standing safely in his laboratory and elaborately expounding—possibly by the aid of diagrams and mathematical formulae—how every stone in an avalanche has a defined pathway and may easily be dodged by one of some presence of mind. We may fancy such an elaborate trifler's triumph as he would analyze the avalanche into its constituent stones, and demonstrate of stone after stone that its pathway is definite, limited, and may easily be avoided. But avalanches, unfortunately, do not come upon us, stone by stone, one at a time, courteously leaving us opportunity to withdraw from the pathway of each in turn: but all at once, in a roaring mass of destruction."[3]

The attempts of the contributors to *Darwin, Creation and the Fall* to escape the evidence for the biblical Adam, even as they attempt to find some underlying historical Adam (which, much like the 'historical Jesus' of some scholars, bears little resemblance to the individual as presented in Scripture), remind one of the attempts to dodge an avalanche, stone by stone. And to put it mildly, the attempt does not come across as a resounding defense of biblical authority.

In reading this collection of essays, one is struck not by how much the authors are keeping of the biblical account, but by how much they are willing to sacrifice in the attempt to find a scientifically acceptable compromise.

### References

1. See Cosner, L., Romans 5:12–21, Paul's view of a literal Adam, *J. Creation* **22**(2):105–107, 2008; creation.com/romans5.

2. Knight, G.W., *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, p. 73, 1992.

3. Warfield, B.B., *The Word of Benjamin B. Warfield, vol. 1: Revelation and Inspiration*, Logos Research Systems, Bellingham, WA, p. 65–66, 2008.

# Intelligent Design in review

A review of
***Intelligent Design 101***
*by H. Wayne House (Ed.)*
Kregel Publications, Grand
Rapids, MI, 2008

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*Intelligent Design 101* is edited by H. Wayne House, professor of biblical and theological studies at Faith Evangelical Seminary, and a prolific author of books and articles on a range of topics, including apologetics, biblical archaeology, theology, and even American law. This book on intelligent design reflects House's theological background in only a few of its essays. For the most part, the book deals with now-familiar design arguments and issues: philosophical criticisms of naturalism as the ruling paradigm of science; discussion of 'irreducible complexity'; and mildly technical reviews of DNA and fossil evidence supporting the design hypothesis. It is more than a little disappointing that a book on ID edited by a theologian does not seriously engage the ongoing theological debate over ID.

Nonetheless, on the subjects that it does cover, *Intelligent Design 101* offers something for everyone. This is both its strength and its weakness. Phillip Johnson, founding father of the ID movement, offers reminiscences on the design movement and his role in sparking its development. Michael Behe contributes a chapter that summarizes his argument in his bestselling *Darwin's Black Box* in a succinct and highly readable way. On the other end of the spectrum, Casey Luskin offers a lengthy, semi-technical, and almost encyclopedic survey, "Finding Intelligent Design in
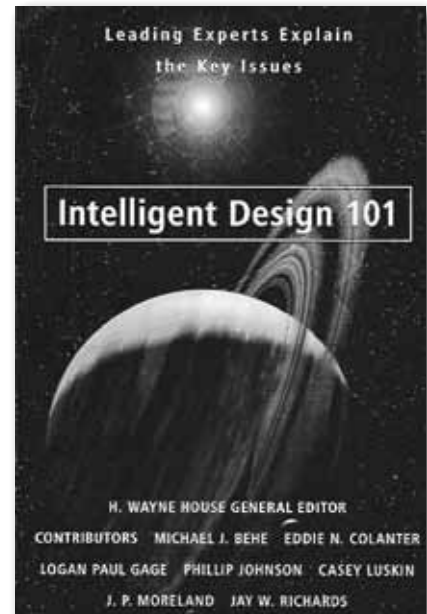
Nature". And Wayne House contributes a chapter on Darwinism and American law that digs somewhat more deeply into the legal precedents than readers new to the debate might be expecting.

### Trajectory of design

This book reflects in some ways the trajectory of the ID movement. It starts, in fact, with an essay by Phillip Johnson, whose 1991 book, *Darwin on Trial*, brought the issue to the center of public attention. In *Intelligent Design 101*, Johnson explains that his vision was to assemble a big tent of Darwin critics—researchers of any and all persuasions who believed that Darwinian evolution could not account for life—or for the origin of species, for that matter. He recognizes that, before him, the pioneer critics of Darwinism in the 20th century were Henry Morris and John Whitcomb, authors of *The Genesis Flood* (1961). "Most of those affiliated with this 'creation science' movement believed in a young earth,

Genesis-based view of earth history and biological origins", Johnson writes.

Johnson recognized that the 'creation-science movement' successfully spread the message and even won political support in a number of states. But the federal courts thwarted the efforts of creationists at getting the message into the public schools. At the same time, Johnson watched as Hugh Ross founded an old-earth creationist organization that accepted the big bang. "Two camps developed", and to Johnson's dismay, the two camps were sharply at odds. "Somewhere along the line", Johnson writes, "I stumbled into this debate". Johnson realized that the US public was skeptical of Darwinism, but he feared that infighting between young-earth and old-earth creationists was going to hurt the cause.

Meanwhile, scientists of varying viewpoints who were critical of Darwinism began to work together to promote a 'design' hypothesis as a big-picture unifying alternative to Darwinism.[1] Johnson's book, *Darwin on Trial*, lit the match. "The culture … was ready to realize that the core question in the debate over origins was whether there was some role played by a Creator" (p. 28).

In those early days of ID, one of the most effective strategies was to expose the role of naturalism, the belief that nature is all there is—or at the least, that nature is all science can consider—a position which ruled out design by definition. The subject of naturalism is taken up by philosopher J.P. Moreland in a later chapter of *Intelligent Design 101*. Moreland explains that the debate over ID is not just about 'facts'; it is a debate about what counts as science. Moreland is a philosopher who knows how to make his arguments accessible to laymen. He explains that there is no good, non-arbitrary reason to define intelligent agency out of science. This basic idea has been a staple ID argument, popularized by Johnson in *Darwin on Trial*.

The philosophical argument over the nature of science works in tandem with the other staple argument of the ID movement—and indeed of the scientific creationist movement that preceded it—the empirical case against Darwinism and in favor of design. In a (comparatively) long chapter in *Intelligent Design 101*, Casey Luskin canvasses numerous fields as he surveys the evidence. He covers some favorite problem cases for evolution, such as the abrupt appearance of the major animal phyla at the Cambrian explosion (figure 1). And he presents positive evidence of design: the genetic code in DNA molecules (figure 2); the fine tuning of the laws of physics and chemistry; the marvelous engineering evident in 'micromolecular machines' (like the flagellum; figure 3); and design components shared among multiple organisms (what evolutionists describe as homologous structures and convergent evolution). Michael Behe elaborates on the beloved bacterial flagellum and the concept of 'irreducible complexity' in a following chapter, providing a handy distillation of his argument from his bestselling *Darwin's Black Box*. The contributors to *Intelligent Design 101* wisely spend more time on the positive arguments (in favor of design) than on the negative arguments (against Darwinism).

## Setbacks for the ID movement

The early intelligent design movement was optimistic in presenting these arguments. The 1990s were, on the whole, heady days for the design movement. A coterie of highly credentialed scientists was assembling to the cause. A number of these scientists were recently minted PhDs or were still in the process of obtaining their degrees— William Dembski, Paul Nelson, Jonathan Wells, Stephen Meyer—giving young energy to the movement. Certainly, the debate over design was vigorous. Many Darwinists were appalled at the ID movement, and there was no shortage of hard words. Stephen Jay Gould, for instance, berated Johnson's *Darwin on Trial* in the harshest terms—it "hardly deserves to be called a book at all", he said.[2] Still, there were encouraging signs that the design thesis was gaining traction. Dembski's groundbreaking work on detecting design mathematically was published by a major university press (*The Design Inference*, Cambridge, 1998). The design thesis received a hearing at a series of successful conferences—involving not only design advocates, but also critics like Michael Ruse and Will Provine who were fair-minded enough to participate in a dialogue. *The Nature of Nature* conference in April 2000 was a triumphant moment, bringing together a dazzling array of speakers—from ID leaders like Michael Behe and William Lane Craig to Darwinist heavyweights like Simon Conway Morris and Steven Weinberg—under the auspices of the Michael Polanyi Center at Baylor University. "The Polanyi Center was also the first, and to this day, only, intelligent design think tank at a major research university", wrote Dembski and Gordon in the preface to the published proceedings from this conference.[3]



Photo courtesy of Wikipedia

**Figure 1.** Under an evolutionist's chronology, the Cambrian explosion is difficult to explain: how can gradual Darwinian processes explain the abrupt appearance of the major animal phyla?

But *The Nature of Nature* conference would be the high water mark for ID, at least so far. Under pressure from Darwinists within and without the university, the Polanyi Center was dissolved that same year.

Indeed, as the '90s turned into the 2000s, the controversy over ID was heating up past the point of good natured academic conversation. The Darwin lobby launched aggressive diatribes aimed at discrediting ID as science and its advocates as serious scholars. The opportunities for debate and dialogue with fair-minded critics disappeared amid a barrage of name calling and academic shunning.

*Intelligent Design 101* does not recount this history. But for those familiar with it, it is history that can be seen reflected to some extent in the flow of the book. Each chapter deals with the omnipresent critics of ID. A hint as to why the subject is so emotional is provided by the chapters contributed by Jay Richards and Eddie Colanter. Design, as Richards points out, suggests that there is a purpose

**Figure 2.** The complex code of the DNA molecule is one of the ID movement's favourite examples of design in nature.

in the universe. Colanter explains that the purpose-filled message of design has implications for biomedical ethics. It comes very close to being a presentation of straight-out *theistic* medical ethics, or perhaps even Christian medical ethics. In short, design presents a challenge to the reigning materialistic worldview of mainstream academia. Little wonder, then, that it becomes a controversial topic.

Still, it seems to me that ID is conflicted in the message it wishes to send. Is ID just about 'empirical evidence'? To what extent is ID concerned with the worldview implications of its message? Where do the worldview implications and the aspiration for 'cultural renewal' come into play? The usual response is that ID is an empirically based scientific position; if it happens to fit well with a particular worldview, religious or otherwise, so be it.

Sometimes ID advocates are comfortable suggesting that ID is something a bit more: a tool to be used in a quest for the renewal of our materialistic, naturalistic culture, as Johnson explicitly states in his chapter in *Intelligent Design 101*. He notes that evolutionists have fixated on the so-called 'wedge' strategy—using design as a 'wedge' to "split the foundations of naturalism". The critics allege that the ID community has ulterior, religious motives. But, Johnson retorts,

"Evolution was never only about science. It was about replacing God with a grand naturalistic creation story ... . So today when our critics tell us that we shouldn't be aiming for 'cultural renewal', our reply should not be to deny the move for renewal, but to show why
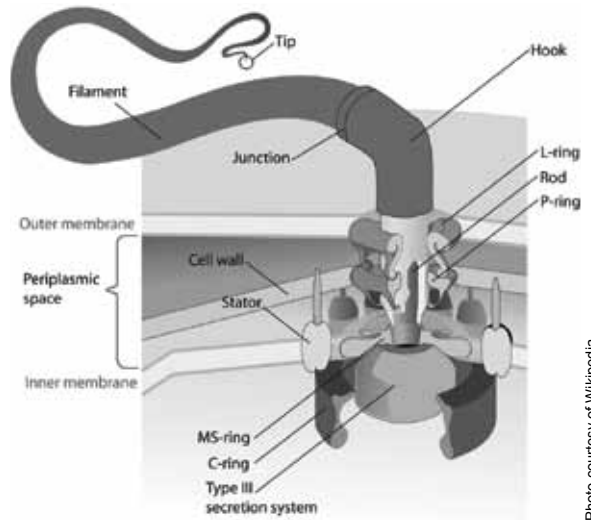
**Figure 3.** Icon of ID: the bacterial flagellum is the classic example of what Michael Behe calls 'irreducible complexity'. If a single component of an 'irreducibly complex' structure is missing, the structure will not function properly. Irreducible complexity in the natural world poses serious problems for Darwinian evolution.

Darwinists have created this need in the first place"(p. 37).

Maybe this doesn't so much indicate that ID is conflicted as it indicates that the ID movement is still unsettled about the extent to which it is willing to make important philosophical commitments. Whatever the state of ID's philosophical commitments, ID has, on the whole, tried to avoid being too closely associated with any particular religious perspective.

The irony is that ID, founded to provide a more sophisticated alternative to creationism, is now widely dismissed by its critics as 'stealth creationism'. (Actually, according to Richard Dawkins, it's not 'stealth' at all—it *is* creationism.[4]) In the legal system, it has certainly been treated that way.

### Legal perspective

Appropriately enough, the final chapter in *Intelligent Design 101* is on the legal issues, written by the editor, Wayne House. The chapter is based on a journal article that originally appeared in the *Regent University Law Review*.[5]

House reviews the history of legal battles over evolution in the American public schools, starting with the Scopes trial. State statutes prohibiting the teaching of evolution in the public schools were struck down by the federal courts in the 1960s and '70s (starting with the US Supreme Court's decision in *Epperson vs Arkansas*[6]). In the late 1970s, creationists tried a new approach, advocating 'balanced treatment' laws that required criticisms of evolution to be taught along with Darwinian orthodoxy. In the 1982 case of *McLean vs Arkansas Board of Education*, a federal district court declared that Arkansas's 'equal treatment' law was unconstitutional as an 'establishment of religion'.[7] The decision came after a highly publicized trial in which a young philosopher of biology named Michael Ruse appeared as an expert witness for the pro-Darwin side. Five years later, the US Supreme Court came to a similar conclusion in *Edwards vs Aguillard*. This seemed to seal the fate of any legislative attempts to get creationism into the classroom.

At the same time, the ID movement was in its early stages. ID presents a significantly different situation compared to the cases involving creationist efforts, House argues. As House explains it, ID "aims to detect specified and complex information in nature", but, unlike creationism, does not take a position on the age of the earth or the identity of the designer (indeed, House notes that ID does not even attempt to determine "whether the designer is natural or supernatural"). House examines the definitions of 'science' and 'religion' offered by some of the older court decisions on creation in the schools. The definition of 'science' used in the 1982 *McLean* decision has been widely criticized by philosophers of science, and moreover is not binding authority (it was a trial court, not an appellate court). Whether or not ID is considered 'science' by the courts (and House thinks it should be), that does not necessarily make it

'religious'. Design theory is at most *consistent with* religion, but it is not religious itself.

In 2005, ID finally had a court test case. The case was *Kitzmiller vs Dover*,[8] and the federal district court ruled that the local school board had unconstitutional religious motivations when it introduced ID into the public school. The *Kitzmiller* decision did not stop there but went on to decide that ID is not science. House argues that this case, while disappointing, will not have a long-term impact. The court overstepped by trying to decide whether ID is science, and the opinion is not binding on other courts (unlike the decisions of the federal appeals courts, for example, whose decisions are binding precedent for their entire judicial circuit). House remains optimistic about ID's prospects in the courts:

> "For legislators or teachers who are truly *not* seeking to get the 'Bible back into school' but simply want fair representation of all competing scientific theories to be presented to students, intelligent design offers a real possibility to achieve that goal" (p. 214).

This brings us back to the recurring issue of ID's ideological commitments. House's argument depends on ID being found not religious. The attitude of the federal courts toward religion is a problem of its own, but putting that aside for the moment, ID's attitude toward religion is also problematic.[9] ID holds out the promise of transforming the way science is done, of lending a helping hand in the project of renewing a culture that has been intellectually and spiritually impoverished by the materialistic biases currently prevalent in science and elsewhere. But at the same time, ID fights for a place at the table (at least in public education) by drawing a sharp line against making religious commitments. This is counterproductive. Indeed, for the serious Christian, I suggest that there is

never a good reason to take an agnostic position on the identity of the Designer.

## Conclusion

*Intelligent Design 101* is a good introduction to the ID movement. It is well written, even though there is some unevenness in the level of detail presented by the various contributors. My main disappointment was that the book did not grapple with the theological posture of ID.

## References

1. But ID still has been unable to avoid dealing with the age-of-the-earth debate. By denominating the age of the earth as a 'side issue', ID has actually taken a position: it would rather not fight this issue. In effect, that means that the ID movement as a whole tends to be more comfortable with 'old-earth' creationists than 'young-earth' creationists, because the former will not rock the boat of mainstream science fighting over a 'side issue'.

2. Gould, S.J., Impeaching a Self-Appointed Judge, *Scientific American* **267**(1):118–121, July1992.

3. The conference proceedings have, a decade after the fact, finally been published as *The Nature of Nature: Examining the Role of Naturalism in Science*, Gordon, B.L. and Dembski, W.A. (Eds.), Intercollegiate Studies Institute, Wilmington, DE, 2011.

4. From Richard Dawkins's endorsement of Barbara Forrest and Paul R. Gross, *Creationism's Trojan Horse*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007.

5. "Darwinism and the Law" 12 *Regent University Law Review* 1 (2000).

6. 393 US 97 (1968).

7. *McLean vs Arkansas Board of Education*, 529 F. Supp. 1255 (E.D. Arkansas, 1982).

8. *Kitzmiller vs Dover Area School District*, 400 F. Supp. 2d 707 (M.D. Pennsylvania, 2005).

9. Actually, the term 'religious' is problematic. Every philosophical idea is going to reflect a worldview that meshes more or less nicely with a particular religious perspective (whether that is Christianity or humanism or something else entirely). Indeed, every idea is premised on presuppositions that reflect ultimately religious beliefs about the nature of reality, of reason, of the role of humans, and a thousand other issues. So in one sense, everything is religious.