

September 2005

## EVOLUTION AND EVIDENCE

By Joe Spears

Once heard a radio show host ask a caller, if it could be proven beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Bible wasn't true and that Jesus wasn't who he claimed he was, if the caller would be willing to accept that information. I remember thinking that I would like to ask the host the same question, turned around, if it could be proven, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that Jesus really was who he claimed to be, would you accept that? Are we willing to believe the evidence? Or do we resist truth or new ideas because of preconceived notions, traditions, or dogma? I see no problem with evidence and the truth. It certainly beats lies.

One area in which claims and counterclaims concerning evidence have been made is the area of origins. Origins deals with evolution and the creation of the universe. Let's look into this area.

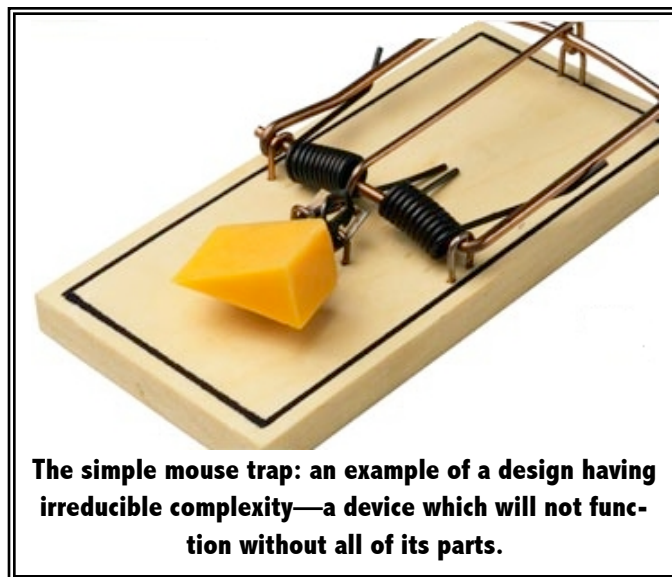
One problem with the fossil record is that the many required forms between reptiles and birds predicted by the theory of evolution are missing from the fossil record.

### **Irreducible Complexity**

Let us think about what is necessary for birds to fly. Feathers and wings and hollow bones all work together to help birds fly. Often many parts or systems work together in such a way that the total effect is one that could not exist if any of the pieces or parts was missing. This is known as "Irreducible Complexity".

Often, each separate part of the entire system is useless, or even worse than useless—detrimental—by itself. Alone, these parts of the system would not have any survival value, and thus no reason for Natural Selection to select them. They have value only in conjunction with all the other pieces of the system.

A classic example of this type of system is a mouse trap. Biochemist Michael Behe used this example to illustrate irreducible complexity. The trap simply does not work at all unless all parts are present and functioning properly.



The gradual change implied by evolution would mean the pieces of the system would at first be incompletely, or partially present, and not perfectly or fully functioning. Remember, evolution is not revolution. It is gradual change. Instead of all the parts appearing full-blown overnight, they gradually develop. The problem is that partially developed pieces of such a system would have no survival value, and thus would not be selected by evolution. It is only *after* they have fully developed and after they are *all* present that they have value. Then they would be selectable. But the problem is that they would have to be selected *before* this happened, so evolution could bring the system up to this point of development. But this development needs to happen before there would be reason for selection to occur! We have to have the development before the selection and the selection before the development—a logical difficulty, to say the least.

### **Missing Links**

Concerning evolution, Pierre Grasse has said, "Evolution is revealed only through fossil forms." In other words, Grasse says the fossil evidence is the crux of the argument on which evolution depends. The fossil record

is known for not supporting evolution. This is where we hear claims and counterclaims. Some say that the fossils demonstrate evolution. Examples pointed to in support of evolution have included the Archaeopteryx and other birds. Archaeopteryx has been claimed to be transitional between birds and reptiles because, among other things, it has been shown to possess claws, but so do other birds, namely ostriches. To make a long story short, the case concerning Archaeopteryx is not conclusive in support of evolution. It is apparently a fully-fledged bird—it has feathers.

One of the problems with Archaeopteryx is that the many required “missing links” or transitional animals between reptiles and birds are missing from the fossil record. The case of the missing transitional forms (the “missing links”) is ubiquitous. It is most often heard of as applying to missing links between humans and our supposed evolutionary ancestors, but there are missing links galore. They abound in the cases of many other types of creatures.

I mentioned the lack of fossils between bird and reptile. In many cases, what we find in the fossil record is lots of one kind of fossil, and lots of another kind, but no fossils of any animals between the two kinds. If evolution occurred, then there should have been many “in-between” fossils.

In fact, one evolutionist pointed out that the best case for documented evidence of one species evolving into another was a species that became infected with a parasite (the species with the infection was the “new” species, different from the same species without the parasite). If we had lots of transitional fossils, he would have mentioned that instead.

The case of the missing “in-between” fossils is a big problem. The so-called “Cambrian explosion” is the “sudden appearance” of many different kinds of fossils. The problem is that the fossils of the kinds leading up to and gradually changing into the Cambrian species are missing. Dr. Ariel Roth, former chairman of the department of Biology at Loma Linda University states, “The Cambrian explosion is not just a case of all the major animal phyla appearing at about the same place in the geologic column. It is also a situation of no ancestors to suggest how they might have evolved.”<sup>1</sup>

Although it has been argued that birds evolved from dinosaurs, it has also been argued that things went the opposite direction, that dinosaurs might have evolved from birds. If both can be argued, it would seem that the evidence in support of both is not very conclusive or

decisive. Again, we see that apparently the fossil record is not supportive of evolution.

In case after case, with the whale and the horse, for example, we find that the fossil evidence does not really support evolution.

### **Probability**

If we look at the theoretical methods by which evolution may be accomplished, we see problems there also. Irreducible complexity has already been mentioned. The changes in genes necessary for new species have been attributed to mutations. But according to Nicholas Comminellis, president of the Institute for International Medicine, “...almost all mutations are harmful to animals.”<sup>2</sup> And from Maxim D. Frank-Kamenetski, Professor of the Center for Advanced Biotechnology and Biomedical Engineering at Brown University, “Mutations are rare phenomena, and a simultaneous change of even two amino acid residues in one protein is totally unlikely. ...One could think, for instance, that by constantly changing amino acids one by one, it will eventually be possible to change the entire sequence substantially.... These minor changes, however, are bound to eventually result in a situation in which the enzyme has ceased to perform its previous function but has not yet begun its ‘new duties’. It is at this point it will be destroyed, along with the organism carrying it.”<sup>3</sup>

One way to avoid the problem is for all the necessary mutations to occur together at the same time. However, the probability of this happening is extremely small. Estimates of the probability of the formation of even some small parts of what is necessary for even a single cell to develop have been made. The numbers calculated have included such estimates as 1 chance in 10 to the thousandth power. The significance of this is that 10 to the hundredth power—a much smaller number than 10 to the thousandth power—is still far greater than the estimated number of atoms in the universe. Think of it—there is a higher chance of picking a single atom out of the entire known universe than the chance that even some of the things that evolution requires would have actually happened.

Why would we believe that these things happened, along with many others necessary for evolution to have occurred? We may give various reasons for believing in evolution, but in this case, we apparently cannot honestly say, “Because of the evidence.”<sup>❧</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Comminellis, Nicholas (2001) *Creative Defense: Evidence Against Evolution*, Masterbooks, p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> Maxim D. Frank-Kamenetski, (1997) *Unraveling DNA*, Addison Wesley Publishing Company, p. 72.

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<sup>1</sup> Roth, Ariel (1998) *Origins*, Review & Herald Publishing, Hagerstown, MD, p. 184.

## MEETING NEWS

### ***Dr. Burton stands up for scientific integrity and balance to evolution***

At the August meeting of TASC, Dr. Gerald Van Dyke finished his discussion on Lee Strobel's *What Does The Scientific Evidence Say About A Creator?* In addition, our 25 attendees were treated with a talk by Mike Burton, PhD from the Department of Crop Science at North Carolina State University. This talk involved an assessment of the controversy brought about by Jim Coors, PhD, president of the agronomy society (CSSA) in his April, 2005 message to the society and by Dr. Burton's response to the message. Dr. Coors stated, "We face a much greater challenge to the integrity of science every day in many schools throughout the country. The substitution of creationism for the teaching of evolution, or even giving both evolution and creationism equal time in school curricula, presents the biggest threat to biological education that one could imagine...Evolution provides the scientific base from which all biology is understood, and denying a young student access to the fundamental concept of evolution is a far greater offense than denying a farmer access to Roundup Ready soybeans."

Dr. Burton replied by way of Letter to the Editor by stating, "The April CSSA President's Message urged support of public policy engagement and recommended a strong position on the creation-evolution question. Dr. Coors expressed his belief that teaching both positions was troubling because 'evolution provides the scientific base from which all biology is understood...'" Dr. Burton further stated, "I would agree that evolution is the theoretical foundation of much of what is taught, and accepted without question, in most universities and public schools....Did you catch that? *Without question*. The problem is the unquestioning acceptance of aspects of evolution. The absence of skepticism—that should rattle any scientist to the core." Dr. Burton also pointed out, "Dr. Coors' characterization of recently reported public school board and state legislation is in error. None have proposed 'substitution of creationism' or 'denying' students access to it. Several, however, proposed that alternatives also be considered. We do no great favors to science or to education by concluding *en masse* that any alternative to a theory of macro-evolution is ridiculous or undesirable. Perhaps we cling to a single hypothesis because we fear the implication of an alternative." Dr. Coors' response to Dr. Burton's response

included, "We should not be timid in evolution's defense, for it has served us well."

Perhaps we who believe in God and are reinforced by a knowledge of creation science should stand up for true scientific integrity as Dr. Burton has and be more proactive in standing for our beliefs. One good start would be to attend next month's TASC meeting where Mark Stephens will explore our challenges in more detail as stated in the announcement of the September talk below.

*Dr. Burton, we admire your stand and are encouraged by your stand, your active response, and your courage to share it with us. We are also encouraged that twelve other professors from universities throughout the US signed their support of your response to Dr. Coors' message. Thanks to them as well!*

## COMING EVENTS

### **Thursday, September 8, 7:30 P.M., Providence Baptist Church, 6339 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh**

Mark Stephens, MCS, chairman of TASC will speak and lead discussion on challenges that we creationists face to get our message out in our churches and the public arena. He will review some of the major creation/evolution controversies such as age of the earth, what does evolution actually mean in today's world, impact of evolution on social and medical issues, ability or ways to share the creation origin account in public arenas in light of the so-called "separation of church and state", and ways to motivate to actually share the creation message. If you identify with some of these issues and challenges or would like to comment on them, please plan now to attend and bring a guest.

### **ANSWERS IN GENESIS CREATION SEMINAR**

#### **Friday-Saturday, September 16-17, Providence Baptist Church, 6339 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh**

Plan now to support this seminar, 6:30 pm to 9 pm on Friday night, September 16, and Saturday morning at 8:30 am to noon on September 17. The creation seminar will be conducted by Answers in Genesis and will provide speakers to include Mike Riddle. Creation science materials will be available for purchase.

#### **Thursday, October 13, 7:30 P.M., Providence Baptist Church, 6339 Glenwood Ave., Raleigh**

Jeff Gift, PhD. will provide a general update on the status of the intelligent design movement, including upcoming meetings and some key areas of ongoing research.

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