

Sept 2005

Darwin: It's How You Look at It

By Pat Bond McLane, Master Gunnery Sergeant (Retired), United States Marine Corps

If one was to wonder how we came to be, they only need open a Christian Bible to Genesis and read, "In the beginning God created the heavens and earth" (The Holy Bible). For some, to include Charles Darwin in his early years, this was a fundamental, deeply-rooted, belief. However, since the publication of *The Origin of Species*, in 1859, there have been many to wonder about evolution. Charles Darwin's theories and concepts are founded on facts, as he sees them. For you, it's how you look at it. What do you choose to believe?

Others previous to Darwin had been toying with the idea of evolution. It was, however, Darwin who provided the necessary documentation for the theory of evolution, or natural selection as coined by Darwin, to be believable. Darwin provided facts to support that all things have their own biological make-up, their own characteristics, and their own beginning. These factors, through time, modify themselves to accommodate surviving and flourishing in the given environment. "Just as the earth is in orbit and has come to be and is depended on the force of gravity, a natural law; so life has come into being and exists and is depended on the force of natural selection. One need not necessarily understand the why or the how of it, but a natural law such as gravitation or selection nonetheless exists, whether a particular puny human being, or group of them believe it or not" (Landry). Darwin's theory "essentially states that life on earth is the result of billions of years of adaptations to changing environments" (Strangescience).

"Darwin's theory of natural selection helped to convince most people that life exists in its present form as a result of evolution, rather than a random series of inexplicable miracles" (Pagewise). "Scientists are no longer forced to question where evolution is fact or fiction. Evolution is considered to be a scientific fact" (Pagewise). To understand Darwin's theory we travel to the Galapagos Islands. It was here that Darwin developed a further understanding of evolution. Of the 13 species of finches that Darwin studied in the islands, he noticed that the finches, although very much the same, had, over time, developed a different beak to adapt to the different conditions on the different islands. Their beaks anatomically changed in order to get to the food supply provided by the varying weather conditions. Other support for Darwin's theory comes from geology and archeology. Darwin wrote, "If we look to long enough periods of time, geology plainly declares that all species have changed; and they have changed in the manner which my theory requires, for they have changed slowly and in a graduated manner." Many archeological finds support the changes in invertebrates and vertebrates that have occurred over the centuries. These changes were necessary to flourish. Not everyone chooses to believe in evolution. "Darwin's theory is now backed up by the comparison of DNA from different organisms which show the closeness of their relationship" (Wikipedia).

The most powerful precedent for disbelieving in natural selection is The Holy Bible. In the very beginning of the book of Genesis it states that God was the creator of not only heaven and earth but also of man and all things earthly. "Charles Darwin's convincing evidence that evolution occurs was very threatening to many Christians who believed that people were created specially by God and that they have not changed biologically since that creation. The idea that there could have been prehistoric humans who were anatomically different from us was rejected for similar reasons" (O'Neil). "Indeed, the theory of evolution, which some opponents say is consistent with atheism because it provides no role for the divine, has been provoking controversy since 1859" (Anderson). On the other hand, Joseph Mastropaolo, writes, "...biology is the best explanation of life. It is the most complete, the most observable, and the most verifiable with experiments. There is no need to employ any of the unnecessary, misleading,

multi-inverted, and unobservable complexities of evolution superstition. Biology completely eliminates evolution.” So, what is one to think about evolution? Is it not true that we believe what we choose to believe?

It is no wonder that Darwin withheld his thoughts from the public for so many years. His proving of evolution was so far ahead of his time, and rightfully he feared what others might say or do when hearing of such “far-out” nonsense. It leads to another way of thinking when considering where things come from. He changed the way people thought and made them think more. What a wonderful thing! However, by providing what some believe to be proof that The Bible may be wrong, shakes the very core of some people’s basic, principled beliefs. Who is to say what is to be believed? I find that Darwin’s basic premise is too strong for me not to believe. And yet, I struggle with the need to believe in God. If I choose to embrace Darwin’s theory of evolution versus God creating the heavens and earth, and all things living, is that to say I do not believe in a higher power? And, if I choose to believe in Darwin’s evolution does that mean there is no salvation, as promised in The Bible? These questions I ask myself. Darwin’s argument is backed up with examples and research that is too compounding to disbelieve. It is more believable, for me to see for myself, that humans do resemble and have many shared characteristics with the monkey. I can logically deduce that with time and conditions my ancestors were most likely monkeys. I can only wonder what we will one day develop into, particularly considering that we are still trying to get machines to do the work of humans. It’s all how you look at it.