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## Davis, RISEN INDEED: MAKING SENSE OF THE RESURRECTION

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be more strongly affected by Malebranche and (to a lesser extent) Cambridge Platonism, and bears little resemblance to Locke's. This leads to my third reservation.

(3) One of my few serious complaints about Smith's treatment of Edwards is his comparative neglect of the latter's metaphysics—Edwards's identification of God with "being in general," the world's only true substance and only true cause. There is no discussion, for example, of Edwards's immaterialism, occasionalism, reflections on the trinity, or analysis of God's end in creation. While Edwards's treatises on the religious affections, freedom of the will, and ethics have the importance Smith ascribes to them, his nearly exclusive emphasis on these works results in a certain imbalance.

In spite of these weaknesses, however, Smith's book is largely successful. Those who are new to Edwards, or are unfamiliar with his thought as a whole, will find this a useful and generally reliable introduction. I know of no other book which provides as good a one. It therefore achieves what I take to be its primary purpose. Those who know Edwards well will also profit from a number of Smith's insights.

*Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection*, by **Stephen T. Davis**. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993. Pp. xii and 219. \$16.99 (Paper).

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During a recent Easter morning church service our pastor read the resurrection account from the gospel of John in which two angels appear to Mary of Magdala. My fidgety, apparently inattentive, five-year old son, who had learned a different version of the story in Sunday School, perked up and said: "There was only one angel, or is that a different story? What's he talking about? Oh, never mind." Then he recommenced to pester his father. So began the critico-historical consciousness of my son. Stephen T. Davis's thorough and impressive defense of the resurrection, *Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection*, could have provided some answers to my son's questions (if only he could read). With a mastery of the Biblical data, theological reflection and philosophical disputations, Davis responds with compelling arguments to virtually every objection to and reduction of the bodily resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of the saints. While he never claims to be able to persuade the ardent objector to miracles and the resurrection, he nonetheless makes a reasonably strong defense of the resurrection in the face of mighty historical, Biblical and philosophical objections. This book is not primarily an evidentialist religious tract designed to prove the resurrection to unbelievers; rather it is a philosophy text mounting an impressive defense of

the orthodox view of bodily resurrection in the face of issues of personal identity, biblical criticism, historical skepticism, and philosophical presuppositions.

The book begins with a brief yet incisive critique of Humean arguments against miracles. Davis defends a perspectivalism in which probabilities are assigned against the background of one's beliefs; if one is a naturalist, then one must discount any putative miracles and if one is a supernaturalist then one will be more inclined to accept claims to miracles. He contends that the available evidence in favor of the resurrection is compelling for those who admit the possibility of miracles and are Christians but is not "for those who don't and aren't." This rather modest claim may not be surprising, but if he can secure it, he can demonstrate the rational feasibility of a Christian's belief.

Davis claims that given supernaturalist assumptions, belief in the resurrection makes good sense. He defines supernaturalism as holding:

1. Something besides nature exists—namely, God.
2. Nature depends for its existence on God.
3. The regularity of nature can be and occasionally is interrupted by miraculous acts of God.
4. Such divine acts are humanly quite unpredictable and inexplicable (p. 20).

While (1)-(4) make some miracles likely, they don't make a resurrection or the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth especially likely. Is it plausible to claim that given (1)-(4), the resurrection makes good sense? Perhaps there is something about the divine nature that is not developed that makes a resurrection (or incarnation for that matter) likely. Perhaps God wishes to identify with humans and to overcome death in a dramatic tragico-victorious fashion; perhaps he simply delights in making immensely difficult beliefs the grounds of a relationship with him. In any case, much more needs to be said by Davis. In a footnote he adds that those who believe in the resurrection accept that the Bible is revelatory and reliable (p. 20). Consider the additional background belief

5. The Bible is divine revelation and reveals the bodily resurrection of Jesus.

But here, it might be argued, the deck is now unfairly stacked in favor of the resurrection. The probability of the resurrection given (1)-(4) and now (5), given the trivial belief that whatever is divinely revealed is true, is 1. If one reasonably believes all of those things, then it is surely reasonable to believe in the resurrection; however, one is left with the nagging sense that one has begged the question or assumed too much. Near the end of the book, Davis does offer more substantial evidence for belief in the resurrection of Jesus under the guise of "soft apologetics"—that belief in Jesus' resurrection is

reasonable from the perspective of supernaturalism, although it is not necessarily reasonable to all rational people. Perhaps Davis's book may best be seen as an instance of faith seeking understanding.

Davis rejects a Platonistic dualism which sees only the soul as essential to being human and which consequently denigrates both the body and this world. He also rejects a monistic, physicalistic view of human nature because of philosophical problems of identity and resurrection. He maintains the view that "human beings are essentially material bodies and non-material souls; the soul is separable from the body, but neither body nor soul alone (i.e., without the other) constitutes a complete human being (p. 87)." This view allows Davis to explain a variety of biblical texts and account for personal identity through death and resurrection. Davis believes that the bible teaches that there is a period after death where we will exist in a disembodied state as human persons until the general resurrection occurs. I can exist throughout this process because of the unity of my soul in the successive stages. He writes: "For surely in the interim state it will be us (and not soul-like replicas of us) who will exist without any body at all... Thus the presence of the soul alone must suffice for personal identity... (p. 96)."

Let us consider these claims. A property P is essential to a thing T being a member of species S if and only if T cannot lose P and still be (an) S. If, as Davis claims, both having a soul and having a body are indeed essential to one's being a human person, then if one loses one's body, one can no longer be a human person. Something may survive death, namely a soul that was once united with a particular body, but it cannot be a human person. And if it cannot be a human person then it cannot be identical with the human person to which the soul was previously united. There simply cannot be *human* persons in the intermediate state as described by Davis. The problems of identity are compounded—if this disembodied soul (i.e., not a human person) is united with a body which is numerically distinct from the original human person's body, in what sense is it the same person ante and post mortem? The answer is (relatively) easy given Platonic dualism—since only the soul is essential to being a human person, the shucking off of a body every now and then is no problem; personal identity is preserved by the continuity of the soul. But if we undergo essential change in the intermediate state, as required by Davis's beliefs about what is essential to being human, then it is not clear that personal identity can be thus preserved.

It would be difficult to find a better contemporary defense of the Biblical doctrine of hell than the chapter on Resurrection and Judgment; even those who disagree with him will have to consider his arguments seriously. While rejecting both a retributionist view of hell and a medieval torture chamber conception of eternal punishment, he nonetheless embraces an eternal "terrible state, a place of incalculable loss," wherein one is separated from God as

a “true source of all love, joy, peace, and light (155).” People are in hell forever because they want to be and this, Davis claims, is a manifestation both of divine justice and mercy. But if we take literally the biblical message that for those in hell it would have been better if they had never been born, it is difficult to see how it is either just or merciful. Surely they would prefer non-existence to life without love, joy, peace and light; so the merciful act would be annihilation of those who don’t choose to be with God. And it is not clear that free-will when exercised in resistance to God is a sufficiently great good to outweigh the suffering of eternal separation from God; so the just act would be annihilation as well. One wonders why he rejects the retributionist view—perhaps he believes it unfair to punish sinners for eternity. But why would it be both just and loving for God to create people who will suffer thusly if it is not a matter of divine retributive justice?

Davis’s arguments support the view that some ought not be allowed in to heaven (and thus militate against universalism), but he has not yet refuted annihilationism. Davis’s views gain some credence when they are coupled with his view that hell isn’t really so bad. He believes that the biblical passages typically taken to support a hellish view of the after-life are literally about the duration of the after-life and not about the intensity of pain. But some of the metaphors seem literally to be about both duration and intensity of pain and whatever hermeneutic he employs on this matter will seem (not without justification) to manifest a tendency to liberalism on the part of biblical conservatives.

There is an occasional lapse in Davis’s usually careful scholarship. Let me mention two. First, he writes without citation: “A few weeks after the crucifixion, Jerusalem was apparently seething with reports of Jesus’ resurrection (p. 80).” There is some obligation to provide evidence for this on Davis’s part. Second, because he believes that in the intermediate state people are in the presence of God, he claims that New Testament references to that period as sleep cannot be taken literally. But surely they can—many of the Old Testament writers embraced the literal notion of soul sleep after death. To show that the NT writers consistently departed from their OT heritage requires a great deal more support than Davis’s intuitions.

Although my comments have focused on areas for development, my overall reaction to the book was extremely positive. Because of the significance of the topic and the quality of Davis’s work, I took the opportunity to suggest topics for further study. But it would be difficult to imagine a more thorough and accessible book on the topic of resurrection. It is no simple fundamentalist tract (although fundamentalists, if they could be persuaded to read such books, would surely be pleased with most of it); it is a carefully argued yet eminently clear discussion of all of the relevant scholarly issues surrounding the topic of resurrection. Some of the chapters, however, may prove a bit

dense for students, laypersons, or non-philosophers, especially those on personal identity (chs. 6 & 7). Nonetheless, I would highly recommend it for classroom use and to pass along to thinking friends. It is an important contribution to a most significant topic.

*God and the Burden of Proof*, by **Keith M. Parsons**. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1989. Forward by Kai Nielsen. Pp. 156. \$38.95.

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This book is a limited and largely non-technical examination, from a perspective of what the author calls 'secular humanism,' of recent "analytical" defenses of theism. It is limited in that attention is restricted to Plantinga's discussion of belief in God as properly basic, Swinburne's account of the cosmological argument (in Swinburne's *The Existence of God*), and Plantinga's presentation of the free will defense against the argument from evil. Parsons discusses each of these topics in some depth, and reaches the overall conclusion that "...when it comes to philosophical argumentation about the truth of theism, game, set, and match go to the atheists" (147). Readers might find it odd that such a sweeping conclusion is reached after a limited exploration of the field. Partly this conclusion is supported by a re-definition of the term 'atheism.' Parsons follows Flew in taking an atheist to be someone who is not a theist (31). Thus, for him an atheist need not believe that there is no God; simple agnosticism will suffice to count one as an atheist. But, according to Parsons, a person who lacks a belief is under no responsibility to provide grounds for that lack; so, an atheist is under no intellectual or epistemic obligation to provide grounds for her lack of belief. It follows, Parsons holds, that theists have a burden of proof; they are under some sort of obligation to provide justifying grounds for theism. If theists have no good grounds *for* the claim that God exists, then atheism wins the match.

Parsons holds that Plantinga's attempt to show that belief that God exists may be taken as properly basic goes too far. The reason is that this same attempt will license some atheist in taking the belief that there is no God to be properly basic, and thus atheism will be rational at least for this one atheist. The reason is this: Plantinga holds that one must use an inductive procedure to establish criteria for proper basicity. One begins with cases which are *obviously* properly basic in certain conditions, frames hypotheses stating prospective necessary and sufficient conditions for proper basicity, and then tests these conditions against the paradigm cases. Parsons takes this to mean that Plantinga picks beliefs that are obviously properly basic to *him*, and then frames relevant hypotheses. Another person not inclined to theism may find