

A PRIMER ON THE INTELLIGENT DESIGN MOVEMENT WITH APPLICATIONS TO  
THE NATURAL KNOWLEDGE OF GOD AND APOLOGETICS

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Go outside as the sun crests on the horizon and the sky is painted with hues of orange and pink and purple, and you may think to yourself, “Praise God for his marvelous creation.” Observe your child grow from baby to toddler to teen and you may pray, maybe sometimes through gritted teeth, “Praise God from whom all blessings flow.” A non-Christian scientist goes outside and looks at the sky and all the flora and fauna and might conclude, “There must be an intelligent designer behind all this.” His conclusion, however, can only come from his own reason. When a non-Christian materialistic scientist goes outside and looks at the same sky and the same flora and fauna he will conclude, “This is all due to a natural cause.” His conclusion too can only come from his own reason, albeit feeble and jaded.

The story of Intelligent Design is a story of opposing philosophic views concerning science. On one side are proponents of Intelligent Design who say that based on the evidence a scientist can conclude there is an intelligent designer who is the cause of life. On the other side are materialistic scientists who maintain that science does not and cannot study unnatural causes, so based on the evidence one must conclude that life is due to natural causes. To put this dichotomy in biblical terms, is there are an apparent contradiction between David who writes, “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” and Paul who writes, “The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so”?

There is no contradiction because the natural knowledge of God concerns empirical evidence, human reason, and an interpretation of that evidence. That is not to say that all interpretations of the evidence are correct, rather we should not be surprised when interpretations of the origin of life fall on a wide and varying spectrum. Why? Because the natural knowledge of God is a doctrine that concerns observation and reason.

The Intelligent Design movement also argues through observation and human reason. In order to understand the argumentation of Intelligent Design we will first look at historical *a posteriori* arguments for the existence of God. Then we will examine the Intelligent Design Movement through its rise and argumentation. Finally, we will critically examine the arguments of the Intelligent Design movement in light of the doctrine of the natural knowledge of God and its usefulness for apologetics. Through these examinations we will see that the natural knowledge of God is a doctrine which has in view observation of nature and human reason.

## The Teleological Argument

The philosophers in Medieval Europe are a case study in the major difference between modern science and medieval philosophy. The religious philosophers of Aquinas' day lived in an Aristotelian universe of observable effects, apparent causes, and intrinsic purposes (teleology). If today we asked "How does wood burn?" a modern scientist would break down the answer to atoms and chemical reactions. However the 13th century scholastic world, in which Thomas Aquinas lived, allowed for observation of natural effects to be proof of an unnatural cause because they believed that everything in nature had a *telos*. Aquinas wrote, "The action natural to fire is to heat. And this is because heat belongs to fire as its characteristic property. And this is a consequence of the nature of fire. And so on, until one is driven to God's will."<sup>1</sup> Thus Aquinas believes that through observation of the natural world and the use of reason we can be led to a belief that the Christian God exists .

Through his work in *Summa Theologiae*, and in a more expanded manner in *Summa Gentiles*, Thomas Aquinas expounded a variety of arguments which proved the existence of God based on human observation of nature.<sup>2</sup> In response to the question, "Is there a God?" Aquinas offered five arguments for the existence of God based on observation of nature. These five arguments are known as his *quinque viae*; his Five Ways.<sup>3</sup> Each of the arguments are similar to one another in that they deal with an observed effect which can be traced back to an efficient, or primary, cause. Aquinas argued for a domino theory. If life in this universe is a series of dominoes stacked in a line, then there has to be a finger which knocks the first domino over.

We are most concerned with Aquinas' fifth argument; the teleological argument. Aquinas said that in nature we can observe a variety of organisms which lack intelligence. But even

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Aquinas. *Summa Theologiae*. Vol 2. Translated by Timothy McDermott. (New York: Blackfriars, 1963), xxiii.

<sup>2</sup> In the opening of volume 2 of *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas begins to answer a series of questions concerning whether there is such a thing that we call the natural knowledge of God: "is it self evident that there is a God", "can it be made evident", and "is there a God". In question one Aquinas answers an objector who argues, based on Psalm 14:1, that it is not self evident there is a God. Aquinas, however, maintains God's existence is made evident by means of his effects in nature. Concerning question two, "Can God's existence be made evident?" Aquinas answers that God's effects "can serve to demonstrate that God exists, even though they cannot help us to know him comprehensively for what he is."

<sup>3</sup> Here is a summary of Aquinas' first four arguments: 1) The Argument of the Unchanged Changer (also known as the Unmoved Mover). There must be a primary cause of change and that cause is God, who does not change. 2) The Argument of the First Cause. Without a primary cause, God, there cannot be a following series of causes and effects. 3) The Argument of Necessity. That which must be and is the cause of the necessity of all the other things that must be is God. 4) The Argument of Gradation. Just as in a fire, that which is hottest is the cause of that which is hot, so also that which is best causes goodness in other things.

though those organisms lack intelligence they still demonstrate some sort of intrinsic purpose. I can go out into my lawn and find a dandelion, however, no matter how hard I try I cannot get that dandelion to respond to me. Though the dandelion lacks intelligence, it is not without a goal. It will wither and the wind will blow its seeds. The seeds will land and take root but will not sprout beautiful sunflowers because the dandelion has a purpose to grow more dandelions. In and of itself that dandelion does not have the intelligence or awareness to decide for itself that its goal should be to produce more dandelions. In fact, since it has no intelligence or awareness, it should be goalless. But it is not. There must be a cause behind the dandelion's intrinsic purpose. Aquinas concludes that the cause behind the dandelion's *telos* is God, "Nothing...that lacks awareness tends to a goal, except under the direction of someone with awareness and with understanding; the arrow, for example, requires an archer. Everything in nature, therefore, is directed to its goal by someone with understanding, and this we call 'God.'"<sup>4</sup> Again, Aquinas observes an effect and traces it back to an efficient cause. In this case, he observed a *telos* in unintelligent life forms and traced the cause back to the all-knowing God.

Aquinas's teleological argument is the great-great-grandfather of "The Argument from Design." Aquinas scholar Anthony Kenny suggests that Aquinas' Fifth Way shares a close relationship to the argument from design based on Aquinas' other writings,

Elsewhere, Aquinas says things which bring the Fifth Way nearer to the traditional argument from design. He produces more familiar examples of teleology in nature, the leaves in plants are arranged to protect the fruit; the foot is made by nature apt for walking; front teeth are good for biting, back teeth are good for chewing. As examples of instinctive activities of brutes, he mentions the swallow's building of its nest and the spider's weaving of its web.<sup>5</sup>

Although in *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas reserves his teleological argument for organisms with no self-awareness, he seems to expand his argument to all organisms in later writings. Aquinas observed plants and animals, rocks and sunsets and through them heard the declaration of God's existence. Aquinas believed that all of nature declared the existence of the One True

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<sup>4</sup> Aquinas, ST II A. Q2. A3.

<sup>5</sup> Anthony Kenny. *The Five Ways*. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1969), 98.

God not so much because God had implanted a witness to himself in mankind and nature, but because he could come to that conclusion through observation of nature.<sup>6</sup>

Through his Five Ways and particularly his teleological argument, Aquinas helped to introduce natural theology, the classical “science” which attempts to prove God’s existence. Through natural theology Aquinas intended to prove not just a generic deity’s existence but specifically the existence of the God of the Bible. Aquinas thought based purely on reason and observation of the natural world, on what we might call the natural knowledge of God, human beings could be led to belief in the Lord.

Luther affirmed the natural knowledge of God but he stopped short of saying that observation and reason can lead to belief in the one true God. Luther did not completely reject the use of reason. Rather, he maintained that reason through the observation of the happenings in nature a person can be led to the conclusion that there is an intelligent agent responsible for life on this earth,

Human reason and wisdom by itself can come this far, that it concludes, although weakly, that there must be a single, eternal divine Being, which has created, preserves and governs all things. When reason considers such beautiful, exquisite creatures both in heaven and earth, governed in such a wonderful, orderly and sure way, it must deny the possibility that the origin and preservation of these things are accidental or spontaneous.<sup>7</sup>

Luther did, however, reject the scholastic emphasis on reason. Luther saw Aquinas leaving the territory of the ministerial use of reason and entering into the realm of the magisterial use of reason. Aquinas wanted to use natural theology to rationalize the existence of the true God, rather than a generic deity. Because of this misapplication of reason, Luther maintained that the conclusions to which natural theology leads are full of “ungodly ignorance, imagination, and opinions”<sup>8</sup>. On principal Luther rejected the scholastic emphasis on natural theology because of

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<sup>6</sup> In some places Aquinas seems to almost deny the natural knowledge of God, “The awareness that God exists is not implanted in us by nature in any clear or specific way. Admittedly, man is by nature aware of what by nature he desires, and he desires by nature a happiness which is to be found only in God. But this is not, simply speaking, awareness that there is a God, any more that to be aware of someone approaching is to be aware of Peter, even should it be Peter approaching: many, in fact, believe the ultimate good which will make us happy to be riches or pleasure, or some such thing.” (ST 1A. 2, 1)

<sup>7</sup> Siegbert Becker. *The Foolishness of God: The Place of Reason in the Theology of Martin Luther*. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1999), 33.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

its disregard for Divine revelation, “Where Christ is absent, there is darkness, no matter how great and bright it may appear to be. This leaves no room for an intermediate state, invented by the scholastics, who say that between the darkness and Christ there is the natural light and human reason.”

As the adage goes, misuse does not remove use. Aquinas’ overemphasis of the use of reason does not mean that we should avoid the natural knowledge of God or ignore that it still speaks.<sup>9</sup> Nor does his misuse of reason mean that somehow he negatively affected the witness of nature to a designer.<sup>10</sup> Nature continues to declare the glories of God in spite of a scholastic Dominican monk overemphasizing reason. Day after day nature witnesses to its creator from 13th century Italy all the way to 19th century England.

### **The Watchmaker Argument**

Six centuries after Aquinas, English clergyman William Paley again popularized natural theology. In 1802, three years before his death, Paley built upon Aquinas’ teleological argument by writing *Natural Theology or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity, Collected from the Appearance of Nature*. In this book, Paley covers various arguments for the existence of God based on observation from the natural world. The most famous of his arguments is “The Watchmaker Argument.”

In the opening chapter of his book, Paley proposes a hypothetical situation in which he is walking through a heath and stubs his foot against a stone. If he were asked how the stone came to be there, Paley could respond that it had been there forever. But if he were in that same heath and found a watch on the ground and was asked how it came to be there, he could hardly answer by saying it had been there forever. Because, as Paley writes,

When we come to inspect the watch, we perceive—what we could not discover in the stone—that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose...the inference we think is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker—that there must have existed at some time and at some place or other an artificer or artificers who formed it for the

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<sup>9</sup> Misuse and denial of any Scriptural doctrine requires more than just occasional use but a *clear* use and confession concerning that doctrine.

<sup>10</sup> Psalm 19:1-4

purpose which we find it actually to answer, who comprehended its construction and designed its use.<sup>11</sup>

Paley continues to apply this argument to various observable examples from nature. The most notable of these examples is found in chapter six. Paley leads the reader to consider the eye, its muscles and sockets, its lids and lashes, its glands and tears, its connection to the ears and throat, and of course, “Its coats and humours constructed as the lenses of a telescope are constructed.”<sup>12</sup> The myriad components of the eye work together so exquisitely, so systematically, so purposefully that one must conclude that it is the product of a designer just as one seeing a watch in a heather patch would conclude that it is the product of a watchmaker. Like Aquinas, Paley said that only through the design of an intelligent agent is the eye able to achieve its *telos*, that is providing sight for the creature.

### **The Rise of Darwinism**

For one particular man, however, Paley’s argument seemed to fall short. Charles Darwin thought there had to be another explanation, one that did not rely on an intelligent agent as the primary cause of life. In fact, Darwin went so far to say that life lacked intrinsic purpose and was the first evolutionist to advance a theory of evolution that did not seek refuge in “final causes.”<sup>13</sup> Darwin’s theory of evolution featured two ideas: 1) universal common descent and 2) natural selection.

In *On The Origin of Species*, Darwin envisioned universal common descent as a great tree which represented all of biological life. The trunk of the tree represents the first organism. The various limbs and branches represent the various phyla and species which developed from that first organism.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> William Paley. *Natural Theology*. <https://archive.org/details/naturaltheology00pale> , 4, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Darwin. *On the Origin of Species*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964), xv.

<sup>14</sup> “The affinities of all the beings of the same class have sometimes been represented by a great tree. I believe this simile largely speaks the truth. The green and budding twigs may represent existing species; and those produced during former years may represent the long succession of extinct species. At each period of growth all the growing twigs have tried to branch out on all sides, and to overtop and kill the surrounding twigs and branches, in the same manner as species and groups of species have at all times overmastered other species in the great battle for life.” (Darwin, 129)

Darwin likened natural selection to selective breeding.<sup>15</sup> As a dog breeder can select particular dogs with particular attributes and thereby create new breeds so also nature has a means of selection. Offspring with beneficial variations are more likely to survive. For example, if a pack of coyotes face a harsh Northern New York winter the coyotes with longer heavier coats are more likely to survive. Nature then acts as a breeder through natural causes, like weather patterns. Nature will favor certain functional attributes over other attributes and thus variation is formed not by a breeder but by a natural process.<sup>16</sup> The difference between breeding and natural selection, however, is that through natural selection given enough time never seen before phyla and species can arise.

It's important to note that Darwinism has been expanded upon. After the discovery of genetic mutation, evolutionary biologists sought to reconcile Darwinian evolution with Mendelian genetics. These biologists demonstrated that small scale variations and mutations could accumulate over time “causing large scale morphological change.”<sup>17</sup> This mash-up between classical Darwinian evolution and Mendelian genetics came to be known as “Neo-Darwinism.”

Neo-Darwinian theory says that natural selection acting upon random genetic mutation can account for the origin of new biological forms. This theory rests on three main claims: 1) evolutionary change results from small random genetic mutations, 2) natural selection sorts these mutations so that some organisms produce more offspring than others, and 3) beneficial mutations must be inherited in following generations to cause change over time.<sup>18</sup>

Though the description of natural selection above is anthropomorphized, Natural Selection has no *telos* or end goal. Darwin's Natural Selection rejects the arguments of Aquinas and Paley. Though it is the watchmaker, to use Paley's words, it has no design in mind. As Richard Dawkins says,

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<sup>15</sup> Stephen C. Meyer. *Darwin's Doubt: The Explosive Origin of Animal Life and the Case for Intelligent Design*. (New York: Harper One, 2013), 4

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 292.



Natural selection, the blind unconscious automatic process which Darwin discovered, and which we now know is the explanation for the existence and apparently purposeful form of all life, has no purpose in mind. It has no mind and no mind's eye. It does not plan for the future. It has no vision, no foresight, no sight at all. If it can be said to play the role of watchmaker in nature, it is the *blind* watchmaker.<sup>19</sup>

Random mutation is no different in its lack of *telos*. If I'm playing *The Settlers of Catan* and I roll the dice and they add up to eight, we could say I randomly rolled an eight. It was all a matter of chance.<sup>20</sup> However, many modern biologists don't define random genetic mutation as genetic mutation left to chance. They take it a step further and say that random genetic mutation is random in the sense that there is no external primary cause and certainly no *telos*. Evolutionary biologist Ernst Mayer said, "When it is said that mutation or variation is random, the statement simply means that there is no correlation between the production of new genotypes and the adaptational needs of an organism in a given environment."<sup>21</sup> American paleontologist George Gaylord Simpson affirms this idea, "Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind."<sup>22</sup>

With the rise of Darwinian Theory a seismic shift took place in the philosophy of science. Before Darwin biologists generally accepted that there was an intrinsic purpose found in nature. After Darwin that purpose vanished. Darwin did not invent the idea of evolution, but the evolutionary theories before Darwin either allowed for the possibility of an unnatural cause or at least suggested that evolution had a *telos*.<sup>23</sup> Philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn notes the peculiar difficulty which concerned many of Darwin's contemporaries at the time of *Origin's* release.

All of the well-known pre-Darwinian evolutionary theories...had taken evolution to be a goal directed process. The 'idea' of man and of the contemporary flora and fauna was thought to have been present from the first creation of life, perhaps in the mind of God.

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<sup>19</sup> Richard Dawkins. *The Blind Watchmaker*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1986), 14.

<sup>20</sup>Alternatively, we could postulate that my roll wasn't just purely chance but that it was guided by an intelligent agent. We could further hypothesize that I rolled the eight because he likes it when I get brick and wheat.

<sup>21</sup> Alvin Plantinga. *Where the Conflict Really Lies*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 11.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Jean-Baptiste Lamarck

That idea or plan had provided the direction and the guiding force to the entire evolutionary process... For many men the abolition of that teleological kind of evolution was the most significant and least palatable of Darwin's suggestions. The *Origin of Species* recognized no goal set either by God or nature.<sup>24</sup>

Before Darwin an intelligent being was an acceptable cause of biological life (via creation or theistic evolution). After Darwin, science began to shift to natural causes as the only acceptable explanation. Stephen Jay Gould said, "Before Darwin, we thought that a benevolent God had created us." But after Darwin, "no intervening spirit watches lovingly over the affairs of nature."<sup>25</sup> In modern science, since the time of Darwin, there is no place for primary causes or intelligent beings in the scientific method. Science particularly is interested in what can be observed based on natural causes. In the realm of modern scientific thought the heavens do not and cannot declare the glory of God.

The philosophical divide in modern scientific thought is evident. On one side of the divide some like Aquinas or Paley observe nature and conclude that nature has a designer. We can observe something like an Apple watch, and reasonably conclude that it has a design. In the same way we can look at the workings of nature and reasonably conclude that biological life is designed. On the other side of the divide others observe nature and conclude that there are only natural causes. They look at flora and fauna and conclude that something inside of the biological system had the power to be an efficient cause.<sup>26</sup> Materialism is the popular view of modern science and anything that falls outside of that materialistic view cannot be tested and is not considered science.<sup>27</sup> If men like Aquinas overemphasized the natural knowledge of God then Darwinism outright denies it.

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<sup>24</sup> Thomas S Kuhn. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 171-172.

<sup>25</sup> Plantinga, 11.

<sup>26</sup> If nature itself has the power to create life, then materialism certainly teeters on the brink of an odd, almost self contradictory, form of pantheism.

<sup>27</sup> "Creationist 'logic' is always the same. Some natural phenomenon is too statistically improbable, too complex, too beautiful, too awe-inspiring to have come into existence by chance... And science's answer to this faulty logic is also always the same... Natural selection is a better alternative. Indeed design is not a real alternative at all because it raises an even bigger problem than it solves: who designed the designer? Chance and design both fail as solutions to the problem of statistical improbability, because one of them is the problem, and the other one regresses to it. Natural selection is real solution. It is the only workable solution that has ever been suggested." (Dawkins, 147)

## The Growth of the Intelligent Design Movement

Against this backdrop of a materialistic world view Intelligent Design enters the scene. The Intelligent Design (ID) movement wants to go back to the days when there was an open admission policy for primary causes and teleology within the scientific arena. Within nature ID sees observable effects, apparent causes, and intrinsic purposes and is thus philosophically aligned with Aquinas and Paley. Many religious scientists wondered whether ID was a religious movement with intentions to bolster and promote creationism. Theologians might wonder whether ID is arguing purely from the natural knowledge of God or if they are arguing from the natural knowledge of God to prove the existence of the One True God, which would then be an overemphasis of the natural knowledge.

Though ID argumentation is based heavily on Aquinas' teleology and Paley's argument from design, the research which heavily influenced the movement began in the late 60s. Chemist Michael Polanyi made two observations which would heavily influence both William Dembski and Michael Behe. First, Polanyi suggested that all of life depends on information. Yet, the information structure on which life depends is independent from an organism's own physical and chemical forms. And secondly, the hierarchy of that information structure cannot be reduced to physical or chemical laws. Polanyi said in a 1968 article for the journal *Science* that DNA configuration is so precise that DNA can work as an encoder only if its configuration comes from something outside of itself, "it must be as physically indeterminate as the sequence of words on a printed page."<sup>28</sup> Already in 1968 Polanyi was suggesting that there had to be something outside of biological life that caused the ordering of DNA.

Though Polanyi planted the seed for the ID movement, it didn't start gaining popular ground as a movement until the 1980s. In 1980, Jon Buell, a campus minister for Probe Ministries, a Christian ministry which sought to "bridge the frontier between the agonizing questions man asks and the profound answers the Gospel offers,"<sup>29</sup> established the Foundation for Thought and Ethics (FTE). The FTE's articles of incorporation state its purpose as "both religious and educational, which includes, but is not limited to, proclaiming, publishing,

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<sup>28</sup> Luskin, Casey. "A Brief History of Intelligent Design." <http://www.discovery.org/a/8931#fn14>.

<sup>29</sup> Probe. "About Us." <https://www.probe.org/about-us/>.

preaching, teaching, promoting, broadcasting, disseminating, and otherwise making known the Christian gospel and understanding of the Bible and the light it sheds in the academic and social issues of our day.”<sup>30</sup> FTE published two books which helped to bring ID into the public spotlight: *The Mystery of Life’s Origin*<sup>31</sup> in 1984 and an important textbook called *Of Pandas and People* published in 1989.

As Darwinian scientists listened to ID arguments from FTE they were certain that ID was just repackaged Creation Science, which is a religious movement. Until the early 2000s they had no way to prove their hunch. *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District* was a 2005 trial concerning Dover, Pennsylvania’s school board policy requiring teachers to teach ID as a way to critically analyze evolution. In a pre-trial transcript when asked if FTE had operated as a Christian organization since 1980, Buell responded, “Not at all. We have, you know, a 25 year plus track record of what we've done, which does -- you know, which you can easily compare or look for Christian activities, it's not there.”<sup>32</sup> Buell denies that FTE operated as a Christian organization but you can almost hear the strain in his answer through the printed page. His answer is not convincing and left many wondering if FTE was actually promoting Creation Science. If FTE promoted Creation Science then to the scientist ID would be a mere pseudo science and to the theologian it would be misusing the natural knowledge.

One of the main pieces of evidence used against FTE is *Of Pandas and People*. *Pandas* was the first book to identify itself with the phrase “Intelligent Design.”<sup>33</sup> Looking at the authors, Dean Kenyon and Percival Davis, the plaintiff had reason to believe that Intelligent Design was a

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<sup>30</sup> Eugenie C. Scott and Glenn Branch ed. *Not in Our Classrooms: Why Intelligent Design Is Wrong for Our Schools*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>31</sup> Here is Discovery Institutes’s description of the book: “The epilogue looks forward to other possible explanations for the origin of life. The book was published in 1984 when the United States was immersed in debate over Genesis-based creationism. Yet these authors take a different approach that is ahead of its time. They recognize that science requires an observation-based understanding of cause-and-effect relationships. Thus they set aside biblical arguments and focus instead on observations about the natural world and intelligence. After demonstrating that various undirected causes lack the power to produce complex information, they note, ‘We have observational evidence in the present that intelligent investigators can (and do) build contrivances to channel energy down nonrandom chemical pathways to bring about some complex chemical synthesis, even gene building’ (pg. 211). The authors then pose a simple question: ‘May not the principle of uniformity suggest that DNA had an intelligent cause at the beginning?’ (pg. 211)” (Discovery Institute. “TheMystery of Life’s Origins.” <http://www.discovery.org/a/3594>).

<sup>32</sup> *Kitzmiller v. Dover School Area District*. “Pre-Trial Transcript: July 14, Part 2” <http://www.talkorigins.org/faqs/dover/buell2.html>

<sup>33</sup> Scott, 15.

new take on Creation Science. Both authors had previous ties to Creation Science. Kenyon had been an author of biology textbooks for McGraw-Hill, but had also written an origins of life book for FTE called *Biochemical Predestination*. Davis co-authored a young earth Creationist book while Kenyon wrote the forward for *What Is Creation Science?*<sup>34</sup>

During *Kitzmiller v. Dover*, the plaintiff obtained early drafts of *Pandas* and soon discovered a link between Creationism and Intelligent Design. The earliest draft from 1983 was entitled “Creation Biology.” Three years later the title was changed to “Biology and Creation.” A 1987 edition offers a definition for creation: “creation means that the various forms of life began abruptly through the agency of an intelligent creator.” In a following edition “Intelligent Design” is simply substituted for the word “creation” and is followed by the exact same definition used for creation.<sup>35</sup>

If materialistic scientists can show that ID comes from creationism then ID would appear to be more of a philosophy than it is a science. If supporters of ID can demonstrate that their conclusions come from observation and not simply from presuppositions then they might have a chance at influencing the scientific arena. The discovery of the early drafts of *Pandas* left ID supporters scrambling for a response.

ID wants to connect itself to historical scientific thought before Darwin brought wide sweeping change. In an attempt to demonstrate that ID is neither a new phenomena nor a purely Christian movement, proponents of ID have tried to demonstrate that the phrase “intelligent design” has a relatively long history dating back to at least 1847 when an article in *Scientific American* used the phrase.<sup>36</sup> If we use the popularization of Darwin’s *Origins* as the dividing line between materialism and theism as the influential scientific world view, then this article falls before the shift to a material world view. In reality though, the movement that we know today as

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 15

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 16

<sup>36</sup> Casey Luskin. “On the Origin of the Term Intelligent Design.” [http://www.evolutionnews.org/2014/06/on\\_the\\_origin\\_o\\_5086701.html](http://www.evolutionnews.org/2014/06/on_the_origin_o_5086701.html)

The author points to an article from 1847 in *Scientific American* which used the phrase. He even demonstrates that Darwin used the phrase in an 1861 letter.

Intelligent Design was coined by Charles Thaxton, the editor of the textbook *Of Pandas and People*.

Thaxton claims that he merely learned the phrase “intelligent design” from a NASA scientist, thought it was a good engineering term, and decided to use the term because it better described what the authors were trying to communicate.<sup>37</sup> Some in the movement defend ID’s past by going so far to say that *Kitzmiller v. Dover* proposed a “revisionist history of ID.”<sup>38</sup> One ID author excused ID’s use of the term creation science by suggesting that in the early 80s creation science was the only alternative to evolution, and though ID authors may have used the word “creation” early on, they meant something different by it than young-earth creationists.<sup>39</sup>

The current leader and organizer of the ID movement is Discovery Institute.<sup>40</sup> Founded in 1991, Discovery Institute is a Seattle based think tank with an interest in, “the role that science and technology play in our culture and how they can advance free markets, illuminate public policy and support the theistic foundations of the West.” In order to understand what is meant by “theistic foundations of the West” we can turn to a 1998 booklet released by Philip Johnson, a UC Berkely Law Professor and leader of Discovery Institute’s Center for Science and Culture. The booklet outlines a strategy the Discovery Institute and particularly the Center for Science and Culture would employ in promoting Intelligent Design. Johnson writes, “The proposition that human beings are *created in the image of God* [italics mine] is one of the bedrock principles on which Western civilization was built... Discovery Institute’s Center for the renewal of Science and Culture seeks nothing less than the overthrow of materialism and its cultural legacies.”<sup>41</sup> If Discovery Institute is not a Christian organization, how can they make the claim that “human beings are created in the image of God” which is a biblical doctrine and cannot be

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<sup>37</sup> Jonathan Witt. “Dover Judge Regurgitates Mythological History of Intelligent Design.” [http://www.evolutionnews.org/2005/12/post\\_6001764.html](http://www.evolutionnews.org/2005/12/post_6001764.html)

<sup>38</sup> Casey Luskin. “On the Origin of the Term Intelligent Design.” [http://www.evolutionnews.org/2014/06/on\\_the\\_origin\\_o\\_5086701.html](http://www.evolutionnews.org/2014/06/on_the_origin_o_5086701.html)

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>FTE has been absorbed by Discovery Institute and has become the Institute’s publishing division.

<sup>41</sup> Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture. “The Wedge.” [https://ncse.com/files/pub/creationism/The\\_Wedge\\_Strategy.pdf](https://ncse.com/files/pub/creationism/The_Wedge_Strategy.pdf)

learned through observation of the human race? Johnson sees an obvious clash between not just two scientific paradigms, but between two philosophic systems of thought.<sup>42</sup>

If ID did in fact grow out of Christian or Creation Science, then in recent years ID has become much more of a scientific movement than a religious movement. Movement leaders have actively distanced themselves from creationism, particularly young-earth creationism. William Dembski, a leading ID researcher, author, and Discovery Institute fellow, said in an interview, “Unlike creationism, with which it is often conflated, intelligent design shifts the discussion of biological origins from a religion vs. science controversy to a science vs. science controversy.”<sup>43</sup> Dembski wants to return to a classical view of science. He wants to return to a time when the marketplace allowed for unnatural primary causes and teleologies within science.<sup>44</sup>

If you find a little part of yourself disappointed by what Dembski said, let’s remember some things. The Father speaking, the Spirit hovering, and the Word creating has been revealed to us. Creation *ex nihilo* has been revealed to us not through the natural knowledge of God but through God’s written Word.<sup>45</sup> Orthodox Christians should, at the very least, have some reservations about the conflation of religion and science because the conflation of religion and science is the same mistake the Scholastics made. The natural knowledge of God will tell us nothing about the events that took place in Genesis chapter 1. As soon as we bring Creation into a conversation concerning observation of the natural world then we have left the realm of the natural knowledge of God and have entered into faith-based doctrines. The natural knowledge of God is a matter of reason and not a matter of faith.

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<sup>42</sup> When asked in a 1999 interview by Focus on the Family, “Have you found that ID makes Darwinists more receptive to the Gospel?” Johnson seemed to put ID’s wedge strategy in more secular terms, “ID is an intellectual movement, and the Wedge strategy stops working when we are seen as just another way of packaging the Christian evangelical message. Christian workers and organizations sometimes have difficulty understanding why anything other than direct evangelism is worthwhile. They ask us, ‘What does it matter what those silly professors think?’ and ‘When are you going to get to the point and do what Billy Graham or Bill Bright would do?’ The evangelists do what they do very well, and I hope our work opens up for them some doors that have been closed.” (Citizen Magazine. “Keeping the Darwinists Honest.”)

<sup>43</sup> Sean McDowell. “How is the Intelligent Design Movement Doing? Interview with William Dembski.” <http://seanmcdowell.org/blog/how-is-the-intelligent-design-movement-doing-interview-with-william-dembski>

<sup>44</sup> Dembski went on to say, “the young-earth creationists... were friendly to ID in the early 2000s, until they realized that ID was not going to serve as a stalking horse for their literalistic interpretation of Genesis. After that, the young-earth community largely turned away from ID, if not overtly, then by essentially downplaying ID in favor of anything that supported a young earth.” (Ibid.)

<sup>45</sup> Hebrews 11:3

Dembski is approaching the origin of life question purely through rational means, through the natural knowledge of God made evident in biological life. If he imposes that framework upon himself, then he cannot say that the Christian God is the creator of the universe and if he cannot say that then he cannot say that the earth is young.

Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture has gathered ID researchers and authors and has released the most influential arguments for the movement. We will look at three of their arguments for design. First we will look at William Dembski's Specified Complexity. Then we will examine Michael Behe's Irreducible Complexity. And finally, Stephen Meyer's argument from *Darwin's Doubt*.

### **Complex Specified Information (Specified Complexity)**

William Dembski affirms intelligent design, but he does so through information theory. He says that we are surrounded by information. Information can often concern communication. When you check a simple text on your phone information is being transmitted in the form of code to pixels to you so that you can read the information on your phone's screen. But information which you and I can cognitively understand is not the only kind of information that exists. For example, when a tree grows from seed to sapling information in its DNA dictates its growth pattern. Dembski suggests, opposed to the materialistic view, that matter is the fundamental building block of the world, "The fundamental stuff of the world is information."<sup>46</sup>

It might be easier to think of information as data, just because information may not communicate anything to us does not mean that it is not information. Dembski claims that information is a reduction of possibilities.<sup>47</sup> It is movement from the possible to the actualized. For example, if I am about to roll a die there are six different possibilities. I roll the die. It lands on 3. Six possibilities have been reduced to one and information has moved from possible to actualized. When I write a text message on my phone I have a menu of possibilities that I could type, but my mind is searching through that communication menu for the letter combination that

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<sup>46</sup> Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture. "Conversations with William Dembski—Information All the Way Down." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnVss3QseCw>

<sup>47</sup> William Dembski. "Intelligent Design as a Theory of Information." [http://www.arn.org/docs/dembski/wd\\_idtheory.htm](http://www.arn.org/docs/dembski/wd_idtheory.htm)



is appropriate. In that way information is reduced and then actualized. Now you might be wondering, “What does this have to do with biology and science?”

This is where complex specified information (CSI, known colloquially as “specified complexity”) comes in. For information to demonstrate specified complexity it must have a pattern that is relatively easy to describe, but it must also be something that has a small probability. Due to this combination of an easily described pattern and small probability specified complexity is something that is nearly impossible to achieve naturally. Dembski says that CSI sits on the “edge of chaos,”

Because specified complexity balances low specificational complexity with high probabilistic complexity, specified complexity sits at that boundary between order and chaos commonly referred to as the “edge of chaos.” The problem with pure order (low specificational complexity) is that it is predictable and thus largely uninteresting. An example here is a crystal that keeps repeating the same simple pattern over and over. The problem with pure chaos (high probabilistic complexity) is that it is so disordered that it is also uninteresting. (No meaningful patterns emerge from pure chaos. An example here is the debris strewn by a tornado or avalanche.) Rather, it’s at the edge of chaos, neatly ensconced between order and chaos, that interesting things happen. That’s where specified complexity sits.<sup>48</sup>

Consider the example again of sending a text message. If I sent you the text “AB-AB-AB-AB-AB-AB-AB-AB,” even though it may not communicate anything to you, information has been actualized. In this case the information is patterned, so it has a low specificational complexity. If I sent you, “ASDFUIOCNHECBGHHJ” that text message is complex because it is not just relying on a pattern. Many possibilities from the menu were ruled out to actualize this information.<sup>49</sup> Now if I sent you via text, “In the beginning God” then that information is both specified and complex.

Here’s the application to biology. In nature greater probability is not a commodity which can be purchased because laws of nature describe *repetitive* phenomena, like crystal formation

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<sup>48</sup> William A. Dembski, *The Design Revolution: Answering the Toughest Questions About Intelligent Design* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 81.

<sup>49</sup> To give you an idea of how technical this gets here is Dembski’s description of complexity: For information measures, degree of complication is measured in bits. Given an event A of probability P(A),  $I(A) = -\log_2 P(A)$  measures the number of bits associated with the probability P(A). We therefore speak of the “complexity of information” and say that the complexity of information increases as I(A) increases (or, correspondingly, as P(A) decreases). We also speak of “simple” and “complex” information according to whether I(A) signifies few or many bits of information.

mentioned above. Based on Darwinian thought which explains the rise of life through natural selection acting on random genetic mutation, the small probability required to create the CSI found in the precise sequential order (a non-repetitive phenomena) of DNA and RNA nucleotide bases cannot be accounted for.<sup>50</sup> Random genetic mutation is too blind and relies too heavily on trial and error.

The question then concerning DNA is: From where does this complex specified information come? German biologist Bernd-Olaf Koppers highlights this question, “The problem of the origin of life is clearly basically equivalent to the problem of the origin of biological information.”<sup>51</sup> In view of the CSI contained in DNA and RNA Dembski concludes, “Natural causes are...incapable of generating CSI... CSI demands an intelligent cause. Natural causes will not do.”<sup>52</sup>

What a scientific layman can learn from observing large scale natural phenomena like the colors in the sky of a sunset, or even the complexity of the eye, Dembski applies to the smallest of biological building blocks and more than that, to the very information in those building blocks which allow the building blocks to not just function but to act as a builder. To Dembski DNA and RNA declare an intelligent designer; information proclaims the work of his design.

### **Irreducible Complexity**

Irreducible Complexity is an example of Complex Specified Information in action. The biologist, Michael Behe, argues in *Darwin's Black Box* that there are certain systems which cannot function if one part is removed. A system that cannot have one of its parts removed in order to continue functioning, Behe calls “irreducibly complex.” This proposes a problem for Darwinian evolution because Darwin himself said, “If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight

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<sup>50</sup> William Dembski. “Intelligent Design as a Theory of Information.” [http://www.arn.org/docs/dembski/wd\\_idtheory.htm](http://www.arn.org/docs/dembski/wd_idtheory.htm)

<sup>51</sup> Stephen C Meyer. “DNA and the Origin of Life: Information, Specification, and Explanation.” <http://www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/filesDB-download.php?command=download&id=1026>

<sup>52</sup> William Dembski. “Intelligent Design as a Theory of Information.” [http://www.arn.org/docs/dembski/wd\\_idtheory.htm](http://www.arn.org/docs/dembski/wd_idtheory.htm)

modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.”<sup>53</sup> In order to evolve an irreducibly complex system would have to arise simultaneously rather than through the gradual process that Darwin supposed.

Behe applies irreducible complexity to different systems and structures including cellular cilia, the bacterial flagellum, the blood-clotting cascade, the transport of materials within cells, the immune system, and the pathways of intermediary metabolism.<sup>54</sup> He says each of these systems work like a mouse trap.<sup>55</sup> Every mousetrap has a platform, a hammer, a holding bar, a spring, and a catch. Remove any one of these parts and the whole ceases to function. In the same way, Behe says, remove any one part of these biological systems and the whole will cease to function.

One of the more popular of Behe’s examples is the bacterial flagellum. The flagellum is the rotary propellor for bacteria like salmonella so that they can move through water. The system for the flagellum looks almost exactly like the system for a rotary motor. There is a drive shaft, bushings, a rotor, and a switch.<sup>56</sup> However, remove any one of these parts and the whole flagellar system fails. Behe maintains that Darwinism can account for precious few of the irreducibly complex systems he outlines. Since Darwinism is incapable of accounting for irreducibly complex systems, Behe’s alternative answer is intelligent design.

Since Darwin said that lifeforms change by natural selection acting on random genetic mutation over a long period of time, then there has to be another explanation for the appearance of irreducibly complex systems. Darwinian evolution cannot account for the production of complex systems and structures within a single generation because Darwinian evolution requires slow incremental steps. If biological systems developed incrementally, then sequential development would provide no benefit to the irreducibly complex system.

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<sup>53</sup> Michael J. Behe. “Molecular Machines: Experimental Support for the Design Inference.” [http://www.arn.org/docs/behe/mb\\_mm92496.htm](http://www.arn.org/docs/behe/mb_mm92496.htm)

<sup>54</sup> Michael J. Behe. “Molecular Machines: Experimental Support for the Design Inference.” [http://www.arn.org/docs/behe/mb\\_mm92496.htm](http://www.arn.org/docs/behe/mb_mm92496.htm)

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Evolution News. “Michael Behe Hasn’t Been Refuted on the Flagellum.” [http://www.evolutionnews.org/2011/03/michael\\_behe\\_hasnt\\_been\\_refute044801.html](http://www.evolutionnews.org/2011/03/michael_behe_hasnt_been_refute044801.html)

## Darwin's Doubt

Meyer's argument from his book *Darwin's Doubt* applies elements from both preceding arguments to answer the question surrounding the Cambrian Explosion. Scientists claim that about 530 million years ago, during the Cambrian period, new life forms exploded onto the biological scene. *Explosion* may be a misnomer since the "explosion" supposedly took place over the course of 10 million years, but if the world is 5.5 billion years old then 10 million years isn't that long.<sup>57</sup> The fossils found in Cambrian era strata have new body types not seen in preceding periods. Instead of seeing a biological tree, as described by Darwin, there is a sudden appearance of new animal forms which do not seem to flow out of preceding life forms. The question is: How do we account for the sudden appearance of new body forms?

Accounting for new body forms proposes a difficulty for Darwinian evolution because there should be evidence of small incremental changes leading to new species. Meyer, describes four problems the Cambrian Explosion causes Darwinian paleontologists: 1) the sudden appearance of new animal forms, 2) an absence of transitional fossils in preceding Precambrian forms, 3) a large variety of new animal forms with new body types, and 4) small genetic mutations are not seen over time.<sup>58</sup>

After examining various false explanations for the Cambrian Explosion, Meyer says that the cause of the explosion has to be able to invert Darwin's bottom up tree of life to a top down pattern of appearance, create new body types quickly, and construct new complex genetic structures.<sup>59</sup> On top of these requirements, he says, "the building of an animal requires specific or functional information that any explanation for the origin of the Cambrian animals must identify a cause capable of generating: digital information, structural (epigenetic) information, [and] functionally integrated and hierarchically organized layers of information."<sup>60</sup>

Darwinian evolution, Meyer, claims has failed to offer an adequate cause for the attributes of living forms that we know from observation can only come from design. Much like

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<sup>57</sup> Even if this were true, God is still laughing, "From everlasting to everlasting..."

<sup>58</sup> Meyer, *Darwin's Doubt*, 34.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 355

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 358

Dembski and Behe, Meyer uses the argument from design found in Paley and Aquinas to demonstrate that the sudden appearance of new body forms found in the Cambrian Explosion must be caused by an intelligent agent.

At the end of his book Meyer makes a perplexing comment, “The theory of intelligent design is not based upon religious belief, nor does it provide a proof for the existence of God. But it does have faith-affirming implications.”<sup>61</sup> So what good is ID if it can’t prove the existence God? Meyer does provide for the possibility that the intelligent designer could have introduced animals with new body forms into the course of biological history much like a human being might introduce a new invention.<sup>62</sup> But Meyer neither expounds on who that intelligent agent is (it could be aliens) nor does he explain the means the intelligent agent used to cause the new biological forms to appear. He simply demonstrates that through observation one can rationally conclude that an intelligent designer caused the Cambrian Explosion. He stops short of saying that those conclusion can prove the *existence* of God. In a sense then, Meyer’s conclusions are more conclusions of correlation rather than conclusions of causation.

### **The Natural Knowledge & Apologetics**

Meyer is right. He cannot prove the existence of God, because the natural knowledge of God cannot prove the existence of the One True God. But in a certain sense Meyer is wrong. The natural knowledge cannot *objectively (a priori)* offer specific faith-affirming implications. Natural knowledge cannot lead a person to faith, natural knowledge can only affirm what we already know by faith: that the universe was formed at God’s command.<sup>63</sup> ID can only affirm what has been revealed to us through Scripture, and it will not affirm everything that scripture reveals and in some instances will allow for arguments which disagree with Scripture.

Rational beings will never be able to reason out specific facts about their intelligent designer beyond what we can see. Through the natural knowledge of God we can only learn about God in part. For many that is a problem. Based on the data, based on observation and

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<sup>61</sup> Meyer 413

<sup>62</sup> Meyer 358

<sup>63</sup> Hebrews 11:3

scientific method a scientist cannot be led to a full and objective belief in God and so he rejects the possibility of God. Intelligent Design highlights more than the age old struggle between two philosophies of thought, it highlights the truth that some have been turned over to their own denial of God's vague testimony to himself in nature.

In Romans chapter 1 verse 20, Paul says that God's invisible qualities are clearly seen, being understood through the natural world. Certainly the natural knowledge of God is not enough to discern who exactly God is, it is only enough to discern certain characteristics. A person can observe nature and through the use of his reason conclude that God is powerful. Through the falling of rain one can reason that God is a preserver.<sup>64</sup> By the design of various animals one can reason that he is wise. But what about materialistic scientists like Darwin, Gould, and Mayer who do not hear the declaration of the heavens? What about Dawkins and his ilk? What about the prospect who just can't fathom young earth creationism? Are God's invisible qualities clearly seen except for when they aren't?

Theologians like Quenstedt, Chemnitz, and Calov would point us to Romans chapter 1 verse 21. When people fail to recognize the proclamation of nature and refuse to be led toward the One True God then their reasoning becomes worthless (ἐματαιώθησαν). The entire purpose of the natural knowledge of God is to act on our reason so we begin to wonder more about God.<sup>65</sup> But the person who denies God's existence fails to show the reverence and gratitude that the natural knowledge encourages. Whatever a person's knowledge about God's characteristics once was, in his failure to acknowledge God's characteristics made known through nature his natural capacity to reason accurately about God is severely harmed.

Luther said that in addition to observation of nature we are born with a knowledge of God. This knowledge is a remnant of the knowledge Adam and Eve had pre fall but now it is "feeble and almost completely obliterated."<sup>66</sup> In the generations following Adam and Eve sin corrupted the full knowledge of God and his revealed attributes. That baseline amount of feeble

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<sup>64</sup> Acts 14:17

<sup>65</sup> Acts 17:28

<sup>66</sup> Martin Luther. Luther's Works. Edited by Jaroslav Pelikan. American Edition. Vol. 1. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 67.

and nearly obliterated knowledge is harmed further then by failing to recognize God's invisible attributes and then being moved to an appropriate attitude toward him.

Both Quenstedt and Calov make a particular distinction between inborn knowledge of God and acquired knowledge of God. On one hand, people are born with a knowledge of God. But because of our fallen states that knowledge is vague.<sup>67</sup> Through sinning and through failing to listen to the testimony of the natural knowledge a person can deaden the knowledge of God he was born with. On the other hand through the active use of his reason and observation of nature he can heighten his natural knowledge. In this way he gains more knowledge about some of God's invisible qualities. Quenstedt seems to inverse Romans chapter 1 verse 21. Rather than being deadened, knowledge of God's characteristics "is acquired from inborn principles of nature through a process of reasoning and careful contemplation of created things."<sup>68</sup>

We can then place humans on a natural knowledge spectrum. On one side of the spectrum is the "hostile sinful mind"<sup>69</sup> and on the other side of the spectrum we can place those who observe nature and see God's invisible qualities. The hostile mind does not deny that there is a God but lives in that knowledge which is "almost completely obliterated." In their inborn hostility they refuse to recognize traits about God. In their hostility they fail to give God his honor.<sup>70</sup> In their hostility they create a system by which they can deal with their own guilt.<sup>71</sup>

Is there really then such a thing as an atheist? In other words, is sinful man's willful ignorance and denial stronger than the natural knowledge of God? No it's not, because Paul

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<sup>67</sup> Adolf Hoenecke. *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*. Vol. 2. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2009), 10.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> "The natural knowledge of God, though true in itself so far as the substance is concerned, is inevitably turned into something false when handled by natural man. For he applies it, and by himself can apply it, only according to the basic lie introduced by Satan into the world, the *opinio legis* (Ga 3:63). Instead of using his natural knowledge of God to honor and serve God in the spirit of grateful love, natural man invariably deals with God, insofar as he has a natural knowledge of Him, in the spirit of the Law, endeavoring to appease His wrath and merit His favor (Ro 1:21; Ac 14:8-18; 17:22-31). This is the initial catastrophic step in repressing the truth of the natural knowledge of God." –Carl Lawrenz

<sup>71</sup> Though God reveals particular qualities through nature, we cannot forget that he is also a hidden God. He is not a God who is easily found, rather he is God who reveals himself when and where he pleases. God's hiddenness insults the reason of the materialist and the atheist. "Where is your God?" they cry. And we, by the grace of God through our sanctified wisdom, know where he is found, because we find the specific God through eyes of faith. John Schaller points out the natural course of man when the type of god they are seeking cannot be found, "they build for themselves a god after their own philosophy and become vain in their imaginations; their foolish heart sinks into darkness; they lose even what was still left over of their natural knowledge of God. And so they fall into deism, lose themselves in pantheism or materialism, and finally end up in the foolishness of atheism."

concludes at the end of Romans chapter 1 that atheism is just a person's attempt to quiet the accusations of their own conscience. If there is no God, then there are no feelings of guilt.<sup>72</sup>

Since atheism is not stronger than the natural knowledge David Hollaz wrote, "It is possible that in theory men become atheists. By nature they are not atheists, but they become such when God in his justice forsakes them and the devil blinds them; not by a total eradication of the light of nature, but by the suppression of its function and exercise nor is man ever an atheist throughout life and permanently, but only when the paroxysm comes upon him." He concludes by saying that there is no such thing as an atheist in the hour of death.<sup>73</sup>

So how are we to deal with the creation skeptic? Maybe ID doesn't match up with our theology, but we can't expect it to because the natural knowledge of God is a matter of reason not a matter of revelation and faith. If advocates of ID are doing what they claim and are simply using observation and reason, then their conclusions can't precisely match up with our theology because our theology is revealed.

Their conclusions can affirm a creator in the same way that the heavens and skies affirm a creator. Their conclusions can identify some of his unseen characteristics. At the very least, ID demonstrates that Neo-Darwinism is not as ironclad as materialistic scientists would like us to believe. ID reminds us that science is a human creation because it is based on the same flawed reason and faulty observation that led the Greeks to create their pantheon of gods and the Druids to find god in trees.

Intelligent Design can never prove that God exists, it is an argument for the existence of an intelligent agent. Arguments from design can be useful but they cannot be a point of departure to discover God as they were for Aquinas. Arguments from design are ministerial in that they support the exercise of a person's acquired knowledge of God. Arguments from design are a way in which to pique a conscience and get a person to wonder more about who their creator is and what else he has done. Although the skeptic is blinded by sin and cannot see God through his

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<sup>72</sup> Romans 1:32

<sup>73</sup> Francis Pieper. *Christian Dogmatics*. Vol 1. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 373.



creation, they can still catch a whiff of God.<sup>74</sup> Arguments from design are a point of contact which allow us to proclaim what reason can never tell us: the saving work of our Creator God.

So use arguments from design, but use them carefully. Use arguments as carefully as you apply law and gospel. Arguments are of the law. They can only condemn, because the natural knowledge of God will ultimately condemn without the revealed knowledge of God.<sup>75</sup> Use arguments as precisely as you speak law and gospel. The natural knowledge of God appeals to reason so be reasonable. Don't use an argument because you think you know what it says, use it because you know exactly what it says. A poor argument reflects less on us and more on our God.

I have to admit that researching this topic made me feel like an alien in a foreign land. The landscape of genomes, and chemical reactions was strange. Reading about eukaryotes and cytochromes, I felt like I was surrounded by a foreign language. But most of all I felt like I was in a foreign land because in this land I could not fall back on objective truth claims. Certainly falling back on the objective is easy and comfortable, but at the same time there come times when that is all we can do.

Reason can always be overturned by reason. No argument can be so carefully constructed, no complexity so irreducible, no complex information so specified, no explosion so explosive that it cannot be deconstructed and reduced. "And this," Luther said, "can be seen in all things. Only the Word of God remains to all eternity."<sup>76</sup> So demonstrate to the questioner that Neo-Darwinism is not absolute truth. As a point of contact, use all of the glory of God seen in nature at your disposal: the eye, bacterial flagellum, down to the information in DNA and RNA bases. The natural knowledge of God is a matter of nature, but the revealed knowledge a matter of salvation. The natural knowledge of God is a matter of the created world, the revealed knowledge of God is a matter of the created spirit. The natural knowledge of God is a matter of reason, but the Word is a matter of a new mind. And remember when dealing with atheists that

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<sup>74</sup> Siegbert Becker. *The Foolishness of God: The Place of Reason in the Theology of Martin Luther*. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1999), 33.

<sup>75</sup> Romans 1:18

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, 38.

there really is no such thing, because all on their death beds will ask the greatest question of life.

Is there actually a Creator?

And the eternal Word speaks:

“In the beginning God created...

...In the beginning was the Word...

...the former things will not be remembered...

...I am making everything new.”

**VDMA**

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