



IS INTELLIGENT DESIGN CHRISTIAN?

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, we have been focusing on questions that are forwarded from theDove audience that relate to the Bible and science and typically center on Genesis 1-11 (questions can be forwarded to hispeoplerejoice@gmail.com). Even though the Bible is explicitly clear on numerous subjects such as the number of days of Creation, the reason for a Global Flood, the Ark, the death and resultant resurrection of Jesus Christ, and most importantly – the need for salvation from sin – there are some areas of Scripture that do not *fill in all of the blanks* leading to the adage of *“the Bible often gives us the mountain tops and not the valleys.”*

While the directive in I Peter 3:15 – *“always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you”* – does not mean that Christians should be experts in all fields of science, it does indicate that Christians should be able and ready to give an adequate defense for what they believe. This month, the submitted question is – *“Is Intelligent Design Christian?”*

As this question provides an excellent opportunity to examine the differences between this ideology and what Scripture has to say about the Creator, let’s begin with a brief look at a general definition of intelligent design (ID), the history of ID, the positive and negative aspects of ID and lastly, the three basic tenets of ID that are based on (1) irreducible complexity, (2) specified complexity, and (3) the anthropic principle.

WHAT IS THE INTELLIGENT DESIGN MOVEMENT

The following definition is taken directly from the ID website and is as follows:

“Intelligent design refers to a scientific research program as well as a community of scientists, philosophers and other scholars who seek evidence of design in nature. The theory of intelligent design holds that certain features of the universe and of living things are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection. Through the study and analysis of a system’s components, a design theorist is able to determine whether various natural structures are the product of chance, natural law, intelligent design, or some combination thereof.

Such research is conducted by observing the types of information produced when intelligent agents act. Scientists then seek to find objects that have those same types of informational properties we commonly know come from intelligence. Intelligent design has applied these scientific methods to detect design in irreducible complex biological structures, the complex and specified information content in DNA, the life-sustaining physical architecture of the universe, and the geologically rapid origin of biological diversity in the fossil record.”¹

A brief summary of the preceding definition of the intelligent design movement (IDM) can be condensed into a theory that holds that certain features of living and nonliving things were designed by an “*intelligent cause*” as opposed to being formed through natural causes. However, and most importantly, the ID concept does not name the intelligent cause thereby divorcing the Creator from creation. Therefore, this movement allows people the opportunity to decide for themselves who the Creator is – Allah, evolution, a great spirit, ET, etc. Unfortunately, the IDM focuses more on **what** is designed, rather than **who** designed it. From a biblical perspective, the Creator and His creation cannot be separated as they reflect on each other.

INTELLIGENT DESIGN HISTORY

The concept of ID is not a new scientific movement that is being used to challenge evolutionary dogma. Rather, it has a long history that goes back to the ancient Greeks and Romans² who considered the idea that life had been designed by some unknown force and speculated if life had progressed from higher or lower forms over time. Moving to more current times such as the 1800’s, the ID movement began to become a noticeable force in the origins debate between secular science and biblical viewpoints.

Although most people are familiar with Charles Darwin and the theory of evolution, the Anglican Clergyman William Paley (1743-1805) is not as well

known outside of scientific circles. In 1802, Paley authored a book titled *Natural Theology: Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity* that made use of the watchmaker analogy. This is an argument that states, by way of an analogy, a design implies a designer and was used to support arguments for the existence of God. In Paley's argument, he wrote – “if a pocket watch is found on a hill, it is most reasonable to assume that someone dropped it and that it was made by a least one watchmaker, not by natural forces.” Paley went on to argue that the complex structures of living things required an intelligent designer and that the natural world was the creation of God and showed the nature of the Creator.³

The 1859 publication of the revolutionary book, *On The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin, was readily adopted as a scientific alternative to biblical creation, God, and the creation account in Genesis by attempting to justify the existence of the universe and all living things by random and undirected evolutionary processes in combination with natural selection. As a result, Darwin's theory of evolution was typically viewed by secular science as providing a counter-argument to Genesis and the watchmaker analogy by Paley while others consider the watchmaker analogy to dispute the theories of evolution and natural selection while also renewing interest in the watchmaker argument. Although random evolutionary processes that rely on a foundation of chance and natural selection do not satisfactorily explain the complexity and obvious design of the universe and life, the IDM presents a notable challenge to the theory of evolution on the basis of sound scientific principles.

The first modern publication to reference ID was a 1989-creationist textbook titled *Of Pandas and People* that was intended for high school biology classes and replaced references to *creation science and creationism*. This was a direct result of the 1987 United States Supreme Court's *Edwards v. Aguillard* decision⁴ that barred the teaching of *creation science* in public schools with the majority stating – “it was not unconstitutional to require the teaching of scientific critiques of scientific theories.” This opinion was stated since the court felt that – “teaching a variety of scientific theories about the origins of humankind to schoolchildren might be validly done with the clear intent of enhancing the effectiveness of science instruction.” Because the *Edwards v. Aguillard* case potentially opened the door to teaching a variety of scientific theories about origins, it also provided the IDM with a renewed interest in legally challenging Darwinian theory as the exclusive answer to origins as taught in academia.

The early to mid 1990's witnessed the emergence of five noteworthy scholars who formed the core of the modern IDM as a direct repudiation of the blind acceptance of the materialistic, godless, and naturalistic philosophy of

Darwinian evolution that has become the foundation of secular science and our educational system. Crossing religious and political barriers from agnostics to Catholics, and from mathematicians to law professors, the following books have formed the core of IDM and have forced evolutionists to argue their viewpoint based on provable, observable facts, and to admit the assumption and gaps that are inherent in a naturalistic viewpoint. The five noteworthy scholars and related books are as follows:

- In 1991, the book *Darwin On Trial* is published along with its sequel the *Wedge Of Truth* in 2000 by law professor Philip Johnson. These books disputed the tenets of science and evolution and have become central texts in the IDM. As a result, Johnson has been recognized as the “father” of the IDM
- In 1996, Johnson’s books were followed by *Darwin’s Black Box* by Dr. Michael J. Behe, a professor of biochemistry at Lehigh University and senior fellow at the Discovery Institute’s Center for Science and Culture. In his book, Dr. Behe introduced the term *irreducible complexity* that simply means that for a structure to work at all, all parts of it have to be already in place and that its presence in many biochemical systems indicates that they must be the result of intelligent design rather than evolutionary processes. The book also popularized the phrase intelligent design
- In 1998, William Dembski, an American philosopher and mathematician authored the book *The Design Inference: Eliminating Chance Through Small Probabilities*. Dembski, a proponent of ID established approaches to evidences of intelligence that could be applied in natural and social situations and introduced the concept of *specified complexity* and *a fine tuned universe*
- In 2000, Dr. Jonathan Wells authored the book *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth* in which he criticized the model of evolution by attacking how it is taught in academia. Dr. Wells is an ID advocate and also a fellow at the Discovery Institute
- Dr. Stephen Meyer is a specialist in the philosophy of science and one of the better communicator’s in the IDM. In 1998 Dr. Meyer authored the book *DNA by Design* that shows how the digital code in DNA points powerfully to a designing intelligence behind the origin of life. In 2009 Dr. Meyers authored *Signature in the Cell: DNA and the Evidence for Intelligent Design* that makes a comprehensive case for ID from the complexity of the DNA code

All of the aforementioned books are highly recommended for additional information on ID and the deficiencies with Darwinian evolutionary theory.

WHAT ARE THE POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF INTELLEAGENT DESIGN

As we have previously discussed, the IDM is dedicated to exposing the problems with naturalistic evolution while also challenging Darwinian evolution in schools, textbooks, and politics. However, there are positive and negative aspects that a Christian should carefully consider:

POSITIVE ASPECTS

- Has produced many resources that support biblical creation
- Refutes the scientific evidences for Darwinian evolution
- Based on the presupposition that the supernatural does exist
- Can serve as a useful tool to initiate discussions about God and creation
- Can be taught in academia as an *alternative* to evolution
- A way of understanding divine action

NEGATIVE ASPECTS

- A primary focus on what is designed rather than answering who, when, why, and how
- Does not name the intelligent cause
- Deliberately ignores Scripture, especially Genesis 1-11
- Allows evolution/natural causes to play a role
- Divorces the Creator from the creation
- Individuals can decide who the Creator is
- *No redeemer and no final solution for evil in this world*

IRREDUCIBLE COMPLEXITY, SPECIFIED COMPLEXITY, AND THE ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE

As we have previously discussed, the IDM believes that intelligent causes are not only necessary, they are the only logical methodology to rationally explain the information-rich structures of the universe and biology, and that these causes are empirically detectable. As an example, specific biological features defy the standard Darwinian *random-chance explanation* because they appear to have been designed. Astonishingly, even Darwin himself referred to ID in an 1861 letter to John Herschel, Cambridge University:

“One cannot look at this universe with all living productions & man without believing that all has been intelligently designed; yet when I look to each individual organism, I can see no evidence of this”⁵

In addition to the admission of Darwin, the secular scientific magazine, *Scientific American* printed the following statement in 1847 (that is highly unlikely to be found in the magazine of today):

“And where must we look for this fountain but to the great store-house of nature; the innumerable and diversified objects where there were presented to our view give evidence of infinite skill and intelligent design in their adaptation to each other and to the nature of man”⁶

Since design requires an intelligent designer, the *visible and obvious appearance* of design is stated by the IDM as evidence for a designer. A simple example is Mt. Rushmore National Monument (Figure 1) where the massive heads of four U.S. Presidents were carved into the hard rock in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Applying the IDM model to Mt. Rushmore, were the carvings a result of intelligent artists or erosion by water over long periods of time?



Figure 1. Mt. Rushmore In South Dakota

With these thoughts in mind, let's consider the three foundational elements (or arguments) in the IDM. Although the following three concepts initially appear to be complex, they can be readily understandable as follows:

(1) IRREDUCIBLE COMPLEXITY

One of the foundational beliefs and arguments for ID is the phrase *irreducible complexity* that is defined as – “*a single system composed of several well-matched, interacting parts that contribute to basic function, wherein the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to effectively cease.*”⁷ From a simplistic biological perspective, since natural selection can only choose systems *that are already working*, this

means that if a biological system cannot be produced gradually it would have to arise as an integrated unit, in one fell swoop, for natural selection to have anything to act on.

Although there are many parts of the human body that are complex such as the brain, eye, heart, immune system, the blood clotting system and DNA to name just a few, lets look a familiar example that clearly illustrates the concept of



Figure 2. A Simple Mousetrap

irreducible complexity; a mousetrap (Figure 2). This common mousetrap is comprised of the following five basic parts:

1. A flat wooden platform to act as a base
2. A metal hammer that traps a mouse
3. A spring with extended ends to press against the platform and the hammer when the trap is charged
4. A sensitive catch that releases when slight pressure is applied
5. A metal bar that connects to the catch and holds the hammer back when the trap is charged

The question that irreducible complexity asks is – “are all the components pictured in Figure 2 required to be in place for the mousetrap to function correctly, which is catching mice?” In this example, the answer is a resounding yes as this trap cannot be transformed, step by step, into a trap with a base, hammer, spring, catch, and holding bar. Remember that Darwinian natural selection acting on variation could not produce this trap by – “numerous, successive, slight

modifications” as this mousetrap is not fully operable until it is an intact system. When this simple concept is applied to more complicated systems, such as the human camera-eye (Figure 3) that consists of many sophisticated features, it is obvious that the human eye cannot properly function until all interrelated parts

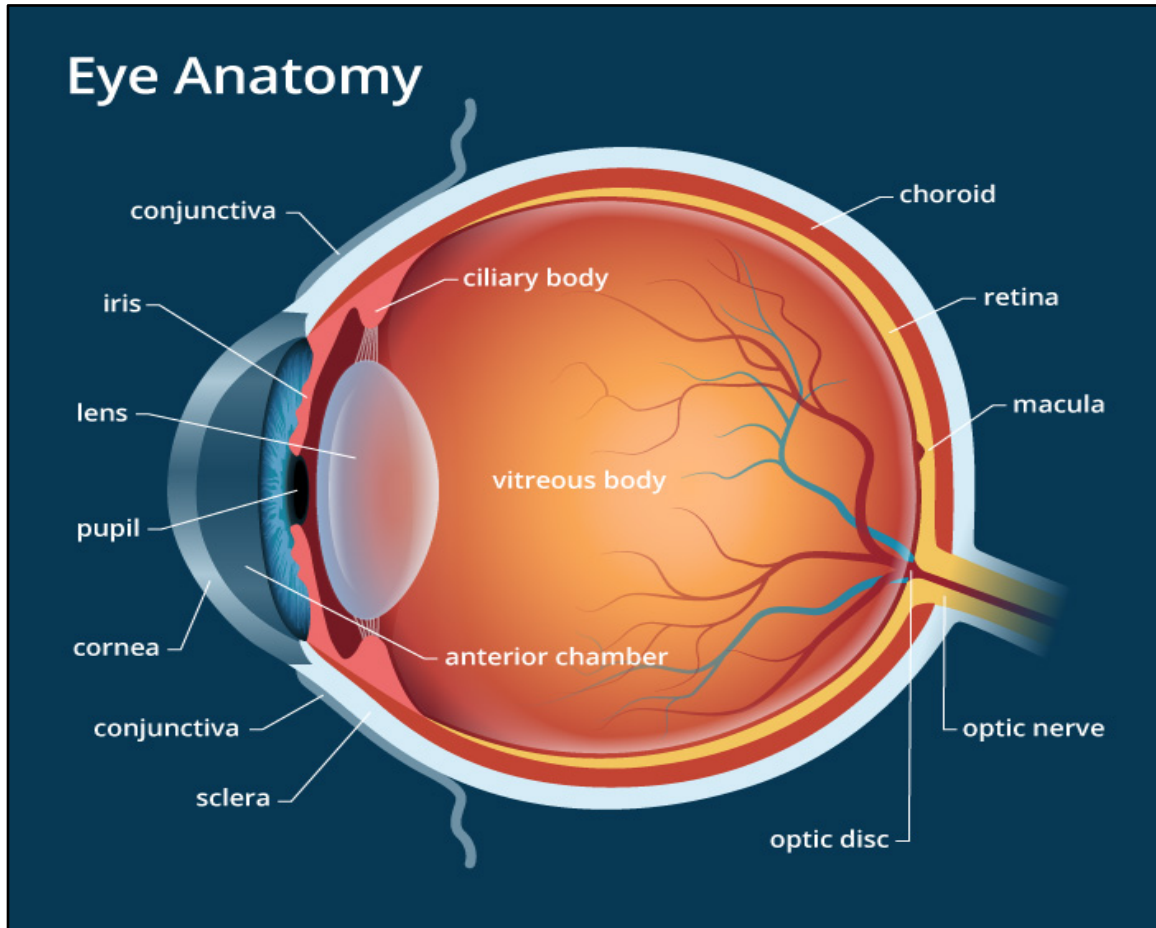


Figure 3. The Human Eye Anatomy

are present and operational. As an example, the pupil of the eye acts as a shutter to let in enough light to see in either brilliant sunlight or nighttime darkness. The lens of the eye gathers light and focuses it on the retina to form a sharp image. The muscles of the eye allow it to move quickly. Different colors of light, with many different wavelengths, would cause a blurred image, except that the lens of the eye changes density over its surface to correct for chromatic aberration. If the human eye lacks any of the aforementioned integrated features, the result would be a severe loss of vision or outright blindness. Therefore, the human eye can only properly function if it were intact as one integrated unit. Nevertheless, many people believe that Mt. Rushmore is the result of intelligent sculptors and the human eye is a result of gradual evolutionary processes that began from nothing!

(2) SPECIFIED COMPLEXITY

Another argument for ID is the term *specified complexity*. Since specified complex patterns can be found in virtually all organisms, it can be logically assumed that some form of intelligence must have been responsible for their origin. This argument can be summarized by the conclusion that it is impossible for complex patterns to be developed through random processes. Although there are numerous biological examples of specified complexity that have recently been discovered as a result of modern technology, let's consider the bacterial flagellar motor (Figure 4) that was a startling, unexpected biological discovery.

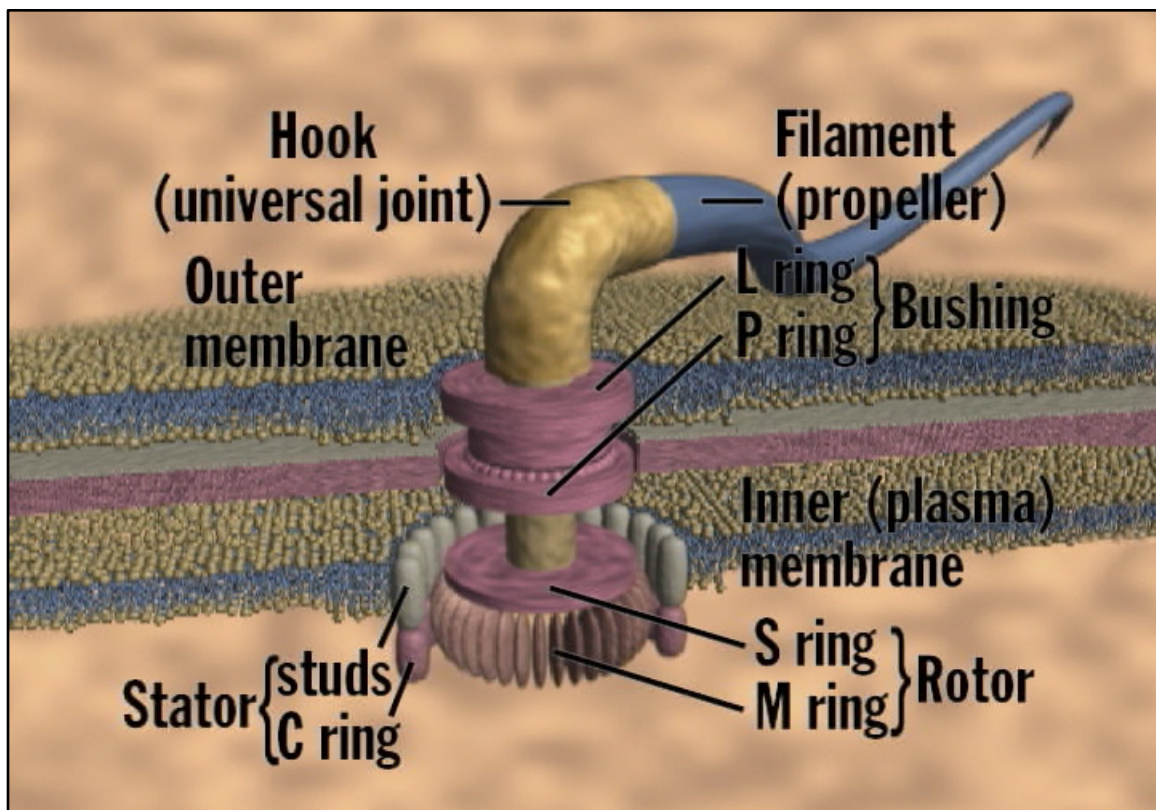


Figure 4. Bacterial Flagellar Motor

The bacterial flagellar motor has often been referred to as an “*outboard motor*.” Its most interesting aspect is a flagellum (propeller or tail) that is attached to and rotated by a motor that is made of different kinds of protein. The motor contains the following parts:

- Filament (propeller)
- Hook (universal joint)
- L and P rings (bushings/bearings)
- S and M rings (rotor)
- Stator (studs and C rings)

The flagellar filament is attached to the flagellar motor by the hook and allows a bacterium to move around (at will) inside a cell. To function completely, the motor requires over 40 different proteins and the electrical power driving the rotary motor is supplied by a voltage difference developed across the membrane of the cell. Additionally, the water-cooled rotary motor has forward or reverse gears, and can operate at speeds of 6,000 to 100,000 rpm with instant direction-reversing capability. This biological device has been called the – “*most efficient machine in the universe*”⁸ and with the complexity of all of its parts, provides a powerful testimony to the specified complexity of this microscopic biological marvel.

Remember that Darwinian theory states that any component that does not offer an advantage to an organism will be lost or discarded; therefore it is impossible for complex patterns to be developed through random processes. As a result, the complexity of this device underscores the hand of an intelligent designer that specifically designed the complexity of the bacterial flagellar motor.

(3) ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE

From the IDM perspective, the anthropic principle views the world and universe as “*fine-tuned*” to allow for life on Earth. The existence and development of life on Earth requires so many variables to be perfectly in tune that it would be impossible for all the variables to come into being through random, uncoordinated events.⁹ Interestingly, modern science now knows that Earth is intricately designed to not only support life but to also give us the best view of the universe (Psalm 19:1). Let’s look at the following astounding findings from contemporary scientific knowledge that confirm the scientific premise that Earth’s conditions were *designed* to perfectly frame an environment for God’s masterpiece, mankind, and has not been found anywhere else in the known universe.

There are at least 20 factors that are currently known by secular science that are necessary for life on Earth. It must be remembered that all of these factors have to be met at the same time in one place, and the same factors that apply to Earth apply anywhere in the universe and/or our galaxy. Additionally, it should be stated that the mathematical chance of all these factors meeting the – “*one place at the same time*” criteria is *one-one thousandth of one, one-trillionth*,¹⁰ which is mathematically impossible without a Creator. Let’s consider some of the factors that make Earth unique in the universe.

Note: The following factors are not listed in any particular order, as they are all interrelated. Additionally, for a complete set of notes on the following subject, request, “[Is The Earth Unique In The Universe](#)” from hispeoplerejoice@gmail.com.

Liquid Water

A basic starting point is the presence of water that has chemical properties that are perfectly suitable and essential for carbon-based life.

Distance From A Home Star

The correct distance from our Sun ensures the presence of liquid water and maintains the correct global temperature. If the Earth were 5% closer to the Sun, temperatures on Earth would rise to 900-degrees F. Conversely, if the Earth were 20% farther from the Sun, the Earth would be locked in cold and ice like Mars.

Terrestrial Planet

The dynamic geology of the Earth's tectonic plates regulates the Earth's interior temperature, mixes chemical elements essential to living organisms, and shapes the continents.

Stability Of The Sun

Our Sun is responsible for the radiant heat and radiation that is typically consistent for the Earth.

Earth's Consistency Of Temperatures

The average temperature on Earth is +59-degrees F. and not only allows liquid water to exist, but also provides a relatively stable environment for life.

Diversity Of Life

The diversity of life on Earth creates a food chain that can sustain a variety of species and allows a greater development of living species.

Protective Magnetic Field

The Earth's invisible *gravity shield* (Magnetosphere) deflects radiation from the Sun and space and also protects organisms on Earth from the solar wind (a stream of charged particles released from the upper atmosphere of the Sun).

The Ozone Layer

The ozone layer is much like the Magnetosphere as it is another buffer against solar radiation, especially ultra-violet radiation.

Oxygen-Nitrogen Atmosphere

We need oxygen and nitrogen for life. Even though the Earth's atmosphere is less than 1% of Earth's diameter, it contains 78% nitrogen, 21% oxygen and 1% carbon dioxide in perfect harmony. These gases ensure a temperate climate, protection from the Sun's radiation, a correct ratio of gases for liquid water and complex life.

Earth Is A Rocky Planet

Current science indicates that a rocky planet (such as Earth) offers the best foundation for life and especially the diversity of life that is common on Earth.

Orbited By A Large Moon

Current scientific thinking dictates that if our moon did not exist, neither would we. Our moon is $\frac{1}{4}$ the size of Earth yet its powerful gravitational pull stabilizes

the angle of the Earth's axis at a constant 23.5-degrees. It also stabilizes the rotation of the Earth, the moon's gravity creates oceanic tides, keeping coastline waters from becoming stagnant and driving currents around the world, ensuring temporal seasonal changes. Most importantly, Earth's climate is the only known climate in the solar system capable of supporting life!

Type Of Star

Earth is known as a spectral type, G2, dwarf, main sequence type of star that is well suited for our needs and for life.

Moderate Rate Of Rotation

The Earth rotates once a day in about 24 hours at a speed of about 1,000 mph and travels around the Sun at about 67,000 mph. If the rate of rotation increased over the present rate, the days would shorten, life would be exposed to increased harmful ionizing radiation from the Sun, and the Earth would experience colder winters, hotter summers and faster wind speeds.

Protected By Giant Gas Planets

Earth is different from other planets as the size and gravity of Jupiter and Saturn in our galaxy minimize the chance of Earth being struck comets/asteroids from space as these two planets act as giant vacuum cleaners due to their immense gravitational fields.

The Stability Of Our Solar System

Our solar system is relatively stabilized in terms of planetary orbits.

Our Location In The Milky Way Galaxy

Our location in the Milky Way Galaxy enhances stability and safety as stars and systems are in a very crowded area where collisions with celestial bodies and high radiation exposure are statistically higher.

CONCLUSION

Even though there are Christian members and supporters in the IDM movement, it is not a Christian movement and does not purport to be one as evidenced by their mission statement (ID website and page 2 of these notes). Although we have listed many of their attributes, their primary disadvantage is the fact that they do not name the Intelligent Designer and/or Creator. This allows each individual to decide who or what that entity and/or person could be. This concept is in direct opposition to biblical Scripture that specifically delineates in numerous passages that the God of the Bible is the Creator of the universe, the Earth and mankind, some of which are as follows:

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth"
Genesis 1:1

“O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom You have made them all”

Psalm 104:24

“For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on Earth, visible and invisible”

Colossians 1:16

“All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made”

John 1:3

“I have made the Earth, and created man on it. My Hands-stretched out the heavens, and all their host I have commanded”

Isaiah 45:12

In conclusion, do you believe the creation account as delineated in Genesis 1:1, or do you place a higher priority on theories that replace God as the Creator of everything we see? Unfortunately, many people either reject Genesis or find Genesis hard to believe even though they may claim to believe in the authority and inerrancy of the Bible. This dilemma is best explained as outlined in Romans:

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of people who suppress the truth by their unrighteousness, because what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world his invisible attributes-his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, because they are understood through what has been made. So people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or give him thanks, but they became futile in their thoughts and their senseless hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools.”

Romans 1:18-23

However, the real question is *“What is the best explanation for your purpose in life?”* If biblical Creation is true (and the evidence from science and Scripture indicate that it is), then each person should be concerned with their future destiny and specifically, where you will spend eternity. The Bible clearly says – *“All have sinned and come short of the Glory of God”* as found in Romans 3:23, and those without a personal acceptance of God will spend eternity in a lake of fire (Revelation 20:15).

Nevertheless, God has provided an alternate choice, and that choice is a free gift that only needs to be accepted by you as highlighted in the following verses:

“For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”

John 3:16

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the LORD shall be saved”

Romans 10:13

This is God’s message to you, so have you accepted his free gift of eternal life?

RESOURCES

- A. The MacArthur Study Bible
New King James Version, 1997
1. www.intelligentdesign.org/whatisid
 2. Cicero used design in support of the Greek Pantheon of gods
 3. Encyclopedia Britannica
 4. Edwards v. Aguillard
 5. www.darwinproject.ac.uk/entry-3154
 6. Scientific American, Volume 2, Issue 48, August 1847
 7. Darwin’s Black box
Dr. Michael J. Behe
A Touchstone Book, 1996
 8. Howard Berg, Department of Molecular & Cellular Biology
Harvard, University
 9. www.gotquestions.org/anthropic-principle
 10. The Privileged Planet
Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay W. Richards
Regnery Publishing, 2013

Figure 1. Curiosity

Figure 2. John Mittendorf

Figure 3. allaboutvision.com

Figure 4. arn.org