

they taught, the bread was transubstantiated into the actual body of our Lord, whereas, in fact, the acceptance of the spiritual, as it was in the case of the manna, could only come about as an act of

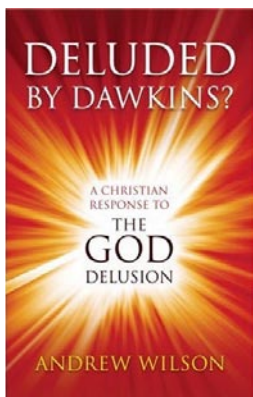
faith in each individual heart. The “flesh” of the Son of man can be assimilated in no other way.

(To be continued)

Exposing the delusions of Dawkins

Stephen Green

PROFESSOR Richard Dawkins is well known for his atheism and for his science. His book *The God Delusion* was published in 2006 and became, like other books of his, a best-seller. It is noted for its aggressive attack on belief in God. In this review we look not at the original book, but at two answers to it that have come from Christian sources. The first is *Deluded by Dawkins?*, written by Andrew Wilson, and the second is *The Dawkins Delusion?*, written mostly by Alister McGrath, both being published earlier this year.*



Deluded by Dawkins?

Andrew Wilson's *Deluded by Dawkins?* is a short work of around 25,000 words, adopting a simple and readable approach, making it a good candidate for use by readers of the *Testimony* personally, and possibly to recommend to friends who have been influenced by *The God Delusion*. This author is able to overcome the

diffuse character of the original book when looking for serious argument. (Dawkins' book is ten chapters long and stretches over 400 pages, with greatly varying relevance to the main theme of God's existence.)

One way Andrew Wilson does this is by analysing and tabulating the arguments so that the reader can access them more easily. He categorises Dawkins' arguments in four ways according to his personal judgement: A (Agreed), I (Irrelevant), U (Unsubstantiated) or D (Disagreed). In the same table he adds a short comment against each entry to give more information. This table he finds very useful for highlighting those arguments which might be worthy of more thorough answers, which he gives in subsequent chapters. Only eight entries out of sixty-three bear the D

code, on which he writes in parenthesis, “Put less kindly, the fact that Dawkins has cluttered his book with unsubstantiated assertions, truisms and irrelevance does not, in principle, mean that his central hypothesis is wrong” (pp. 31-2).

Wilson also points out that the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus is totally ignored by Dawkins:

“Most seriously, Dawkins spends the best part of the book either making points that are not directly relevant to the question of whether or not there is a god . . . or attacking bad reasons to believe that there is, while the most definitive argument that Christians have used since A.D. 30, the resurrection of Jesus, is not even discussed . . . From the point of view of Christian preaching, both in the Bible and throughout church history, the resurrection is the elephant in the room, the one giant that has to be felled if Christianity is to be buried (1 Cor. 15:14)” (p. 18).

This is, of course, a really major weakness in *The God Delusion*. For many Christians the resurrection of Jesus is a basic element of their faith. And the Bible itself makes it fundamental to the true faith (1 Cor. 15:12-17). It is hard to imagine any favourable reasons why Dawkins has made this omission. Perhaps, because he assumes miracles to be impossible, he did not wish to involve himself in research and discussion that would take the Bible seriously or show too clearly a weakness in his case. Wilson points out that there is historical evidence for the resurrection both inside and outside of Scripture, and the resurrection can therefore be used as evidence of the existence of God and the authority of Christ.

* Andrew J. Wilson, *Deluded by Dawkins? A Christian Response to The God Delusion*, 112 pages (Kingsway Publications, Eastbourne, 2007); Alister McGrath with Joanna Collicutt McGrath, *The Dawkins Delusion? Atheist fundamentalism and the denial of the divine*, 78 pages (SPCK, 2007).

The eight topics of Dawkins that Wilson sees as worthy of detailed answers, as given on page 37 of his book, are (page numbers are those for the original book by Richard Dawkins):

- 1 Omnipotent omniscience is impossible (p. 78)
- 2 Supernatural experiences never happen; the brain makes them up (pp. 87-92)
- 3 The Bible is all untrue, so we need not worry about its claims (pp. 92-7)
- 4 Darwin's theory of natural selection has destroyed the 'illusion' of design (pp. 114-9)
- 5 The existence of life is very improbable, but less improbable than God (pp. 134-41)
- 6 The existence of the universe is very improbable, but less improbable than God (pp. 141-51)
- 7 Miracles were shown in the nineteenth century to be impossible (pp. 156-7)
- 8 Yahweh is nasty, and the atonement masochistic (pp. 237-53).

He further groups these Dawkins topics into four themes: Anti-supernaturalism, Logic, Scripture, and Improbability, and devotes a chapter to looking at each. The list of eight topics above have been expressed in summary form, but Wilson's answers, of course, look appropriately at Dawkins' actual arguments in some detail.

In the chapter on "Improbability" Wilson offers a rather gentle answer to Dawkins' rubbishing of "Irreducible Complexity". This is a phrase used by the microbiologist M. J. Behe (of *Darwin's Black Box* fame) for situations where he believes he finds living structures which could not possibly be formed through the small-step process of evolutionary natural selection, but, requiring that each intermediate stage should deliver a viable organism, point to the work of design. Wilson's response is not strongly to attack Dawkins' criticism, but rather to say that it is "unsatisfactory" and "misleading", and that Dawkins' "section on wings could give the unguarded reader the impression that irreducible complexity is far less tenable than it actually is".

So far the features of his book we have mentioned are mostly valuable, and enable us to isolate parts of Dawkins' *The God Delusion* that might be worthy of detailed response. However, Wilson's arguments are influenced by his doctrinal views, and so we will not follow him on all his points, for example when he introduces the Trinity and the Incarnation. In spite of such serious misunderstandings on elements of Scripture teaching, they only occur very occasionally, and

we will find much that is helpful and that we can agree with in this book.

The defect just mentioned may limit how we promote the book to others, but if we are called upon to answer similar atheistic views to those of Dawkins we could still find it a very useful tool for ourselves. It could also be useful for others as long as they already understand the basics of our position, and are not likely to be misled.

The Dawkin's Delusion?

Alister McGrath's *The Dawkins Delusion?* is a different kind of book, although it sets out to tackle a very similar theme. This book is slightly larger, at around 30,000 words. It is written as a more serious and scholarly production. McGrath has a very careful style, which is in marked contrast to the sloppy thinking of Dawkins' *The God Delusion*, but it does tend to lose readability.

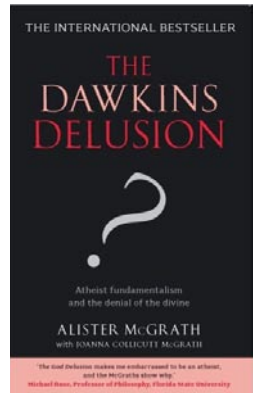
Professor McGrath writes as one who used to be atheist but later became Christian; that is, he has travelled in the opposite direction to Dawkins. Along the way he has been a scientist and a philosopher, and is currently a theologian.

McGrath concentrates on only certain parts of Dawkins' book. As he says in his introduction, "Assuming that Dawkins has equal confidence in all parts of his book, I shall simply challenge him at representative points, and let readers draw their own conclusions about the overall reliability of his evidence and judgment" (p. xii).

His four chapter headings are:

- Deluded about God?
- Has science disproved God?
- What are the origins of religion?
- Is religion evil?

These headings give an impression of which of Dawkins' points McGrath wants to tackle, and if we make the opportunity to read this book we will find some useful answers to Dawkins. McGrath is particularly useful for answering Dawkins' atheism. The fact that he began as an atheist himself enables him to understand Dawkins clearly. He tackles the 'philosophy' of Dawkins, his 'theology', and also the widespread irrelevancy of his content. However, there is one point where he offers no help; this is with the



science and evolutionary teaching of Dawkins. This is because McGrath is himself an evolutionist. He holds to theistic evolution: that God has used a process of evolution to form much of the life found in the earth. He therefore does not wish to deny Dawkins' Darwinian-style science, where we would like him to be sceptical. Needless to say, therefore, McGrath is as much against the concept of Irreducible Complexity as is Dawkins.

Conclusion

For a Christadelphian, the book by Wilson is likely to be of greater value than the second, if only because it is much easier to read and master. But if, after reading Wilson, something more serious is required to combat particular arguments of atheism, then McGrath's work may supply it.

In all three books—Dawkins', Wilson's and McGrath's—it is quite remarkable how little of God's revelation is considered as evidence for His existence. In Dawkins the Bible is used mainly as a source of criticism of God's character. In McGrath Scriptural evidence for God is hardly mentioned, possibly because it would be taken as a sign of Christian fundamentalism; he is keen that all fundamentalism be avoided, both atheistic and religious. In Wilson there is mention of a part of this evidence, but mainly restricted to the resurrection of Jesus.

What a shame that the evidence for God's reality to be found in the fulfilment of the Bible's prophecies and in the events of Bible history are not promoted more when the existence of God comes into question!

Molech and the Son of God

A study in contrasts

2. God's holy nation goes astray

Tom McCarthy

Part 2 develops the theme, referred to in Part 1, of the Law of Moses being designed to keep Israel separate from the heathen world and holy to God, but shows that they forsook God for heathen idols, as typified by Solomon's worship of Molech and other gods.

ANOTHER FEATURE of our study is to consider just how small an area the land of Canaan/Israel is. Just as God had in the beginning planted a garden, taking a specific area and fencing it off from the rest of the world, of which we know nothing, so He selected a small area of land to be *His* land, another Eden, as it were, in which he could live in communication with His chosen people within the terms of His own holiness. To the southwest of Israel we have Sinai and the vast bulk of Egypt, and to the east the even greater immensity of Arabia and Mesopotamia. Viewed naturally, the chosen land was vulnerable on all sides to greater and stronger nations. Only the guarantee of God in their midst could safeguard them from being swallowed up.

Egypt and Babylon have great significance in Biblical meaning. Egypt is the country from which

Israel could not escape without Divine aid. God had to free them. But with Babylon, the invitation is to come out. Just as Abraham had been instructed to come out from Chaldea, so the invitation, or rather command, is for us to "come out". There are aspects of our lives from which we cannot extricate ourselves; we cannot escape from the bondage of sin and death without God's help. But from the sophistry, city-building and false religion-cum-politicisation of Babylon we have to make the decision and the move to "come out".

Israel holy to God

What the Lord required from Israel, then, was an acknowledgement of the righteousness of His law, combined with a reverence for it and Him. He wished them to examine their helpless selves, and show a willingness to be taught, to be led, to be governed, by Him. Fellowship was to be maintained by the sanctuary and the altar. They were commanded to go to the altar, they were invited to the altar, to the presence of God ("before the LORD"), to uphold His righteousness and to receive forgiveness.