

FTB 59 CREATING LIFE SYNTHETICALLY?

The past month has heralded headlines about scientists making synthetic life in a laboratory. Needless to say, this has caused many questions to come through the ministry. Some have claimed that this has proven creationists are wrong. Before they get too excited, perhaps we best hear what really has been done in the lab.

This announcement is much akin to the old Miller/Urey experiment that was used in textbooks for years, where in some cases, they even claimed that life had been formed in the lab. In other cases, it was claimed that the building blocks for life were created. The fact is, however, they only made amino acids (the wrong kind) along with toxic tar that would destroy the amino acid. All of this, not to mention that they cheated by using an existing recipe and leaving out of that recipe, oxygen, something known to exist in the early atmosphere.

Likewise, the hype of synthetic life being created in a lab is far from being honest. The fact is, nothing new was really created, existing material was only moved around. FOX News stated, "The inventors call it the world's first synthetic cell, although this initial step is more a re-creation of existing life -- changing one simple type of bacterium into another -- than a built-from-scratch kind." The fact is that scientists have been moving single genes from one species to another for years. In one case the entire genetic code of one bacterium was transplanted into another, turning a goat germ into a cattle germ. In other words, they have only changed the software program in a computer, but the computer itself was already there. Also, they have plagiarized the software program just as Miller/Urey did with copying the known recipe for an amino acid. They still cannot explain (outside of an intelligent Creator - Jesus), how the molecular hardware was able to write its own software to begin with.

Before completing this experiment there were at least three issues to overcome. First, as mentioned, they needed to be able to put the software into an existing computer. To get around this, the scientist simply used an existing cell that God had already created. Second, they needed to know what kind of software the computer would take and how that software would work. Here again, they did not make anything new from scratch, rather they simply copied what was already in an existing cell and modified it, synthesizing DNA with this information. Third, they needed to hook up this new molecule to a different bacterium. Once more, the scientists used existing proteins from yeast to accomplish this.

It is because of using all these pre-existing materials and recipes that Glenn McGee of the Center for Practical Bioethics in Kansas City, MO said, "To claim the creation of synthetic life, the entire organism must be successfully produced from raw materials.

The landmark achievement has yet to occur. What they've done is they've successfully transplanted DNA from one thing to another without noticeably harming the operation of the old DNA, as best they understand it, from their definition of its function. When I put it that way, it's a hell of a lot less significant." Steve Jones, another Anti-creationist has even said, "The idea that this is 'playing God' is just daft. What he has done in genetic terms would be analogous to taking an Apple Mac program and making it work on a PC — and then saying you have created a computer. It's not trivial, but it is utterly absurd the claims that are being made about it."

These critics are correct. With the DNA software made from the recipe of an already existing microbe, joining them with components based on proteins of living organisms and reading the software with machinery from existing cells, there was no life formed here. This would be analogous to an ipod falling from the sky out of an airplane in a remote village. The village chief was astounded with its capabilities and wonderful sound that came out of the gadget so he took it apart and studied it for years, learning everything he could about each component. He then makes copies of each part, puts them together in the same way and makes his own ipod. Then with all pride and arrogance, has the gall to say, "I made an ipod from scratch just as this one that fell out of the sky came about by chance."

I don't mean to say that this isn't an amazing feat, because it is. This technology holds hope for the future and the scientists are working with Exxon Mobile to hopefully turn algae into fuel. However, it isn't nearly the created life that the headlines are claiming. Though this may be wonderful insight into God's creation and have some possible benefits to science in the future, it is a far cry from creating life. Only God can boast of that feat. This is why we read in Acts, "It is God Himself who gives all men life and breath and everything else" (Acts 17:25).

What we really see with this announcement is how complex and amazing God's creation actually is. It took 15 years of study to be able to copy what God has done in this tiny area. So complex and precise is this creation that in reproducing it, a 1 letter mistake was made out of a million lettered code, which caused a 3-month delay for these scientists. This is how precise and accurate things must be in order to work. Yet they want us to think that this code of millions of ordered codes happen by chance processes without any mistakes? Given enough time it could happen they cry. First of all, even that statement itself sounds more like faith than science to me. "Given enough time" means we haven't observed it, rather it is only hoped for and believed in. Through the 2nd law of thermodynamics, science reveals that the more time the more disorderly things become. To illustrate this proven fact, imagine cutting up a picture of our president into thousands of tiny squares, mixing those squares up, placing them in a garbage bag and then taking them up into a helicopter 50 feet in the air and dumping them out of the bag to the ground. How many drops would it take for the pieces of the picture to arrange themselves into a nice photograph again? Remember, each piece must be facing the right direction, right-side up. Perhaps more time is the answer? Well

then, move the helicopter 200 feet up and repeat the experiment. Of course, there will be only more disorder. Go up 10,000 feet and, again, more chaos and disorganization will come about. More time only increases the entropy.

This whole idea of scientists claiming to have made life after 15 years of research reminds me of the cartoon where the man in the lab says, "If I can just synthesize life here, then I'll have proven that no intelligence was necessary to form life in the beginning." The funny thing is, this actually sounds logical to many scientists today. In conclusion and I can confidently and thankfully raise up the praises from the Psalms, "I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from You when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, Your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in Your book before one of them came to be" (Ps 139:14-16).