

fearfully and wonderfully made:

Balance

A gymnast lies still on a beam, preparing for a series of impressive tumbles. Her body looks supremely balanced and perfectly at rest. This is achieved by complex interactions between her nervous system and muscle cells that are organised into motor units. As 'an octopus would encircle a pole', motor nerves wrap themselves around motor end plates, in millions of neuromuscular junctions.

Many things can upset the balance of our Christian faith, both doctrinally and practically. The church, the body of Christ, is at its best when reaching out to others in love, rather than wasting away in inactivity by looking selfishly inwards. Sadly, we have not always fulfilled this commission; instead exerting 'extreme exaggerated reflexes' to spiritual controversies of the time. Do any contemporary debates come to mind right away?

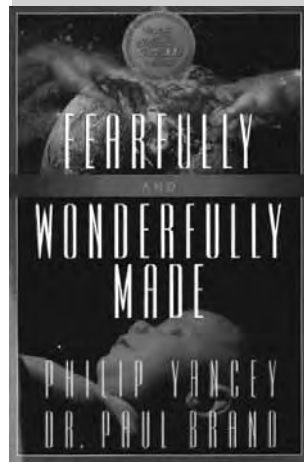
In the books of Galatians and Romans, the apostle Paul demonstrates a better way. He denounces the Jewish believers for their legalism, yet upholds

good works as the outworking of a heart transformed by God's grace. So much of Christian faith is a balance between extremes.

The physiological process of maintaining balance is remarkably simple to understand. An action potential travelling down the motor nerve will stimulate only one response from the muscle fibres across the junction: a shortening to cause contraction. This is repeated over and over, providing a constant stream of messages to maintain tone throughout the body's muscle 'choir'. This constant 'click-click' of messaging is what allows the gymnast's body to remain poised on the beam. When it comes to maintaining balance, communication is vital.

Similarly, the body of Christ can learn much through communication between brothers and sisters across the globe. It is sometimes hard to look beyond cultural differences in the way others see church, and remember that God loves them. This is worth the effort, as he teaches us valuable lessons about his body. This

This article is inspired by a chapter from Yancey P, Brand P. *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987. The authors expand on the New Testament analogy of the Body of Christ, linking it to the human body.



requires an open heart and humility that God delights to give. The Bible urges us to clothe ourselves with humility toward one another, because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5). In conclusion, the church finds unity in commitment to the head, Jesus Christ; we must find fellowship in our mutual obedience to him.

Pete Mackley is
*intercalating in medical
ethics at the University
of Leeds*