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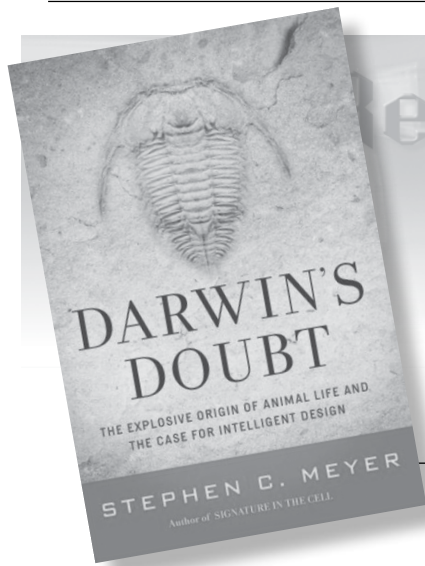
Volume 50 Summer 2013 Number 1



## **THE CREATION RESEARCH SOCIETY: FIFTY YEARS OF SERVICE**

- *THE HUMAN HAND: PERFECTLY DESIGNED*
- *CREATION AND THE FATE OF THE UNIVERSE*
- *AR/AR CALIBRATION AGAINST NOVARUPTA*





## *Darwin's Doubt: The Explosive Origin of Animal Life and the Case for Intelligent Design*

by Stephen Meyer

HarperOne, New York, 2013,  
498 pages, \$29.00.

This historical journey begins with Darwin and his respect for his nemesis, Louis Agassiz, and takes the reader through a survey of today's leading evolutionists, who admit that neo-Darwinian mechanisms cannot explain (1) the origin of body plans, (2) mounds of molecular information, and (3) the fossils of the Cambrian explosion. One hundred and fifty years ago, Agassiz noticed that the very fossils that would connect the branches in Darwin's tree of life just happened to be among those that were "missing" (p. 24).

As an intelligent design advocate with the Discovery Institute, the author's old-earth perspective makes him vulnerable to some naïve claims, including that "radiometric dating methods" are straightforward and do not "depend on a host of contingent factors" (p. 109). Stephen Meyer then quotes a paper in the Oxford journal *Molecular Biology and Evolution*: "The rate of molecular evolution can vary considerably among different organisms, challenging the concept of the 'molecular clock'" (Ho, et al., 2005, p. 1355). Meyer should know regarding radiometrics, however, that the same could be said for differing techniques that give differing dates, whereas the same technique often gives differing ages for the same specimen.

Meyer's well-honed anti-Darwinian arguments include colorful examples,

like exoskeletons and ion pumps, to expose the lack of even broad-stroked explanations of how integrated functional requirements could arise via a nondirected process. The exoskeleton, which first appears in Cambrian strata, "is far more than a mere covering ... because it provides the sites for the attachment of the muscles." The limbs "can articulate," and shrimp exoskeletons have, "interior projections [to support] organs. At the same time, the skeleton of any arthropod is a product of, and in turn regulates, its metabolism." The first organisms to evolve an exoskeleton "would have had to have successively secreted a new skeleton beneath the old one, to have shed the used exoskeletons, and to have hardened each new exoskeleton. This tight functional integration suggests the implausibility of evolutionary models that envision the arthropod exoskeleton arising late as a kind of accretion to an already integrated system of soft parts" (end notes, p. 421).

Though not intended, pointers to biblical creationism are everywhere in *Darwin's Doubt*. The mudflows that "transported the Burgess [shale Cambrian] animals several kilometers into deeper waters" were "highly turbulent" (p. 45). Meyer imagines regarding the shale's discoverer Charles Walcott, "Finding marine animals so high above sea level no doubt made Walcott acutely aware of the way in which continents and seas had changed locations" (p.

46). But how high above sea level? The 7500-foot altitude is not mentioned till the end of the book.

Along the way, Meyer explains the failed Darwinist attempt to use sequencing to date divergence, for "the same or similar groups of molecules have generated dramatically different divergence times" (p. 107). He points out admissions from Dobzhansky protégé Francisco Ayala, who says that such evolutionary calculations are "fraught with danger." And Berkley's James Valentine joins others in acknowledging that "the accuracy of the molecular clock is still problematical, at least for phylum divergences, for the estimates vary by some 800 million years." Meyer then references a Michael Behe paper regarding DNA-packing histones, reporting that even with a dozen years of experiments in yeast showing that histones can tolerate dramatic deletions, regardless, across phyla histones remain highly conserved (i.e., minimally different). Meyer argues this against the Darwinists, showing their tendency to commit the cherry-picking fallacy, in this case by selectively ignoring data. But he doesn't mention that IDers are guilty of the same failure, regarding the same evidence no less. The evolutionists assume their own conclusion in that, as Meyer points out, histones "are never used as molecular clocks ... Because ... the small differences between histones yield an *extremely recent* divergence" (p. 107; emphasis added). By the way, how

recently? He does not say. And neither did Behe offer an estimate for how long he believes plants and animals have existed with this extreme lack of mutation. Behe did point out, though, for example, that “the green pea differs from that of mammals by only two conservative substitutions in 102” (Behe, 1990, p. 374). Yet intelligent design, Meyer explains, does not rule out common ancestry (p. 339), for, allegedly, a billion years ago a designer could have engineered a split between plants and animals. But Meyer cannot have it both ways. He wields the histone evidence against Darwinists but only by committing an equally circular, selective data fallacy. As with the intelligent design movement generally, Meyer’s book fails to acknowledge this extreme lack of mutations as at least apparent evidence against these phyla having lived for hundreds of millions of years.

The material on punctuated equilibrium (chap. 7) rightly exploits the findings of world-class evolutionary paleontologists who acknowledge that the fossil record lacks the transitions between phyla and more. Later, regarding how the designer may actually have implemented his design in nature, Meyer says of ID advocates, “We simply don’t know ... how the intelligent agent responsible for life arranged or impressed *its* ideas on matter” (pp. 305, 307, emphasis added). “Its”? The Christians among the IDers seem to believe in what we could call interventionist punctuated equilibrium, or IPE. That is, every so many millions of years, God introduced new life-forms by some kind of profane species conception or incarnation (i.e., hopeful monster), or even by repeated special creations, though the apparent ID reluctance to discuss this latter option seems to make it an unmentionable. As a longtime (though nowhere-near comprehensive) observer of the ID movement, I’ve frequently heard it said that ID does not

rule out universal common ancestry, but I’ve never heard their spokesmen say that ID does not rule out special creation.

Creationist authors represent a wide range of scientific disciplines. The intelligent design community—again by my subjective view—seems to be lopsided toward cosmology and molecular biology, with underrepresentation, for example, in geology. Thus IDers commonly suggest that prior to their own movement, opposition to Darwinism perhaps “seemed premature [and reflected] something of the prejudice of the times” (p. 379). However, both Newton and Einstein could make intuitive leaps from general observations. Likewise, neither the Hubble Telescope nor the electron microscope is needed to see irreducible complexity and intelligent design. “For since the creation of the world His [three] invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead [i.e., persons, Enyart, 2008]), so that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20 NKJV).

Proposing earlier “the purposeful action of a conscious and rational agent” (p. 337) and “the activity of a designing mind” (p. 379), by the last three pages of his book Meyer finally gets to God. The “theory of intelligent design ... suggests the possibility that life may have been designed by an intelligent person, indeed, one that many would identify as God” (p. 412). Biological information points to the attribute of *intelligence* in the designer, which ID theorists admit, when taken alone, could suggest design by aliens. Interviewing Meyer for Real Science Radio (Enyart, 2013), I suggested that by the same “cause and effect” reasoning (p. 341) that they use to infer the designer’s intelligence, when considering the conscience manifest in the human family, they should be able to infer also the designer’s attributes

of being relational and moral. Meyer took that opportunity to repeat a common ID claim that when they consider the fine-tuning, not only of organisms but also of the cosmos itself, then they can argue that the evidence points to a designer who is not merely a very intelligent creature from somewhere within the universe but a transcendent Designer. This agent would be like the person Christians refer to as God, who created not only life but also the entire universe. As C. S. Lewis might point out, at that point you’re still far from the God of the Bible, but you might be thinking about Him.

Of a theistic evolutionist, Meyer asks (p. 411), “But why attempt to reconcile traditional Christian theology with Darwinian theory, as [Francis] Collins tries to do, if the theory itself has begun to collapse?” The biblical creationist cannot but smile, as he or she thinks of Meyer’s attempt, as a Christian, to reconcile the Darwinian epochs with dinosaur soft tissue, a million nautiloid fossils standing on their heads, and Carbon 14 everywhere it shouldn’t be.

## References

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