

Quest for a Creatorless Origin of Life - 21

Richard Dawkin's "Pilgrimage to the Dawn of Life" in his book *The Ancestor's Tale* is based on the modern belief that changes in the genes gradually produced all the species of life. In other words, it is on the assumption that the current genomes in cells evolved over millions or billions of years from their first living form. The body of the book simply assumes this to be true.

No explanation is given for the mechanics of producing such remarkable, continuous and myriad instances of design in species. Otherwise scientists would be able to duplicate the process in the lab - but they cannot. The author offers support for reading an evolution into the genetic structure of species in the method used by literary scholars to trace the ancestries of texts. The best example offered is that of the *Canterbury Tales* project.

Among the 84 manuscripts of *Canterbury Tales* there are both minor and major variations. Many of these differences are the result of errors in copying, but others may be additions and revisions by Chaucer over time. Even the oldest remaining manuscript is not in Chaucer's handwriting, but written by a copyist not long after he died.

"These ancient manuscripts, hand copied before the advent of printing, are our best hope of reconstructing Chaucer's lost original." Dawkins continues, "as with DNA, Chaucer's text has survived through repeated copyings, with accidental changes, perpetuated in the copies." He leaves out the probable designed changes which were likely made by Chaucer.

He goes on, "By meticulously scoring the accumulated differences, scholars can reconstruct the history of copying, the evolutionary tree - for it really is" - says Dawkins - "an evolutionary process, consisting of a gradual accumulation of errors over successive generations. So similar" he concludes, "are the techniques and difficulties in DNA evolution and literary text evolution, that each can be used to illustrate the other" - p. 159.

Has the author thought through what he has said here? Is *Homo sapiens* - the thinking man, merely the end product of a countless series of errors in DNA transmission? Could he for one moment entertain the possibility that the same process could have ended up with that aeronautical engineering feat, the Sikorski Black Hawk helicopter? Could that machine be the result of a series of errors - or of careful thought, planning and design?

This aircraft has features for survival in warfare conditions, which clearly did not occur by chance or error. Unlike most other crashed aircraft, this one tends to hold together. When bullets fly from below they are stopped before reaching the pilot. Gear boxes keep working when dry. A special shock absorber on the landing gear smooths out fast landings on rough terrain. Fuel tanks are self-sealing to prevent leaking and fire from incoming bullets.

Could any similar achievement which has accomplished, been performed by a series of errors or mistakes? But Dawkin's comparison completely breaks down in several ways. Within the *Canterbury Tales* are actually a group of separate "Tales", ranging from the "Knight's" to the "Parson's". Quite unlike the imaginary evolving of man from the apes, etc, in *The Ancestor's Tale*, the earliest Knight's Tale is still the quite recognizable Knight's Tale, and the latest form of *The Parson's Tale* is still the same story.

In *Canterbury Tales*, there are changes, the result of Chaucer's design to enhance the Tale.