



# Point of View

I'm afraid I live in a pretty puny neighborhood. The people I work with - and the ones with whom I collaborate - are devoting themselves to "little" things like increasing the population in heaven, and enhancing the impact of people who are already planning to move there. Those initiatives sound like incidents when you think about the challenges facing scientists like Mark Bedau..

Bedau is based in Venice; he is the COO of a company called ProtoLife. Their business is active in the field of "wet artificial life." Their agenda: participate in the race to be God-like...

They probably wouldn't describe it in those terms. For their team - and their competitors, worldwide - it's all about creating synthetic ("the imitation of that which occurs naturally") life. "We're talking about a technology that could change our world in pretty fundamental ways, in fact, in ways that are impossible to predict," according to Bedau. Duh...

They're down to three major hurdles in the lab: 1) creating a cell wall that would keep the bad stuff out and the good stuff in; 2) creating a genetic system that can act as the core controller for the cell, enabling it to reproduce and mutate; and, 3) creating a metabolism that would change raw materials from the surrounding environment into energy. Seems like a manageable to-do list, for capable people who are creators-in-training...

Jack Szostak - from Harvard Medical School - is one of the contributors in the effort. He predicts that, in the next six months, Challenge #1 - the cell wall - will be handled. His idea is that, once the container is made, scientists would then just add the genetic goodies to the mix, and... "We aren't smart enough to design things, we just let evolution do the hard work and then we figure out what happened..."

And I thought we were pursuing some bold initiatives! We've been content to just serve God; but, people like Bedau and Szostak and their counterparts are out to replace Him. Will He allow other listings in the Yellow Pages, under the heading of "Creator?"

Way back in the early days of Genesis, in the generations that emerged after the Great Deluge, there were some techno-types who made some plans to put God out of business. They held a conference. Subject: "How to Avoid Flood Damage in the Future." Here's the transcript of their conversation: "'Come, let's make bricks and bake them thoroughly.' They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.'" (Genesis 11:3-4) Translation: He got us last time, but He won't get us again. Waterproof materials (fired brick and

tar); building elevations that would rise above flood levels (reach to the heavens). Beat God at His own game...

Reaction? "But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The Lord said, 'If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.' So the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city." (Genesis 11:5-8) Even God has His limits, and those folks at Babel reached that mark...

I'm one of those literalists who believes that God wasn't writing fiction when He inspired the Bible. There is another interruption scheduled, when He will interrupt human history and change the course of man's direction. "Nothing they plan to do will be impossible;" will He just watch, or will He intervene?

"But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming." (2 Peter 3:10-12)

Serve God... or, Challenge God? We all have that choice to make. Synthetic life... or, Eternal life?

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