

The Unmitigated Horror of (Gasp!) Evolution

By Norm R. Allen Jr.

Beliefs don't change facts. Facts, if you're reasonable, should change beliefs. –
Ricky Gervais

The latest Jurassic Park movie *Jurassic World* has sent many Christians into a tizzy. They find it difficult to enjoy the film because it lends credence to the theory of evolution, which for creationists and Intelligent Design theorists, is far more frightening than any tyrannosaurus could ever be. (Indeed, many of them refer to it as *eviloution*.) How ironic that, for them, they cannot enjoy science fiction because of the good science behind it!

Creationists have a problem with dinosaurs to begin with. Some believe that dinosaurs never existed. After all, they contend, why would a perfect God allow any of his species to go extinct? (They obviously do not understand that, in reality, about 98% of the species that have ever existed on Earth have gone extinct! Of course, there is nothing surprising about extinction in light of evolutionary theory, survival of the fittest, and in the words of the late, great Paul Kurtz, the fact that we live in a “turbulent universe.”)

Others wonder why God would have waited 65 million years after the end of the dinosaur era to have finally created human beings. They believe that dinosaurs and human beings existed at the same time. As one comedian joked, these people must believe that *The Flintstones* is a documentary! However, human beings were not around at the time to eat brontosaurus burgers, to battle raptors with rocks and spears, and to ride dinosaurs like horses.

It has now been well-established in dinosaur science that birds evolved from dinosaurs. Obviously, transitional fossils are always difficult to find. Most remains do not fossilize well, especially in certain environments and in certain kinds of soil, and we are extremely fortunate to have found the relatively few fossils we have. However, archaeopteryx was a mixture between a reptile and a bird. It had teeth, wings, feathers and the tail of a lizard.

Some religionists are rather insidious in their opposition to evolution. Elijah Muhammad, founder of the Nation of Islam (NOI) used to teach that dinosaurs

never existed. When the first Jurassic Park film came out, a writer in *The Final Call*, the Nation's official newspaper, suggested that the film was a plot by Jews in Hollywood to lead people away from divine truth.

Creationists and ID theorists maintain that the human body is so remarkably designed that God must have designed it. But do they really want to blame the poorly designed body on a perfectly intelligent God? As has been pointed out repeatedly by many others, practically every human being has back pain at some point in their lives due to the awkwardness of the human body. We breathe and eat out of the same orifice. Our eye has a blind spot, the birth canal in females is tiny, causing many deaths to girls and women giving birth, etc. In other words, the flawed human body looks exactly as we would expect were it the product of evolution by natural selection, which it obviously is. (This is why astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson and other scientists have referred to it as "stupid design.")

One of the most compelling ideas in ID is the notion of irreducible complexity. Michael Behe is the leading proponent of this idea, having published *Darwin's Black Box* in 1996. Behe maintained that an irreducibly complex system in groups of molecules in cells engages in an action and contains such perfectly matched and absolutely necessary parts that if any part were missing from the system, the system would be rendered unworkable. The implication is that only God could have created such a system.

However, the scientific community does not accept Behe's idea. A so-called irreducibly complex system could have arisen in a round-about Darwinian route. Antecedents to irreducibly complex systems could have been around with different uses, and could have become no longer necessary, and for that reason, taken apart via evolution. There are many examples of this throughout biology.

Certainly the notion that "we are all Africans," or the idea that humanity originated in sub-Saharan Africa cannot sit well with many White conservative Christians, some of the most strident opponents of evolution. After all, they do not seem to bolster that idea as they are traversing Africa, happily spreading the Gospel with their White Christ figures.

The natural world is all we – and the other animals – know. Anything else is just our belief. Nature works the way it works and neither owes nor offers any

explanations to theists that do not like or understand nature's ways. Moreover, science, by far, offers us the best way of understanding the natural world and our part in it. Good, responsible scientists simply want to try to understand and explain. It would be great if more theists would just get out of their way and permit them to continue enlightening the rest of us.