

(September/October 1996, pp. 52-53) as one "that both skeptics and believers in the paranormal would do well to read," while also finding, as I do, that it poses too sharp a division between possible beliefs on these matters.

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Leaps of Faith: Science, Miracles, and the Search for Supernatural Causes by Nicholas Humphrey. New York: Basic Books, 1996, 244 pp. \$23.00, (c) ISBN 0-465-08044-8.

The subtitle of this book describes it well: *Science, Miracles, and the Search for Supernatural Consolation*. Humphrey attributes the belief in paranormal phenomena to an ineradicable need of humans for some meaning to their life beyond mere physical existence and the death that terminates it. This craving lowers or even suppresses our critical faculties when we confront testimony that suggests a less bleak eschatology.

Humphrey tries to show that the miracles attributed to Jesus and the entire edifice of the Christian religion, which he is convinced largely derives from belief in these miracles, illustrate nothing more than gullibility. He suggests that Jesus was initially just an unexceptional itinerant conjurer who happened to attract a following of believers. His skill in magic impressed early observers; his healings could have occurred as described, through the power of faith. Witnesses of his phenomena began to believe that he had paranormal powers. The first believers influenced others to believe. In the end, Jesus came to believe he really possessed the powers he claimed to have. The throng adoring him troubled the religious and governmental authorities for whom he appeared to be a potentially dangerous agitator.

Humphrey's preoccupation with the miracles of Jesus and other miracles continues through nearly the entire first half of his book. In the remainder he addresses the question of whether an intelligent person should take seriously modern claims of paranormal phenomena. The titles of some chapters, such as "PK" and "ESP" exemplify Humphrey's light-hearted approach to his task. He raises the well-known complaint that parapsychologists offer no coherent explanation of how the purported paranormal phenomena occur. He objects to the patchiness of the phenomena and its unpredictability. He also thinks that paranormal phenomena make no sense. There is, he contends, "no rhyme or reason for what gets through [in claimed extrasensory perception] and what does not." With one exception, Humphrey speaks in generalities only and never confronts the details of particular experiments. (Spontaneous cases of apparent paranormal experiences are seemingly not even worthy of his dismissal.) In the exception, which, he writes, "breaks with the convention of this

book," he describes (with what he calls "a certain amount of experimental detail") the Ganzfeld experiments in telepathy by Charles Honorton and his colleagues. He then devotes slightly more than one page to a summary of several years of research. (In fact, Honorton's research with the Ganzfeld method extended over nearly two decades.) Although Honorton's experiments are widely regarded as among the best controlled as well as most successful of modern experiments, Humphrey discounts them because one of Honorton's former colleagues found that *possible* sensory leakage might have accounted for the positive results.

Humphrey has read widely in the history of science, which makes it surprising that he reifies science and tells us what science does and does not allow. In his view, paranormal forces can have no place "in a world of normal laws." Yet surely no one should speak in the name of *science*; one can only say what *scientists* believe. The "laws" declared by scientists are just as perishable as the physical bodies of the persons promulgating them. For example, physicists of the latter part of the 19th century believed firmly in the existence of a pervasive ether filling the spaces between material objects, but by the end of the fourth decade of this century new physicists had relegated the concept of ether to the history of their field.

Although this book contains much of value about the psychology and sociology of credulity, I cannot recommend it to anyone beginning a study of research on paranormal phenomena. Humphrey does provide excellent references to his numerous quotations and citations; the only inaccuracy I noticed was the anachronistic misplacement of Sir Thomas Browne as an Elizabethan. These references and the index, however, offer no guide to the serious literature that would help a reader to make an independent appraisal of the phenomena the importance of which Humphrey denies. An informed reader cannot tell from his references whether he is as well acquainted with that literature as the author of a book like this should be. My doubts about this do not derive only from Humphrey's incorrect spelling of the first name of Frederic Myers, one of the best known figures in the history of psychical research. They derive much more from his assertion that paranormal phenomena show no "rhyme or reason." Despite its many limitations, research on some paranormal phenomena has certainly shown recurrent features and circumstances of their occurrence.

I do nevertheless recommend this book to scientists or students already acquainted with the field. They should know how a highly intelligent outsider — himself a qualified scientist and one who can write well — regards claims of paranormal phenomena. Most scientists in conventional lines of inquiry ignore research on these phenomena. Humphrey at least takes the subject seriously enough to think it worth the trouble of writing a book deploring it.

Because Humphrey spends so much of his effort in an endeavor to undermine belief in the miracles attributed to Jesus, I think it appropriate for me to draw the attention of readers to two recently published and more balanced

appraisals of the life of Jesus and its value for us today (Wilson, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1994).

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- Wilson, A. N. (1993). *Jesus*. London: Harper Collins.
 Polkinghorne, J. (1994). *The Faith of a Physicist — Reflections of a Bottom-Up Thinker*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Man to Man: Surviving Prostate Cancer by Michael Korda. New York: Random House, 1996, 254 pp., \$20.00 (c). **Author: need ISBN#**

Me Too: A Doctor Survives Prostate Cancer by James Payne. Waco: WRS Publishing, 1995, 141 pp., \$11.95. ISBN 1567960863.

How I Survived Prostate Cancer... and So Can You: A Guide for Diagnosing and Treating Prostate Cancer by James Lewis. Westbury: Health Education Literary Publisher, 1994, 264 pp. \$18.95 (p). ISBN 1883257069.

Prostate and Cancer: A Family Guide to Diagnosis, Treatment & Survival by Sheldon Marks. Tucson: Fisher Books, 1995, 342 pp., \$14.95 (p). ISBN 1555610781.

Prostate and Cancer: A Non-Surgical Perspective by Kent Wallner. Canaan: SmartMedicine Press, 1996, 156 pp., \$15.95 (p). ISBN 0964899108.

The Prostate Book: Sound Advice on Symptoms and Treatment by Stephen N. Rous. New York: W.W. Norton, 1994, 287 pp., \$22.95 (c).

A Patient's Guide to Prostate Cancer: An Expert's Successful Treatment Strategies and Options by Marc Garnick. New York: NAL/Dutton (Plume Book), 1996, 276 pp., \$11.95 (p). ISBN 0452274559.

The Prostate Cancer Answer Book: An Unbiased Guide to Treatment Choices by Marion Morra and Eve Potts. New York: Avon Books, 263 pp., \$12.50 (p). ISBN 0380785641.

Frankly, blips in random number generators, unexplained output from white noise devices or barely detectable magnetic fields are, to use a fashionable colloquialism, not where it's at. A much richer vein of anomalous science may be found in the medical field with the true mother lode being prostate cancer. To use another metaphor, prostate cancer is a growth industry which has become a growth industry in books about prostate cancer; the above eight books are merely a sample of what can be found in libraries and book stores.

The boom in prostate cancer and its subsequent literature — unlike TB, AIDS or the Ebola virus — has nothing to do with any sudden epidemic that threatens the foundations of Western Civilization. The amazing rise in