not 'real' when contrasted with the physical world of waking life. If we did not wake, but instead lived on in this dream world would it not continue to seem real? Of course physical relationships in such a world would be different because mental images would have spatial relationships in themselves and to other images but would not occupy physical space.

Dale Allison gives innumerable examples from the literature of psychology, psychiatry and parapsychology as well as from his own personal experience which show that apparitions of the dead demonstrate all the features mentioned in the Gospels concerning the resurrection appearances of Jesus. These include the apparition being seen and heard by one or more people and having the appearance of being real and 'solid'. Allison does not claim that this shows that some or all of the resurrection appearances of Jesus were merely subjective or purely visionary (32). Tom Wright, the bishop of Durham, in his book uses the word 'transphysical' to describe Jesus' resurrection body because Jesus is seemingly physical and yet behaves in quite peculiar ways. P.W.Gooch has argued that Paul's conception of the spiritual body is consistent with the idea of a disembodied person (33). His view has been criticised because it does not accord either with the insistence in the Gospel accounts or with Paul's own statement about the reality of Christ's resurrection body (34). What about Jesus' resurrection body after the ascension? Some of the early church fathers taught that the forty days when Jesus appeared to the disciples on earth were a transitional period prior to his reign in heaven in his glorified body.

Like the Angels

When Jesus replied to the question asked by the Sadducees regarding the resurrection he said that when the dead rise they will be like the angels in heaven (Mk.12.25). When angels appear to humans in the Bible they take on a human form. Like the resurrected Jesus, angels seem to appear and disappear at will and were offered food to eat. We know little about angels in their natural state, although Peter Williams has attempted a description. He believes that angels do not have physical bodies but are still persons with sensations, beliefs, desires and volitions. They do not occupy space, but can 'move' by transferring their attention from one object to another (35). It is difficult, if not impossible to grasp what it would be like to be an angel or to be a disembodied person like God but Christians nevertheless believe in both angels and God. Neither science nor our own powers of reasoning will enable us to comprehend the nature of the resurrection body. Paul called it a mystery. The Greek word *mysterion* usually denotes that what was once hidden has been disclosed by divine revelation. Thistleton, commenting on this verse (1 Corinthians 15.51), says the meaning may be nearer to the English use of the word. "Paul cannot and does not say more about the precise nature of the change. He knows that Christ's own resurrection mode of existence provides the model (cf. also Phil 3.20-21), but much more than this we cannot know." (36)

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Review:

Islam - Pure and Simple and Creationism versus Evolution

by Aziz Rasul

It is unusual for this Christian journal to review the writings of a Muslim, but the reviewer believes this author's work should be noted and encouraged, for reasons that will be explained. *Islam - Pure and Simple* is an electronic book of approximately 43,000 words, which the author will supply for free on CD (together with an electronic copy of the Qu'ran). *Creationism versus Evolution* is a 4,000-word article that covers the same ground as the scientific material in the former work. If you email him on azizrasul@hotmail.co.uk, he will email it to you. (He also offers to email the book, but I would not recommend this unless you have very fast broadband!)

To give you the gist of his approach, here is the start of his section on "The Creation of the Universe" from *Islam - Pure and Simple*, with the reviewers' comments:

An extremely long time ago, the only thing that existed was God (the creator). There was no universe. God begins the creation of the universe from a single particle, which is split apart. The scientific world refer to this as the "Big Bang Theory", [references are given in footnotes] where an energy source created a particle called the primary nebula or primeval atom. The tiny particle has also been referred to as the *cosmic egg*.

"Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth (meaning the universe) were joined together (*ratq*) in one piece, then We (meaning God, the Creator) rent them asunder (*fataqa*) and We got every living thing out of the water. Will they then not believe?"

Qu'ran - Surah al-Anbiyaa (The Prophets) 21:30

[Actually, the Qu'ran is more reminiscent of Genesis 1:7 than any theory of modern cosmology. Note the reference to water.]

The celestial matter of the early universe existed in an *expanding* gaseous state, containing hydrogen and helium according to scientists.

"Then turned He (the Creator) to the heaven when it was smoke ..."

Qu'ran - Surah Fussilat (Explained in Detail) 41:11

"The heaven, We have built it with (Our creative) power. Verily, it is We who are steadily expanding it."

Qu'ran - Surah az-Zaariyat (The Winnowing Winds) 51:47

[He adds in a footnote: 'Edwin Powell Hubble (1889 - 1953) was able to establish in 1929 that the galaxies were moving away from us and thus we had an expanding universe. This was a momentous discovery towards understanding the origins of

the universe.']

Most verses in the Qu'ran refer to the universe as 'heavens and earth'. In 41:11 only the heaven is mentioned, because the earth did not exist as a physical entity in the early universe. Similarly in 51:47, it is the heavens i.e. the outer space that is expanding not the objects within it.

[In Pickthall's *Meaning of the Glorious Qu'ran* 51:47 is translated: "We have built the heaven with might, and We it is who make the vast extent (thereof)." followed by v. 48 "And the earth have We laid out, how gracious was the Spreader (thereof)." Noting the parallel with 'the earth', is 'the heaven' being described as 'steadily expanding' or just being of 'vast extent'?]

As a pre-requisite to understanding the six periods of creation of the universe, we need to be aware that the six periods do not refer to six Earthly days. This is a common error. After all, during the early stages of the universe, the Sun and Earth did not exist. In the six periods of creation, the periods are large epochs of time (*yaum* or *ayam*).

[Many Christians, also, have taken the 'days' in Genesis 1 as long periods of time. A passage often quoted in support of this, 2 Peter 3:8,9, is akin to Qu'ran - al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage) 22:47 quoted by Rasul: "Allah fails not His promise, but lo! a Day with Allah is as a thousand years of what you reckon." tr. Pickthall.]

I suppose that most readers of this bulletin will not be impressed by these arguments for the inspiration of the Qu'ran, so why do I urge you to read them and encourage the author to continue his studies?

1. His attempts to read modern science into the Qu'ran are akin to the way some Christians read scientific discoveries into the Bible. If you find his arguments unconvincing, it may help us to see that unbelievers find such Christian arguments equally unconvincing.
2. Reading his work, one becomes aware how close the worldview of the Qu'ran is to that of the Old Testament. We should encourage Muslims who are attempting to find a view of, for example, environmental issues in their scriptures, since this may make them 'fellow travellers' with us in our environmental concerns.
3. This is a Muslim who is happy to enter into dialogue with Christians. He may do so in the hope of converting us, but as those who have the truth in Christ, we should be even more hopeful of converting him!

Bob Allaway

(Baptist Pastor in North London and former Research Chemist)

Book Reviews

William A. Demski (Ed.) *Darwin's Nemesis. Phillip Johnson and the Intelligent Design Movement* 2006 Leicester IVP pb £14.99 374pp. ISBN 978.1.84474.128.1

This compilation is a *festschrift* for Phillip Johnson contributed mainly by a group of authors committed to the idea of intelligent design and reflecting strongly its American setting.

It begins rather confusingly with members of the group expressing their strong mutual appreciation and what they see as the steady progress of the intelligent design set of ideas, starting with the contributions of Johnson between 1976 and 1988 and culminating in his book *Darwin on Trial* in 1991. It is a mixed read which includes much about the hostile reception which their ideas received from fellow scientists within the USA and the confusion of ideas surrounding those opinions.

In basic terms there are two phases to Johnson's contribution. First, he used his clear and logical lawyer's mind to dissect the facts on which evolutionary biology is held to rest from the theories embedded with them, neo-Darwinism. Though not a biologist but a distinguished lawyer, he was able to show that in addition to the undoubted facts of microevolution there were added elements of assumption and that this mixture had set into a rigid framework of required belief; this is true especially of macroevolution, the origins of the main branches of life. Also, this has been augmented by the American ideology of a necessary division between demonstrable truth, as seen in science, and of religious or other faiths - the latter being banned from taught material in public schools. Related to this is another divide between public and private matters, religion being confined to the latter. These divisions are the subject of chapter 14 of this book.

The second phase of Johnson's activity has been to build upon the first as a leader of the intelligent design movement. He, and the other authors of this book, distinguish clearly what they are saying from both "young earth creationism" and "theistic evolution"; though it is heavy reading, their statements of case are clear, well evidenced and unpolemic.

The hard core of the book is in chapters 12 and 13, masterly accounts in whole or in part by Stephen C. Meyer, the first being reprinted from *Proc. Biol. Soc. Washington* (2004). These present in great detail the geological facts about the Cambrian life explosion, summarising information from 150 cited references; then in chapter 13 the remarkable way in which pathogenic bacteria develop both their flagellar motility and toxicity to mammals whilst one or other or both depend upon genetically determined protein assembly varied by environmental conditions. The argument made is that to account for the origin of such complex and conditioned events, first that the Cambrian life explosion is highly improbable due to neo-Darwinian mechanisms alone and second that the conditioned high complexity of bacterial flagellar structure and function is again most unlikely to arise alone from those same mechanisms.

The central problem about this extensive effort seems to be that though it has been highly useful to dissect between fact and assumption in the neo-Darwinian argument one is still left with arguments about what is more or less likely as a causal mechanism in a highly complex field where the evidence is still at best partial, even if it is massive in extent, and where logical closure or proof can never be attained from either side of the contest. This is clear enough for the argument for intelligent design (e.g. in creation), where people point to what as yet cannot be explained and invoke this as a 'God of the gaps' argument for their case. But it is strikingly evident that the inverse image applies equally to the 'no design' argument (e.g. that set up by Richard Dawkins) which can equally be designated as a 'no God of the non-gaps'. (This situation is stated with admirable clarity in Alister Geddes' book *Dawkins' God*.)

Some aspects of this book seemed depressing; the title is unfair; Darwin's original work and ideas still stand and will so do; it is much that has been added to them later which is open to stronger doubt. Also, Darwin never held much that has been added to his theory later. He was clearly agnostic about many parts of Christian faith; especially was he troubled by suffering in nature. But he was never an atheist; certainly he made the demonstrable facts of nature be the ground of credence and he went to astonishing lengths to ascertain them. But he never asserted that his theory explained all that could be seen in nature and stated clearly many times that if a single fact were found which negated his theory it must fall. It seems a pity that the term 'Darwinism' is used to cover much that is now based upon his work but which in fact goes far beyond his claims.

Reviewed by **Prof. Duncan Vere**.

Hugh Ross. *The Creator and the Cosmos*. 3rd edition 2001. Colorado Springs NavPress pb £10.99. 266 pp. ISBN 1.57683.288.0

It is now well known that the universe started off in a gigantic explosion we call the Big Bang some 13.7 billion years ago. It is also known that the conditions at the earliest time we can sensibly speak of, and the constants that go into the laws of physics, must be very special indeed ('fine-tuned') so that the universe can be fruitful and produce any kind of complexity, let alone ourselves. This raises the very important philosophical question as to how we interpret this data.

Hugh Ross sees both the Big Bang theory itself and the fine-tuning as evidence that the universe was created by God. He provides a mountain of evidence for the Big Bang and also provides numerous examples of fine-tuning, e.g. that the mass density had to be right to 1 part in 10^{60} and the cosmological constant (a repulsive force believed by many cosmologists to be due to the energy of the quantum vacuum) to 1 part in 10^{120} . These are truly remarkable degrees of accuracy and, as Ross notes, exceed that of human engineering design by many orders of magnitude.

I share Ross's view that we have here a powerful tool in the apologetic armoury, and that the most rational explanation for the universe's existence and its fine-tuned nature is that God made the universe this way. However, I have a number of reservations about his book.

First, I think that Ross needs to give much more than the scant attention he does to alternative explanations which cosmologists have come up with, most notably the idea that our universe is a member of a gigantic ensemble of universes (a 'multiverse') or that inflation drives some of the parameters to particular values anyway. I think a careful analysis leaves divine design as far and away the best contender, but the argument does need to be made and is essentially probabilistic. Ross gives the impression that one can virtually read off the Biblical God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ from modern cosmology with only a superficial treatment. Indeed he makes highly dogmatic assertions to this effect when a much more modest and nuanced approach would better serve his purpose.

A general characteristic is that Ross's argument strikes one as simplistic. Thus he thinks that the Big Bang implies a beginning which implies a Beginner. That might be so, and has been argued forcefully by philosopher William Lane Craig (who gets only the briefest of mentions and not in this context), but it needs a lot more unpacking. It assumes something like Leibniz's Principle of Sufficient Reason, which, whilst plausible, is not a necessary truth. Also many Christian theologians would argue that God can create a universe that has no temporal beginning (such as the steady state theory, even though the proponents of that theory wanted to avoid God) and that the important thing about the Christian doctrine of creation is the ontological rather than temporal dependence of the universe on God.

That brings me to my second point, which is perhaps more serious. Although Ross is not a six day creationist (a clear impossibility in the present context), he nevertheless seems to retain a remarkably literal understanding of Biblical texts. And he makes some quite astonishing assertions in relating them to modern cosmology. Thus God's stretching out the heavens is identical to the Hubble expansion and the discovery that the universe is 'flat' shows that the Big Bang model is 'perfectly aligned with Biblical cosmology'. He relates how the accuracy of Genesis 1 as cosmology struck him and led to his conversion.

The strange thing is that, whilst Biblical theology is profound, Biblical cosmology is primitive and shares many features with that of the surrounding cultures. Thus the earth is stationary, resting on pillars, and there is a metal dome (firmament) separating the waters above from those below. Other features which preclude a literal interpretation include the creation of day and night on day 1 but the sun not until day 4. Of course nothing really hinges on this because the Biblical writers are using the cosmology of the day poetically and theologically, rather than literally, anyway.

The idea that the Biblical writers had any understanding of the universe comparable with that of modern cosmology strikes me as bizarre. What they did have was a profound understanding that the universe, which was awesome on any view, showed forth the glory of its Creator and that it was indeed his handiwork. To that extent, the discoveries of modern cosmology are supportive of the Biblical theology of creation (and may even enhance it given what we now know of the grandeur of the universe), though not a literal interpretation of the Bible's cosmology. Curiously, Ross castigates the Flat Earth Society but leaves himself open to the same challenge!

On the scientific side there are also some strange features. That applies to his surprising and oft-repeated anti-Darwinian polemic, but also to the physics which is his main focus. Thus Ross seems to accept without question that string theory, which involves extra compacted spatial dimensions, has been proved by observation, whereas the opposite is the case – it is a highly contentious area of physics and some doubt whether it is physics at all. Ross also seems to think it provides added proof to the Biblical account – and even leads to the doctrine of the Trinity - whereas some string theorists (notably Leonard Susskind) use it atheistically. More minor quibbles are Ross's at times confusing use of unconventional terminology, e.g. 'exotic matter' for 'dark matter', 'space energy density' for 'vacuum energy density' and 'space-time theorems' for 'singularity theorems'.

Any book of this nature will rapidly appear out of date, and the author can hardly be blamed for that. One unfortunate instance of that in the present case is that there is no mention of the WMAP satellite which is yielding much greater precision in providing cosmological data and in measuring the cosmological parameters than the COBE satellite and Boomerang balloon, which Ross discusses in some detail, were able to do.

Reviewed by **Rev. Rodney Holder**

Malcolm Duncan, *Building a Better World – Faith at work for change in society*, London: Continuum, 2006, p.b., 164pp + xiv, n/p

Reading through this book, it clearly has two aims. Firstly, as leader of *Faithworks*, 'a Christian Social Movement' (p4), Malcolm Duncan wants to remind Christians of the social implications of their faith. At the same time, he is conducting a 'dialogue' with those who might reject Christian 'Religion', but share his concern for social justice. He is inviting them to explore 'Christian spirituality' with him as something that gives expression to their deepest motivation. 'You may have been singing the lyrics of a song about a better world for a long time, yet be unsure of the tune. ... What if God himself is the melody you have been looking for and he is humming the tune in Jesus?' (p31) It is this second aim that gives his book its originality and interest, for this reviewer, at any rate.

The danger of such an approach is that it might lead to a watering down of the call to exclusive commitment to Christ in the Christian message. I was fearful that this might be the case when he expounds the Beatitudes, in chapter 3, without wrestling with the fact that they are addressed to Jesus' disciples (Matthew 5:2). My concern was allayed in the next chapter, where he says, "... God paid the ultimate price: Jesus laid down his life on the cross for the world. The cross is the place at which the ultimate cost of human selfishness is paid. We cannot 're-live' the cross. It is God's unique word to deal with the pain and wrong and evil in our world. Without it – without Christ, there is no hope." (p94) "Without the seamless message of the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection, Christian spirituality would not be complete." (p95)

This book plainly has the theological grounding to convince Evangelical Christians of the need for social activism. Whether it would also achieve its second aim is another matter. In so far as it shows not all Christians are like right-wing Republicans in the USA, it removes a stumbling block on the way to faith for those who do not share such views. It is one thing, though, to gain respect for Christians as 'fellow travellers', it is quite another to cross over and join them. His argument would be strengthened by more actual examples of Christians whose 'spirituality' has enabled them to persevere, working for change in difficult circumstances, when others give up.

Reviewing for this journal, I am surprised that he does not deal with environmental issues. His only nod in this direction is a reference to there being 'almost seven times as many airports as there are television stations' in the USA. (p39)

Finally, a couple of boobs on page 148: The 'widow of Tain' is no doubt a result of poor proof reading, but where does he get 'the thousands he fed before delivering the Sermon on the Mount'?

Reviewed by **Dr. Bob Allaway**

Francis S. Collins *The Language of God : A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief.* 2006 London Free Press hb. £ 304 pp. ISBN 0743286391

If ever a book was written that gives the lie to the notion that a thorough knowledge of the genetic basis of life would lead to atheism this is the book. No one in the field can boast of better credentials than Francis Collins, the head of the Human Genome Project; he stands at the vanguard of the current explosion of knowledge of the blueprint of life and its demonstration of the genetic relationships of all living things on earth. This knowledge far from compelling him to a godless despair has led him to describe this basic information of life as the "language of God." Like Robert Chambers who saw the discoveries of geologists a century and a half ago as merely clues to the process of creation as hinted at in the title of his book the "Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation," Collins too feels he has been entrusted with some of the mysteries of the creation as he sees the unfolding drama of the genomic revolution. But like Henry

Drummond who though a geologist and theologian found no contradiction between evolution and the Christian faith he is in danger of being sidelined by the 'orthodox' who hold that the Bible proves evolution could not have happened. But also like Drummond he is bound to help many thinking people who wonder how a real faith can be sustained in the face of the onslaught from atheistical propaganda appearing to be founded on science.

The book is written clearly and the science and faith at a level that any serious reader can follow. It is greatly enlivened by being autobiographical, taking readers through his journey to faith and the challenges presented by disease and suffering. This journey to faith owes much to C.S. Lewis and Collins' thinking through the issues of faith and science seems by its clear reasoning to offer a further compliment to his instructor. Collins' journey to Christianity, being prompted by the faith of Christian patients he met in his medical work, was supported by Lewis's arguments for faith based on the universal moral sense of humans and culminated in a personal experience of God.

Collins takes his readers through the frustration and elation of a dedicated research scientist. His work brings him face to face with some of the most controversial and difficult ethical dilemmas facing the world today and he shows how both compassion and knowledge are inseparable in finding the road ahead.

In his introduction to the nature of the process of inheritance and the significance of DNA he brings a complex field within the grasp of the general reader. Anyone wanting a full understanding of DNA and its role in inheritance will go to text books but here everyone can find enough information to follow the excitement of the research and get a feel for the stunning advances that had to be made to sequence the human genome.

The detailed knowledge of the nature of inheritance and its power to resolve genetic history is as good evidence for evolution as ever could have been expected. Though the evidence from geology and morphology has been contested it is difficult to see how an objective mind could come to different conclusions from genetics than Francis Collins does here. The new knowledge makes the whole Young Earth Creationist position appear as misguided as the medieval opposition to Copernicus.

Of course if evolution is established by genome research it now leaves many Bible believing Christians with an obvious dilemma. How can life have been created in both six days and over millions of years? Collins' clear thinking makes him fully aware of all the problems here and it is most intriguing to find him going to such an ancient authority as Saint Augustine for help with the interpretation of Genesis. It is perhaps unrealistic to expect a busy scientist to solve all the theological and expositional problems his research raises but it cannot be argued that he has insufficient genetical background to see the implications of his research for the evolutionary debate. It is then for specialists in other disciplines to say how those insights are going to be accommodated rather than insisting that they are unsupportable. Various ways of integrating science and

faith were abandoned in the wake of the flight to six day creationism following the publication of the Genesis Flood and the rise of the Creationist Movement. Francis Collins points all sincere Christians seeking harmonisation of science and faith back to their work of interpreting scripture in ways that acknowledge that the mysteries recently uncovered in DNA and genome research are simply the “Language of God” in creation and cannot be held to contradict what he says through revelation in the Bible.

This book is a timely, lively and very necessary work and its final chapter on the ethical dilemmas raised by the new scientific possibilities in the area of inheritance point to a future where harmony can only be discovered by a full knowledge of the facts together with a deep and respectful acknowledgement that humans have a God given ethical and moral sense. This book deserves to be prominently displayed alongside the popular writings of Richard Dawkins on the one hand and the texts of the Young Earth Creationists on the other and become essential reading for everyone looking for a responsible integration of science and faith.

Reviewed by Dr. E Gwyn Jordan.

***Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute,*
continued (after Vol. 90) as *Faith and Thought.*
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Cumulative Index - Part 5**

The first part of this index was published in Bulletin 27 (April 2000) and covers volumes 1 to 43 [1866 to 1911]; Part 2 (Bulletin 28) volumes 44 to 70 [1912 to 1938]; Part 3 (Bulletins 29 - 31) volumes 71 to 100 [1939 to 1973]; Part 4 (Bulletins 32 - 33) volumes 101 to 105 [1974 - 1978]. Part 5, which began in Bulletin 34 and is continued below, covers volumes 106 to 110 [1979 - 1983].

Abbreviations

Asterisk (*) - the first page of an article; **c** - correspondence; **d** - contribution to a discussion; **f** - and pages following; **r** - review; **rw** - writer of a review.

To save space, titles of papers and headings are indexed under key words only and not given in full. Also, ‘10’ is omitted in volume numbers: e.g. 6-107 indicates volume 106 page 107.

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