Badly Understood?

On the BBC Radio 4 ‘Something Understood’ programme on Sunday 19th September, Mark Tully considered the increasing tendency for people to talk about ‘The Universe’ where previously they might have spoken of God. The broadcast, ‘Blame it on the Universe’, began with a statement by an actress who, having moved to Dorset and then being offered a good TV acting role, said she felt it was the Universe confirming to her she was in the right place. As Tully observed, people might have previously said it was God confirming something to them through events. Several calming pieces of ‘New Age’ and similar music were played, including ‘What God is, we do not know’ by composer John Tavener, a Russian Orthodox mystic*. An interviewee spoke of how meditation helped her develop ‘a broader view of the cosmic mind’ than Christianity, and spoke of the universe being ‘one great interconnected mind... the universe is a living, evolving intelligence’ with we humans playing a part in the ongoing evolution of the universe.

There were about eight references to evolution in the half-hour programme, in the context of ‘traditional religion’ with its narrow restrictive ideas ‘evolving’ into ‘spirituality’, with increasing numbers of people describing themselves as ‘spiritual, but not religious’. Feminism, Eastern religion and the environmental movement were praised for their contribution to this ongoing spiritual evolution. Listeners were told ‘if we are going to grow and evolve, we can’t be limited’ and that it was necessary to ‘move beyond traditional understandings towards deeper reality’. All of which sounds very sweet, tolerant and holistic - but is it true?

Rationally designed, but not to be confused with its Designer. Image: NASA, in the public domain.
Of course, as we read in Ecclesiastes ‘There is nothing new under the sun’. These notions of ‘religion evolving into spirituality’ are simply a mixture of Hindu and Buddhist style pantheism, post modern philosophy (“whatever floats your boat - this is my truth, tell me yours”) and a dollop of Deism dressed up in vague touchy-feely language.

With cosmic and biological evolution taken as a given, the BBC is now preaching spiritual evolution to us. How ironic that with the New Atheists so aggressively trying to establish scientific materialism as the new state religion, men and women, who continue to have spiritual needs but feel disinclined for whatever reason to go to church, should increasingly turn to forms of ‘do it yourself’ religion. Such ‘spirituality’ can be very agreeable to the user since it gives a warm, contented feeling when required while making no demands of the worshiper. Like evolutionism, it is stated in such imprecise terms that it cannot be rigorously examined or falsified and is so flexible it can adapt to accommodate any situation.

But whatever this currently fashionable ‘evolutionary cosmic spirituality’ may be, it isn’t new. The Apostle Paul wrote almost 2,000 years ago ‘Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily’ (Colossians 2:8-9).

*Cancer and Evolution*

Hitting the news recently has been a new cancer drug called PLX4032. It has been described on national radio and the Web as a ‘penicillin-like breakthrough’. It attacks the “B-RAF” gene mutations that accelerate melanoma skin cancer. In a drug trial, 24 of the 32 participants saw their tumours shrink and two were hopefully cured. A study in *Nature* describes the drug's chemical structure and raises hopes for the development of similar genetically targeted cancer drugs. However, hope must be tempered with realism, as the drug doesn’t work for all melanoma patients and may only give temporary remission rather than a cure. The best hope is still prevention and early detection of skin cancer.

*New Scientist* online commented that ‘Although scientists have known for some time that all cancers are a result of gene mutations [my emphasis], it is only recently that gene sequencing has become efficient enough to work out exactly what genetic differences give rise to cancer’. This is an extraordinary statement when considered alongside the evolutionist orthodoxy of *New Scientist* and *Nature*. Mutations (random re-arrangements of information-bearing DNA) are the supposed source of new genetic information which natural selection uses to drive evolution forward. Indeed, mutation is the only mechanism available to produce the variations without which, as Darwin admitted, ‘...natural selection would have nothing to work with.’ We see from this report that it takes a highly skilled and well equipped team of scientists working purposefully and building on the discoveries of many others to produce even
an imperfect genetic therapy against the gene mutation that causes melanoma cancer. Developing PLX4032 took intelligent design, and lots of it. The cancer-producing mutation itself, however, arises spontaneously - and all too easily, since we have a skin cancer epidemic.

So on the one hand we have the cancer-producing mutations that degrade the precise DNA information we need for our skin’s natural defences against radiation, and on the other hand we have the supposed information-building mutations that drive evolution forwards. What is the difference between them? Simple really. Destructive mutations are very commonly observed and obey the laws of entropy, while information-building mutations, like the ones which supposedly built the melanin producing cells in the first place, have never been observed. They exist only in the fertile imagination of evolutionists.

CSM wishes every success to the Plexxikon team and all scientists and others who work to relieve the suffering due to cancer. We also wish that evolutionist scientists and reporters would

be honest about the observable reality of mutations – that they tear down and destroy genetic information, they do not build new features or new creatures. It is not in their nature to do so. Natural selection acting on random mutations is the central mechanism of Darwinian evolution, but from what we can observe about mutations the mechanism does not work. Mutations have never been observed to transform fish into amphibians, or amphibians into reptiles, or reptiles into birds, or indeed apes into men.

Reference:
(Nature, DOI: 10.1038/nature09454).
Stephen Hayes

Cuttings & Comments from New Scientist
by Dr David Rosevear

10 July p.14 Instant evolution helps make up for vanishing pollinators
Since insect pollinators such as bees are in decline, a Kansas scientist placed 1600 flowering plants in a field, with a similar number of the same in a greenhouse without insect pollinators. “By the fifth generation, the greenhouse plants had developed smaller flowers; this encourages self-pollination as the female and male organs are much closer together. Seed production in these plants – a measure of their ability to survive – crashed in early generations, before returning almost to normal.”
Of course, this has nothing to do with evolution. In the first generation, the
smallest varieties self-pollinated while the majority produced no seeds. Subsequent generations saw the survivors with genes for small flowers spreading to replace those that could not produce seeds. The plants remained *Mimulus guttatus*. It would be interesting to see what would happen if insect pollinators were subsequently allowed into the greenhouse.

17 July p.3 No candour, no trust
The *NS* editor points out that none of the three enquiries into the handling by the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia of their leaked e-mails were satisfactory. The first, by MPs, rushed out before the general election on 6 May, ducked the science because the university said it was setting up an independent scientific assessment panel. This 5-page report declared ‘the science was not the subject of our study’. Last week’s 150-page report now says it is not about the content or quality of CRU’s scientific work. It did criticise CRU for lack of a proper degree of openness. “Without candour,” the editor says, “public trust in climate science cannot be restored, nor should it be.”

17 July p.12 I cook, therefore I am human
Richard Wrangham of Harvard University has told the Evolution 2010 conference in Oregon that he believes we split off from the apes when one of our ancestors accidentally dropped some tough raw meat in the fire. When the food was recovered, he or she found that the cooked meat was easier to chew and tasted better. The practice caught on and *H. erectus* found he didn’t need such big jaws and teeth, and his gut shrank. The time saved chewing allowed him somehow to evolve a bigger brain and build complex social relationships. Unfortunately for the theory, “as yet there is no convincing evidence that hominins could control fire more than a million years ago.” This must be the silliest story since Big Chief Sitting Bull sat on the fire and became Big Chief Sitting Beef.

17 July p.35 Is laughter the best medicine?
Lee Berk of Loma Linda University in California showed 14 volunteers 20 minute clips from humorous TV programmes, measuring their blood pressure and cholesterol levels before and afterwards. “During the ‘laughtercise’ both cholesterol levels and systolic blood pressure fell...That’s not all: laughter may also help fight off infection. Other studies have found that it boosts the performance of the immune system by increasing the production of antibodies and the activity of natural-killer cells. A mother’s laughter can even improve the quality of her breast milk, making it more effective at fighting skin allergies in newborn babies.”
3,000 years ago, Solomon wrote: A merry heart does good like a medicine; but a broken spirit dries the bones.

24 July p.38 Set shields to stunning
One of the dangers interplanetary travellers have to consider is the threat from cosmic rays. On Earth, we are protected because the solar wind is deflected by Earth’s magnetic field. “Without this shield some of the particles spat out by the sun would charge through our bodies, shattering the machinery of our cells. In the absence of our protective magnetic field, complex life on Earth would probably be unsustainable.” Blasts of radiation could be 1,000 times as powerful as that released at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Now a team from Oxford have shown that even a small magnet can deflect the radiation and might be used to protect those on their way to Mars. One might almost imagine that the Earth was designed for life.

31 July p.6 Deceived by the morphosaurs
“Dinosaurs were shape-shifters. Their skulls underwent extreme changes throughout their lives, growing larger, sprouting horns then reabsorbing them, and changing shape so radically that different stages look to us like different species.”
The skulls of triceratops and torosaurus are markedly different but are actually from the same species. “Torosaurus will now be abolished as a species and specimens reassigned to Triceratops, says Horner.”

7 August p.3 In silico evolution
There are three problems for those wanting to create machines in our image – life, consciousness and intelligence. No one can agree on what these mean. Hence attempts to produce AI - artificial intelligence - all fail. But writing computer programs can imitate self-replication (like DNA) and natural selection that enables more successful ‘organisms’ to monopolise resources. Some would call this process creative. This editorial concludes hopefully: “Evolving life inside a computer lays the groundwork for understanding the selective pressures that led to life, consciousness and intelligence the first time round. A new chapter in our understanding will open when we get evolution to do it all over again.”

7 August p.26 Out of a harsh and hostile earth
This piece is written by Nobel Laureate Jack Szostak and puts forward problems with the origin and evolution of life. The high-energy environment of earth ‘4 billion years ago’ would make the emergence of complex, replicating biomolecules most unlikely. “The exact nature of that first cell, the basic unit of life today, is still unknown.” He thinks that RNA and a cell membrane were needed from the start. “The basis of biology is Darwinian evolution; for that to work, genetic material must encode useful information and transmit it to the next generation.” The problem about information is that it is only produced by an intelligent source, and is lost by random mutations.

14 August p.23 Robots to get bee’s eye view
“Neurobiologists have developed an artificial bee eye, with a 280-degree field of vision, which should enable robots to see more of the world around them.” I guess they used their considerable creative powers to mimic the bee’s eye. Could the bee itself have arrived by chance processes?
14 August p.30 Opinion letters
A reader’s letter from a Norwegian physicist dares to question the reality of the Higgs particle.
“It is important to remember that the Higgs mechanism was invented in 1964 as a ‘fix’ to give mass to the particles called vector bosons, just as dark matter was suggested as a fix to explain the velocities at which galaxies orbit each other in clusters. Neither of these entities has been found.”

21 August p.14 Harvard star in misconduct probe over monkey minds
The idea is put about that scientists simply follow where their research results lead them. Yet every now and again we hear of them cooking the findings, either to boost their scientific status or to fit in with a theory that supports their reputation. A lot of these frauds are in support of the theory of evolution. Piltdown Man was an early example that remained undetected for 40 years. Now Marc Houston, one of Harvard’s brightest stars, has been found guilty of misconduct. His studies purported to suggest that monkeys are capable of mental feats once thought to be the preserve of humans and great apes. Chimps, macaques and cotton-top tamarins were also claimed to be able to interpret the meaning of human gestures. He has since apologised.

21 August p.16 Humans wiped out giant turtles
“The half-tonne meiolaniid turtles were thought to have died out 30,000 to 40,000 years ago because of climate change. Now butchered remains have been found in the South Pacific island nation of Vanuatu. Carbon dating shows that the most recent bones are between 2890 and 2760 years old.” (They think this is within 200 years of the arrival there of humans.)

28 August p.16 Solar system slips back in time.
It is suggested that particles up to a centimetre across may have formed as the components of our solar system solidified. By using radiometric dating (U-238 and U-235) of such inclusions in meteorites found in north-west Africa in 2004, workers have pushed back the age of the solar system by almost 2 million years to 4,5682 billion years.
Apart from the usual sources of error in radiometric dating (such as not knowing how much of the initial U-238 was present when it formed) there is the unknowable effect of possible accelerated isotope decay under the influence of extreme radiation levels in space, big bang or not.

4 September Unseen Universe
This is an eight page insert, the third in the Instant Expert series, and is full of fascinating facts from astronomy. It is written by professor of astrophysics Michael Rowan-Robinson.

11 September p.7 A constant mystery
The fine structure constant, alpha, governs the way light interacts with matter “Alpha seems to have the exact value needed for several life-enabling processes.”
Now it seems that alpha was smaller in the ‘early universe’ according to the light from distant quasars. Moreover, alpha varies across space. This is interpreted to mean that the fact that it has the same value for our neck of the woods does not imply design.
Barry Setterfield writes: This must be put in context. The changes that are being measured are in fact only one part in $10^5$, that is one part in 100,000. This is not
significant, and a number of experts are yet to be convinced that the result is genuine.

11 September p.10 Thank the ur-worm for Shakespeare
“The hallmarks of the human brain – the thing that sets us apart from all other animals and is presumed to be the source of our intellectual superiority – can be traced back 600 million years to the ancestor of a primitive worm.”

CSM would claim that what makes man different from the animals is that we are created in the image of God. This article is simply a Just-so story based on the assumptions of evolution theory and deep time. For example; “The ancestral worm may have had a memory, similar in capacity to that of a modern insect.” The piece concludes: “All this is speculation for now, but what seems clear is that the seed for what would eventually give us the likes of da Vinci and Darwin was planted inside a tiny worm, 600 million years ago.” Planted?

11 September p.20 The humpback of the Cretaceous
A fossil theropod dinosaur with a very large dorsal fin has been uncovered in Spain. “Equally intriguing, the dinosaur may have had bird-like feathers. Its forearm bones have knob-like recesses that could have held feather quills. This pushes back the emergence of theropods with bird-like feathers by some 50 million years. ‘This is hugely significant as it’s the first good evidence for feather-like structures in a primitive theropod lineage,’ says Roger Benson of Cambridge.”

So, “may have had” and “could have held” feathers constitute “the first good evidence for feather-like structures” in theropods. No other branch of science would regard it as good evidence! The forecast evolutionary link between reptiles and birds remains an unproven dream.

11 September p.34 Zeros to Heroes – the 11 most improbable ideas that we couldn’t live without
These ideas include Bayes’s theorem regarding probabilities, the use of gyroscopes on monorail transport, imaginary numbers, George Cayel’s work on flying machines published 200 years ago, the use of fine lenses in 1674 to see bacteria in lake water, prions, digital communications and a cure for stomach ulcers by Helicobacter pylori in 1984.

Regarding the latter, Barry Marshall wrote: “I was met with constant criticism that my conclusions were premature. My results were disputed and disbelieved, not on the basis of science but because they simply could not be true.”

Pride of place at the beginning of the article is given to Michael Faraday, who discovered electromagnetism. “Of the many stories of how unlikely discoveries
can change the world, this is the best known and remains the most relevant.”
The article failed to mention that Michael Faraday was a Bible-believing Christian,
six-day Creationist. He deserved to have his portrait on UK banknotes rather more than did Darwin – certainly for the quality of the science.

11 September p.40 Supercrops!
With ever rising world populations, it is argued that we need to somehow improve photosynthesis of plants. Almost all life depends on plants for food. Turning carbon dioxide into food, with oxygen as a by-product, are both essential to life. “In theory, plants could capture a wider range of wavelengths, but such a fundamental redesign is beyond today’s bioengineers.” They ask why plants are not black to take advantage of all wavelengths of light. How ugly, how depressing! “Evolution had several billion years to change that, and didn’t,” they say of a further suggested innovation. “Problem: no one has yet managed to get a plant to make a foreign rubisco (an enzyme that catches CO₂, but does it rather slowly). The enzyme consists of eight large proteins coded for by the chloroplast’s genome, and eight small proteins coded for by genes in the cell nucleus. All these proteins have to be put together by special chaperone proteins. It’s all quite a challenge.”
What arrogance to imagine that science can improve on the Creator’s handiwork with its utility and beauty!

18 September p.12 Doubts linger over godless multiverse
“Stephen Hawking’s new book The Grand Design sparked a furore over whether physics can be used to disprove the existence of God.
“That the laws of nature in our universe are finely tuned for life seems miraculous, leading some to invoke divine involvement. But if there is a multiverse out there – a multitude of universes, each with its own laws of physics – then the conditions we observe may not be unique.
“Hawking suggests that M-theory, the leading interpretation of string theory, calls for a multiverse. Others are divided over the strength of this link. ‘My own opinion is that we don’t understand the theory well enough to be able to say whether there is one single universe or a multitude of universes,’ says M-theorist Michael Duff of Imperial College, London.”
M-theory requires 10 dimensions, but we only experience 3 of space plus time. Perhaps the other 7 are too small to see; or perhaps they’re duff.

“Duff adds that with our current patchy understanding of M-theory, the multiverse seems plausible enough, but it might not work if we could see the bigger picture. Even then, assuming multiple universes remain mathematically possible, there would still be no proof that they are actually present... “It’s dangerous to pin your beliefs on any theory of physics”, Duff adds, ‘because it might turn out to be wrong. But if Stephen wants to stick his neck out, I wish him good luck’.”

It has been estimated that the odds of everything being just right for life to exist without being designed by God is 1 chance in $10^{229}$, sensibly zero. Winning the lottery every week of your life is a dead cert compared with this. A universe arriving by chance would be a miracle, but some $10^{229}$ universes by chance is surely stretching it a bit!

18 September p.16
Wingspan of fossil megabird revealed
“For decades, fragmentary fossils had hinted that extinct birds once had wingspans of 6 metres, more than twice that of the wandering albatross, which now holds the record. Now we finally have proof for such giants: a 70 per cent complete skeleton of *Pelagornis chilensis*, a sea bird that lived 5 to 10 million years ago in Chile... The bird had thin-walled bones, and previous fossils had been crushed, making it hard to determine their original size. The new fossil is intact...”

The waters above the firmament (see Genesis 1) would have given a much higher atmospheric pressure before the Flood. This supported the flight of larger birds and insects. Most fossil plants and animals are larger than their living counterparts. This cannot be explained on a uniformitarian model where the present is thought to be the key to the past.

25 September p.34 Why I am a ‘possibilian’
This piece appears to be in response to the recent books by Hawking and other atheistic scientists “such as Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Sam Harris and Christopher Hitchens” who know there is no divine creator. Equally, author
David Eagleman is critical of religious fundamentalists who know that there is.

“So while there are plenty of good books by scientist atheists, they sometimes under-emphasise the main lesson from science: that our knowledge is vastly outstripped by our ignorance. For me, a life in science prompts awe and exploration over dogmatism.

“Given these considerations, I do not call myself an atheist. I don’t feel that I have enough data to firmly rule out other interesting possibilities. On the other hand, I do not subscribe to any religion.”

Of course, although a study of God’s works can strengthen a person’s faith, it is the work of the Holy Spirit, opening up the reading and preaching of Scripture, that leads to the knowledge of the Holy One. Eagleman concludes: “In every generation, people are seduced by the idea that they possess all the tools they need to explain the universe. They have always been wrong. From consciousness to dark energy, we know that we are missing an unknowable number of pieces of the puzzle. This is why in the debates between the strict atheists and the fundamentally religious, I choose a third side. A little less pretence of certainty and a little more of the possibility space.”

If, like Eagleman, you feel comfortable sitting on the fence, be assured that the fence becomes less comfortable with time. John says ‘These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name.’

25 September p.36 An unlikely story...

This 8 page article has been put together by a number of writers who have no doubts at all about 10 cosmic accidents that led from nothing to us. They are “cosmic coincidences. If they hadn’t happened, we wouldn’t be here.”

Certainly, 13.75 billion years ago, in the first $10^{-32}$ of a second after the big bang, rapid inflation led to exponential expansion that ensured that the universe was flat and uniform. In the next $10^{-15}$ of a second, matter and antimatter, formed in equal amounts much less than a second before, annihilated one another, but inexplicably left a tiny fraction of matter (one particle in a billion at the last count!) over to form the universe we all know and love. In the next 100,000,000 years, atoms of hydrogen and helium formed, followed by stars and galaxies. You all know the rest: our Milky Way, Solar System, Earth, bacteria, Man. Rudyard Kipling couldn’t have told it more convincingly.
Changes among CSM officers

At a meeting of the Council of the Movement this September a number of changes were approved.

Dr Bill Cooper has been unable to attend the twice-yearly meetings at Portsmouth for some time because of chronic illness. The Council reluctantly accepted Bill’s resignation. He had been a Council member since 1992, enthusiastically supporting the decision to set up the Genesis Expo when four other Council members had resigned in protest against it.

Bill has accepted our invitation to become a Vice-President of CSM. (Our President is The Lord Ashbourne and Vice-President Lady Money-Coutts). We shall continue to seek Bill’s wise advice.

Bill has two doctoral degrees and his book After the Flood is regarded throughout the creationist world as a classic. As well as other books, he regularly submits pamphlets and articles to our journal. Until his illness, Bill was a much sought after speaker on Creation, not only because of his historical research but also for his spiritual insights.

Mr Mark Carter has accepted the Council’s invitation to become a Trustee of CSM. Mark, a keen and knowledgeable creationist, has been attending the Council as an advisor since September 2009 and has led a team from his church in repairing and decorating the Genesis Expo since the mezzanine floor was completed. He will have particular responsibility for overseeing repairs and maintenance of our building.

Dr David Rosevear was unable to attend the Council meeting, having just come out of hospital. Earlier he had submitted his resignation as only the third Chairman of CSM in its 78 year history. David joined the Council of the Evolution Protest Movement, now CSM, in 1976 and became Chairman in 1985. He, with his wife Joan, has lectured on Creation in some two dozen universities in 16 countries, as well as undertaking many tours of churches, schools and halls. He chaired most of the European Creationist Congresses and was made a Fellow of ICR’s Graduate School in the States. David has agreed to stay on the CSM Council.

The Council unanimously elected Mr Ross Rosevear as its new Chairman. Ross stood in as CSM Secretary from 1982-86 when Mr Alan Radcliffe-Smith resigned due to ill health. Ross rejoined the Council as an advisor in 1996 and was appointed full-time Manager of the Genesis Expo in 2003, roles he has undertaken with astute skill.

Genesis Expo update

As well as the mezzanine floor now completed, considerable amounts of painting and decorating have been done in the exhibition area and the stairway. The ground floor exhibits are being overhauled. Those computers have been working daily for a decade, and several need to be replaced by modern digital devices. Repairs to drains have at last been sorted in this nineteenth century building. We are grateful to Mark Carter, Mark Fergusson, John Keeping and their team of volunteers from the Family Church in Portsmouth for much of this work.
Work remains to be completed on electrics in the Expo and the basement. We will produce new displays for the new floor; along the lines of those Andrew Sibley had made for the mobile exhibition.

There has been a tightening up of safety legislation since we bought the building 15 years ago. This has meant time-consuming and expensive work. Asbestos levels throughout the building have had to be checked. There is just one lagged pipe from the disused boiler in the basement.

The Fire Officer is insisting on us putting fire doors on the Expo and the flats above, and this is being done by a local tradesman. These measures satisfy new Health & Safety regulations.

The Streamline instrument for taking credit card payments was not working, and before the bank would replace it they needed to check the postcode and have letters from two trustees, that they then checked. This is to satisfy recent legislation about preventing money laundering by terrorists! The machine is now working.

When the mezzanine floor was completed back in the summer (at a total cost of a little under £50,000 - thank you for your donations) we believed we would soon be open to the public again. Now the end is in sight - we think! Check on www.csm.org.uk.

“Quotes”

“...it is worth making the point that an enormous problem still remains for Stephen Hawking and his followers. One of the most fundamental of all questions is ‘Where did the universe come from?’ The Christian answer is to simply state that God made it out of nothing. Hawking’s answer to such a question is to say that nothing made the universe: that this greatest possible something came, of its own accord, out of absolutely nothing. Both views require faith but I know which of the two I find it easier to believe in!”

J. John

“...ignoring a first cause is like trying to jump out of a bottomless pit.”

David Williams

"So if you are a white Christian man upholding traditional family values and expressing a desire to stop immigration and leave the EU, while being sceptical of man-made global warming and believing that Darwinian evolution does not explain the origin of life on earth, Britain is no longer your country."

Melanie Phillips

Creation Science Movement

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