

## Chapter 3

# *What Is Intelligent Design, and What Does It Have to Do With Men's Testicles?*

So, what do male testicles have to do with ID? Little did we realize that this would become one of the central questions of modern science.

Proponents of ID insist that biological organisms everywhere, including human beings, show unmistakable signs of having been designed by an intelligent Creator, rather than having evolved through natural selection.

But if testicles were designed, then one wonders why God didn't protect them better. Couldn't the Designer have put them inside the body, or encased them in bone, or at least put some bubble wrap around them? Is this the best that the Designer can do?

ID is a very important idea. Its advocates have support from numerous presidential candidates, some members of Congress, a few United States governors, and many state legislatures. They are the people responsible for the famous court case called *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*.

They think that educational policy and textbooks should be changed to reflect their views. Who are these people, what do they believe, and how did they get to be so powerful?

## WHAT IS INTELLIGENT DESIGN?

ID is the idea that biological organisms have come about due to the deliberate work of an intelligent Creator. ID says that the Creator's "signature" can be seen in the way we are put together.

It further argues that new species cannot come about through evolution by natural selection, and must be the work of a Designer. This means that human beings, which are a separate species, as well as all other creatures, are considered to be the products of intelligent design.

This idea admits that evolution by natural selection can modify existing features, but only within species that already exist, and that new features are also the work of a Designer.

ID's proponents insist that it is as valid a scientific theory as evolution by natural selection and that it therefore must be taught alongside evolution in science classes in public schools. ID's proponents are also unique in the history of science for insisting that their views be written into science textbooks before a single experiment has been done.

### *Why Does This Matter?*

"But wait a minute!" I hear you say. "Wasn't this settled by the Scopes trial in 1925? And by the Dover, Pennsylvania school trial of 2005?" Unfortunately, the problem is that the ID folks are a political lobby, just like the tobacco lobby. They don't give up, because they want you to buy their product, no matter what.

What's ID's product? Religious indoctrination. As the judge in the Dover school trial said,

[W]e conclude that the religious nature of ID [intelligent design] would be readily apparent to an objective observer, adult or child.<sup>1</sup>

ID proponents want your kids and my kids to grow up being taught the ID proponents' version of religion in public school. At your expense, since you pay taxes. Here is a quote from their strategy document, called the Wedge Strategy:

1. *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*, Judge John E. Jones III's decision, 24.

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Design theory promises to reverse the stifling dominance of the materialist worldview, and to replace it with a science consonant with Christian and theistic convictions.<sup>2</sup>

By “materialist,” here, they don’t mean buying stuff. They mean believing in facts and evidence about the material world. In other words, scientific facts. They want to squash science as a method of investigation, which obtains facts about the material world by investigating it using material means.

What’s more, when ID promoters talk about wishing to replace modern science with “a science consonant with Christian and theistic convictions,” you need to know that “theistic convictions” means that God created and rules the world, and no explanation is acceptable if it doesn’t put God first. So ID proponents don’t like science, because it doesn’t invoke God for its explanations. And when ID proponents talk about theism and God, they specifically mean a conservative Christian version of God. They may say otherwise when they talk to the press, but their writings reveal their insistence on the conservative Christian world view, which they think should take over science.

ID proponents want everyone in the US, by way of public schools, to be taught that the actual facts about the material world don’t exist, or shouldn’t. Instead, they simply want to tell you what you have to believe, regardless of any factual basis. In other words, if they invent it, you have to believe it.

Attacking the teaching of evolution is simply their way of getting into the American school system. They try to convince politicians that what they are saying is science, not religion, so that then they can force their way into American public education, and then expand from there. They see this as a political fight, and are using political means to fight it.

### *Who Is Promoting Intelligent Design?*

Although it presents itself as a grassroots concern, ID promotion is actually a well-run and well-funded political operation. One of the places that pushes it very hard is the Discovery Institute. The Discovery Institute is located in Seattle, Washington. It has received a great deal of funding from multimillionaire Howard F. Ahmanson Jr. Mr. Ahmanson was quoted in the *Orange County Register* in 1985 as saying, “My goal is the total integration

2. *The Wedge Strategy: Five Year Strategic Plan Summary*, 4. This document may be accessed at <http://ncse.com/creationism/general/wedge-document>.

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of biblical law into our lives.”<sup>3</sup> Other wealthy conservative and religious entities also contribute to the Discovery Institute.

The Discovery Institute and its subsidiary, the Center for Science and Culture, has a long list of fellows, directors, program advisors, and program directors. Many of these people make handsome salaries for promoting ID. They want to replace scientific investigation with the words “God did it.” They think that this is an adequate and even preferable explanation for everything, despite the fact that I have never seen a successful satellite launch that based its knowledge of physics on biblical writings.

Here is another quote from the Wedge Strategy, describing the goal of the Discovery Institute:

Discovery Institute’s Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture seeks nothing less than the overthrow of materialism and its cultural legacies.<sup>4</sup>

Remember that when they say “materialism,” what they mean is science. So ID is very well funded, well organized, very determined, and they want to indoctrinate American children and American society with their antiscientific rubbish, at taxpayer expense.

### *What Is the Evidence for Intelligent Design?*

Proponents of ID have a wide range of viewpoints. Some point to the Cambrian explosion, a time when many species came into existence, as evidence for ID. They say that all these species couldn’t have come into existence without help from somebody.

ID promoters have a number of concepts that they work with. These include *irreducible complexity*, *specified complexity*, and the *design inference*.

Here’s what those terms mean.

**IRREDUCIBLE COMPLEXITY** means that some people believe that certain biological structures or systems are too complex to have evolved from similar structures or systems in simpler organisms.

So a feature or system is irreducibly complex if it has many distinct parts, all of which are necessary for its proper functioning. If any single part

3. Cited in Kerwin Lee Klein, *From History to Theory* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011) 153.

4. See <http://ncse.com/creationism/general/wedge-document>.

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is removed from this system, then it no longer functions properly, and this makes it irreducibly complex.

Here is what Michael Behe, the primary proponent of irreducible complexity, has to say on the subject: "Irreducible complexity is just a fancy phrase I use to mean a single system which is composed of several interacting parts, and where the removal of any one of the parts causes the system to cease functioning."<sup>5</sup> Behe is confusing destruction and simplicity. He doesn't say "irreducible complexity is just a fancy phrase I use to mean something that couldn't have evolved from something simpler." Rather, he proposes looking at a living, functioning system and removing parts from it. If the system then ceases to function, then Behe wishes you to believe that it cannot have evolved into existence. So, for instance, if you chop a dog's head off and it dies, that proves it couldn't have evolved from a simpler organism.

The usual examples given for irreducible complexity are the human blood clotting sequence, the bacterial flagellum, and the human eye. I will talk about these in Chapters 18, 20, and 21.

**SPECIFIED COMPLEXITY** insists that specific complex patterns in their current forms, such as some biological systems, are unlikely to have evolved through random mutation. Some ID promoters insist that specified complexity proves that evolution could not have produced new species.

**DESIGN INFERENCE** is a similar argument. It also insists that the probability that specific complex patterns evolved through random mutations is so low as to be impossible. It says that specific complex patterns are seen in many current-day biological systems. This then leads ID promoters to insist that a Designer must have brought these improbable outcomes into being.

Unfortunately, this is kind of like shooting an arrow randomly, and then when it lands somewhere, painting a bull's-eye around where it hit, and then saying "God made me hit a bull's-eye! The odds are too infinitely small for me to have hit that bull's-eye by chance! Therefore, God directed my arrow."

5. Behe, "Evidence for Intelligent Design from Biochemistry," <http://www.discovery.org/a/51>.

*What Do They Really Believe?*

Some ID proponents insist that the earth is at most 10,000 years old. Others agree with modern geology and say that the earth is approximately 4.56 billion years old. Most ID promoters insist that ID is not religion. Others insist that the Designer is God, and by God, they mean the Christian God.

In general, the range of viewpoints among ID proponents is very wide. There's no agreed-upon theory of who the Designer is, when and how the Design was implemented, which interspecies barriers are inviolable, how new species are created, or how new features are put into existing organisms.

In fact the only thing ID proponents have in common besides, in many cases, fat paychecks from the Discovery Institute, is that they insist that their version of reality must be taught in public schools at taxpayer expense.

*Public Education*

The basic argument that ID's supporters use is that they have expressed doubt about evolution, and this therefore means that their viewpoint must be taught as science in science classrooms.

One strong piece of evidence that ID is not science is that its promoters insist on its being written into textbooks and taught in public schools before they have conducted a single experiment.

ID promoters ignore the fact that having a few people with a contrary viewpoint does not amount to a serious controversy. Scientists around the world accept the overwhelming evidence that biological organisms evolved through natural selection. A few crackpots claiming something else does not amount to an important controversy.

Of course, what they are really trying to do is teach their particular religion in American public schools at taxpayer expense. They pretend that it's science, but by their own admission, their stated goal is to destroy science. They wish to insert their religion into public schools, so that all children are indoctrinated with their religion. All paid for by American taxpayers.

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### *Politics*

ID promoters are very energetic in their pursuit of public education. They intend to win their fight not by proving their claims scientifically, but by winning in the court of public opinion. To further their goals, they get candidates to run for school boards, without telling the public what their beliefs are. Since most schools' boards need people to volunteer to be members, these stealthy candidates can get themselves elected. When they achieve a majority, they then announce that ID will be taught in public schools. This is what happened in Dover, Pennsylvania.

ID promoters also lobby politicians and political institutions at all other levels of government. So, for instance, presidential candidate and then-senator Rick Santorum amended an educational funding act to encourage presenting evolution as "continuing controversy."<sup>6</sup> This has been used by ID proponents throughout the United States as an excuse for proposing legislation that encourages teaching ID as science in public school science classrooms. Since then Louisiana has passed the ID-friendly "Louisiana Science Education Act," which claims only to wish to promote critical thinking, but manages only to include in its list of subjects worthy of critical thought the fields of "evolution, the origins of life, global warming, and human cloning."<sup>7</sup> Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal signed this into law in 2008.

As of 2012, Tennessee also enacted a law that allows the teaching of intelligent design/creationism in public schools.<sup>8</sup>

In 2014, the states of Ohio,<sup>9</sup> South Dakota,<sup>10</sup> Missouri,<sup>11</sup> Virginia,<sup>12</sup> and Oklahoma<sup>13</sup> all had bills in their state legislatures that would have

6. The National Center for Science Education, "Is There a Federal Mandate to Teach Intelligent Design Creationism?," <http://ncse.com/taking-action/analysis-santorum-language>.

7. See the Louisiana Science Education Act, <http://www.legis.state.la.us/lss/lss.asp?doc=631000>.

8. House Bill 368, Senate Bill 893, <http://www.capitol.tn.gov/Bills/107/Bill/HB0368.pdf>.

9. House Bill 597, [http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/bills.cfm?ID=130\\_HB\\_597](http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/bills.cfm?ID=130_HB_597).

10. Senate Bill 112, [http://legis.sd.gov/Legislative\\_Session/Bills/Bill.aspx?file=SB112P.htm&&Session=2004&cookieCheck=true](http://legis.sd.gov/Legislative_Session/Bills/Bill.aspx?file=SB112P.htm&&Session=2004&cookieCheck=true).

11. House Bill 1472, <http://www.house.mo.gov/billsummary.aspx?bill=HB1472&year=2014&code=R>.

12. House Bill 207, <http://legl.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?141+ful+HB207>.

13. House Bill 1674, <http://www.oklegislature.gov/BillInfo.aspx?Bill=HB1674&>

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allowed the teaching of intelligent design/creationism as science, in American public schools.

This is what I mean by winning in the court of public opinion.

They don't do scientific experiments to show the truth of their claims, they just lobby politicians whether their claims are true or not. In fact, they repeat claims that have been publicly exposed as being untrue. They also make up new claims very easily, since they don't feel the need to base their claims on facts or experimentation.

Unfortunately, this means that no matter how many of their silly claims serious scientists defeat, ID promoters simply repeat their untrue claims, and crank out more of them.

This is a politically expedient approach for ID to take because it's easier to come up with specious claims than it is to do real scientific experiments. Nonetheless, even knowing that they may come up with five new unsubstantiated new claims next week, I will address some of their current claims in the following chapters.

But for now, what about the big one? Their major claim is that we are intelligently designed. Let's get back to having fun. Let's talk about testicles. Again.

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Session=1300. Senate Bill 1765, <http://www.oklegislature.gov/BillInfo.aspx?Billsb1765&Session=1400>.