

“Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen”
(1 Timothy 6:16).

August 2004

IMMORTALITY

by Henry M. Morris*

Almost everyone believes in some form of future life (or immortality) because of the extreme inequalities experienced in this life. People just naturally feel that something will be done, somewhere, somehow, to even things out. However, just what immortality means in the minds and hearts of men does vary widely—extremely so—with different groups of people around the world.

The word itself means “endless life.” One who is “mortal” will eventually die; one who is “immortal” will never die. Even if his body dies and returns to dust, his “soul” or “spirit” (or what might be called the “soul/spirit complex”) continues to exist apart from the body. Belief in immortality in this sense is almost intuitive. It seems so obvious to most people that the soul/spirit is quite distinct from the body—so much so that, when it finally leaves the body, it just *must* continue on somewhere else.

All the great philosophers of antiquity—Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, etc.—thought so, although the precise details of their concepts of immortality were diverse and ambiguous. The same is true of later pseudo-Christian philosophers generally—Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, etc. Some of these men tended to believe in the continued existence of individual personalities, others in the merging of individual souls into a kind of “all-soul.”

One very widespread belief is that of transmigration and reincarnation (also called metempsychosis), commonly identified with Hinduism and Buddhism, but also found in one form or another in a great many other sects, ancient and modern. In such religions, the soul “migrates” from the dead body to the body of a newborn creature. The latter may be animal or human, depending on the merits of the recently deceased.

There are many others who believe that the personality of the deceased persists in disembodied form, perhaps as a ghost. Such a belief is found widely in animistic cultures, but also in China and many ancient nations. Witness the many tales of haunted houses and the like, even in “Christian” countries.

There are many “spiritualistic churches” professing a diluted form of Christianity and led by “mediums” who claim to have the ability to communicate with departed family members or others. In recent years, numerous “New Age” cults have also risen, many of which involve “channelers” who receive “revelations,” either from dead ancestors or from other kinds of spirits. It is significant that all such concepts of immortality assume that only the soul/spirit survives at death; the body is dead and that’s the end of it.

They usually assume that some form of evolution was the origin of the whole

*Dr. Henry M. Morris is Founder and President Emeritus of ICR.

system. This is not atheistic evolutionism (the strict atheist does not believe in any kind of after-life at all, except the notion that immortality consists merely in one's ongoing influence or in the achievements of his descendants).

But there are many religions that believe in some form of pantheistic evolution—that is, the concept that Mother Nature (or Gaia, or some such personification of the supposedly “conscious” Cosmos) has somehow generated life as well as individual spirits. The various forces of nature which have been involved in doing this are then likewise personified as various deities to be worshipped because of what they have accomplished (the god of thunder, the goddess of fertility, the god of grain, and so on *ad infinitum*). This whole system has been called polytheistic pantheism. There are even gods of war and gods of death and gods of various other evils. After all, these also have supposedly contributed to evolution.

It is not surprising that these various systems of pantheistic evolutionary origins have believed in immortality, but *none* believe in the immortality of the *body*—that is, in bodily resurrection. After all, physical death is one of Nature's ways of maintaining a balance of life and even future evolution of new life (at least in their way of thinking). There can be no comfortable role for resurrection in any kind of evolutionary system.

And now there is even a new form of immortality which fits even the premise of atheism. The most influential atheistic periodical today is probably *The Humanist*, published by the American Humanist Association. A recent article in this journal by a humanist essayist named Brian Trent argues that science is so wonderful that it may soon conquer death altogether.

Perhaps someday soon, scientists will learn how to extend the human

life span indefinitely. To a growing number of scientists and commentators, this is neither wild dreaming nor science fiction.¹

The scientific evidence offered for this incredible prediction is that a certain scientist at the University of California at Irvine has been able to breed a few fruit flies that are still alive and vigorous at 24 years of age (their usual life-span is only several weeks).

This remarkable research has been published in a recent book² by that scientist. He calls these flies “Methuselah flies,” so he is familiar with the Biblical record of great longevity in the world before the Flood, noting that Noah's grandfather Methuselah lived 969 years.

If these scientists are right, we might soon be able to produce our own immortality—merely by never dying! Brian Trent seems confident that “the immortals are most likely coming. . . . There may be people alive right now who could live to see endless sunrises.”³

To the Christian, however, this is not a happy prospect. To live a million years in a body easily brought “*into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members*” (Romans 7:23) seems repugnant, at best. In fact, that may well be the ultimate future for those who participate in “*the resurrection of damnation*” (John 5:29), “*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*” (Mark 9:48), and where “*he which is filthy [will] be filthy still*” (Revelation 22:11). But as far as this present life is concerned, neither is it a possible prospect. “*It is appointed unto men once to die*” (Hebrews 9:27). “*Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*” (Romans 5:12). That's what God says about it!

God does offer the prospect of *true* sinless immortality—not just of the soul, but of the whole individual—body, soul, and spirit! This true immortality can only

come from the Creator Himself. He is the only one who intrinsically “*hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen*” (I Timothy 6:16).

The Greek word translated “immortality” in this passage is *athanasia*, meaning literally “no death.” Only the Creator has intrinsic immortality, but He created the first man and woman “*in His own image,*” with the purpose that they also would be immortal. When they rebelled against His Word, however, they marred that image, bringing in death and becoming mortal, subject to physical death. “*Unto dust shalt thou return*” was God’s pronouncement to Adam (Genesis 3:19).

But the Creator cannot be defeated in His purpose for creation, so He has provided a wonderful redemption for His human creation (that is, for all who will accept it as God’s gift). “*For . . . this mortal must put on immortality. So when . . . this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory*” (I Corinthians 15:53–54).

In the context of this wonderful passage, it is clear that this great event will take place when our great God and Creator, the Lord Jesus Christ, descends from heaven to re-fashion our mortal, dying bodies, to “*be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself*” (Philippians 3:21).

To transform mortal bodies into immortal bodies will require a miracle of creation, comparable only to the miracle of the primeval cosmic creation itself. Only the Creator can do this, on the basis of having satisfied the demands of divine judgment against human sin Himself, by dying in our place and then

defeating death. And He *will* do it for this is His immutable promise!

Now for mortals to put on immortality, bodily resurrection will be required, not just spiritual regeneration, though that also is immensely important, and is a part of the whole redemptive work of our Creator. It must be emphasized again that creation and resurrection must go together. The varieties of so-called immortality that accompany the evolutionary religions can never produce resurrection. *That* can only be the work of the Creator/Redeemer.

We note also that there are two creationist religions in addition to Biblical Christianity (Orthodox Islam and Orthodox Judaism) and they also believe in physical resurrection. However, their respective concepts of creation and resurrection both refuse to acknowledge the Creator as their Redeemer, the One who died for their sins, then rose triumphantly from the dead. Sadly, both Muslims and Jews still refuse to believe that Christ rose again after His redeeming sacrificial death. So their concepts of immortality are as ineffective as those of any other religion, and also as this new but futile hope of naturalistic immortality promoted in *The Humanist*, as noted above.

True immortality can be realized only through the substitutionary death and victorious resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This has all been “*made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*” (II Timothy 1:10).

Endnotes

1. Brian Trent: “The Future of Immortality,” *The Humanist* (volume 64. May/June 2004), p. 12.
2. Michael R. Rose: *Methuselah Flies: A Case Study in the Evolution of Aging* (World Scientific Publishing Co., 2004).
3. Brian Trent, op. cit., p. 15. 

WAS GEOLOGIC WORK DONE DURING CREATION WEEK?

by John D. Morris, Ph.D.

At ICR we spend much time researching the geologic effects of the great Flood of Noah's day, but we should not neglect the great global geological events which occurred during Creation Week.

It was on Day One that God created "the earth," but it was still "without form and void," shapeless and unfilled. It was either in a fluid state or covered with water as darkness engulfed "the deep" (vv.1–2). The geologic effects which occurred are uncertain, but certainly earth materials were created and energized when the "Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

On the second day the earth's water mass was separated into "the waters above" and those separated from the ocean by a firmament (vv.6–8). The evaporation of water from liquid into gas implies uncertain water movements which may have produced sedimentary deposits. These would, of course, be fossil-free since life had not yet been created.

On Day Three the continents were uplifted to form dry land. Assuming gravity and other processes were operating, this uplift and worldwide drainage of the waters from the uplands into the ocean basins would have been accomplished with tremendous amounts of erosion and redeposition of surface materials in the form of wide-spread but fossil-free sedimentary rocks.

During the second part of day three, God created plant life (vv.11–12). This necessitates an active, root-penetrated top soil which could support plants as well as topographic highs and lows which would allow waters to nourish them and then drain off. Additional in-

formation in Genesis 2:5–6 implies that a completely different hydrologic system was in place with the rivers fed from underground springs rather than the system of evaporation and rainfall that we now know.

On Day Four the sun and moon were created. Today the sun is the source of most of the earth's energy, with daily warming and cooling cycles producing small but steady effects. The moon's gravity produces the ocean tides with rising and falling waters continually refreshing the ocean. Geologic effects are implied but uncertain.

Days five and six in Scripture are primarily involved with the creation of life, life in the oceans, life in the atmosphere, life on land; nothing geologic is mentioned but much can be inferred.

For instance, many of the ocean creatures are rooted to an underwater surface. Many other animals, both on land and in the sea burrow under the ground and can even chew their way through rock. Today this bio-turbation continually recycles soil and sand and must have done so in the beginning as well.

On Day Seven God rested from His creative work but the forces of nature are never at rest. For instance gravity never stops. As breezes move particles around gravity pulls them back to the earth. As water comes to the surface, it flows downhill to the ocean. These would have occurred even before the Curse. Thus much was accomplished during Creation Week as God prepared the earth for human habitation. At the end of creation He pronounced it all "very good" (v.31). 



© 2004 by ICR • All Rights Reserved

Single Copies 10¢ • Order from: **INSTITUTE FOR CREATION RESEARCH**

P.O. Box 2667, El Cajon, CA 92021 • Available for download on our website (www.icr.org).