

INTELLIGENT DESIGN AND THE BIBLE

Intelligent Design theory -- ID theory -- is the position that an intelligent designer made the universe, and earth, and all living things. ID theory is one of the newest developments in the long conflict among views of the origin of the universe.

Before Jesus founded the Church (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2), evolutionary views had long prevailed in ancient cultures. The Babylonians believed that all life began in the sea, much like modern evolution. This Babylonian belief was actually a corruption of the truth that God brought forth water-dwelling creatures from the sea in the beginning (Gen. 1:20-21). The Greeks and Romans of Jesus' time also held evolutionary views, though without the scientific terminology in fashion today.

The early church grew rapidly, and by the fourth century AD paganism in the West became a fringe belief. As ancient paganism vanished, so did the evolutionary beliefs of antiquity. For nearly 2000 years, evolution remained the belief of a small minority of skeptics. Until the 1800s these skeptics did not succeed in influencing most people.

In the early 1800s Englishman Charles Lyell, a lawyer by training, put forth arguments for geological evolution that swayed academic and ecclesiastical leaders to give up a belief in biblical creation. The way was prepared for another Briton, Charles Darwin, who in 1859 published *The Origin of Species*. Using Lyell's teaching of geological ages for his time frame, Darwin claimed that slow biological evolution had brought forth all life.

HOW DID THE INTELLIGENT DESIGN MOVEMENT BEGIN?

Creationists refuted Darwin's claims, but with the establishment backing evolution, the origins debate continued. The conflict came to a head in 1925 in Dayton, Tennessee, a small town about 30 miles from Chattanooga. The Dayton "Monkey Trial" got more press coverage than any event up to its time. Prominent defense attorney Clarence Darrow argued that high school biology teacher John Scopes should be free to teach evolution. William Jennings Bryan, thrice nominated for President of the United States, argued for the prosecution. Scopes was fined for teaching evolution, but the press portrayed the trial as a battle between freedom (teaching evolution) and medieval bigotry (teaching creation).

After the trial, creationists continued to call for teaching creation in the classroom. In the 1960s grassroots movements led to the formation of creationist organizations now having a worldwide influence. Gallup polls since the 1980s have shown that over 40% of the American public believes that man was created

10,000 years ago or less, and that God created the universe.

Even evolutionists themselves began to doubt Darwin. These doubts became public in the early 1970s when Harvard professor Steven J. Gould spoke out against Darwinism -- the belief that evolution occurred over eons because of natural selection "choosing" mutations to change one life form into another. Gould emphasized that he remained an evolutionist and that he deeply respected Darwin, but he did not believe that Darwin had explained evolution.

Others listened. In the mid-1980s, Michael Denton, an Australian medical doctor, wrote *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*. Like Gould, Denton considered himself an evolutionist, but claimed that the Darwinian kind of evolution cannot explain how life arose. A few years later, biochemist Michael Behe read Denton's book, and the modern ID movement burst into prominence with the publication of Behe's book *Darwin's Black Box*.

HOW DO INTELLIGENT DESIGN THEORY AND BIBLICAL CREATION COMPARE?

Denton and Behe -- and a growing number of additional writers -- say things about Darwinism that creationists have long claimed. This makes reading books by ID authors enjoyable for a creationist. Some of these books are listed at the end of the next page.

On the other hand, Behe and other ID theorists are generally careful not to specify who the intelligent designer might be. Behe is definite about this. He writes on p. 196 of *Darwin's Black Box*, "Inferences to design do not require that we have a candidate for the role of designer." On p. 197 he claims, "The inference to design can be held with all the firmness that is possible in this world, without knowing anything about the designer." But the Bible contradicts these statements. Romans 1:20 says, "For the invisible things of [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen ..." This general revelation of God in creation, Romans 1:20 goes on to say, is sufficiently clear that man is left "without excuse" for knowing Who the Designer is, and coming to Him for salvation.

Unless we identify the Intelligent Designer with the God of the Bible, there is room for the designer to be a New Age "force." This may seem far fetched, but there are New Age adherents aggressively teaching this very idea. Michael Cremo and Richard Thompson are converts to Hinduism and authors of *Forbidden Archeology*. In a book sequel, *Forbidden Archeology's Impact*, Cremo on p. 122 revealed that, "*Forbidden Archeology* is designed to demolish the case for [conventional] biological and cultural evolution, and to advance the cause of a Vedic alternative." The Bible constantly identifies God as the

Creator and Designer. From Genesis 1:1 through Revelation, the Creator is God, not an unknown force. John 1:1-3 identifies the Creator as Christ the Son, the second Person of the Trinity, and Rev. 4:11 praises God as Creator.

To the extent that ID theory critiques Darwinism, the ID movement is to be appreciated. To the extent that the ID movement hesitates to honor God as the Designer, there is a difference between biblical creation and the ID movement.

Christians need to go beyond the ID position that there is a designer, because biblical creation identifies the Designer as the God of the Bible. Biblical creationists can utilize the growing library of works presenting scholarly ID arguments for design, but Christians should also teach that the creation occurred relatively recently, within a time span of a week. These too are tenets of biblical creation.

In contrast, Behe on p. 227 of *Darwin's Black Box* states, "The belief that the designer had to have made life recently ... *is not a part of intelligent design theory* [his italics]." The book's dust jacket points out that "Michael Behe is not a creationist." ID advocates Guillermo Gonzales and Jay Richards, in *The Privileged Planet* -- in many ways an excellent book -- endorse the big bang theory for the origin of the cosmos (p. 99) and assume a 4.5 billion year age for the universe (p. 182). In *Forbidden Archeology's Impact*, Cremo approvingly notes that this conventional evolutionary chronology is like the Hindu time scale (p. 6). Advocacy of an old cosmos developing over eons is not a return to biblical teaching but a departure from it.

WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS TEACH BIBLICAL CREATION?

Identifying God as the Creator and Designer is the biblical basis for claiming that we, as created beings, are accountable to Him. Our accountability to God is why all men must turn to God in Christ for salvation. It is also the reason that we are to keep His teachings and commandments given in Scripture. These precepts are the basis for civil behavior in a free and ordered society.

Those who know the Lord are to live lives filled with the graces of godliness, such as kindness, patience, being tenderhearted, tempered by discernment and wise judgment (Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 6:1; Phil. 1:9; 2 Pet. 1:5-8). But these graces are under increasing attack as our culture is secularized more and more.

During Lyell's and Darwin's time, England became increasingly secularized. British philosopher John Stuart Mill, in his essay *On Liberty*, expressed the hope that even without Christianity people would exercise self-control. The German atheist Nietzsche was more realistic. According to Gertrude Himmelfarb, on p.

86 of her book *On Looking Into the Abyss*, Nietzsche castigated Mill and others "who thought that they could secularize morality by divorcing it from Christianity ... [not realizing] how conditional their morality is on the religion they profess to discard." History has revealed tragically that Nietzsche was right. In the 1800s the West began adopting a liberal, secularized theology. The twentieth century suffered the two most deadly wars in history as well as the emergence of unprecedented corruption in the West -- witness the Enron and WorldCom scandals and the abortion holocaust.

As Nietzsche realized, without a Creator, there is no basis for morality. But godliness -- genuine biblical morality -- is the only basis of effective evangelism. It is also the only foundation for a civil society in which each citizen has self-control and consideration for others. Christians need to show forth this kind of witnessing and godly living. That is why Christians need to honor God as the Creator and Designer, and that is why Christians need to teach biblical creation.

Some Books by ID Theorists and Anti-Darwinians. This list has no Christian works. These books question only Darwinism, not evolution generally. Some of the authors are theists (they believe in God), but all accept evolutionism as fact, and some are in the New Age movement, showing that the modern shift away from Darwinism is *not* a change back to the Bible.

1960: G.A. Kerkut, *Implications of Evolution*, Pergamon.
1967: Peter Medawar (ed.), *Mathematical Challenges to the Neo-Darwinian Interpretation of Evolution*, Wistar Institute.
1968: G. Himmelfarb, *Darwin and the Darwinian Revolution*, Norton.
1971: Norman Macbeth, *Darwin Retried*, Gambit.
1977: Pierre-P. Grasse, *Evolution of Living Organisms: Evidence for a New Theory of Transformation*, Academic.
1981: Jacques Barzun, *Darwin Marx Wagner: Critique of a Heritage*, University of Chicago.
1982: Francis Hitching, *The Neck of the Giraffe: Darwin, Evolution, and the New Biology*, New American Library.
1983: G.R. Taylor, *The Great Evolution Mystery*, Harper and Row.
1984: Wm. [sic] R. Fixx, *The Bone Peddlers*, Macmillan.
1984: Jeremy Rifkin, *Algeny: A New Word, A New World*, Penguin.
1985: Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, Alder & Alder.
1986: John D. Barrow and Frank J. Tipler, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*, Oxford.
1987: Richard Lewin, *Bones of Contention*, Simon and Schuster.
1991: R. Wesson, *Beyond Natural Selection*, MIT.
1993: Michael A. Cremo and Richard L. Thompson, *Forbidden Archeology*, Bhaktivedanta Institute.
1996: Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*, Free Press.
1997: R. Milton, *Shattering the Myths of Darwinism*, Park Street.
1997: Lee Spetner, *Not By Chance*, Judaica Press.
1998: Michael A. Cremo, *Forbidden Archeology's Impact*, Bhaktivedanta Institute.
2000: Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution*, Regnery.
2004: Guillermo Gonzales and Jay Richards, *The Privileged Planet: How Our Place in the Cosmos Is Designed for Discovery*, Regnery.