

Correspondence

Dear Sir,

Professor Joel B. Green's fine article on 'Scripture and the Human Person' (S & CB, April 1999, 11, 51–63), in 'further reflections' on my CiS Conference paper, 'Human Nature: Unitary or Fragmented?' (S & CB, October 1998), only came to my attention in November 1999. His reflections are listed on the Contents page under the heading 'Debate.' So it is encouraging to find that in fact a Professor of New Testament Interpretation is taking a view on what is compatible with biblical teaching that he does not differentiate from mine in any specific. Moreover, his paper enlarges on these views using the methodology that my paper advocated and indeed I illustrated in what had to be an all too brief and amateurish fashion.

This belated note is to emphasise two of my points that may be missed by readers of Professor Green's paper and yet are fundamental to issues in these ongoing debates to which we are contributing from much the same theological position.

First, our shared methodology is to seek to understand biblical uses of language in their original contexts, as a prerequisite for delimiting soundly Christian positions in our day. It is therefore puzzling to see disparaging reference to 'Hebrew and/or Greek word-studies' (also made by a reviewer of my paper), when Professor Green and I are doing the same things at different lengths from our disparate professional contexts. I hope that the *New Bible Dictionary* that I cited is not thought to be an English/Hebrew and/or English/Greek lexicon, rather than the encyclopaedia of literary and historical scholarship that it is.

Much more importantly on this matter, my paper carefully cited the later Wittgenstein's elucidation of language and mind, and indeed Fergus Kerr's highly accessible introduction to its theological implications. As some of Wittgenstein's successors rather crudely put it, 'Meaning is usage.' In contrast, Professor Green leaves his exposition open to misconstrual by those who hold the essentialist views on the meaning of words that Wittgenstein debunked (including his own earlier position). Without such a preconception of a necessary 'substance' to (families of) concepts, it becomes exceedingly difficult to distinguish the Thomist view of survival after/beyond death, summarised by Howsepian (Green, page 57), from the person's relationship to God in God's eyes that I suggested is a key to biblical ideas of the 'spirit' of a woman, man or child. Green's commentary on Cooper's 'dualism' seems to allow this. We agree that the Bible does not require the human 'soul' to be 'an ontological entity' but that, rather, it is scripturally consistent to hold to the understanding of 'an embodied capacity and vocation to relate to others, to self and to God' (page 58).

The second fundamental point that theologians and scientists should notice is that such natural 'capacit[ies]' and 'vocation[s]' are the prime subject matter of psychological science. In contrast, Professor Green considers no scientific alternative to physically reductive monism or the intuition that my soul is what I'm aware of when I think about what it is for something to seem to be the case for me. The latter is the introspectionist view of the mind (as fallacious as the behaviourist view), against which I took care to cite philosophers Wittgenstein and Lyons and psychologists Broadbent and Allport. Psychology is not about cells and molecules in the brain but about the 'behaviour,' i.e. the achievements, of the person. These successes of our words or acts are engineered by the whole brain interacting through the muscles and senses with the physical and social environs but have an irreducible reality of their own, as does also the social performance of a red traffic light. As pointed out in my *S & CB* review of *The Astonishing Hypothesis*, this is what Francis Crick means by 'the behaviour of a vast assembly of nerve cells': his example of a person's visual performance has been missed by those who do not attend to the later, scientific parts of his book. So Crick's book is not the tract for the physicalist reductionism that theologians, physicists and even biologists are prone to confuse with the many options within naturalism. What Crick does not grasp, nor regrettably some even of my academic colleagues, is the radically social – as well as biological and cognitive-affective – view of humanity that is integral to the fundamental science of psychology, in full affinity with biblical theology. This realism also about social culture makes practical applications of psychological science a pivotal ally not only in the 'cure of souls' and 'physick' for 'persons' (translating Professor Green's summary on page 62 into 17th century English) but also in 'having compassion one of another' (1 Peter 3:8, KJV).

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