

# Poem

## CRICK, WATSON, AND THE DOUBLE HELIX

by Christopher Southgate

A single insight made the Book of Life cohere,  
Sent two men shouting into a Cambridge bar.  
More slowly there steals upon us the power, the fear.

The X-ray from King's, and Chargaff's pairs,  
Not one helix, but two, fugues on a common air;  
A single insight made the Book of Life cohere.

An amazing future, suddenly laid bare –  
New drugs, cheap insulin, strawberries all the year.  
More slowly there steals upon us the power, the fear.

They were to find the grammar of genes trickier  
Than expected, the syntax harder by far.  
But a single insight had made the Book of Life cohere.

They could see the Nobel, and the patenting wars,  
The complex hunger for profit, healing, honor.  
More slowly there steals upon us the power, the fear.

It was all there, in the thin Cambridge beer,  
The Text of Texts, laid ready for the sequencer,  
A single insight made the Book of Life cohere.

Christopher Southgate is Research Fellow in Theology at the University of Exeter, Amory Building, Exeter EX4 4RJ, U.K.; e-mail c.c.b.southgate@ex.ac.uk. This poem appears as the frontispiece to *Brave New World? Theology, Ethics and the Human Genome*, ed. Celia Deane-Drummond (T&T Clark, 2003), and in Christopher Southgate, *Easing the Gravity Field: Poems of Science and Love* (Shoestring, 2006).

[*Zygon*, vol. 42, no. 1 (March 2007).]

© 2007 by the Joint Publication Board of *Zygon*. ISSN 0591-2385

Harder to take in the tears at the screening center,  
The many deaths of unborn others,  
But slowly there steals upon us the power, the fear.

Now we face the uninsurable cancer,  
Anticipate the repertoire of the baby-tweaker.  
A single insight made the Book of Life cohere,  
And slowly there steals upon us the power, the fear.