



including contemporary and pre-biblical documents. The author identifies three problem areas:

1. *The Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Literature.* The Bible often looks like the literature of the surrounding Gentiles. If the Bible is God's special revelation, should it not be unique?
2. *Theological diversity in the Old Testament.* Different authors seem to have different opinions on the same subject, at times even flatly contradicting each other. If God only has one opinion, should the Scriptures not always say the same thing?
3. *New Testament interpretation of the Old Testament.* The New Testament authors seem to quote the Old Testament out of context, making it say something the author never intended. If we have to use the grammatical-historical method, should they not?

An additional problem area ...

4. *The biblical and scientific accounts of origins do not agree.* Issues of age, pre-adamic humans, and death before the Fall plague efforts to make the "two books" concur.

Conservative Christians generally believe that the Bible must be error and contradiction free for it to be God's Word. The result has been a huge effort to smooth over the inconsistencies with yet another "harmony of the gospels" or "harmony of science and Scripture."

Enns suggests instead that one *begin* with the belief that *Scripture is inspired* then deal with the problems as they appear. Faith comes before proof and it is not based on fact or proof, or it would not be faith. If it is inspired, then the contradictions are there for a reason, and it does not make it any less inspired.

The author asks us to think of biblical inspiration in terms of the "incarnational analogy." "As Christ is both God and human, so is the Bible" (p. 17). While not a new concept, it is often ignored by evangelicals. The Bible is both a divine and human book. Both Christ and Scripture were situated in the context of their times. The Old Testament is more than a compendium of dictated timeless truths; it is revelation bound to the cultural trappings of its times—the languages, the customs, the events of the day, political structures, etc. There needs to be a balance between minimizing the human marks of Scripture and regarding it as just another ancient book.

In the chapters, *The Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Literature*, *The Old Testament and Theological Diversity*, and *The Old Testament and Its Interpretation in the New Testament*, Enns considers data from the ancient Near East that conservatives have downplayed. *PSCF* readers will have a special interest in his (all too short) discussion of the biblical accounts and ancient creation and flood stories and *Enuma Elish*, *Atrahasis*, and *Gilgamesh* epics. Enn's summary is instructive.

It is a fundamental misunderstanding of Genesis to expect it to answer questions generated by a modern worldview, such as whether the days were literal or figurative, or whether the days of creation can be lined up with modern science, or whether the flood was local or universal. The point I would like to emphasize, however, is that such a firm grounding in

ancient myth does not make Genesis less inspired; it is not a concession that we must put up with or an embarrassment to a sound doctrine of scripture ... This is surely what it means for God to reveal himself to people—he accommodates, condescends, meets them where they are (pp. 55–6).

Each chapter closes with an annotated bibliography and a lengthy glossary of terms. One index contains references from Scripture and other ancient literature; a second, topics and authors.

Inspiration and Incarnation has created heated discussion among biblical scholars. Some feel that Enns has not gone far enough, others find him headed down a slippery slope. Get it.

Reviewed by John W. Haas, Jr., Emeritus Professor of Chemistry, Gordon College, Wenham, MA 01984.



Letters

Author's Reply to Two Letters Regarding "Prospects for Theistic Science"¹

P.G. Nelson's letter² makes the point that complex groups can have properties not singly possessed by their components. That is undoubtedly correct, and the non-reductionist ontology I advocate agrees with his examples of this. But the point is doubly irrelevant. First: that fact has nothing to do with whether everything has at least some properties of each basic kind (quantitative, spatial, physical, biotic, sensory, logical, etc.). Nelson says he is in disagreement with this, but gives no reason for it. Second: the sort of reduction I was arguing against was not only the old whole-must-be-the-same-nature-its-parts claim. Instead it attacked a more basic sort of reduction, a sort that is ontically global, namely, the claim that anything in creation is purely X, where X is one or another of the basic kinds of properties and laws exhibited by things. Against that claim I gave a (knock-down) argument: no one can so much as frame the idea of any thing as purely X -or even any property as purely X. I urged my readers to try the thought experiment of thinking away the non-physical properties of a thing to see what they had left when they finished. So I ask again: what is left of the idea of a physical thing that is nowhere in time or space, is not mathematically calculable, and is not logically identical with itself, and cannot be referred to in language? The very idea of *physical* disappears before our minds as soon as we attempt to separate it from the non-physical kinds of properties-and-laws we experience such as temporal, spatial, quantitative, logical, and linguistic, etc.

The same comments apply to the letter³ of Moorad Alexanian. While ignoring the argument I just repeated, he simply asserts "The purely physical constitutes the subject matter of science" and "the content of all there is in Nature are elements that are either (1) purely physical, (2) purely non-physical, or (3) both ..." But if we cannot form any idea of anything as purely physical (or purely logical,

numerical, sensory, or whatever) the expression “purely physical” is on a par with talk about square circles. Moreover, Alexanian shifted the idea of ontological reduction from the one I found religiously objectionable and rebutted, to the claim that some sets are either “equated” with one another or are empty. But kinds of properties-and-laws are not sets; kinds do not have “members” and what is qualified by each kind is a matter of contingency. By contrast, sets do have members and each is necessarily a member of the set. Besides, I gave a fairly detailed circumscription of the senses of “reduction” I found objectionable so it is hard to understand why a completely different idea is treated in response.

Finally, my non-reductionist argument would equally defeat the notion that a proper ontology can be a “set theoretic analysis of the whole of reality.” The idea of a set is derived by abstracting from the quantitative aspect of creation and thus can neither encompass nor explain its nonquantitative properties and laws.

Notes

¹Roy Clouser, “Prospects for Theistic Science,” *PSCF* 58, no 1 (2006): 2–15.

²P. G. Nelson, “Reduction in Science,” *PSCF* 58, no 3 (2006): 253–4.

³Moorad Alexanian, “Set Theoretic Analysis of the Whole of Reality,” *PSCF* 58, no 3 (2006): 254–5.

Roy Clouser
204 Bradley Ave
Haddonfield, NJ 08033
royclouser@comcast.net

Free Will and Incarnation

David Siemens¹ questions my attempt to understand free will and incarnation scientifically.² Concerning my explanation of free will, he asks: “What mechanism or process sets up the balanced state [in the brain], produces awareness of it in the decider, and then consciously switches it?” The best answer I can give to this is as follows.

As a child grows, its brain develops by cells multiplying and differentiating according to the child’s genes, and by the whole structure interacting, through the nerves and sensory organs, with the rest of the body and the outside world. This leads eventually to activity among the neurons that the young person experiences as an awareness of having to think about and make a decision. So far this is a bottom-up process, determined by physics and chemistry.

My hypothesis is that, once this point has been reached, a top-down process becomes possible. This is when the young person’s consideration of the options facing him or her gives rise to a physically balanced state (bifurcation point) in the brain. In this circumstance, I suggest, the young person’s thoughts themselves can, by proceeding along one line rather than another, determine the direction the brain takes. This then constitutes a free choice.

David Siemens also asks, in relation to my treatment of the Incarnation: “if personality is a function of brain how does a nonphysical spiritual being have a personality?” My answer to this is that personality resides in *patterns* among neurons, not in the neurons themselves.³ A spiritual being can therefore have a personality if it has an organ with components that can take up similar patterns to those in the brain. In my treatment of the Incarnation,

I assumed that the preincarnate Son had such an organ with patterns in it (I speak humanly⁴). I further assumed that, when the Son “emptied himself” and became an embryo, the Father retained these patterns in his memory, and then, as Jesus grew up, ensured that they were reproduced in Jesus’ brain.

Notes

¹David F. Siemens, Jr., “On Freedom and Incarnation in Nonreductionistic Materialism,” *PSCF* 58, no. 2 (2006): 165.

²P. G. Nelson, “Neuroscience, Free Will, and the Incarnation,” *PSCF* 58, no. 1 (2006): 86–7.

³Cf. P. G. Nelson, *Big Bang, Small Voice: Reconciling Genesis and Modern Science* (Latheronwheel, Caithness, Scotland: Whittles, 1999), 109–10.

⁴Romans 3:5.

P. G. Nelson
25 Duesbery Street
Hull, HU5 3QE
England
P.G.Nelson@hull.ac.uk

Creationism or Methodological Naturalism: A Response to Finlay, et al.

In “Creation versus Creationism,” (*PSCF* 58, no. 3 [2006]: 236–9), Finlay, et al. criticize Christians who attack and debunk “evolution,” yet their article is a classic example as to why thinking Christians should reject “evolution” as promoted by the scientific community. Thinking Christians accept naturalistic microevolution but understand that compelling evidence for the naturalistic evolution of humans from a common ancestor with the chimpanzee and for the naturalistic generation of new families of proteins does not exist.

Finlay, et al. provide data that compare similarities between the human and chimpanzee genomes. They conclude, “Chimps and humans are related genetically.” Thinking Christians would concur, but genetic relatedness is not evidence for any agency that could cause genetic alterations.

Yes, “Humans differ from chimps by about 200 large duplicated or deleted segments.” However, such segments of DNA could be identical whether they were generated, altered or deleted by naturalistic processes or by an intelligent agency. Since DNA does not reveal causative agency, neither do RNA, proteins, homologous structures or fossils.¹ In macroevolution, causative agency cannot be determined from scientific data, and it is not naturalistic by default.

Without any supporting data, Finlay, et al. state dogmatically, “The differences between chimp and human genetic sequences reflect natural genetic processes.” Such unfounded statements concerning agency are a major reason for Christian opposition to “evolution.” Rather, scientists should ask, “Is the naturalistic evolution of *Homo sapiens* from a common ancestor with the chimpanzee probable?” If one were to ask Charles Darwin, he would have responded by saying that there were endless variations,² innumerable progenitors,³ and an unlimited number of generations.⁴ His invocation of the infinite has fogged rational thinking.

What are the facts? *Homo sapiens* evolved from a common ancestor with the chimpanzee about 7 million years