

Endtime Issues

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Darwinism: The Science and the Faith

Dr. Timothy G. Standish, PhD
Researcher
Geoscience Research Institute

Charles Darwin's theory of evolution arises automatically from certain philosophical presuppositions irrespective of the evidence. This has been demonstrated over the course of history. When Darwin's materialistic philosophy along with its concomitant naturalism is applied to the question of how life originated, there is only one reasonable answer and that is that chance combined with natural laws somehow accounts for everything. Before the time of Christ Lucretius, the Roman popularizer of Epicurean philosophy, wrote out something very much like the idea of evolution from atoms to life as we know it:

"The atoms did not intend to intelligently place themselves in orderly arrangement, nor did they negotiate the motions they would have, but many atoms struck each other in numerous ways, carried along by their own momentum from infinitely long ago to the present. Moving and meeting in numerous ways, all combinations were tried which could be tried, and it was from this process over huge space and vast time that these combining and recombining

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Continuing the Legacy

Gianluca Bacchiocchi

It is hard to imagine that it has been exactly one year since my father, Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi, passed away. A man who had always been to me the epitome of fortitude, perseverance, and passion for truth, is now waiting for his Lord and Savior to raise him up on that glorious advent day we all anticipate ever more earnestly. We would like to thank everyone for the many words of encouragement and prayers during this past year. The Lord has truly blessed our family providing comfort and a peace that truly surpasses understanding.

As you have noticed, we have decided to continue the legacy of the Endtime Issues Newsletter that goes out to more than 27,000 subscribers around the world. With the invaluable support of our Advisory Committee, our goal is to continue publishing articles that provide unique insights on the many issues and challenges that we face as Bible-believing Christians. By God's grace, we hope that the articles published in the Endtime Issues Newsletter will provide you with information that will not only enhance your personal walk with Christ, but also increase your desire to serve Him here on Earth.

Today's study, our 6th this year, is written by Timothy Standish, PhD. Dr. Standish reflects on the impact of Darwin's, **ORIGIN OF SPECIES**, which celebrated the 150th anniversary of its publication this past November. Although many scientists have adopted Darwinism as fact and predicated their work paradigms on Darwinism, many scientists, like Dr. Standish, are willing to challenge Darwinism, and have done so in a formidable way. In a world where a spontaneous big bang and billions of years of gradual evolution is accepted as fact, we, as Christians, should not be bashful in defending our belief in God as our Creator. In this study, Dr. Standish proposes how a paradigm with God as our Creator can better resolve the data points that Darwinism fails to explain. May God richly bless you as you read this timely study.

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Ordering Books, DVDs and CDs from Biblical Perspectives

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*Darwinism: The Science and the Faith
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atoms eventually produced great things, including the earth, sea, and sky, and the generation of living creatures.”¹

Lucretius put the essential presupposition of materialism in place first; the atoms are all there is and they lack intelligence. Once this materialistic premise is established, lots of time and a great big universe

naturally lead to everything including life itself. More recently, the vocal atheist and proponent of Darwinism Richard Dawkins somewhat naively claimed:

“The theory of evolution by cumulative natural selection is the only theory we know of that is in principle capable of explaining the existence of organized complexity. Even if the evidence did not favor it, it would still be the best theory available.”²

It is true that Darwinian evolution is the best mechanism yet devised, whether credible or not, that can be offered in the context of materialism. However, it is worth noting that minds are the only entity we know of that can in principle design aircrafts, bridges, computers and the Mona Lisa. To the degree that nature in its details resembles any number of incredible machines and on the gross scale is a transcendent work of art, it seems to be, in principle, only explicable in the context of a mind that transcends nature.

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So Darwin’s theory of evolution via natural selection of naturally produced variations in organisms is as good as it gets IF one starts with the premise that there is no supernatural. A less restrictive view of reality allows a genuinely adequate cause to be invoked. Because Darwinism functions as a worldview that acts as the prism through which all of nature is viewed, the fact that it seems to explain lots of things is unsurprising. That is what worldviews, by their nature, do. In fact, it would be shocking if evolution did not explain lots of phenomena; every theory has to explain something. But does Darwinism really explain the origin of biological species? The famous geneticist and enthusiastic evolutionist Theodosius Dobzhansky seemed to suggest this when he asserted, “Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution.”³

Dobzhansky’s first name, Theodosius, means “God giving.” He considered himself to be a creationist, writing: “I am a creationist *and* an evolutionist. Evolution is God’s, or Nature’s method of creation.”⁴ Unfortunately for Dobzhansky, science is a clumsy method of understanding the creation and is not really designed to tackle different theological views like whether God is the

creator or Nature is God. Nevertheless, science has one great virtue: all scientific theories are subject to empirical data. In science it is what can be seen, heard, touched, tasted and smelled that counts, not preconceptions, holy books or philosophies of how the world must be. Empirical data can either support or disprove scientific theories. Even if a theory explains much of what is known about reality – and Darwinism certainly can – if it is inconsistent with data, it should be rejected.

When Darwin wrote the *Origin of Species*, he recognized that there are empirical data that are problematic for his theory of evolution. Given that one major part of evolutionary theory is that all organisms have ancestors in common, necessitating numerous intermediates between say, humans, oak trees, amoebas and snails, Darwin asked:

“Why then is not every geological formation and every stratum full of such intermediate links? Geology assuredly does not reveal any such finely graduated organic chain; and this, perhaps, is the most obvious and gravest objection which can be urged against my theory.”⁵

Because the fossil data did not support his theory, Darwin cleverly explained it away by appealing to “the extreme imperfection of the geological record.”

In science it is what can be seen, heard, touched, tasted and smelled that counts, not preconceptions, holy books or philosophies of how the world must be.

In the 150 years since Darwin published his theory, many geologists have looked at countless rocks trying to improve upon the “extreme imperfection” of the fossil data. And while there have been a few fossils that some interpret as missing links (while others dispute their interpretation), it is clearly insufficient to improve upon Darwin’s self-avowed imperfection of his theory. The problem is that only a few possible missing links is not what Darwin’s theory demands; it demands *abundant* missing links. And so the best way to protect Darwinism from the data is to continue to claim that the data are imperfect.

Now, in order to be perfectly fair to Darwin, we must admit that the scarcity of possible missing-link fossils does not necessarily disprove his theory. If something is absent, that may suggest that it didn’t exist, but it is not

strong proof that it never existed. Absence of missing links may not be fatal for Darwin’s theory of evolution, but the problem in the fossil record is more profound than simply missing links. For example, deep in the geologic column, more and more fossils are being found that look remarkably similar to modern organisms. A dramatic example of this is the recent discovery of octopus fossils that appear to be essentially identical to modern octopuses.⁶ One of the discoverers of these fossils expressed his surprise this way; “these things are 95 million years old, yet one of the fossils is almost indistinguishable from living species.”⁷

It is a blow to Darwin’s theory of evolution that, with surprising frequency, fossils of supposedly ancient species are being discovered that are identical in structure to modern-looking organisms.

However old they may be, it doesn’t look as if octopuses had much time to evolve into octopuses, as these are the oldest fossil octopuses ever found. Maybe because fossil octopuses are very rare, primitive ones existed earlier and we can, like Darwin, appeal to a poor fossil record, but pushing back octopus evolution further in time means that there is less time for some other ancestral organism to evolve into the first primitive octopus. How old does an octopus fossil have to be before we can grant that there is simply not enough time available for it to have evolved from something else?

It is a blow to Darwin’s theory of evolution that, with surprising frequency, fossils of supposedly ancient species are being discovered that are identical in structure to modern-looking organisms. Other examples include modern birds⁸ and at least one kind of fish.⁹ Sometimes even extinct creatures have modern-looking features apparently before they should be there. For example placoderm fish, now extinct, fertilized their eggs internally, apparently before the external fertilization that is supposed to be a primitive trait evolved in modern fish.¹⁰ And the amazing little hairs that allow geckos to run across panes of glass, ceilings and other seemingly impossible surfaces (a feature that should have come about late in their evolutionary timeframe) have been discovered in the oldest known gecko fossil.¹¹

It is true that the fossil record probably isn’t perfect, but there seem to be enough examples of complex organisms suddenly appearing without evidence of any significant evolution which call into question Darwin’s theory of

gradual evolution. The common pattern is that groups of organisms, like birds or flowering plants, appear suddenly and in great diversity without obvious fossilic evidence of their evolution found in lower layers of rock.

The most dramatic example of fossils suddenly appearing is found in Cambrian rocks, the lowest geological layer where abundant animal fossils are found. The Cambrian contains fossils of numerous odd looking animals. Some resemble those living today, some don't, but they don't look particularly simple relative to modern animals and appear to have had the same genetic and biochemical systems in their cells. Some Cambrian fossils may resemble animals in lower layers of rock, but these rare fossils below the Cambrian don't look like reasonable candidates to be the ancestors of most Cambrian fossils.

Sudden appearance of organisms in the fossil record, as opposed to the gradual evolution Darwin predicted, is echoed in a seemingly very different field of study: genomics. Genomics is the study of genetic information encoded in DNA, and includes both the genes and the non-coding sequences of the DNA. Obviously, different organisms have different information in their DNA, which helps to explain why cabbage is so different from a mouse or fruit flies are so different from the yeast they eat on fruit. Much of that difference may be explained by differences in genes.

Genes are coded information in DNA for making different proteins, although important, they only make up a small percent of the genomes of most familiar organisms. They are like the parts available at a hardware store. Most organisms have an inventory of about twenty to twenty five thousand different genes, or parts, that they can use to build themselves, but information about how to put these parts together is found elsewhere in the genome.

It is true that the fossil record probably isn't perfect, but there seem to be enough examples of complex organisms suddenly appearing without evidence of any significant evolution which call into question Darwin's theory of gradual evolution.

With this in mind, imagine all the different buildings that can be built using bricks, wood, electrical wiring, nails and all the other parts found in a hardware store. One builder might use them to make a hospital, another a shopping mall and another a single family home. In each case, mostly the same parts could be used. There's no

need for a fundamentally different linoleum in a mall, a hospital or a home. The same principle seems to apply with genes. Most organisms have an amazing number of genes in common. Some genes are unique to different kinds of organisms, but the overlap in the general kinds of genes is remarkable. For example, most of the kinds of genes found in humans are also found in organisms as diverse as fish, birds and frogs.

You might think that if you could make all kinds of different organisms out of the same genes, then evolution would be much more plausible. The problem is that Darwinism explains the reason organisms have all of these genes in common as the result of inheriting them from a common ancestor. The more different organisms are, the more ancient their common ancestor. So humans, according to Darwin's theory, might have a common ancestor with a chimpanzee a few million years ago, while humans and chimps have an even more ancient common ancestor with sea urchins which lived hundreds of millions of years ago. If humans and sea urchins share genes, then those genes must have been present hundreds of millions of years ago.

Darwinism does a fair job of explaining similarities between organisms, but is far less accomplished when it comes to explaining where new and novel genes come from.

The problem is that the older the common ancestor, the less time there was to evolve the genes, and Darwinism invokes lots of time to explain how genes evolved. Finding more genes in common between organisms puts Darwinism into a bind. Darwinism does a fair job of explaining similarities between organisms, but is far less accomplished when it comes to explaining where new and novel genes come from. The bind is that finding more similar genes between organisms removes the time Darwinists invoke to explain the presence of new genes.

Let's look at a specific example. A peculiar-looking fish called a chimera, or ghost shark, swims over a mile deep in the dark depths of the ocean. These strange fish are very different from humans, but Darwinists believe they share an ancient common ancestor with us. Recently the chimera genome was sequenced revealing, to everyone's surprise, that they have color vision that works on the same principles as human's color vision.¹² According to Darwinian thinking, this means our common ancestor with chimeras must also have had color vision and thus our color vision could not have evolved over the several

hundred million years since humans and chimeras went their separate ways.

Here is a second example that is not a gene, but does involve genes and helps to illustrate how Darwinism can accommodate some data. The eyes and sometimes skin of humans with liver problems frequently turn yellow because a yellow chemical called bilirubin accumulates in them. This chemical is a breakdown product of the heme component of hemoglobin in red blood cells. Unsurprisingly, bilirubin can be found in a wide variety of animals, but it was completely unexpected to find bilirubin in several plants.¹³ Plants don't make red blood cells and the bilirubin that was first discovered in bright orange seeds from the "white bird of paradise" tree functions as a pigment rather than a waste product. Very specific enzyme molecular machines are needed to make bilirubin. As other plants are not known to produce bilirubin and the common ancestor of plants and animals is not hypothesized by Darwinists to have made it, how can it be explained in the seeds of the "white bird of paradise" plant?

Until scientists can travel back in time to see what actually happened, our ideas about the past will never be quite as clear as our ideas about phenomena that can be experimented upon in the present.

There are two ways a Darwinist might explain this situation without invoking common ancestry. The first is convergent evolution in which the same thing is thought to have evolved separately in different groups of organisms. Another explanation might be lateral gene transfer, in which genes from one organism are transferred to another. Without getting into the technicalities of both explanations, they seem far more plausible the less one knows about how genomes operate and how evolution is supposed to work. Darwinism explains organisms and structures when they are the same because of common ancestry and also when they are the same not because of common ancestry. A reading of the scientific literature will also reveal that Darwinism explains things when they are the same and when they are different. In other words, Darwinism makes itself irrefutable by explaining everything. No matter what the data are, the theory is true, or irrelevant depending on your perspective.

Some people would argue that a theory that explains everything, as Darwinism seems to, also explains nothing

as it is no longer subject to empirical data. The problem is that other theories about origins, like creation, are subject to the same criticism. The past is never as clear as the present and sometimes the present isn't very clear either. Until scientists can travel back in time to see what actually happened, our ideas about the past will never be quite as clear as our ideas about phenomena that can be experimented upon in the present.

Still, there are some trends that are clear. While modern scientific data is routinely squeezed into Darwin's theory of evolution, the amazing molecular machinery found inside cells and intricate organisms preserved in the fossil record seem to stand in tension with it. When Darwinism is extended from simply changing one organism into another to miracles, like the origin of life, it seems to impute occult properties to matter that matter, in and of itself, simply does not have. In some ways it is less like science and more like animistic religions that attribute supernatural powers to rocks, fetishes and other objects.

Even if organisms are currently evolving, which they may be, it does not necessarily mean that is how they originated. On the other hand, even if the kinds of things seen in organisms, like the amazing molecular machinery found inside cells, are only known to be the products of engineers today, science can't really prove this was the case in the past.

If we are willing to entertain the possibility that God may exist, much data points away from the Darwinian alternative and toward His existence.

Near the beginning of the **ORIGIN OF SPECIES**, Charles Darwin wrote: "I am well aware that scarcely a single point is discussed in this volume on which facts cannot be adduced, often apparently leading to conclusions directly opposite to those at which I have arrived. A fair result can be obtained only by fully stating and balancing the facts and arguments on both sides of each question."¹⁴ While many Bible-believing Christians view the world very differently from the perspective Darwin adopted, most would be willing to agree with him on this point.

Throughout the 150 years since Darwin published his materialistic theory about the origin of different organisms, much data that no one at the time could have anticipated has become available. New fossils and insights into the genomes of organisms are just two areas in which we have far more data, and yet ultimately

not a lot more clarity, especially when the data is viewed through the prism of Darwinism. For those who embrace a materialistic definition of science which precludes consideration of a Creator, Darwin's theory of evolution is clearly true as it is essentially the only materialistic theory of origins that explains much at all. On the other hand, those who believe that science should be more about the actual empirical evidence and where it logically points, Darwinism becomes suspect while much of nature is well explained within the context of some sort of Intelligent Creator who transcends nature. In other words, while science doesn't prove God does or does not exist, one's views on what nature is telling us are strongly influenced by what we already believe about God. If we are willing to entertain the possibility that God may exist, much data points away from the Darwinian alternative and toward His existence. In addition, much data that appears problematic from a worldview constrained by materialism resolves itself into a far more beautiful and coherent picture when viewed from a Christian theistic perspective.

NOTES

¹ This is my own translation of the original Latin as printed in Titus Lucretius Carus, circa 55 B.C., *De Rerum Natura*, Book 5, lines 416-31. **LUCRETIUS: ON THE NATURE OF THINGS**, trans. W. H. D. Rouse, rev. Martin F. Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1992). The Latin text is reproduced below:

416 Sed quibus ille modis coniectus materiai
 417 fundarit terram et caelum pontique profunda,
 418 solis sunai cursus, ex ordine ponam.
 419 nam certe neque consilio primordia rerum
 420 ordine se suo quaeque sagaci mente locarunt
 421 nec quos quaeque darent motus pepigere profecto,
 422 sed quia multa modis multis primordial rerum
 423 ex infinito iam tempore percita plagis
 424 ponderibusque suis consuerunt concita ferri
 425 omnimodique coire atque omnia pertemptare,
 426 quacumque inter se possent congressa creare,
 427 propterea fit uti magnum volgata per aevom,
 428 omne genus coetus et mortus experiundo,
 429 tandem convenient ea quae convecta repente
 430 magnarum rerum fiut exordia saepe,
 431 terrain maris et caeli generisque animantum.

² Dawkins CR. 1987. **THE BLIND WATCHMAKER: WHY THE EVIDENCE OF EVOLUTION REVEALS A UNIVERSE WITHOUT DESIGN**. WW Norton & Company, New York. Pg 317.

³ Dobzhansky T. 1973. Nothing in biology makes sense except in the light of evolution. *The American Biology Teacher* 35:125-129.

⁴ Ibid Pg 127.

⁵ Darwin CR. 1859. **ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES BY MEANS OF NATURAL SELECTION, OR THE PRESERVATION OF FAVOURED RACES IN THE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE**. 1st Edition. John Murray, London. Pg 280.

⁶ Fuchs D, Bracchi G, Weis R. 2009. New Octopods (Cephalopoda: Coleoidea) from the Late Cretaceous (Upper Cenomanian) of Hakel and Hadjoula, Lebanon. *Palaeontology* 52(1): 65. DOI: 10.1111/j.1475-4983.2008.00828.x <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4983.2008.00828.x>>

⁷ Science Daily Mar. 18, 2009. <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/03/090317111902.htm>

⁸ Zhou Z, Zhang F. 2005. 2005. Discovery of an ornithurine bird and its implication for Early Cretaceous avian radiation. *PNAS* 102(52):18998-19002.

⁹ Zhu M, Zhao W, Jia L, Lu J, Qiao T, Qu Q. 2009. The oldest articulated osteichthyan reveals mosaic gnathostome characters. *Nature* 458, 469-474. doi:10.1038/nature07855

¹⁰ Long JA, Trinajstic K, Johanson Z. 2009. Devonian arthrodire embryos and the origin of internal fertilization in vertebrates. *Nature* 457:1124-1127. doi:10.1038/nature07732.

¹¹ Arnold EN, Poinar G. 2008. A 100 million year old gecko with sophisticated adhesive toe pads, preserved in amber from Myanmar. *Zootaxa* 1847:62-68.

¹² Davies, W.L., Carvalho, L.S., Tay, B., Brenner, S., Hunt, D.M. and Venkatesh, B. Into the blue: gene duplication and loss underlie colour vision adaptations in a deep-sea chimaera, the elephant shark *Callorhynchus milii*. *Genome Research*, 2009; 19: 415-426 DOI: 10.1101/gr.084509.108 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1101/gr.084509.108>> For further discussion of this and other surprising common elements between the chimera and human genomes, see: Wang, J., Lee, A.P., Kodzius, R., Brenner, S. and Venkatesh, B. Large number of ultraconserved elements were already present in the jawed vertebrate ancestor. *Molecular Biology and Evolution*, 2009; 26: 487-490 DOI: 10.1093/molbev/msn278 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/molbev/msn278>>; Venkatesh, B., Kirkness, E.F., Loh, Y.H., Halpern, A.L., Lee, A.P., Johnson, J., Dandona, N., Viswanathan, L.D., Tay, A., Venter, J.C., Strausberg, R.L. and Brenner, S. Survey Sequencing and Comparative Analysis of the Elephant Shark (*Callorhynchus milii*) Genome. *PLoS Biology*, 2007; 5 (4): e101 DOI: 10.1371/journal.pbio.0050101 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.0050101>>

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¹⁴ Darwin CR. 1859. **ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES BY MEANS OF NATURAL SELECTION, OR THE PRESERVATION OF FAVOURED RACES IN THE STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.** 1st Edition. John Murray, London. Pg 2.

C O N T A C T S

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

4975 APPIAN WAY

BERRIEN SPRINGS, MI 49103

(269) 471-2915

NEWSLETTER

Gianluca Bacchiocchi gianluca@biblicalperspectives.com

BOOKSTORE

Daniel Bacchiocchi dan@biblicalperspectives.com

HEALTH SEMINARS

Loretta Bacchiocchi loretta_bacchiocchi@fhchs.edu

A D V I S O R Y C O M M I T T E E M E M B E R S *

Dr. Fernando Canale, PhD; Dr. Roy E. Gane, PhD; Mr. Nicholas P. Miller, Esq.; Dr. Thomas Shepherd, PhD; Dr. Timothy G. Standish, PhD; and Dr. Ranko Stefanovic, PhD.

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