

That the “living souls” were specially created does not deny their biological evolution. But a new dimension was created in them, sentient or psychological functionality, whose physical substrate had evolved. Science has not yet found a convincing explanation of the sentient (as distinct from behavioral) aspect.

Eshelbrenner’s remark notwithstanding, I dealt with the spiritual dimension.⁷ Humans alone are created in God’s image, which provides a spiritual mode inaccessible to science. Furthermore, those accepting God’s salvation are “born again” into a new, spiritual, eternal life. Thus, four “life dimensions” are shared by all such believers, three by all humans, two by “higher animals,” while “lower” organisms and plants have the dimension of biological life only.

Eshelbrenner alludes to problems of a separation of body, soul, and spirit at death; of its reversal at resurrection; and even of a speculative intermediate state (unknown in the Bible). A plausible solution may be a “God-time,” which is not collinear with physical time, but something like a second time dimension, allowing for an immediate shunt over large physical time periods for those “asleep.”⁸ God would keep the dead alive as hidden “seeds,”⁹ like information in a mental database.

I agree with Eshelbrenner that Christ’s incarnation, death, and resurrection are absolutely unique. Nevertheless, Christ’s assuming common human body-soul-spirit dimensions provides for the cross and the resurrection, and thus for all believers’ justification and transformation into eternal life. Although we have a foretaste through the Holy Spirit, we cannot yet conceive what we shall be as multidimensional body-soul-spirit-eternity persons after Christ’s image.¹⁰

Notes

¹D. Eshelbrenner, “Soul-Doctrine,” *PSCF* 57 (December 2005): 342–3.

²P. Rüst, “Dimensions of the Human Being and of Divine Action,” *PSCF* 57 (September 2005): 191–201.

³Gen. 1:20.

⁴P. Rüst, “Dimensions of the Human Being and of Divine Action,” endnotes 21 and 24.

⁵Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11–14.

⁶Gen. 1:22.

⁷P. Rüst, “Dimensions of the Human Being and of Divine Action,” 195–7.

⁸Luke 23:43; 1 Thess. 4:13–17.

⁹1 Cor. 15:37–42; Matt. 22:31–32; Ps. 139:16.

¹⁰1 Cor. 15:47–54.

Peter Rüst
ASA Fellow
CH-3148 Lanzenhäusern
Switzerland
pruest@dplanet.ch

On Freedom and Incarnation in Nonreductionistic Materialism

P. G. Nelson (*PSCF* 58, no. 1 [March 2006]: 86f) responds to my challenge to nonreductionistic materialism [*PSCF* 57, no. 3 [Sept. 2005]: 187–90]. He first attempts to defend human freedom, claiming that disturbing a balanced quantum mechanical state represents personal choice. For it to be a personal decision, the individual must be at least rudimentarily aware of the alternatives and make a conscious decision between them. What mechanism or process sets up the balanced state, produces awareness of it in the decider (awareness by the superscientist does not count), and then consciously switches it? How does the evanescent quantum state persist long enough to allow the decision? To be sure, Nelson introduces an “I” to decide, but the entity is without minimum, let along effective, connection to the required awareness.

Secondly, if personality is a function of brain—with social interactions, of course—how does a nonphysical spiritual being have a personality? Furthermore, how does a nonphysical spirit “fuse” with a nonspiritual body in the hypostatic union? We are back to the Cartesian dualism that spawned Malebranche’s occasionalism and Spinoza’s neutral monism. I think of only two possible solutions. One may deny spirit by following Hobbes, the only philosopher I know of who is a materialistic theist, insisting God has a body. Alternatively, one may have an analog of monotheletism, but more like demon possession than incarnation. However, I cannot exclude either additional unpalatable possibilities I have not recognized, or a more subtle solution that meets biblical requirements.

I fail to see that Nelson has moved toward a solution to the problem that I posed at Trinity Western University in 2004. Thus, the only viable resolution for the Christian remains the recognition that science cannot detect spirit, whether human or divine. This does not diminish the relevance of neuroscience. It merely underscores the recognition that no natural science determines ultimate metaphysical answers. Consequently, the original challenge remains: “... they need to produce a clearly stated Christology ...”

David F. Siemens, Jr.

ASA Fellow

Canyon Institute for Advanced Studies at Grand Canyon University

Phoenix, AZ 85017

dfsiemensjr@juno.com

