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Good News Magazine

In This Issue:

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What is the Good News?

The Good News Magazine is a weekly Catholic interest magazine written by and run by teens for all ages.

The Beginning of Life

By Alex Hanson

Many today claim that life arose on Earth because of pure chance. A few amino acids in a pool being struck by lightning randomly coming to life is the most common explanation. This idea seems plausible at first, as experiments have shown that amino acids can form from simpler molecules spontaneously. Given the chaotic environment of the early Earth, these molecules will be crashing into each other enormous numbers of times, facilitating even the most complex chemical reactions. Surely given enough of these collisions a basic life form could come into existence.

I find numerous problems with this theory, which I will cover. Firstly, for the theory to work there would have to be enough chaos in the environment for chemicals to react and form requisite molecules. But if the conditions were too dynamic, the large molecules that are required to form RNA or membranes would stand a large chance of being torn apart. Even in lab environments which scientists control, we cannot form a cell that is self-replicating. With the chaos of the "primordial soup", I do not see how enough of these molecules could even come into a close area, much less react in the exact way they need to form life. But there were millions of years where life could have spontaneously formed, so couldn't chance bring together enough molecules?

The issue is that for life to form we need hundreds of thousands of large molecules to form in the exact way to reproduce. For instance, one of the simplest life-forms we know of, *Nasuia deltocephalinicola,* has around 100,000 base pairs of DNA. This bacterium has along with its DNA all the required parts of a cell, numbering in the millions of molecules.

(Continued on Page 2)

(The Beginning of Life, *cont. from p. 1)*

Even for a theoretical bacterium that is an order of magnitude simpler than *Nasuia,* it would still take unbelievable luck to form. Not only this, it still would have to happen in a puddle or the ocean in an early earth. In this puddle hundreds of thousands of molecules would have to form, encounter each other, form together into a cell, then be able to reproduce.

So, even assuming the possibility that all the parts of the cell can form spontaneously, we still do not have life. A pile of DNA is not the same as a living cell, even if it contains all the information to produce a cell. A nucleus is not a cell, a ribosome is not a cell, a cell membrane is not a cell, etc. To even be considered a living thing every part of the cell must be present *and* be combined in a way in which it can function and reproduce. If you look at the individual components of the cell, they are also made of large molecules that must form together. For instance, DNA is made of a long strand of molecules that has specific base pairs along its length. These base pairs encode the information to form another cell and determine how the cell should operate. If even a few pairs are swapped the cell cannot replicate, and thus cannot form more life. So, if we apply this to *Nasuia* we need 100,000 large molecules to form in the correct order to form the DNA. But assume we only need 1000 of these base pairs to be in the correct order to allow the cell to reproduce. This means that we need one order in 1000 factorial possibilities, 10^2567 possible orders. If we can have 100,000 random DNA molecules form each a second it would take 10^2555 years, roughly 10^2545 times the age of the earth.

No matter how many DNA molecules you form every second, the time to form DNA in the exact order to make life would be orders and orders of magnitude longer than the time it actually took for life to form. But let's even assume that we can form a functioning cell. Say this cell is able to reproduce with minimal resources, allowing the necessary conditions to form. What happens if it dies? For our theoretical bacterium to form a colony it must avoid dying for long enough to reproduce via fission numerous times. Then the bacteria that are formed must also survive to reproduce and so on until the point that the colony is impossible to kill. This will require the bacteria to migrate to other puddles or to other parts of the sea and form colonies there as well. Only this will ensure the survival of the species.

But to form these colonies the first must be established. Given that a bacterium in optimal conditions can reproduce only every 10 minutes, it must survive that long. The violent conditions that led to its initial formation do not look kindly on a single small proto-bacterium. The odds are that for any given life-form that is created, it will not be able to stabilize a population.

So, what if we allow that life might have several chances to form, so that eventually one must be able to form a large enough colony to survive. This theory might work if it wasn't for the fact that it contradicts scientific data. We can see from evolution that it is likely that all life descended from one common ancestor. But if we allow the number of times for life to generate to be higher, there might very well be a second tree of life unrelated to ours. If we reduce the number of times life is formed, then we run into the issue of species survival. Either way we see the chance for life to have formed once and survived is not likely to have occurred.

This predicament can be avoided in a few ways. One is to deny that it is an issue. What if life has formed once on earth but it could have formed many times on other planets? The problem with this is the lack of evidence that life can form at all except for the one time we know it did on Earth. If we cannot even create a cell in a laboratory, then why would it possibly form on another planet? Someone could also claim that we might not know what the correct conditions to form life are and that the early earth just happened to have these conditions. Of course, this solution comes up against the counterexample of there only being one tree of life.

From this evidence we could conclude that it is impossible to form life. Obviously, this won't work because life does exist, but what if it is impossible for us to form life, what if life could only be formed once? From my examination of the evidence, I think that the only solution lies in the hands of the Almighty God. Many will take issue with a solution to the problem that involves the supernatural, but they neglect that God could use his physical creation in the process of creating life. Why cannot God set up the circumstances for life to form only once, why cannot he provide that breath that distinguishes a group of molecules from a living thing? Any explanation against this must take into account the evidence (life exists) and we have only seen it form once. GN

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The Red Scapular

By Benjamin Cabeen

The Red Scapular is one of the many types of scapulars. In this series, I have covered the Brown Scapular and the Green Scapular. The Red scapular has two squares of cloth held by two strings: one square is worn on the front, the other on the back in the same way as the Brown or Green Scapular. The Red Scapular was given to Sister Apolline of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. In two apparitions of Jesus, he gave her the scapular. On the front of the scapular shows a picture of Christ and the Cross and containing the words 'Holy Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, save us.' The back has a picture of the hearts of Mary and Jesus being worshiped by angels. Pope Pius IX gave the approval of this new type of devotional scapular on June 25, 1847.

The Red Scapular of the Passion was promised by Jesus to have great increases of Faith, Hope, and Charity every Friday. The Scapular needs to be blessed by a Priest before you can wear it and receive the special graces.

Next week I will do the Blue Scapular of the Immaculate Conception. GN

Henry's Word Scramble

By Henry Himself

How well did you read the magazine? Find out by unscrambling these words.

1. Lapilneo:
2. Sainau:
3. Niceeatohn:

Answers on Page 3

The Eastern Rites

By Mary Catherine Vallejo

The Eastern Rite of the Catholic Church is broken down into groups, some of which have subgroups. Most of the groups were at one point not in union with the Church but have since, at various times and for various reasons, rejoined. Some of the groups remain away, including the Greek Orthodox Church. Many of the rites practice different cultural customs and use different languages in their liturgies.

One of the biggest groups with the most subgroups is the Byzantine Rite. This rite has 12 groups under it. These groups include: the Albanian, Belarussian, Bulgaria, Croatian, Greek, (not to be confused with the Greek Orthodox Church), Hungarian Italio, Albanian, Romanian, Russian, Melkite, Ruthenian, and the Ukrainian rite. The Byzantine rite is based on the rite of Saint James, with the reforms of Saint Basil and Saint John. The subgroups did not rejoin the Church all at once, but by the 17th century all had joined.

The second largest rite is the Alexandrian Rite, containing the Coptic and Ge'ez Rite. These rites have some elements of the Byzantine Rite of Saint Basil and Saints Cyril and Gregory. The Coptic Rite is mostly in Egypt and returned to the Church in 1741. Their celebrations usually are practiced in the Coptic or Arabic languages. The Ge'ez rite returned to the Church in 1846. It is said in the Ge'ez language in Ethiopia, Jerusalem, and Somalia.

Thirdly are the Chaldean and Syro-Malabar rites. The Chaldean rite is in Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Egypt, Syria, Turkey and the United States. They reunited with Rome in 1692. Their celebrations are said in the Arabic and Syriac languages. The Syro-Malabar is primarily in India. It is said in Syriac and Malayalam. They were not in complete accordance with the Church until the 15th century.

The Antiochene Rite has one branch under it: the Malankara Rite. It is called the Liturgy of Saint James/ Jerusalem. The Malankara rite is mostly in India. Not all members are in union with the Church, but a majority returned in 1930. Their celebrations use the Syriac and Malayalam languages. GN

Questions?

Email *feedback@goodnewsmagazine.xyz*

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Answers to Heny's Word Scramble

1. Apolline
2. Nasuia
3. Antiochene

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-the Editor

JMJ