



COVER SUBJECT

# How Did Life Begin?

How would you complete the following sentence?

LIFE IS THE RESULT

OF \_\_\_\_\_.

A. EVOLUTION

B. CREATION

SOME might assume that a scientifically-minded person would pick “evolution” and that a religious person would pick “creation.”

But not always.

Rama Singh, professor of biology at Canada’s McMaster University, says: “The opposition to evolution goes beyond religious fundamentalism and includes a great many people from educated sections of the population.”

Consider Gerard, a professor of entomology who was taught evolution at college. “When I took tests,” he says, “I would give the professors the answers they wanted—but I did not believe it.”

Why is it that even some scientifically-minded people have trouble accepting evolution as the origin of life? To answer that, consider two questions that baffle many researchers: (1) How did life get its start? and (2) How did living things develop?

# 1 How Did Life Get Its Start?

**WHAT SOME SAY.** Life arose spontaneously from non-living matter.

**WHY SOME PEOPLE ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THAT ANSWER.** Scientists know more about the chemistry and molecular structure of life than ever before, yet they still cannot define with certainty just what life is. A wide gulf separates nonliving matter from even the simplest living cell.



- Scientists can only speculate about what conditions on earth were like billions of years ago. They have differing views about where life began—for instance, whether within a volcano or under the ocean floor. Another belief is that life's building blocks first formed elsewhere in the universe and arrived here embedded in meteors. But that does not answer the question of how life began; it just pushes the issue farther into space.

- Scientists speculate about the existence of molecules that preceded genetic material as we know it today. These molecules are supposedly more likely to arise spontaneously from inert material and are self-replicating. Yet, science has found no evidence that such molecules ever existed, nor have scientists been able to create any such molecule in a laboratory.

- Living things are unique in the way they store and process information. Cells convey, interpret, and carry out instructions contained within their genetic code. Some scientists liken the genetic code to computer software and the chemical structure of the cell to computer hardware. But evolution cannot explain the source of the information.

- Protein molecules are necessary for the function of a cell. A typical protein molecule consists of hundreds of amino acids strung together in a specific sequence. Additionally, the protein molecule must fold into a specific

three-dimensional shape for it to be useful. Some scientists conclude that the odds of even one protein molecule forming spontaneously are extremely improbable. "Since a functioning cell requires thousands of different proteins," writes physicist Paul Davies, "it is not credible to suppose they formed by chance alone."

**CONCLUSION.** After decades of research in virtually all branches of science, the fact remains that life comes only from preexisting life.

## 2 How Did Living Things Develop?

**WHAT SOME SAY.** The first living organism gradually developed into a variety of living things, including humans, through a process of random mutation and natural selection.

**WHY SOME PEOPLE ARE NOT SATISFIED WITH THAT ANSWER.** Some cells are more complex than others. According to one reference, how simpler cells could develop into more complex cells is “often rated the second major evolutionary mystery, after the origin of life.”



- Scientists have discovered within each cell intricate molecular machines composed of protein molecules that cooperate to perform complex tasks. These tasks include transporting and converting nutrients into energy, repairing parts of the cell, and conveying messages throughout the cell. Could random mutations and natural selection account for the assembling and functioning of such sophisticated components? Many find that concept difficult to accept.

- Animals and humans develop from a single fertilized egg. Inside the embryo, cells multiply and eventually specialize, taking on different shapes and functions to form distinct parts of the body. Evolution cannot explain how each cell “knows” what to become and where it should move within the organism.

- Scientists now realize that for one kind of animal to develop into another kind of animal would require that changes take place within the cell, at the molecular level. Since scientists cannot demonstrate how evolution can produce even the “simplest” cell, is it plausible that random mutations and natural selection could be responsible for the different kinds of animals on the planet? Regarding the structure of animals, Michael Behe, professor of biological sciences, says that while research “has revealed unexpected, stunning complexity, no progress at all has been made

in understanding how that complexity could evolve by unintelligent processes.”

- Human beings are conscious and self-aware, have the ability to think and reason, and possess moral qualities such as generosity, self-sacrifice, and a sense of right and wrong. Random mutations and natural selection cannot explain the existence of these unique qualities of the human mind.

**CONCLUSION.** While many insist that an evolutionary origin of life is an indisputable fact, others are not satisfied with the answers that evolution provides regarding how life began and how life developed.



# An Answer Worth Considering

## Did You Know?

**THE BIBLE IS NOT ANTISCIENCE.** On the contrary, it *encourages* people to examine the natural world. (Isaiah 40:26) While the Bible is not a science textbook, it is consistent with scientific fact. For example, the Bible does not support creationism. It does not state that the earth was created in six literal 24-hour days. The term “day” as used in Genesis applies to periods of considerable length.\*

\* For more information, see the brochure *Was Life Created?* published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available online at [www.jw.org](http://www.jw.org).

## The Bible Teaches That . . .

**LIFE COMES ONLY FROM LIFE.** “With you [God] is the source of life.”  
—Psalm 36:9.

### **GOD MADE PLANT AND ANIMAL LIFE**

**“ACCORDING TO THEIR KINDS.”** (Genesis 1: 11, 12, 21, 24, 25) The Bible does not define the boundaries of these “kinds.” This allows for a degree of variation within each kind.

**GOD CREATED HUMANS WITH THE CAPACITY TO DISPLAY THE SAME MORAL QUALITIES THAT HE POSSESSES.** These qualities include love, goodness, and justice. “God said: ‘Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness.’”  
—Genesis 1:26.

AFTER considering the evidence, many people conclude that life is the product of a superior intelligence. Consider the example of Antony Flew, a professor of philosophy who at one time was a leading advocate of atheism. When he learned about the staggering complexity of life and the physical laws of the universe, Flew changed his opinion. Citing an ancient approach to reasoning, he wrote: “We must follow the argument wherever it leads.” For Professor Flew, the evidence pointed to the existence of a Creator.

Gerard, mentioned earlier in this series of articles, came to a similar conclusion. Despite his advanced education and his career in entomology, he said: “I saw no proof that life arose spontaneously from non-living matter. The order and complexity of living things convinced me that there has to be an Organizer and Designer.”

Just as a person can learn about an artist by examining his artwork, Gerard came to discern the Creator’s qualities by studying the natural world. Gerard also took time to consider a book attributed to the Creator—the Bible. (2 Timothy 3:16) There he found satisfying answers to questions about mankind’s past and practical solutions to the problems facing people today. He thus became convinced that the Bible was also the product of a superior mind.

As Gerard found, the Bible’s answers are worth considering. We encourage you to examine them for yourself. ■