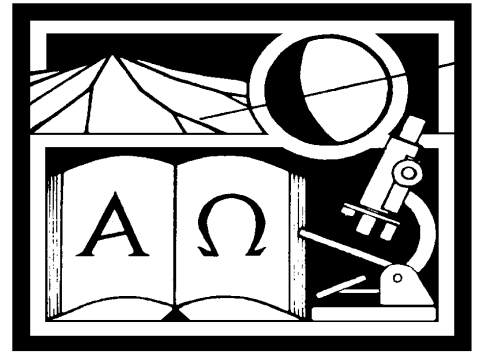


Origins Insights

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE
CREATION SCIENCE FELLOWSHIP



TM

December 2001

Discontinuity Understanding Biology In The Light of Creation

PART 2

by *Bob Harsh*

This is a continuation of my report on the Discontinuity 2001 conference held at Cedarville University in August 2001. I want to repeat Todd Wood's introduction to the conference. This will help reset the stage for a report of that excellent conference.

Theodosius Dobzhansky declared that 'Nothing in Biology makes sense except in the light of evolution.' Christian biologists today are strongly challenging that statement. Biology can be understood in light of creation of discontinuous groups of organisms, organisms that share no ancestry with each other. Despite theological disparity regarding the age of the earth, Christian biologists who reject macroevolution hold one thing in common: We believe that all living creatures do not share a single common ancestor; that is, we believe in a fundamental discontinuity of life. Rather than de-

scending from a single ancestor, the diversity of life on earth form discontinuous phylogenetic units that were created by God. It is clear, then, that discontinuity may well become the unifying principle of creation biology. Discontinuity is certainly the concept that most sharply contrasts the practice of evolutionary and creation biology. The importance of building and elaborating the principle of discontinuity cannot be overstated.

Nigel Crompton from the Paul Scherrer Institute in Switzerland made a presentation, "Basic Type Biology". I would characterize Nigel's presentation as "Practical Baraminology". One of the functions of taxonomy that is based on evolutionism is to attempt to discover the ancestors for diverse types of organisms. For example, Scientific American currently has a short article on their website that supports

the belief that whales and hoofed mammals had a common ancestor "long ago". Darwin's descent with modification without any limits is the basis of this taxonomy and the results lead to the evolutionary tree illustrations.

The new scientific field of baraminology is a system of taxonomy that seeks to discover the created "kinds" that are spoken of in the book of Genesis. Most baraminologists believe that microevolution has taken place since creation and so the taxonomic illustration will be better described as a creation orchard. There are many trees, each tree completely discontinuous with any other trees, with numerous branches. The trunks represent the "created kinds" while the endmost branches represent all of the modern-day species as well as extinct species.

Nigel's paper attempted to explain how we should discover the trunks of

(Continued from page 1)

the taxonomic trees. He supports the concept of "Basic Types" as the created "Kinds". "Two organisms are said to belong to the same Basic Type if [i] they are able to hybridize or [ii] they have hybridized with a third organism." [N. Crompton]

Nigel described three modern taxonomic methods that are used by biologists today to describe nature. He demonstrated that none of these methods utilizes the "discontinuity" that is observed in nature. He referred to the first method as "Character State Groups". This is the way almost any non-taxonomist classifies organisms. They simply "look like" they belong to the same groups. An example is the Class - Mammalia. The groups are logical, coherent, artificial, and arbitrary.

The second method of taxonomy is by lineage. Either the creation orchard or the Darwinian tree of life illustrations can use the degree of "similarity" among organisms to try to determine the proper lineage. Crompton described the method of "phenetics" where many characteristics such as fossils, physical characteristics and genetic similarities are assigned numerical values to determine the degree of relatedness and to construct lineage patterns.

The third taxonomic method was the use of cladistics. Computers are used to determine the degrees of relatedness. The basis of the computer analysis is the sequences of nucleotides for various proteins that are the same in the species being compared. One giant problem for cladistics is that different proteins produce different cladograms.

The bottom line for Nigel was his appeal to base taxonomy, not on degree of similarity but on degree of discontinuity. The different original "Basic Types" are not genetically related after all.

Ken Cumming and Kris McGary presented general overviews of how

"baraminology" is superior to other taxonomic systems because it recognizes two sources of evidence that orthodox taxonomy ignores. The two sources are discontinuity and the Bible. It is interesting that McGary credits the papers presented by Walter ReMine and Kurt Wise at our very own Second ICC in 1990 as the beginning of the "creationist biosystematic methodology of choice."

One of my favorite creationist authors presented an explanation of the most basic of all discontinuities observed in nature. Many years ago I read Charles Thaxton's book The Mystery of Life. His book provided me with a clear and persuasive description of the chemistry of the origin of life. Charles explained that the transition from ordinary chemistry to the generation of molecules that contain and transmit information is a discontinuity that orthodox evolutionists have as yet not produced a satisfactory explanation. The basic biomolecules that contain information are DNA and protein. Thaxton reminded the audience that DNA and other proteins are needed to produce proteins and proteins and DNA or RNA is needed to produce DNA. He said, "More than four decades of experimental failure has persuaded researchers that a natural cause pathway to life is elusive and hard to find, but has not led them to doubt there is a route." Of course, the general public has been led to believe that the route from chemicals to life was discovered long ago.

Thaxton referred to the informational characteristics of DNA and proteins as "specified complexity". Charles is a stickler for details and he introduced an added component to the production of bioinformational molecules. "Configurational entropy work" is required for the synthesis of bioinformational molecules. "In making proteins, for example, the configurational entropy work includes selecting the suite of twenty proteinous amino acids, selecting

peptide bonds, and selecting whichever of the available twenty amino acids is to be added at each step." If evolution is true, this entropy must be supplied. However, "the only known sources for supplying configurational entropy work in the laboratory synthesis of bioinformational molecules are enzymes and the biotic labor of investigators."

Joseph Francis is a very talented biology professor at Cedarville University. Joseph made an excellent detailed presentation on the biology of cell reproduction. His topic was "The Discontinuity of Cytokinesis". Most people, without thinking, look at cell reproduction as a no-brainer. One cell becomes two cells. Most biologists know that cell reproduction is a very orderly process that involves two realms; the replication and dividing of the chromosomes [mitosis] and the division of the rest of the cellular contents [cytokinesis]. Since the same thing is accomplished [one cell becomes two] one would think that all organisms would go about it in the same way. "However, even a cursory examination of cytokinesis mechanisms reveals complex processes that differ widely among different cell types." Francis reported on "profound discontinuities" in the mechanisms of cytokinesis between prokaryotes and eukaryotes and between plants and animals. "The observation of disparate, complex, cytokinesis mechanisms in living cells is consistent with the pre-existence of complex cells at the origin of life and offers a challenge to the naturalistic origin of one of life's most basic and essential processes."

One of the most important "Intelligent Design" scholars presented a paper, "You Can't Get There From Here: Discontinuity in Development and Evolution". You may know Jonathan Wells from the Discovery Institute as the biologist who wrote the very influential book, Icons of Evolution. Wells presented the controversial idea that genetic

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

programs may not be in "total control" of the embryonic development of organisms. "To be sure, genes [DNA sequences] affect development, but many lines of research suggest that body plans and other morphological features are laid down prior to and largely independently of gene expression." [J. Wells] He went on to say that "genetic mutations affect development primarily by [a] damaging molecules needed for normal development, and [b] damaging binary switches that direct development along predetermined lines that are not controlled by the genes themselves."

So, in other words, the embryological development of organisms is due to two sources of information; the genes inherited from the parents and information contained in the egg cell itself. These two sources of information work in concert to produce a viable embryo. If mutations happened in one of the sources of information then those changes had to be compatible with the development produced by the other source. Wells believes that any genetic mutations would only produce disaster for the developing embryo.

Because changes in DNA sequences that control development of embryos are incapable of bringing about evolutionarily significant changes in development, neo-Darwinism cannot be a mechanism for how the embryonic development of organisms came to exist. There is fundamental discontinuity written into the mechanism of embryonic development that serves as a significant obstacle for evolutionary changes in how organisms develop. To evolve from a reptile to a mammal is now even less easy to imagine!

Kurt Wise presented the last regular paper, "Evidence of Biological Discontinuity in the Fossil Record". A seemingly insurmountable problem for evolutionist is the sudden appearance of complex organisms in the fossil record. If conven-

first organisms to evolve had to accomplish, what had to take billions of years in zero time. The bombardment from space, as evidenced by craters on the moon, would have occurred at the same time as life had to be evolving and would have constantly destroyed life-forms that would have gotten a toe-hold in the realm of the living. Not only do we not see intermediate types of organisms in the fossil record, but also we do not find intermediates for cell type, organs, or organ systems. Each of these should have evolved gradually and intermediates should have been fossilized. We find discontinuity among animals in the fossil record. That is the rule at every level of investigation! Not only do individual species appear all of a sudden without introduction by intermediates, but also communities [groups of species that interact with each other in an ecosystem] of organisms appear abruptly in the fossil record. Kurt expanded on the discontinuity among animal types that are found in the fossil record.

Several attendees presented reports of their ongoing research. Most were very interesting and I found myself eager to know the results of their research. One of the most popular presentations was given by Stephanie Mace from the Center for Origins Research and Education at Bryan College. She is a member of a group of people who are compiling a database of all interspecific hybrids. The general goal of the HybriDatabase [HDB] is to determine the basic types of organisms and monobaramins. They are trying to find all of the valid reports of animals from different species that have mated and produced offspring. The most entertaining presenter was Donald Moeller, a dentist from Georgia. Besides being entertaining, Don made a compelling argument for discontinuity in nature based on dental fossils. Steven Gollmer from Cedarville University also made a fine presentation on his research on discontinuity and systems theory. Roger Sanders gave

bionomenclatural rules with the direction creationists want to go with baraminology. Roger pointed out problems with both systems of classification.

David DeWitt and Wendy Skinner from Liberty University are working on a project that seems to indicate that there are regions of the mitochondrial DNA genome that mutate much more frequently than other regions. The result is a much more recent common ancestor for modern humans and Neanderthals.

Todd Wood, Kurt Wise and David Cavanaugh presented, what I considered, a controversial challenge to creationist's longstanding interpretation of the horse fossil series. They used "Analysis of Pattern" to conclude that evolutionists have been right all along. The fossil record does contain a series of horses that show descent with modification. I remain a skeptic of the validity of "Analysis of Pattern" as a valid tool as used in this study.

I want to offer my congratulations to, especially the people at Bryan College for their leadership in promoting and organizing the content of this very successful step in the right direction in understanding biology from the viewpoint of a creationist. I would also like to tip my hat to the people at Cedarville University for hosting and promoting a first class scientific conference. I also appreciate the amount of effort the presenters are putting forth to do their research with open minds and a keen yearning for knowing truth about nature. I wish the ongoing research into "discontinuity as a pattern" in nature success!



(Continued on page 4)

CREATION SCIENCE FELLOWSHIP, INC.
P.O. Box 99303
Pittsburgh PA USA 15233-4303
Phone: (412) 341-4908

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Pittsburgh, PA
Permit No. 2548

Address Service Requested

MEETING TOPICS FOR THE NEW YEAR

JANUARY 15, 2002

ICONS OF EVOLUTION,
PART I - BOB HARSH

FEBRUARY 19, 2002

ICONS OF EVOLUTION,
PART II- BOB HARSH

MARCH 19, 2002

"I WANT TO KNOW":
MEMBER Q&A -
DENNIS WERT et. Al

~~~~~  
**THERE IS  
NO MEETING  
FOR  
DECEMBER 2001**  
~~~~~

***PLEASE SEND YOUR
CREATION/EVOLUTION
QUESTIONS VIA EMAIL
OR TO THE ADDRESS
ABOVE FOR THE
"I WANT TO KNOW"
MEETING IN MARCH!***

AVAILABLE on CD: Entire audio recordings of 1994 and 1998 ICC's!

Two CD set for each year in MP3 Format- Plays on a computer via the media player program or special MP3 players but it does not play on a regular music CD player. Each 2 CD (MP3) set has over 60 hours of audio presentations with questions and answers not only from the Technical Track but also the Basic, Evening, and Educational Tracks. This is a real value at \$20.00 per set and \$5.00 shipping/handling. In addition, when purchased with a written proceedings of 1994 or 1998, the cost of the proceeding is only an additional \$5.00 with no shipping charge.

Creation Science Fellowship, Inc. newsletter is published monthly.

Purpose: The aim of Creation Science Fellowship is to inform and educate people of the biblical, philosophical, and scientific validity of creationism.

Circulation: 430

Officers

Dennis E. Wert. . .Chmn, Corres. Sec.
Robert Harsh, Vice Chmn, Nwsltr. Ed.
Jim Hawk. Book Coordinator
Reid Moon. Treasurer
Robert Ivey Web Site Manager

Ex-officio:

Robert Walsh . . . ICC Proceedings Ed.

Email Address:

csficc@csfpittsburgh.org
CSF Page: www.csfpittsburgh.org

Editors Address:

Robert Harsh
439 Little Creek Road, Harmony,
Pennsylvania, USA 16037
Email: naturbob@juno.com