

remain unconvinced of the claims.

Martin Brasier is one who has long argued *against* the idea that the stromatolites are of biogenetic origin and that they are more likely chemical precipitates.⁶ Professor of paleobiology at the University of Oxford, he is reported to have said ‘Much caution is needed when making claims about the earliest signs of life. In rocks of this great age we must assume the hypothesis of a non-biological origin.’²

Note that it’s not because of the *evidence* that he rules out a biological origin, but the *assumed* ‘great age’—i.e. the rocks are presumed to be older than life itself, therefore any evidence to the contrary is automatically dismissed.

From a biblical perspective, it is inconceivable that volcanoes would be active during Creation Week, depositing volcanoclastics and tuff such as comprise parts of the stratigraphic sections (figure 3). These sections show abundant signs of catastrophe that point to large-scale watery and volcanic processes, so it is doubtful the material was deposited in the pre-Flood era.

Rather, the sediments were likely laid down during the early phase of the global Flood. It is possible that reefs which grew during the pre-Flood era were uprooted and redeposited, but it is more likely that the stromatolite structures are not of biogenic origin.

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‘Not to be used again’: homologous structures and the presumption of originality as a critical value

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One of the most common arguments used by evolutionists as a ‘proof’ of naturalistic evolution points to the existence of homologous structures among different animal types. This argument also manifests as an argument against special creation and/or intelligent design. The following paragraph from a popular source online sums up the matter succinctly:

‘Homologous structures are body parts with similar arrangements derived from a common ancestor but used for different functions. The human arm, the horse’s forelimb, the whale’s flipper, and the dog’s front paw are all homologous structures which make use of the same basic bones and muscles. Why would an infinitely powerful designer choose to repeat the same design over and over in his creations? Why, in his infinite wisdom, could he not use a radically different design for each of his supposedly independent creations?’¹

It will not be our purpose here to discuss the scientific merits of the argument concerning homologous structures. Rather, we will be defending and expanding upon a prior creationist defence made against this argument on strictly logical and philosophical grounds.

Elsewhere it has been capably pointed out that the argument from homologous structures commits a serious logical fallacy: We can apply this analysis to a major evolutionary argument:

- If organisms X and Y have a common ancestor, they will have homologous structures;
- X and Y have homologous structures;
- Therefore X and Y have a common ancestor.

This demonstrates that it is an example of the fallacy of affirming the consequent. The conclusion is not proven—the homologous structures could be due to a common designer, leaving a ‘biotic message’² that there is a single designer of life rather than many.³

This argument may in fact be strengthened and reaffirmed through the understanding that the argument from homologous structures hides an unsubstantiated presumption. That is, that *originality is a critical value which God would be compelled to follow*. However, this presumption is the result of modern biases interpreting the biological evidence, while, indeed, the suggestion of a ‘biotic message’ is quite accurate. Homologous structures, far from pointing away from a designer of infinite wisdom, would have indicated to readers of the Bible in their time a designer who did indeed possess infinite wisdom and mastery over His creation. It is only because modern persons have arbitrarily decided that a certain degree of what they see as ‘originality’ is a proper *means value* that the evolutionists’ argument carries any apparent force.

Something old, nothing new

To frame our argument against the evolutionists’ misuse of homologous structures requires us to have an understanding of certain values critical to ancient persons. Roman literature of the New Testament period tells us, ‘The primary test of truth in religious matters was custom and tradition, the practices of the ancients.’⁴ In other words, old was good, and innovation was bad. Change or novelty was ‘a means value which serves to innovate or subvert core and secondary values.’⁵

By itself, this demolishes one part

of the evolutionists' argument and makes it, clearly, a case of arbitrary imposition of modern values. In a context such as the above, 'radically different design' would have indicated to an ancient reader either no deity, or else a deity whose means was chaos and instability, or a deity who did not have mastery over creation.

Because entirely new things were regarded with suspicion, it was more typical for ancient persons to borrow from and recast what was old and use it for their own purposes. An example of this is how John the Baptist set out to deliberately imitate the prophet Elijah by wearing similar clothes, or how Jesus chose 12 disciples to represent the 12 tribes of Israel, and stayed 40 days in the wilderness to purposefully parallel the Exodus. Similarly, today, a hunger striker may fast 14 hours, one for each of 14 prisoners being held against their will. Symbolic acts such as these, created to invoke a particular point, are part of normal human communication, but were especially important as an expression of cultural values in the biblical era.

A more directly germane example is given by Malina and Rohrbaugh in their *Social Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*.⁶ They note specifically the example of Mary's 'Magnificat' prayer as they explain:

'To be able to quote the [Old Testament] tradition from memory, to apply it in creative or appropriate ways to the situation of daily living, not only brings honor to the speaker but lends authority to his words as well. The song of Zechariah, the so-called Benedictus, in

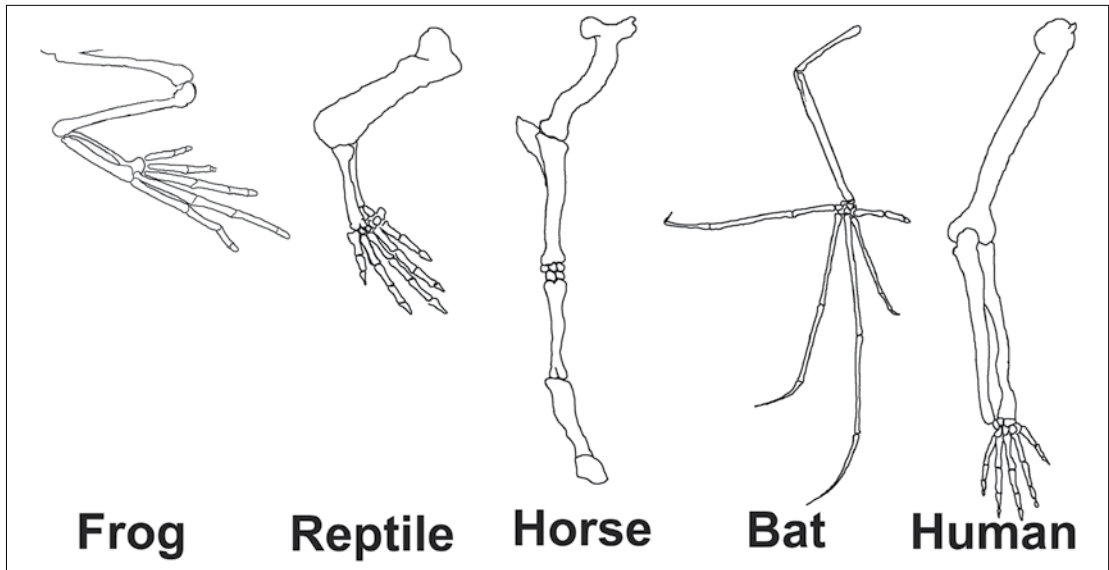


Figure 1. The pentadactyl (five digit) pattern has been used in a wide variety of animals, such as bats, whales, frogs and lizards, just to name a few. However, common ancestry is not the only possible conclusion from observing such common patterns. Rather, common design would bring greater honour to a single designer with biblical attributes. (From Sarfati⁷).

Luke 1:68–79 is an example. It is stitched together from phrases of Psalms 41, 111, 132, 105, 106, and Micah 7. The ability to create such a mosaic implied extensive, detailed knowledge of the tradition and brought great honor to the speaker able to pull it off.⁷

To express the application directly, in the eyes of an ancient reader, homologous structures would not have been seen as a case of a designer with no wisdom, or no designer at all, but something that brought *honour* to the Creator and would also indicate the Creator's authority over and mastery of His creation.

Conclusion

We may conclude, in summary, that the evolutionist argument based on homologous structures is deeply flawed and highly subjective. Indeed, it is the sort of argument that comes of a 'consumer culture' in which one has more toys than one can possibly play with, yet always wants something more and something new. The lesson to be taken here is that God is not obliged to entertain evolutionists with more and newer designs simply because they think He should.

References

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