

readers' letters:

Homoeopathy

In Triple Helix No. 1, Eutychus reported that Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Health Authority had stopped paying for homoeopathic treatment because there was not enough evidence to support its use. Dr Anita Davies, a Trustee of the Blackie Foundation Trust, writes:

Thank you for making so much information available in the first issue of *Triple Helix*. It is relevant and interesting for a wide spectrum of health care workers. There may be bias in your choice of items for your roundup of medical news - and I would refer readers interested in homoeopathy to a properly researched review article by Klaus Linde (*Lancet*, 20 September 1997; 350: 834-843) which concluded that:

'The results of our meta-analysis are not compatible with the hypothesis that the clinical effects of homoeopathy are completely due to placebo. However, we found insufficient evidence from these studies that homoeopathy is clearly efficacious for any single clinical condition. Further research on homoeopathy is warranted provided it is rigorous and systematic.'

Creation-Evolution Debate

Dr Antony Latham writes from the Isle of Harris:

The review in *Triple Helix No. 2* by Denis Alexander of Michael Behe's book *Darwin's Black Box* left me somewhat amazed. My first surprise was that he omitted to mention that Behe has written a beautifully lucid and accessible book about complex biochemistry - written too in the sort of dispassionate and professional way that is badly needed in the debate about creation.

Going then straight to the three so-called 'flaws' that Alexander finds:

Firstly, he finds the term 'irreducibly complex' simply an admission of ignorance. He feels that science will

discover the answers to Behe's problems. He gives the discovery of DNA as a good example of how we have unravelled what was once thought to be mystery. In this argument he fails to realise that it is the very discovery of the details of biochemistry such as the DNA molecule which has led people like Behe to find evidence for a creator. The more detail we find about the biochemical processes in the cell (Darwin's black box), the more we see irreducibly complex systems. Behe's parallel example of the simple mousetrap is a good one - the various constituent parts cannot have any role on their own. The systems that Behe describes are far more unlikely to have occurred by chance. Alexander seems to have missed the point here or if not he has failed to give any logical alternative.

Secondly, he criticises Behe as someone putting God into the gaps of our scientific ignorance. He maintains that our God will 'shrink' as we discover more and more to fill these gaps. I find this argument extraordinary from a believing Christian who I assume does think that God somehow created us. Alexander, I assume, is of the Christian school of thought that feels that God had little if anything to do with the details of creation once he had set up the laws of the universe at the beginning. If so, then he should say that. Many of us however still hold to a biblical view of God's design and total involvement in our makeup. Behe is challenging the Darwinian world view and is doing so in a credible and very logical way. The sound logic that he uses is in stark contrast to that of celebrated Darwinian writers such as Richard Dawkins, whose books are filled with his own made-up stories of how he thinks we evolved. In contrast to Dawkins, Behe is taking a hard look at the nuts and bolts of the issues. He makes up nothing.

Thirdly, Alexander maintains that design is still possible as a mode of explanation even when we thoroughly understand all the biochemical components. I presume this is his way of saying that he can still believe in God as creator even if all the components of the cell have been shown to have occurred by chance (in other words looking for evidence of design and irreducibly complex systems is unneces-

sary). I would challenge him to re-examine this and look squarely at the issue. Either God did design us or he did not. If he did, is it surprising that biochemists such as Behe are now finding firm evidence for this? I think Alexander is being vague about this and should say clearly if he believes God designed the details of life or not.

There are other issues which space does not allow me to go into but I would urge readers to go out and buy Behe's book and think for themselves.

Intention

Ipswich GP Owen Thurtle finds inconsistency between articles in the second issue:

I agree with Andrew Fergusson's editorial that the intention of an act is what matters rather than the final outcome. So a large dose of analgesic intended to ease pain is not the same as giving a drug with the primary intention of bringing about death.

However, it is not only the moral philosophers he refers to who have difficulty accepting this distinction, but also contributors to the same issue of *Triple Helix*! On the back page we find Antony Porter protesting at the injustice of calling road deaths 'accidents', just because no-one intended to commit murder.

Another instance where you cannot assess guilt simply by the final outcome.

The Editor welcomes original letters for consideration for publication. They should have both Christian and health-care content, should not normally exceed 250 words, and if accepted may have to be edited for length.

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