

Modern Biochemical Genetics:

What it Tells Us about Our Origin, Ourselves, and Our God

by Bruce Holman, Ph.D.

The natural knowledge of God is a valuable thing. It tells us that God exists, that he created the universe, knows our every thought, and is at work in the world to bring about his purposes. Flowing from this natural knowledge is a sense of right and wrong and the understanding that there will eventually be justice and an accounting for one's sins¹. In Romans chapter 1, Paul tells us that God is now judging those who willingly suppress this truth, and his description of that judgment is exactly what we are seeing in today's world. It is hard to find a foothold to present the Gospel when its light is extinguished in someone.

The Darwinist world view pervading our culture is all about providing reasons for the intellect to discard this knowledge. Christians who consume a daily diet of propaganda are sometimes tempted, like Job, to think God is far away, that he doesn't hear, doesn't know, or worse yet doesn't care about our individual situation. These thoughts are beguiling because there is a grain of truth to them. Our iniquities have separated us from our God, and our sins have hidden his face from us (Isaiah 59:2). God normally refrains from miracles so that we may be about the task of subduing the earth. Yet we dare not think he does not have power over the way the universe operates. When we listen to scripture with believing ears, and see the world by its light, we find God is intimately involved with his creation, and yes, with us as individuals. Guided by scripture we can see his agenda, and for that work we can use what we see in the world.

Our Lord is using believers to make disciples of all people with the gospel. In this connection he reminds us that he has all authority in heaven and earth, and that he will be with us always (Matthew 28: 18-20; Mark 16: 15-16). This is what he is actively doing in this world, and he has given us the privilege of playing a key role in that great work. But how do we get people to listen when they are so immersed in the mindset of a faraway God?

One way to strike at the root of this poisonous tree is to use some of the science which textbooks do not emphasize: "If as you say Mr. Evolutionist, everything has been formed by natural processes, how exactly does this happen?" Textbooks detail processes which we understand, and gloss over areas which are hard to explain. Even in the primary scientific literature most scientists keep the unanswered questions to themselves. Many dismiss the embarrassing truth that life cannot be formed by natural processes, while they imagine that science will someday discover how this has happened – but our basic understanding of natural processes forbids the very thing they imagine science will someday learn. The whole unbelieving mind set shows the blindness, depravity, and rebellion of the human heart. When we learn about the workings of the world we ought to be humbled by the greatness and intelligence of the Creator (Romans 1:19).

¹ I believe this is what Paul refers to as the "στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου," that is "basic principles of the world" (NIV 1984), or "elemental spiritual forces" (NIV 2011) (Galatians 4:3,20; Colossians 2:8,20). I also believe it is embodied in the arguments of Job's friends.

Nowhere is this more evident than in what we have learned about the information that directs the complex biochemical processes we call life. The nucleotides which form the alphabet of our genetic code do not naturally combine together into nucleic acids, and if they did, they would produce gibberish, not useful code for protein molecules of a specific purpose. And even if you could get that to happen you cannot get those molecules into a living cell able to provide the energy necessary for all those chemical reactions on an ongoing basis. And even if that living cell were made, it would need an environment necessary for the maintenance of its life.

When Watson and Crick first published their structure DNA in 1953, scientists realized that its sequence of nucleotides was related to the sequence of amino acids in the tens of thousands of different protein molecules that each organism needs. For a few decades thereafter, scientists imagined that the series of nucleotide bases that made up the genetic code would be read within cells in a linear fashion much like a ticker tape.

But in the last few decades we have come to realize that the DNA is read in many different ways. It can be read in the forward or reverse direction. It can be read by skipping nucleotide bases in a regular or irregular way. We have learned that the way in which the DNA is read depends not only on the DNA sequence but also on a complex mixture of proteins and non-chromosomal nucleic acids in the nucleus. We have found that the DNA folds over on itself and creates in essence a three dimensional coded message. Not only is the DNA sequence inherited from our parents, but also some of this non-DNA apparatus as well. We are thankful that we have this amazing natural process at work within every living thing available for our investigation, but its complexity shows that it could not have been formed initially by a natural process.

Imagine finding a large multi volume set of books. Immediately you would recognize that they had been written intentionally, and bound into nice volumes by someone. Imagine further that you read those books and found them to be tremendously insightful. This also would show that those books were no accident. You would know that the person who wrote the set was a genius. But what if you also discovered that you could take each page and fold it into an origami figure or paper airplane and that it would reveal a different story equally as insightful as that of the flattened page? Not only is the information necessary to build each protein molecule present, but the knowledge and ability to orient and read the DNA appropriately is also present. That is exactly what we have in the DNA of every living cell – not only in our bodies, but in every living thing, even in the simplest one cell creature. Many DNA codes overlap each other in a myriad of ways.

When people talk about genes, they mean the genetic roots of certain characteristics that can be potentially observed in the organism. Any particular characteristic involves the working of many different structural and enzymatic proteins catalyzing many different biochemical reactions. Thus any particular gene involves the genetic code for many different protein molecules. Each code for a particular protein molecule may exist on the section of DNA which is also occupied by that of many other protein codes that do not contribute to the characteristic of interest. If we alter or replace the genetic code for one gene, we potentially affect many others. The genetic code for any organism is not something that can be built up one bit at a time.

God gives flexibility and variety to each cell in an organism, and to each organism within a created “kind.” Each cell must have its own structure appropriate to its function, and that function must be appropriate for the whole organism’s needs. But each cell works off of the same DNA that every other cell in the organism uses, yet each reads that same DNA differently so that the code for its own functions are expressed. Variation within created kinds is also accomplished by meiosis (sexual reproduction) involving both DNA and by certain inherited aspects of the non-chromosomal nucleic acids and proteins in the gamete cells.

So also our God works our genetics, experience, and environment into a beautiful tapestry. He arranges history and circumstance to reach out to each of us with the energizing power of the Gospel. Our sins have indeed caused damage that will result in our death. But God gives us new life that grows out of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The terrible justice our sins demanded was born in love by a loving God so that we might receive right now a new life through his Holy Spirit, and a new body revealed when Jesus returns.

Moses proclaimed 3,400 years ago: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). How ironic that with our modern knowledge of biochemistry we seem to be blind to this truth – but the Scriptures foretold that, too (Romans 1:21-3; 2 Peter 3:3-10)! It describes our sins as not mere outward transgressions, but inward iniquities which degrade our whole being. How ridiculous it is to think that they might be removed by some outward good deed or performance of prescribed ritual. And even if we were to make a complete change of our inmost heart we could not go back in time to erase the stains of our past sins. What we need is a miracle no less amazing than that of creation!

That is exactly what Jesus offered when he proclaimed the arrival of the kingdom of God, promising, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 3:15). He who has promised that the Holy Spirit will come to us through the means of grace begins this process in this present body, and has promised to perfect it in heaven. This Gospel we have by revelation from God – apart from scientific investigations. It cannot be discovered by reason or experimentation, but must be preached and proclaimed, because it is what God says is true. The truth of the message is backed up by the evidence of Jesus’ resurrection, and by the testimony of science, history, and archeology. But it is that message from God alone which creates this new life which is even more amazing than the one we investigate through science.

There are hundreds of ways to dismantle the idea that natural processes are responsible for creating life. How can we expect people to believe in the second miracle without believing in the first? The Gospel creates faith in the most unlikely individuals all the time. Still, with Creation Science, and God willing, through the ministry of LSI, we can make it difficult for people to ignore the natural knowledge of God – and, in so doing, introduce the topic of salvation. Help us spread this skill to everyone we can!