

## 8.4

## The Mystery of the Human Eye

William Paley was an English philosopher who lived in the late 1700s and died in 1805. He believed that God was a master craftsman, similar to a person who assembles a watch or a telescope. To help people understand this, he presented to his friends the similarities of the human eye with a high-powered telescope. This is what he determined:

- The eye was made for vision; the telescope was made for assisting it.
- Each uses a sophisticated lens to achieve its function and purpose.
- Both reflect and manipulate light.
- Both are able to bring an object into proper focus. The muscles surrounding the soft lens of the eye move to bring objects into focus, while a telescope uses dials to move the lens.

With this in mind, he asked his friends if it would be reasonable to believe that the telescope was created by a craftsman while the eye was not. Should they not both be considered products of design?<sup>21</sup>

I mention Paley's illustration because natural selection has a difficult time accounting for the human eye. Darwin clearly

recognized that understanding how the eye was formed posed a problem to his theory, as he wrote bluntly in a letter:

"The eye to this day gives me a cold shudder."<sup>22</sup>

The complexity of the eye causes problems for evolutionary theory because a biological system like the eye had to develop over millions of years, and would have never worked until fully developed.

Darwin clearly saw this as a real problem.

The August 15, 2005, cover story of *Time* magazine was "Evolution Wars." It was a fairly lengthy article on the theory of evolution versus the theory of intelligent design. It addressed this thorny issue of the human eye. It would be very difficult for the eye to be the product of accidental mutations. As Michael Behe, an American biochemist, asks, "How could a process of gradual improvements produce a complex organ that needs all its parts—pinhole, lens, light-sensitive surface—in order to work?" Behe says the eye closely resembles a camera, which is clearly a product that someone has designed.<sup>23</sup>

The tiny retina of the eye has 130 million receptor cells, 124 million of which are rod shaped and enable us to differentiate between light and darkness. Six million of these receptor cells are cone shaped and can identify up to eight million variations of color. Could this really occur by a random, purposeless process?

Author John Blanchard makes a significant point:

"A partial eye is useless. Five percent of an eye would not give five percent vision—it would give none. What is more, even if all the physical components of an eye were in place, they would achieve nothing unless they were precisely 'wired' to an amazing complex of nerve cells in the brain. Small wonder that someone has suggested, 'Examination of the eye is a cure for atheism.'"<sup>24</sup>

Dr. Ming Wang is a world-renowned eye surgeon who earned

his MD from Harvard and his PhD in laser physics from MIT. He is one of the few LASIK surgeons in the world who holds a doctorate in laser physics. He has performed over fifty-five thousand cataract and LASIK procedures, including more than four thousand on fellow doctors.

Wang grew up in China and moved to the United States in 1982. In his years at Harvard and MIT he was an atheist. However, over time as he considered the human brain and how it was assembled, he began to question his atheistic belief. He says:

"As a medical doctor and a scientist, I can firmly attest to the fact that it is impossible for natural selection to form the intricacies of the eye."<sup>25</sup>

Over time, he became a Christian because he could not find in science answers to those questions in life that he had been searching for. He said:

"The more I learned about science, the more—not less—evidence that I saw of God's creation and design. For example, as I was becoming an ophthalmologist and learning about the inner workings of the eye, the amazing and logical arrangement of photoreceptors, ganglion cells, and neurons, I realized that there is absolutely no way that an intricate structure such as the human eye could ever evolve from a random compilation of cells. The very complexity of a human eye is, in fact, the most powerful evidence of the existence of God."<sup>26</sup>

This is a very powerful argument particularly since Darwin himself saw that the complexity of the eye had the potential to completely undermine his theory.