

to die of typhus in Belsen just two days after the cessation of hostilities.

There were perhaps a dozen or so Jewish children who had Christadelphian foster parents in those early war years, most of whom eventually came into the Truth, and later some of their children and grandchildren. No doubt those who are still with us have their own sad stories to tell. One cannot read such a book without feeling sadness for all those persecuted people, who lost their parents and families and had to restart

life without them in a new land, learn a new language and new customs, and make new friends.

Vera Diamant went back to Czechoslovakia after the war, but soon returned to England, where she married and settled down. She has written other books, but this one will bring back poignant memories for many older Christadelphians who can remember those difficult times and those selfless families who rose to the occasion so magnificently.



Science

EDITOR: David Burges, 7 Whitehead Drive, Wellesbourne, Warwick, CV35 9PW.
Tel. 01789 842692; e-mail: dburges@alethia.freeserve.co.uk

Science and the Creator

“The days of our years . . .”

David Burges

THE MARVELS of design in the human frame are a constant source of wonder, and of admiration of the mind of the Creator Who conceived them. However, it has to be recognised that there are certain design ‘defects’ in our make-up, and these become increasingly clear with advancing years. Examples include fragile bones, arthritic hips, varicose veins, deterioration of hearing and eyesight, and many others.

Evolutionists often point to these with some scorn as evidence against there being a Divine Designer, who would not have made such elementary ‘mistakes’. They, of course, attribute such failings of design to the random results of natural selection. A group of scientists who are specialists in human ageing have written of the reasons for these defects, and of some ‘design improvements’ that they consider would increase human longevity.¹ In their scenario, the living machines we call bodies deteriorate because they were not ‘designed’ for extended life. Natural selection, they claim, does not aim for perfection or endless good health, but to allow individuals to survive long enough to reproduce and raise their young, thus passing their genes and body

design to the next generation. Defects that seriously hamper survival in youth will be selected against and die out, whilst those that take effect past the age of childbearing will tend to spread.

A deeply flawed theory

This reasoning does not stand much examination. If the preservation and passing on of the genes is the principal aim of life (as argued by Richard Dawkins in *The Selfish Gene*) then natural selection might be expected to favour individuals with extended reproductive ages and hence the opportunity to produce greater numbers of offspring. This would imply a selective pressure towards *greater* longevity, exactly the opposite of the evolutionary argument above. In fact it raises the question of why natural selection has not, in the billions of years claimed to have been at its disposal, eliminated ageing and death altogether.

The authors describe and illustrate a number of ‘improvements’ to human design that, in their

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1. S. J. Olshansky, B. A. Carnes and R. N. Butler, “If Humans were Built to Last”, *Scientific American*, Mar. 2001, p. 43.

opinion, would help to extend the human lifespan. They do this to highlight what they see as the deception of those who claim that ageing can be halted or reversed by certain diets or lifestyles. However, in most cases they admit that their 'improvements' would have inherent drawbacks and would require further modifications. Many of the defects addressed are considered to result from man's upright posture and bipedal locomotion, which sets us apart from nearly all other animals. These lead to high pressures being applied to the feet, ankles, knees and back, particularly the disks of the lower back, leading to inevitable wear and tear over a lifetime. A related problem is that of the age-related demineralisation of bone, which leads to increased susceptibility to fracture, osteoporosis and curvature of the spine.

The scientists' proposed solution to these problems is to have a shorter, forward-tilting human frame, with thicker bones and disks, and extra muscles and fat to combat demineralisation. They also propose additional ribs to hold the internal organs more rigidly and backward-bending knees to supposedly reduce wear. Ironically, they seem not to have considered that much of this would increase the weight and stiffness of the body and so contrarily lead to increased pressure on the joints and more wear. They also concede that the backward-bending knees would lack a locking mechanism, making it difficult to stand for very long, which might seem to be a major disadvantage!

Additional 'defects' of the human frame given the redesign treatment include relocation of the optic nerve behind the retina of the eye to reduce the risk of a detached retina, raising the windpipe above the oesophagus to prevent choking, and relocating the male urethra outside the prostate gland to prevent its obstruction. These are commonly cited in evolutionary propaganda as examples of 'divine misdesign'. Yet the authors admit that there may well be unknown advantages from the existing designs and severe trade-offs with their proposed fixes: for example, they confess that the raised windpipe would disrupt breathing through the mouth and the ability to speak.

Fearfully and wonderfully made

All this nonsense is solemnly presented in a serious science journal because it is discussed in the context of the supposed evolutionary process. The fact that *Homo sapiens* is demonstrably the

most successful species of large animal on the planet, with a rapidly growing population in excess of six billion, suggests that, in biological terms, our design is astonishingly well adapted to our environment, and that few improvements could be made.

The true explanation for those design defects that can be identified in the human frame lies in the Word of God, and His judgement of mortality upon man because of sin: "for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19). In contrast with the Creator Himself, Who is "from everlasting to everlasting", it has been determined for us that "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away" (Ps. 90:2,10). We cannot escape the conclusion that human ageing, and the whole range of diseases which affect us, have been ordained in the earth by God as part of the general condition that "the creature [Gk. *ktisis*, creation] was made subject to vanity . . . by reason of Him Who hath subjected the same in hope" (Rom. 8:20).

Nevertheless it remains true that healthy living in accordance with the principles established in the Law of God offers the best strategy for maintaining the lives we have been given in this age. As God promised the children of Israel: "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD That healeth thee" (Ex. 15:26).

Decay and mortality are inescapable, but there is an incomparable hope for the future, in that creation itself is to be "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:21). Whilst we rejoice in the marvellous design of the bodies that we have been given in this dispensation, our true focus should be upon the even finer bodies that will be granted to those who, through faith, inherit the promise of eternal life in God's Kingdom.

The Apostle Paul assures us that, for every kind of life, "God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him" (1 Cor. 15:38). Our present bodies have been designed for our allotted span in this life of probation. But in the resurrection there is the assurance that, "as we have borne the image

of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly" (v. 49), that is, of the Son of God who died for us and rose to glory.

Consequently, whatever ailments afflict us, we are to take comfort in the assurance that "our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also

eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able to subdue all things to himself" (Phil. 3:20,21, NKJV).



Prophecy, History and Archaeology

EDITOR: Tony Benson, 26 Tiercel Avenue, Norwich,
NR7 8JN. Tel./Fax 01603 412978;
e-mail: tony.benson3@ntlworld.com

The mark and number of the beast (1)

David Green

THE MEANINGS of the mark of the beast and its number (Rev. 13:16-18) are the subject of questions frequently asked in the mission field. To be able to give satisfactory answers it is necessary to keep in mind the New Testament context as well as the Old Testament background. The number 666 and the mark of the beast are associated in chapter 13 of the Apocalypse with certain beast symbols. These need to be interpreted first of all in order to establish the context of the references to the mark and the number.

The beast symbols of Revelation

The beasts are summarised as follows in the order of their appearance:

- 1 **The dragon** is first mentioned in chapter 12 and originally has seven crowned heads and ten horns (v. 3). In chapter 13 it is seen in vision giving power and authority and a throne to the next beast, which comes up out of the sea (v. 2). The next mention of the dragon is in 16:13.
- 2 **The sea beast** (13:1), like the dragon of chapter 12, has seven heads and ten horns, but this time it is the horns that are crowned and not the heads. This beast speaks blasphemies against God and persecutes His saints.
- 3 **The land beast** (13:11) supports the sea beast and also exercises the authority of the sea beast. This beast has two horns like a lamb but speaks like a dragon, and performs miracles and signs which deceive the earth's population.

- 4 **The image of the sea beast** (13:15) is given power by the land beast to live, speak and persecute those who fail to worship it. Its worshippers are forced by the land beast to receive a special mark.
- 5 **The scarlet beast** (17:3) has seven heads and ten horns, is ridden by the harlot woman and is destroyed by Christ (19:20) during the seventh vial period (16:19).

The meaning of the head and horn symbols

There is ample Scriptural evidence for the general meaning that underlies the use of beast symbols in prophecy. It is clear from the book of Daniel that this type of symbol refers to human kingdoms or empires, which trample, tear, and devour one another as they develop in power and strength (7:5,7,23; cf. 8:20,21).¹

The multiple heads are explained in the Apocalypse as being consecutive forms of government which rule an empire (17:10,11). This is fitting, since from a natural point of view the head contains the mind that rules and directs the body. It is the eyes and the ears in the head that receive the information that determines actions. Likewise the head contains the mouth that promulgates laws and issues commands to control the populace and guide the civil and military authorities.

1. For a more detailed treatment of the symbolism see "Symbols in Bible prophecy: beasts, heads and horns", *The Testimony*, Mar. 1998, pp. 88-92.