

Survival of the Fittest

The year was 1859. Charles Robert Darwin had just published his newest book, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*. He let loose a fire storm. Science versus religion; faith versus reason. Few topics in science have incurred such a widespread controversy for such an extended period of time. This debate still rages on—and largely because of faith-based issues. Finally, however, there has been a new development in the dispute. Michael J. Behe's book, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*, has confronted the traditional neo-Darwinistic theories—not with faith, but with scientific evidence.

Behe's argument centers on a crucial point, noted by Darwin himself in the *Origin of Species*:

If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.

Up to the present time, most of the arguments concerning this very point have been focused on the macroscopic. Science has “proven” and “disproven” the evolutionary process for many species numerous times. Behe, however, sees a fatal flaw in this logic: we simply cannot tell. Even simple organisms are far too complex for us to determine an exact methodology. Didn't Darwin realize this? Yes, but not exactly. At Darwin's time, cells were unknown and were *black boxes*. (Behe writes, “Black box is a whimsical term for a device that does something, but whose inner workings are mysterious—sometimes because the workings can't be seen, and sometimes because they just aren't comprehensible.”) Evolution seemed possible, at least with the scientific knowledge of the

day.

Now, however, science has made great strides in studying the inner workings of the cells and other microscopic functions of living beings. We have begun to understand many of life's mysteries at their most basic level: the cell. Behe's premise, then, is that the inside workings of the cell could not have evolved.

Has Behe succeeded? Brilliantly. He uses five primary cellular examples of life systems that could not have possibly evolved. He describes their structure and inner workings in exquisite detail, complete with descriptive drawings of the mechanism at hand. He has painstakingly done research finding all available published reports on how each system might have evolved. He addresses each opponent head on, and covers a wide variety of microscopic machines—from flagella to the blood-clotting mechanism to cellular transport. By the end of each chapter, the reader is convinced of the impossibility of the evolutionary formation of the system. Behe is at his best with his logic and his forceful writing, and his points ring loud and clear.

In addition to its technical prowess, *Darwin's Black Box* does an excellent job of presenting such a complex subject in easy-to-understand terms. Behe patiently guides the reader through the nuances of cellular biology, relegating the technical details to the middle chapters. He marks particularly confusing material with dingbats in the text, and makes liberal use of analogies and diagrams. Behe even includes a biology primer in the book's appendix. He has labored to provide a book that is readable by all, and he has succeeded. Anyone with a rudimentary knowledge of biology can read *Black Box* and see the scientific problems that biochemistry presents to evolution.

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1 Corinthians 2:2
English 101D
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Behe's work is invaluable to Christians—Christian students, Christians involved in the sciences, and every Christian who wants to be informed about our world. Why? No, Behe does not advocate a young-earth, six-day Creation. But, that is precisely what makes *Black Box* so useful—it is primarily written from a secular point of view. As such, it can be a very effective tool for sharing with the evolutionists around us—it effectively shows the problems with the Darwinistic indoctrination that we hear around us without raising questions of “biased science.”

Unfortunately, this also provides a severe drawback. In Behe's chapter entitled, “Science, Philosophy, and Religion,” he attempts to reconcile the hard feelings between creationists and evolutionists. The middle ground that he paves, however, simply separates religion and science with each side doing nary more than politely acknowledging the other. Perhaps, this is all that our society will allow. It is a dangerous compromise, however. As Christians, we are called to live our faith throughout our lives—a raging flame instead of just a polite acknowledgement—even in the sciences. As Peter wrote in 1 Peter 1:15 (NIV), “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do.”

Michael J. Behe has presented the biochemical evidence against evolutionary theory very conclusively. His logic is crystal clear and refutes every argument against it. And, *Darwin's Black Box* is understandable by nearly everyone, regardless of their biological knowledge. It is an excellent book, which I would recommend to anyone with even a passing interest in evolution. It is invaluable overall for any student of life on this earth.