



A Microbiologist Explains Her Faith

Feng-Ling Yang is a senior research assistant at the central research academy in Taipei, Taiwan. Her work has been published in scientific journals. She used to believe in the theory of evolution. But then she changed her mind. *Awake!* asked her about her science and her faith.

Tell us about your background.

My parents were very poor, and my mother never learned to read. We raised pigs and grew vegetables in a flood-prone area near the city of Taipei. My parents taught me the value of hard work, and they also taught me to help other people.

Was your family religious?

My family practiced Taoism. We made sacrifices to the

“Heaven God,” but we didn’t know anything about him. I used to wonder: ‘Why do people suffer? Why are people selfish?’ I read books about Taoism and Buddhism and about Eastern and Western history. I even went to a couple of churches. But I couldn’t find answers to my questions.

Why did you study science?

I liked mathematics and was fascinated by the way physical and chemical laws govern the

structure of things. Everything, from the immense universe to tiny microbes, has a structure that is controlled by rules. And I wanted to understand those rules.

Why did you believe the theory of evolution to be a fact?

I was taught nothing to the contrary. From junior high school through university, evolution was the only explanation I heard. And then because of being a researcher in a life science, I was expected to accept evolution.

What made you start reading the Bible?

I went to live in Germany in 1996 to start my postgraduate studies. The following year

I asked myself, ‘How did those protein machines become so well engineered?’

I met a lady named Simone. She was one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, and she offered to show me the Bible’s answers to my questions. When she told me that the Bible explains the purpose of life, I was intrigued. I began getting up at half past four each morning to read the Bible for an hour. Then I would go for a walk to meditate. During the next year, I read the whole Bible. I was impressed by the accuracy of its prophecies. Gradually, I became convinced that the Bible is from God.

What were your thoughts about the origin of life?

Well, when I began giving this serious thought in the late 1990’s, molecular biologists were beginning to realize that the chemistry of life is much more elaborate than anyone had previously thought. Of course, scientists had long known that the proteins in living cells are the most chemically sophisticated molecules in existence. But now, they were discovering how whole assemblies of proteins are organized to form elegant machines with moving parts. A molecular machine might be

composed of over 50 proteins. And even the simplest cell needs a collection of different machines—for example, to generate power, to duplicate information, and to control access across membranes.

What did you conclude?

Well, I asked myself, ‘How did those protein machines become so well engineered?’ At the time, the unexpected complexity of cell chemistry made a number of scientists ask the same question. A professor of biochemistry in the United States published a book arguing that the molecular machines in living cells are so complex that they could not have originated randomly. I agreed. I felt that life *must* have been created.

Why did you become one of Jehovah’s Witnesses?

I was impressed that although Simone had health problems, she traveled some 35 miles

(56 km) each week to teach me the Bible. I learned that during Germany’s Nazi era, some Witnesses were imprisoned in concentration camps for their political neutrality. Their courage deeply impressed me. The Witnesses’ love for God made me want to be like them.

Has believing in God benefited you?

My colleagues say that I’m happier now. I used to feel inferior because of my poor background, so I never told anyone where I grew up and never mentioned my parents. But I’ve learned from the Bible that God is not interested in social status. In fact, Jesus was raised in a family that was probably as poor as mine. Now I care for my parents and enjoy introducing them to my friends. ■

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