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TASC's mission is to rebuild and strengthen the foundation of the Christian faith by increasing awareness of the scientific evidence supporting the literal Biblical account of creation and refuting evolution.

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Evolution's False Start: The Spontaneous Generation of Life

By Dave Greear

The date was August 28, 2011. The setting was the biennial world-championship of track and field, held on this occasion in Daegu, South Korea. The "world's fastest man," Jamaica's Usain Bolt was expected to easily defend his 100-meter crown that he won in 2009 after also taking the Olympic gold in 2008. Two of his main competitors were not even in the race. Jamaican teammate Asafa Powell withdrew right before the event with a groin injury and American rival Tyson Gay was out of commission with a hip injury. Bolt had cruised through the preliminary heats, and it seemed like a gold medal was a forgone conclusion, but something very unexpected happened. After getting set in the starting block, Bolt jumped the gun! He was disqualified by the very controversial new "zero-tolerance" false start rule that had been enacted the previous year. Under the new rule, there were no second chances! A single false start now disqualified a runner. Therefore, there was now no chance that Bolt would repeat as world champion in the 100 meters because everyone knows that you can't win the race if you aren't able to start the race! Similarly, you can't win the race if you can't "get out of the blocks" (due to injury, cramping, or whatever). Either way, whether as a result of inability or disqualification, the failure to get started down the track makes it impossible to even finish the race, much less win the race! On this occasion it mattered not that Bolt was the world's fastest man because there was now a 0% probability that he would win the race. You and I had exactly the same chance of winning as Bolt!

In like manner, the biological theory of evolution has a huge "false start" problem in the form of the spontaneous generation of life that must occur before evolution can even start down the track. The nonlife-to-life barrier, in essence, makes the biological theory of evolution irrelevant because if there is no life, there is no possibility of evolution to modify the initial life-form. This "false start" analogy is not a perfect one because it may seem to imply that, given life, evolution most certainly would proceed towards higher and higher genetic complexity as the standard *neo-Darwinian* theory hypothesizes. An evolutionist might argue that just as Bolt almost certainly would have won the race had he not been disqualified, evolution most certainly would move from molecule to man given the initial molecule. However, that is most certainly not what I am implying. This is where the analogy

breaks down. I would argue that even given a simple life form, the proposed mechanisms for biological evolution (random mutations and natural selection) could not account for the huge informational increases that would be required for molecule-to-man macroevolution to occur, but that discussion is for another article.

Historically, the statistical improbability/impossibility of the spontaneous generation of life has always represented one of the greatest problems for the theory of evolution. Before natural selection (which is acknowledged as essential for biological evolution) can even enter the equation, life has to already exist (i.e., you must have an organism capable of reproduction before you can have natural selection, so natural selection cannot be a part of the process that led to life). Evolutionists have traditionally taught that organic molecules, such as amino acids, arose from a "primordial soup" of complex chemicals (i.e., *chemical evolution*). These organic molecules subsequently evolved into simple proteins, which eventually evolved into organisms capable of reproduction. Is this scientifically feasible? The late British astronomer, Sir Fred Hoyle, stated,

The chance that higher life forms might have emerged in this way is comparable with the chance that "a tornado sweeping through a junk-yard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the materials therein."¹

The reason for a statement such as this is the incredible complexity of life at the molecular level. For example, Michael Denton, a non-Christian molecular biologist writes,

Is it really credible that random processes could have constructed a reality, the smallest element of which—a functional protein or gene—is complex beyond our own creative capacities, a reality which is the very antithesis of chance, which excels in every sense anything produced by the intelligence of man? Alongside the level of ingenuity and complexity exhibited by the molecular machinery of life, even our most advanced artifacts appear clumsy. We feel humbled, as

¹ Sir Fred Hoyle, as quoted in "Hoyle on Evolution," *Nature* 294, (November 12, 1981), 105

neolithic man in the presence of twentieth-century technology.²

Unfortunately for evolutionists it can be shown that it's harder to get from nonlife to life than from a molecule to a man. As implied in the quote above, a single cell in the human body is far more complex than any computer or machine yet imagined. A Boeing 747 is a collection of 4.5 million nonflying parts arranged in an intricate design so that it can fly. In contrast, a typical cell contains several billion nonliving molecules such as proteins, DNA, and RNA all arranged in an intricate design that is essential for life. According to Denton, a typical cell contains ten million million atoms.³ Its life depends on the integrated activity of ten or even hundreds of thousands of different proteins, and each individual protein is, itself, exceedingly complex.

For instance, for "chemical evolution" to occur, amino acids must be arranged in certain exact sequences, just like letters in a sentence, to form protein molecules. The odds of this type of arrangement coming together by chance is infinitesimally small. Dr. Dean Kenyon was once a world authority on "chemical evolution." He coauthored *Biochemical Predestination* in 1969, which was, for a time, the definitive work on the subject. Kenyon, however, has abandoned his previous position and is now an advocate for "intelligent design." In a 1993 book, *Of Pandas and People*, Kenyon, with his coauthor Percival Davis, argues that the odds of forming a small protein of only about 100 amino acids randomly from the 20 different amino acids that make up the proteins of life is 1 in 10^{130} .⁴ Some evolutionists would counter that some amino acid variation is possible at some positions without disrupting the function of the protein, but information scientist Hubert Yockey has calculated and MIT biologist Robert Sauer has confirmed by experimentation that this allowable variation would increase the probability to only a 1 in 10^{65} chance.⁵ Compare this number with the 10^{18} seconds in a theoretical 30-billion-year history of the universe (actually much longer than the current estimate). There is not enough time to attempt to assemble even a fraction of the combinations possible for a 100-amino-acid protein, and such a protein would still be far from life (it is estimated that a minimum of about 400 amino acids would be needed for the simplest life).

Sir Fred Hoyle and his colleague, Chandra Wickramasinghe, used computers to calculate the odds for the formation of the 2000 or so enzymes needed to give rise to an amoeba to be 1 in 10^{40000} . Afterwards, they stated,

The likelihood of the spontaneous formation of life from inanimate matter is one to a number with 40,000 noughts after it...It is big enough to bury Darwin and the whole theory of evolution. There was no primeval soup, neither on this planet nor on any other, and if the beginnings of life were not random, they must have been the product of purposeful intelligence.⁶

Wickramasinghe added,

From my earliest training as a scientist, I was very strongly brainwashed to believe that science cannot be consistent with any kind of deliberate creation. That notion has had to be painfully shed.⁷

As a result of calculations such as these, some evolutionary scientists (including Francis Crick, who shared a Noble Prize for the discovery of DNA's structure) have felt it necessary to postulate an interesting "rescuing device," namely that life must have arisen somewhere in space and was subsequently translated to earth. We are not told, however, how the probabilities are any better in space! This "solution" simply pushes the problem back without solving it.

In addition to the molecules of life themselves, the genetic code found in the DNA molecule is unbelievably complex. The DNA molecule, which is the molecule of heredity, is necessary to code for proteins, the molecules of structure and function. Without DNA molecules to provide instructions, amino acids would never join together to form proteins. However, the opposite is also true. DNA is not built without protein machinery. Therefore, our dilemma is which came first, the DNA or the proteins? Both are necessary for reproduction, and an organism not capable of reproduction would not survive. Even if, against all odds, a simple living organism were spontaneously generated by random chance, it would still not give rise to higher life forms by evolution unless it could first reproduce itself. Reproduction is only possible if there is information already encoded on the DNA. Where did the information come from? In a purely materialistic scheme, it had to come from blind chance. Why? Because information is not material, therefore one cannot conceive of a material process to bring about its existence. To illustrate, I can hold a compact disc in my hand since it is material. If I wanted to, I could choose to use it like a Frisbee and fling it across a room. It might not fly as well as a Frisbee, but it is material just like a Frisbee. However, the information stored on that same disc is not material, and no

² Denton M (1986) *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, Adler & Adler, Bethesda, MD, 342

³ Ibid., 329

⁴ Davis P, Kenyon D, (1993) *Of Pandas and People*, Haughton Publishing Company Dallas, TX, 146

⁵ Ibid., 146-147

⁶ Hoyle F, Wickramasinghe C (1984) *Evolution from Space*, Simon & Schuster, New York, NY 148 as quoted in Morris HM (1997) *That Their Words May Be Used Against Them*, Institute for Creation Research, San Diego, CA, 55

⁷ Wickramasinghe C (1981), Interview in *London Daily Express* (August 14) as quoted in Morris HM (1997) *That Their Words May Be Used Against Them*, Institute for Creation Research, San Diego, CA, 57

one can conceive of a material process to bring it about! We must keep in mind that natural selection and mutations cannot be the source of the information since neither of those can enter the picture until the information is already there to select from or to mutate.

Where then does information come from? Information theory teaches that coded information always originates from an intelligent designer. This understanding is the basis for the SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) program which is searching for extraterrestrial intelligence by looking for the simplest of coded signals (as simple as "SOS," for example) from space. German information scientist Werner Gitt writes, "A code system is always the result of a mental process (it requires an intelligent origin or inventor)."⁸ Gitt also states,

There is no known law of nature, no known process and no known sequence of events which can cause information to originate by itself in matter."⁹

The "RNA world" hypothesis, that tries to account for an initial lifeform that has both catalytic properties like proteins and information-storing capacities like DNA, does not solve the problem because even if even if it were scientifically feasible¹⁰ it still doesn't account for the origin of the stored information (that is not material)! Why is it that we are willing to spend billions of dollars to search for coded information from space that would prove that intelligent life exists there, but we are unwilling to acknowledge that the precisely coded information in each cell of life likewise indicates an intelligent designer?

When we couple this information dilemma (i.e., the first life form would have to somehow randomly give rise to information to reproduce itself) with the original dilemma of overcoming the statistical impossibilities of life's formation in the first place, we can argue that evolutionism needs two simultaneous miracles to achieve the spontaneous generation that it needs to "get out of the starting blocks." Even evolutionists understand this problem. A display I once saw many years ago at the Smithsonian Institute's Natural History Museum in Washington, D.C. emphasized how scientists speculate that all life on earth evolved from the same initial elementary life form because of the statistical improbability of it happening multiple times! It seems that evolution also has a "zero tolerance" false start rule! If the elementary life form somehow evolves spontaneously against all probabilities but dies without reproducing, the false start means the process would have to start over against impossible odds! Famous evolutionary biochemist Leslie Orgel admitted,

The origin of the genetic code is the most baffling aspect of the problem of the origins of life and a major conceptual or experimental breakthrough may be needed before we can make any substantial progress.¹¹

Baffling indeed! Unfortunately, most biochemists have ruled out philosophically the very "conceptual breakthrough" that is needed, creation by the direct hand of God! ☹

ANOTHER REASON TO BELIEVE A BIBLICAL AGE OF THE EARTH

Observations show that the earth's magnetic field (a dipolar field with north and south poles) has been steadily decreasing over time. Measurements of the field's intensity show that it has declined by about 7% since 1829. From this data it can be calculated that the half-life of the magnetic field's strength is approximately 1400 years. In light of this calculation, the field's strength would be twice as strong every 1400 years backwards in time. At this rate, only about 20,000 years ago the earth's internal structure would have been disrupted by the heat produced from the electromagnetic field.¹²

COMING EVENTS

Thursday, April 12, 7:00 pm, Providence Baptist Church, 6339 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh, Room 207

Dave Greear will present A Critique of Chemical and Biological Evolution. Dave will discuss the problem that the zero probability of spontaneous generation of life brings to the argument for evolution, with additional information dealing with the difficulty that biological evolution has in accounting for increases in genetic information over time.

⁸ Gitt W (1997) *In the Beginning was Information*, Christliche Literatur-Verbreitung, Bielefeld, 67

⁹ Ibid., 107

¹⁰ Behe MJ (1996) *Darwin's Black Box*, The Free Press, New York, NY, 171-173, for the scientific problems with the theory

¹¹ Orgel L (1982) Darwinism at the very beginning of life. *New Scientist* 94 (April 15), 151

¹² Morris JD (1994) *The Young Earth*, Master Books, Colorado Springs, CO, 75