A BIBLICAL VIEW ON

Intelligent Design

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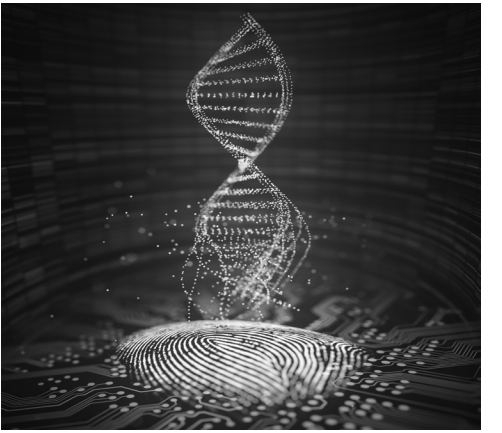
Intelligent Design



Where did we come from? Why are the earth, the sun, and the universe here? How did life arise on this planet? These are fundamental philosophical questions with scientific implications. The theory of evolution rests on the assumption that life arose on this planet by chance and that all of the cosmos is the result of a material cause.

But does the scientific evidence

support this? Evolutionists say that it does, but there are other views that certainly challenge this fundamental assumption. Some of those who challenge Darwinian evolution embrace the idea of intelligent design.

What is Intelligent Design?

Mathematician and philosopher William Dembski, in his book *The Design Revolution* defines intelligent design in this way:

As a theory of biological origins and development, intelligent design's central claim is that only intelligent causes adequately explain the complex, information-rich structures of biology and that these causes are empirically detectable. To say intelligent causes are empirically detectable is to say there exist well-defined methods that, based on observable features of the world, can reliably distinguish intelligent causes from undirected natural causes.

The search for intelligent design is

a significant part of certain scientific investigations. Archeologists, for example, use chip marks and shape to determine whether a stone they find resulted from erosion or was designed by an ancient toolmaker. Medical examiners and crime scene investigators are trained to distinguish between accidental death and murder. Firefighters and arson investigators look for distinguishing characteristics in a fire to determine if a fire was accidental or arson. Intelligent design proponents suggest using similar tools to distinguish chance from design.

Intelligent Design in Astronomy

Since the time of Copernicus, astronomers have assumed that the Earth is not very special. *The Copernican Principle* is much more than just the simple observation that the universe does not revolve around our Earth. It is a metaphysical construct that has also displaced human beings from the

center of the cosmos.

Astronomers have discovered that the parameters associated with the universe, our galaxy, our solar system, and Earth are intricately balanced. They are so balanced and finely tuned that some people have said they are essentially on a knife edge. If there were a slight change in either direction, life (especially complex life) would not exist. In many cases, the universe itself would not exist.

For example, if the strength of gravity was weaker by only one part in a trillion, trillion, trillion, the universe would expand too rapidly for galaxies and planets to form. But if gravity was stronger by one part in a trillion, trillion, trillion the universe would collapse upon itself. Similar fine-tuning can be found for the constants in equations for gravity, electromagnetism, strong, and weak nuclear forces. It can also be found in the ratio of proton to electron mass.

This delicate balance is one of the reasons that many refer to our universe as a "just right universe." Some even call it the "Goldilocks" universe because the forces are not too strong and not too weak. They are just right.

One way to imagine this is to think of the parameters of the universe like giant dials on a control panel. All of the dials are adjusted to favor life. One science reporter put it this way: "They are like the knobs on God's control console, and they seem almost miraculously tuned to allow life."

One book (and subsequent film) that attempted to bring together all of the data supporting the idea of intelligent design in astronomy was the book *The Privileged Planet* by astronomer Guillermo Gonzalez and philosopher Jay W. Richards. They challenged the idea that Earth was merely an insignificant speck in a vast and meaningless universe. Instead, they set forth the case

that our planet is exquisitely designed both for life and for scientific discovery. Gonzalez and Richards conclude, "Mounting evidence suggests that the conditions necessary for complex life are exceedingly rare, and that the probability of them all converging at the same place and time is minute."

They also argue that Earth is especially suited for scientific investigation. Because our galaxy (the Milky Way) is relatively flat, we can observe other galaxies clearly. And since our position is between the spiral arms, we have a relatively unobstructed view of these distant galaxies.

Intelligent Design in Biology

In the nineteenth century when Charles Darwin proposed his theory, he thought the living cell was quite simple: a cell wall filled with a mass of protoplasm. Scientists could only see the cell under very low-power microscopes.

We now know that even a simple living cell is a maze of complexity and storehouse of information. In many ways, a single cell is something like a small city filled with factories and other forms of manufacturing. There are factories that produce biological materials. There are transportation systems that move these materials around the cells. There are others that attach them. And there are still others that recycle.

At the center of all this flurry of activity is the nucleus where the codes, plans, and blueprints are housed and used to manufacture all these important substances. And all these activities are regulated and timed to incredible perfection.

One argument for intelligent design surfaced with the publication of the book *Darwin's Black Box* by Michael Behe. He introduced a new concept to the debate and showed that the latest advances in science seemed to be argu-

ing against the theory of evolution first proposed by Charles Darwin.

According to Michael Behe, irreducible complexity is "a single system composed of several well-matched, interacting parts that contribute to the basic function, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease functioning." He has written about a number of microscopic systems (cilium, bacterial flagellum) that show irreducible complexity.

Charles Darwin saw how artificial selection could significantly change an organism and therefore proposed that every living organism was created and modified by natural selection. But centuries of artificial selection and breeding have shown us that there are limits to biological change. Botanists, for example, have been working to increase the sugar content of the sugar beet. And they have been successful in raising the sugar content from six percent to

about seventeen percent. But they have also found that there is an upper limit to biological variation.

Origins and the Bible

The Bible teaches that God created the heavens and earth (Genesis 1:1), but Christians who believe in creation usually fall into one of two camps. Entire books have been written about these views, here is but a summary.

The **recent** creation view maintains that the first chapters of Genesis are a literal, historical document that outline the six days of creation and a seventh day of rest. Proponents point to the fact that the Hebrew word for day (yom) means a 24-hour day. Proponents also assume that the genealogies of Genesis (chapters five and eleven) provide an accurate accounting of the history and thus suggest that creation took place a few thousand years ago.

According to recent creation, the fossil record is the result of a universal,

worldwide flood (recorded in Genesis 6-9). The geologic column does not represent sedimentary layers laid down over millions of years but instead are the result of the sorting and mixing during the flood of Noah.

Recent creationists also believe that God created various kinds of plants and animals that reproduce after their kind (Genesis 1:24-25). In other words, God created a dog kind from which you get various breeds of dogs but there would be limits to biological change.

Proponents of **progressive** creation believe that God intervened throughout long periods of time to bring about His creation. Instead of accepting Genesis as a description of six literal days, the progressive creationist accepts the standard scientific time frame of billions of years. Proponents of progressive creation often hold to a view known as the day-age theory. This view assumes that each "day" in Genesis represents a

long age. They point out that the Hebrew word for day (yom) can sometimes mean an indefinite time period. Others hold to a view known as the gap theory in which they attempt to put all of evolutionary history in between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2.

The geologic column, according to this view of progressive creation, represents millions of years. Proponents accept the standard scientific estimates for the age for the universe in billions of years. And they believe that God created various intervals and that there was probably some lateral variation among those created organisms but not major change through macroevolution.

The purpose of this booklet is not to try to resolve this decades-old debate about creation, but to acknowledge there are different views. I believe that as science progresses, we can begin to find answers to many of the questions about origins. You should be encour-

aged that whether we look in a telescope or a microscope, so much new evidence in science points to an intelligent design.

However, science is limited and cannot prove the existence of God. We learn that from God's general revelation through nature (Psalm 19:1 and Romans 1:20) and through our conscience. We also learn of Him through the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21) and through the person of Jesus Christ (John 3:16 and John 14:9).

We can agree with the Psalmist (19:1-4) – "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night reveals knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their line has gone out through all the earth."

Additional Resources

Kerby Anderson, *A Biblical Point of View on Intelligent Design,* Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2008.

Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*, NY: Free Press, 1996.

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Stephen C. Meyer, *The Return of the God Hypothesis: Three Scientific Discoveries That Reveal the Mind Behind the Universe*, NY: HarperOne, 2021.

Stephen Meyer, *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design*, NY: HarperOne, 2010.

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