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## Origins and Mariner 10 (Faith & Science Update)

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John T. Baldwin

Once in a while contemporary science makes a discovery that comes as a great and pleasant surprise to creationists. Here is a story of one of those moments. It needs to become much more widely known than at present.

For years now, evolutionary scientists have claimed that they can simulate the accidental, spontaneous origin of life around 3.7 billion years ago without any reference to God's input. According to this theory, life arose in some warm pond, which is sometimes called a primordial soup. These scientists hypothesize that just the right amount of the needed chemicals combined with a proper amount of electric start-up input from the atmosphere, which purportedly resulted in the initial formation of the basic building blocks needed for life forms to develop. Creationists have puzzled over this evolutionary claim, wondering about its scientific accuracy and credibility.

Findings by the United States

## ORIGINS AND *MARINER 10*

space program, as reported and interpreted by two leading professors, George T. Javor and G. E. Snow, who are also creationists, have provided a powerful response to this claim that life can arise spontaneously in the distant past in conditions provided by some primordial soup setting.<sup>1</sup>

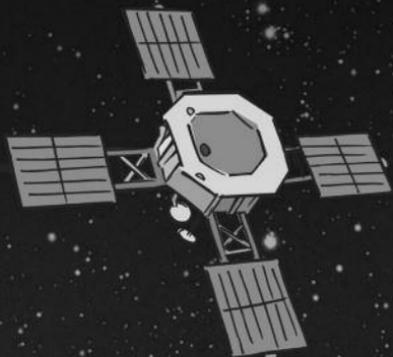
As a background to the discovery, a few relevant facts need to be noted. It may come as a surprise that oxygen is potentially poisonous to simple life forms. For this reason, scientists think that there was no oxygen present in the primitive Earth. The oxygen-free condition would then permit simple life forms to get a foothold. Therefore, in scientific laboratory simulations of the primordial soup conditions, oxygen was intentionally removed from the gasses present. When oxygen was introduced into the experiments, no biologically significant compounds were formed. Then came the space program and an exciting discovery relevant to the origin of life in the primordial soup conditions.

The mission of *Apollo 16* placed a special camera onto the surface of the Moon. Photographs from this camera surprised scientists by revealing that substantial amounts of hydrogen are leaving Earth's atmosphere.<sup>2</sup> What did this mean? Water molecules in the upper atmosphere above the ozone layer are shattered into atomic and molecular oxygen and hydrogen by the Sun's ultraviolet radiation. The hydrogen is lighter than the oxygen and so rises away from the Earth and was thus recorded by the Moon camera. On the other hand, the oxygen is heavier than the hydrogen and falls downward to the Earth. This atomic oxygen is an important source of atmospheric oxygen that is pro-

duced without reference to living things, like plants, and their photosynthesis process. Photosynthesis, of course, also makes oxygen.

This space program discovery means, importantly, that oxygen was present in primitive Earth conditions long before any life forms were present. How, therefore, did life get started with this enemy of life forms always present? Evolutionary scientists received this information with a mixed reception, because of the unfavorable implication for origin of life studies.<sup>3</sup>

More good news for creationists came in 1973, when *Mariner 10* spacecraft flew by the planet Venus and sent back information that the upper atmosphere of Venus was very



similar in oxygen content to that of Earth. We know of no plant life growing on Venus, therefore, we now have strong evidence that a primitive planet's atmosphere like that on Venus can contain atomic oxygen even though vegetation is not present on the planet, provided water vapor is available.

This discovery means that we cannot postulate the existence of long periods of the early atmosphere on so-called primitive planet Earth that were free from oxygen. In other words oxygen, the foe of simple life forms, was present on Earth at the time of the alleged primordial soup. How, then, did life appear on Earth? The space program has shown that life could not have arisen spontaneously and naturalistically as claimed by evolutionary theory. However, life is here. How did it arise?

Evolutionary scientists have refused to accept as true the biblical account of the origin of life forms at the hand and word of God. However, as Ellen White states, "Since the book of nature and the book of revelation bear the impress of the same master mind, they cannot but speak in harmony. By different methods, and in different languages, they witness to the same great truths."<sup>24</sup> The

space program discoveries confirm what the book of nature tells us that if oxygen has always been on planet Earth, life could not have arisen by evolutionary principles. As Snow and Javor rightly suggest, this conclusion shows, in harmony with biblical revelation, that life came "through a creative act by the One who commanded that 'the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind' (Gen. 1:24)."<sup>25</sup> This is a faith-building implication.

Sometimes science has pleasant surprises for the creationist. The discovery of the existence of oxygen at all times on our Earth, which would block the evolutionary development of life forms, is powerful and encouraging. This strengthens our faith in the biblical statement that, "the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isa. 40:8, NASB).

#### REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> G. E. Snow and G. T. Javor, "Atmospheric Oxygen Rules Out Biochemical Evolution," in *Our Real Roots: Scientific Support for Creationism*, Leo Van Dolson, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publ. Assn., 1979).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Education*, p. 128.

<sup>5</sup> Snow and Javor, *op cit.*, p. 160.

