

META..what?

'Mummy – Mummy, guess what we learned at school today?'

Charlie was so excited and breathless as he burst into the kitchen.

'What is it, what *is* it?' asked his mother, as much worried as curious.

'We learned that tadpoles become butterflies.'

Mum smiled – 'No Charlie - tadpoles become frogs and toads. *Caterpillars* become butterflies and moths!'

'Wow' said Charlie, 'Just as exciting!'

I wonder if we as Christians are even *more* excited...

I wonder why the Creator has 'gone to all the trouble' to biologically engineer what we call Metamorphosis ('Change of form')? Could He be telling those with eyes to see something even *more* profound and personal?

Most of us ask the 'Why' questions, and sometimes others come along and say 'Because'. So why metamorphosis in its many forms? Because...?

Could it be just coincidence that the change in a Christian life is even *more* dramatic than metamorphosis and that we are to look, to see, and to learn to wonder just what is happening to us?

Let's take the one example of a caterpillar's life and draw some comparisons with Christians.

There are four main changes in the insect.

First the egg, followed by the larva, then the pupa (chrysalis), and finally the flying adult (butterfly or moth).

When a butterfly or moth larva (also known as the caterpillar) first hatches from its egg it is very small. This young caterpillar is referred to as a First Instar. A caterpillar has only one job: to eat! Many species begin their feast by eating their egg shell, which contains plenty of nutrients. Other species of caterpillars immediately begin eating the tender small parts of leaves.

Caterpillars (and all insects) face a challenge as they grow - unfortunately their skin cannot grow with them!

In order for a caterpillar to grow larger than the skin it had when it hatched it must make a new, larger skin. The caterpillar does this by first growing a new skin underneath the outer skin. Then, when it is ready, it "sheds" the old skin and the newer, larger skin underneath is exposed. This process is called molting. After the caterpillar has molted for the first time it is referred to as a Second Instar, and it has some room to grow.

The change from what enters the pupa to what emerges is more than dramatic. The caterpillar that becomes the pupa has gone. It changes into a hormonal 'biological soup' and has effectively died. This transition is called Apoptosis, which is actually a form of controlled cell death. There is an absolute disconnect from the caterpillar to the butterfly (or moth).

After approximately 10 to 14 days as a chrysalis the butterfly is ready to emerge.

When the butterfly emerges, its wings are small and wet and the butterfly cannot yet fly. It must pump fluids from its abdomen through the veins in its wings causing them to expand to their full size. Next the wings dry, and the butterfly must exercise flight muscles before it can fly.

(I once saw a small cartoon showing two caterpillars looking from their twig at a beautiful Red Admiral butterfly flutter by, and the one saying to the other 'You'd never get *me* up in one of those things!')

But seriously, for us Christians, when we read some of the New Testament, certain verses seem to leap off the page:

*We are a New Creation – the old has gone and the new has come.

*We are being transformed (Greek Metamorphoo).

*We are being transformed (that word again) into His likeness with ever increasing glory.

*Christ will transform (again) our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body.

*We are sown in weakness, we are raised in power. We are sown a natural body, we are raised a spiritual body.

*It doesn't appear what we will be like, but when He appears we will be like Him.

So little Charlie was right to be excited (despite a little mis-hear!)

Perhaps when we look at nature we too can exult in 'What on Earth' God has done and will do both to us and for us.

But right now 'Eye hasn't seen nor has ear heard the wonderful things God has for those who love Him.

If pigs could fly... Now *there* would be a sight for Charlie to behold!