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## “Intelligent” Design?

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Since its publication in 1859, Charles Darwin’s book “On the Origin of Species...” has changed our understanding of living things and has challenged how religious leaders explain the world. Before Darwin (and several other influential scientists, like Hooke and Van Leeuwenhoek), people expected their churches to explain the mysteries of life. Charles Darwin’s arguments – that all living things evolved from a common ancestor, that all living things are constantly changing from generation to generation, that we are all distantly related – were a major challenge to the church’s explanations of the world. These important, scientific hypotheses have continued to be supported by more and more evidence since they were first published in 1859. Nevertheless, old fashioned churches around the world still seem to be scared of them. The most recent version of religion attacking the evidence for evolution is called Intelligent Design (ID), but don’t be fooled – there is almost nothing intelligent about it.

Recently, the most popular argument made by the ID community is what is called the “argument from incredulity<sup>1</sup>”. An argument from incredulity usually goes like this: “\_\_\_\_\_ is just too complicated and incredible to have happened because of evolution, so it must have been designed by God.” Eyeballs, bat wings, microscopic flagella, and many other complex parts of living things have been used as examples for this argument. All of them have been studied and thoroughly explained—without any need for God—by scientists. Notice that the argument from incredulity does not offer any proof for its claims, and it very rarely talks about the years of scientific proof (fossils, DNA evidence, direct observations, etc.) for it. Any argument from incredulity can be summarized by saying, “I don’t care how many scientists have spent their whole lives studying this organism. I don’t care how much

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<sup>1</sup> **incredulity** (n.) (pronounced “in-cre-JOOL-ity”) – unwilling to admit or accept what is offered as true.

proof you have. I just believe that God did this because I don't understand how that could have happened any other way." Imagine if our courts of law worked that way! No matter how much evidence you find at the crime scene that proves that a person is guilty, the judge just won't believe you because it's "just too complicated and incredible to have happened". If judges were allowed to ignore the evidence like the Intelligent Design community does, our streets would be full of murderers, rapists, thieves, and other guilty criminals!

All of this is **not** to say that religious people are stupid or ignorant. The point is that the argument from incredulity shows very clearly that religions and religious beliefs work very differently than science does. Religions base their decisions on what they've read in their holy books (the Bible, the Koran, the Torah, etc.) and on their faith in their beliefs. As the Bible says in the book of Hebrews, "faith is being sure of what we hope for and being certain of what we do not see." Science works almost exactly opposite of this. Science is based on making educated guesses using as much evidence as you can possibly find. If you can do a test or take a measurement of some kind to find evidence for something, then it might be the answer you're looking for. If you can not do a test of some kind and try to find evidence for your question, then what you want to know is not something that science can help you with.

The scientific claim, most famously explained by Charles Darwin, has been supported by tens of thousands of different scientists all over the world, studying every different kind of living thing that humans have ever discovered. Some of the evidence that these scientists have discovered is very complicated and hard to understand. Some of it does not completely explain every detail. The scientists' hypotheses were often wrong, but science is all about revising your hypothesis and trying to make sense of your new evidence. DNA evidence is a modern form of proof for evolution that has proven that many scientists were right about the basic fact of evolution all along. Even the conservative Christian Francis Collins, former director of the Human Genome Project, has admitted that, "the evidence that comes out from... [DNA] analysis is overwhelmingly in favor of a single origin of [all] life... that is entirely consistent with Darwin's view".

Supporters of ID say that living things are just too complicated to have evolved through evolution, but just saying “God” as the answer to everything does not explain *how* that could have happened. It also creates more questions than it answers. When scientists look for evidence to explain something, they are trying to show how something works, so that we will all be able to finally understand it. The “God did it” answer only leads us to ask, “Okay, so *how* did God do it? What tools did God use to make his Creation? And, while we’re at it, who created God? What does God look like? Who taught God all that chemistry and physics?”

God, according to all theistic religions on earth, is a very complicated being, much more complicated than anything that lives on earth. As the famous Muslim scholar Al-Ghazali has said, “It is absolutely impossible for [the believers] to know Him.” If the “God did it” statement made by the ID community is going to be accepted as a scientific hypothesis, it **must** be backed up by its own evidence. A creator that is “absolutely impossible... to know” is not proof that we can all see clearly. And so, if even religious experts say that they can’t completely understand their own God, then how is that supposed to be useful as a practical explanation for why organisms are the way they are? As medical doctor and evolution advocate Burt Humburg, M.D. has pointed out:

There is nothing wrong with Intelligent Design as a strictly religious or philosophical concept. However, it simply fails as a scientific theory. ... Because Intelligent Design cannot be disproved [through experimentation] and because it is not predictive [like a hypothesis], it cannot be science. Because Intelligent Design is not science, it is inappropriate to teach it in the public school science classroom.

The bottom line is that belief in God is a lot like an opinion. Just like you can’t prove that Coke is better than Pepsi, you can’t prove that God exists. Good science, on the other hand, deals *only* with facts. There are sometimes things that science can’t completely explain, but we’re working on it, one careful experiment at a time. Until then, scientists won’t be going to any churches to tell them the right way to pray, so “Design Theorists”, please stop telling us how to understand our scientific evidence.

“Design Theorists” say...

But scientists say...