

THE DESIGN REVELATION

by Henry M. Morris*

The Design Revolution is the title of a significant new book by William Dembski,¹ elaborating on the Intelligent Design (ID) movement which is being welcomed by many evangelicals today as the best response to Darwinism. The book is certainly impressive, with a daunting array of new terms. On the book jacket Phillip Johnson (the commonly accepted leader of the movement) said, "Bill Dembski poses all the tough questions that critics ask about intelligent design in biology, and brilliantly answers them all!"

However, it was disappointing that no subject index was included. Also, although Dembski quotes from numerous other writers, he gives no documentation for any of these often very relevant quotes.

Although he covers much ground already well explored by "young-earth creationists," he does not acknowledge this. On the other hand, he emphasizes that "intelligent design" is *not* "scientific creationism" in his chapter 3 (pp. 41–44). The chapter begins with the assertion: "Intelligent design needs to be distinguished from *creation science*, or *scientific creationism*." Then, in the last paragraph of this chapter, he stresses that:

... the designer underlying intelligent design need not even be a deity. . . . Unlike scientific creationism, intelligent design does not prejudge such

questions as Who is the designer? or How does the designer go about designing and building things? (p. 44).

We disagree with this approach! We do appreciate the abilities and motives of Bill Dembski, Phil Johnson, and the other key writers in the Intelligent Design Movement. They think that if they can just get a "wedge" into the naturalistic mindset of the Darwinists, then later the Biblical God can be suggested as the "designer" implicit in the concept.

We occasionally have used a similar approach ourselves. For example, our creation/evolution debates on university campuses are set up to be strictly scientific debates, with no reference to Bible or religion. Normally the creationist side will "win," strictly on the basis of *scientific* arguments. However, the audiences all know that we on the creation side are actually Bible-believing Christians, so they interpret our scientific arguments in that context. Furthermore, we know that the Christians in the audience (usually in the sponsoring organization) will be active in follow-up ministry. We also have a few books, technical monographs, etc., that deal solely with the scientific aspects of the subject. Creationism can, indeed, be adequately justified just by scientific evidence and reasoning.

But what about the ID strategy? Even if one becomes a believer in intelligent

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design he is still unsaved until he receives—by faith—God in Christ as His personal Designer, Creator, and Redeemer. In fact, there are multitudes of creationists (in Islam and Judaism, for example, as well as in various cults) who still reject the Lord Jesus as God and Savior. Creation is the *foundation* of the saving Gospel of Christ, but not the whole structure. We have been commissioned to “*preach the gospel to every creature*” (Mark 16:15), not just the need for a designer.

Two Fallacies

Our concern with the intelligent design approach probably devolves upon two main factors. First, it is ineffective, no more convincing to evolutionists than is young-earth creationism; second, it is not really a new approach, using basically the same evidence and arguments used for years by scientific creationists but made to appear more sophisticated with complex nomenclature and argumentation. Not only are atheistic evolutionists (such as Dr. Eugenie Scott and the leading evolutionists who are board members of her National Center for Science Education) unimpressed by it, but so are many “Christian evolutionists” such as Dr. Ken Miller (the Catholic biologist at Brown University) and Dr. Howard Van Till (the Calvinist physicist at Calvin College). These latter scientists and their many colleagues are quite satisfied with believing that God instituted the evolutionary “process” and has allowed it to work on its own with no further “design” on His part.

The intelligent design movement has been quite successful in one aspect, however. Many Christians now seem to think that it has freed them from having to confront the Genesis record of a young earth and global flood. All they need to do, they have decided, is to believe in intelligent design. This result was surely not what Dembski and others intended, but that is what’s happening.

Our other hesitation to get on this bandwagon is their use of the same arguments and evidences we Biblical creationists have used for years, while simultaneously trying to distance themselves from us. Our adherence to Biblical literalism is ridiculed by evolutionists, and the ID advocates would be embarrassed to be tarred with the same brush. In fact, Dembski goes so far as to say belief in evolution itself is okay, as long as it’s not naturalistic. He opens his chapter 23 with the following:

Intelligent design does not require organisms to emerge suddenly or to be specially created from scratch by the intervention of a designing intelligence. . . . What separates intelligent design from naturalistic evolution is not whether organisms evolved or the extent to which they evolved but what was responsible for their evolution.²

It is not even necessary that the designing intelligence be God.

Intelligent design is a strictly scientific theory devoid of religious commitments. Whereas the creator underlying scientific creationism conforms to a strict, literalist interpretation of the Bible, the designer underlying intelligent design need not even be a deity.³

Dembski himself may not believe such nonsense, but he is trying to build a very large tent, allowing anyone except pure materialists to take refuge there.

These well-meaning folks did not really invent the idea of intelligent design, of course. Dembski often refers, for example, to the bacterial flagellum as a strong evidence for design (and indeed it is); but one of our ICR scientists (the late Dr. Dick Bliss) was using this example in his talks on creation a generation ago. And what about our monographs on the monarch butterfly, the bombardier beetle, and

many other testimonies to divine design? Creationists have been documenting design for many years, going back to Paley's watchmaker and beyond.

Dembski uses the term "specified complexity" as the main criterion for recognizing design. This has essentially the same meaning as "organized complexity," which is more meaningful and which I have often used myself. He refers to the Borel number (1 in 10^{50}) as what he calls a "universal probability bound," below which chance is precluded. He himself calculates the total conceivable number of specified events throughout cosmic history to be 10^{150} with one chance out of that number as being the limit of chance. In a book⁴ written a quarter of a century ago, I had estimated this number to be 10^{110} , and had also referred to the Borel number for comparison. His treatment did add the term "universal probability bound" to the rhetoric.

God's Revelation of Design

It thus seems premature to think of the intelligent design movement as a "revolution," for it is neither new nor convincing to the Darwinists it seeks to influence. There is indeed much evidence of design in nature and God's Word frequently refers to it. "*For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made . . . so that they are without excuse*" (Romans 1:20).

That is, those who refuse to see the evidence of God's handiwork in the things He made are inexcusable. One does not have to be an engineer or a probability mathematician to see that the animals and plants of the world—not to mention the stars in the heavens and the very laws of nature themselves—could never have evolved out of primeval nothingness. Evolutionists think that, if they can even *imagine* how things might have organized themselves into higher levels

of complexity, that is sufficient proof that it must have happened!


Furthermore, the origins issue is mainly a historical question, not merely one related to the complexity of organisms. Not "*could* it happen?" but "*did* it happen?" The historical evidence for Creation and the Flood—and against evolution—especially as recorded in the Word of God, is so strong that the apostle Peter calls it *willful ignorance* not to accept it! (II Peter 3:3–6).

As far as the organized complexity of any living thing is concerned, the ancient challenge of Job is still relevant. "*But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this?*" (Job 12:7–9).

A school child can easily tell a rounded stone from a crafted arrowhead—one shaped by natural forces, the other by skilled human hands. Just so, the incredible organized complexity of even the simplest one-celled organism speaks clearly of intelligent design, and one should not need sophisticated rhetoric or math to recognize this.

We had best try to teach all who will listen with open minds the complete gospel of creation and redemption, not just argue the fine points of complexity. God has "*left not Himself without witness*" (Acts 14:17), and anyone of willing heart will hear.

Endnotes

1. William Dembski, *The Design Revolution* (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 334 pp.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 178.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
4. Henry M. Morris, *King of Creation* (San Diego, CA: CLP Publishers, 1980), pp. 130–131; out of print. See *The Modern Creation Trilogy* (vol. 2 Green Forest, AR: Master Books, 1996), pp. 168–175. 

DOES THE GALLBLADDER HAVE A NECESSARY FUNCTION?

by John D. Morris

Recently a growing pain in my side forced me into the Urgent Care facility at the hospital. Several tests ensued, including an ultra-sound look at my gallbladder. Here in this small potato-sized organ could be seen a solid gallstone, about the size of a jalapeño pepper. I was told it had completely blocked the exit duct and had to be removed. Not just the offending stone, but the entire gallbladder. Both doctor and nurse assured me, “It doesn’t matter, it’s a useless organ.”

Well, I’m not particularly up on human anatomy, and in fact knew little about the gallbladder, but I have investigated similar arguments made for the appendix. Evolutionists have for decades claimed the appendix is a “vestigial organ,” a useless evolutionary leftover from our animal ancestry. In fact, just one hundred years ago nearly 200 organs and structures in the human body were thought to be vestigial, a claim even used as “proof” of evolution in place.


But now we know of uses for each one. There are no “vestigial organs.” The appendix is recognized to play an important role in the immune system, particularly in childhood. We can survive without it, but clearly it is a useful, functioning organ, and we are better off to keep it. There are times when it can get blocked or infected, and must be removed, but if healthy, it’s best left in place.

Other organs or features once thought to be “useless” include wisdom teeth, tonsils, the thymus gland, the “tail bone,” the little toe . . . would a person be better off without these? Of course not! Does their presence prove evolution? Hardly.

The gallbladder serves as a bridge between the liver (which produces bile necessary for the digestion of fats) and the small intestine, where the digestion occurs. The gallbladder stores the bile and parcels it out as needed. If the bladder is removed, it doesn’t impair the production of needed bile, only its concentration and timed release into the small intestine. Dilute bile merely oozes in continually. A person can function quite adequately without the gallbladder under normal conditions, but it’s better to keep it. Mine was infected and damaged and is now gone, and I haven’t missed it . . . but I wonder.

The wise Creator God designed our bodies to cope under a variety of circumstances. Ever since sin entered the perfect creation and all systems began to deteriorate, sometimes things don’t perform optimally. Thankfully there are back-up systems for many organs, like the gallbladder. The Creator intended us to survive in this fallen world, and here we see the evidence.

Whenever we hear words like “that’s a useless organ,” we should recognize them as a product of evolutionary thinking. Often such claims are merely repeats of foundless evolutionary tales heard since elementary school.

The Creator designed things well—nothing is useless. Even if an organ becomes “useless,” we can be confident that it was once good, and even if we can’t find its present function we can be sure it has (or had) one. The same could be said for organs and structures in plants and animals. God doesn’t make junk, and that’s the “Back to Genesis” truth. 



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