

Quest for a Creatorless Origin of Life - 6

Spontaneous generation was an accepted part of the conventional wisdom of the intelligentsia in 17th century Europe. Italian physician F. Redi challenged this by demonstrating that it was flies on the meat, not spontaneous generation, which were the source of the maggots. Later work by L. Spallanzani demonstrated that visible life like flies and mice were descended from their own kind, as already understood of man and the larger animals.

But the public mind was not changed until the celebrated Louis Pasteur demonstrated that microbes came only from their own kind. And so he finally overthrew what everybody thought they “knew” was a fact - the pagan Greek philosophy of vitalism.

Little more than a decade later, Charles Darwin rejected this science, and like the apostle’s “sow that was washed” - 2 Peter 2:22 - decided to roll in Aristotle’s muddy philosophy. In his letter of February 1, 1871 to Joseph Hooker he wrote of his imagining “some warm little pond, with all sorts of ammonia and phosphoric salts, light, heat, electricity present, that a protein compound was chemically formed, ready to undergo still more complex changes.”

Fifty years later A. Oparin, working under the auspices of the atheist Soviet government, took Darwin’s warm little pond a step further, calling it “primordial soup” in which, by purely natural means, organic chemicals were imagined to have been generated.

In the same decade British biochemist J.B.S. Haldane imagined that ultraviolet light from the sun could have caused the production of large-molecule carbon based chemicals. These, he suggested, became complex enough to become self-replicating so that they would gradually accumulate in the seas.

It is frankly admitted by those seeking a natural explanation for the origin of life, that there is a very wide gap between earth’s natural chemistry and even the simplest living organism. The life of that cell depends on the complex interaction of a great number of chemical processes. Rather than occurring independently as if they were mindlessly brought together, they are coordinated into a single system, which would be the result of design. Design, by definition, is a plan or scheme conceived in the mind - which can only exist in an intelligent being.

Perceived in this way, this points to the operation of a very high intelligence with a specific design in mind of the life being constructed. We see the results of such mental effort among mankind. All around us, in our homes, in motor vehicles, aircraft, etc are the results of industrial design. Some are relatively simple, like a drinking glass. Others are far more complex like the airliner. But none of these exist apart from the well-informed and carefully executed mental effort of a designer or designers.

Instead, in the case of life’s origin, men have chosen to find an alternate explanation down a theoretical pathway called emergence. Those on that path regard emergence as part of the fundamental physical laws of the universe, like those governing the action of gravity and energy. These laws are capable of being, and have been, expressed mathematically.

True, at one time men, while first contemplating the nature of energy, conjectured on whether it was governed by mathematical laws. But emergence is still stuck in the conjecture stage. Despite the fact that much effort has been expended to prove its existence, emergence still remains just as speculative as Aristotle’s doctrine of vitalism.