

# *“Intelligent Divining, Or Shall the Fundamentalists/Secularists Win?”*

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Genesis 1:1-2; 2:4b-9, 18-23

“In the Beginning God created the heavens and the earth...”

My friends, I have just made a glorious faith statement as to the origin of all that is.

But, I have not made a scientific statement. There is a difference! Not a contradiction – but a difference!

In faith, the Christian religion has declared throughout its history that an Intelligent Designer created the world, the universe we inhabit. And we must be vigilant in maintaining the integrity of this belief system, this philosophy, this theology.

We must not hand over our belief system, our view of life and ultimate value questions to a discipline that is not equipped to deal with such questions, i.e. The empirical sciences, which includes biology.

Unless you have been living in a cave, or a tree, you have heard of the court case that has just concluded in Harrisburg, PA, now awaiting the judge’s decision. The issue, should Intelligent Design be part of the science curriculum in public schools? Should a mere statement about the consideration of Intelligent Design be part of the science curriculum?

This trial has been heralded as Scopes II. Recall the Scopes Monkey Trial, so-called back in 1925, in Dayton, Tennessee, where William Jennings Bryan defended the belief in creationism – opposing the introduction of Darwinian evolution into the science classroom. Scopes was convicted of breaking the law which prohibited the teaching of “any theory that denies the story of Divine Creation of Man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animal.” Subsequently anti-evolution laws were passed in numerous states. Not until 1968 was it finally legal throughout America to teach evolution in public schools! 1968!!!

Most major Christian denominations have come to terms with Darwinism as a way of understanding the evolution of life, including our own Presbyterian Church (USA). God works through this process – a faith commitment, a faith statement.

From my readings it appears that those Biblical literalists, with some adjustments have evolved from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century creationism (where evolution is denied), to what today is a much more sophisticated attack called “Intelligent Design.”

Intelligent Design is intriguing and worthy of discussion – but not in the biology class! Rather, present it in Sociology, psychology, philosophy, history, or religion classes. Briefly, Intelligent Design argues that random genetic drift and natural selection alone cannot account for the irreducible complexity in certain natural

phenomena. The complexity of multi-component molecular machines makes it improbable that they develop by random evolutionary process.

Now, all of this is complicated. And much of it is not new. And I am leaving out a wealth of history and information, but beware – the inviting into beliefs, values, meaning and ultimate purpose, a discipline that is not equipped for such, but will take up the gauntlet (by some), and drive your beliefs – into the dust of pure materialism.

Thank God for science!  
Let us leave it to do its work!

ID'ers, Intelligent Designers deny they are basing their position on religious grounds, but both the empirical and ideological data point otherwise.

Comedian, I mean Televangelist Pat Robertson, responding to the Dover community's voting out all eight school board members who are trying to introduce "Intelligent Design" into high school science as an alternative to evolution, had this to share, "I'd like to say to the good citizens of Dover: if there is a disaster in your area, don't turn to God, you just rejected Him from your city... And don't wonder why He hasn't helped you when problems begin, if they begin. I'm not saying they will, but if they do just remember, you just voted God out of you city.

Intelligent Design is the old creationism with a Ph.D.

Apparently, all those Catholics and Protestants who see no problem with evolution in Dover have turned from the God they have loved and served, by voting against a proposition they don't believe belongs in the science classroom. Earlier in Dover, one of the three who voted against adding intelligent design to the science class was told by another school board member she was "going to hell." All three subsequently resigned.

Our Christian Fundamentalist brothers and sisters believe on a foundational level that this quasi-scientific position (my word) exposes Darwinism as taught throughout the world. What I especially fear is the harm this will cause to those impressionable evangelical youth who are being indoctrinated into not trusting what has been tested, verified and used to great human and civilizational advantage.

Here, I'm reminded of one of the greatest American sermons ever preached, Shall the Fundamentalists Win? preached by Henry Emerson Fosdick in 1922, where? In the First Presbyterian Church, New York. He, along with other ministers were seeking to reconcile faith and science, hoping to curb what he and others saw as closed-minded anti-intellectual and intolerant fundamentalism of that era.

Fosdick challenged those denying the Christian name to those who differ with them. Recall Pat Robertson.

Fosdick pleads... "for an intellectually hospitable, tolerant, liberty-loving church." And he also shared this:

"Science treats a young man's mind as though it were really important. A Scientist says to a young man, "Here is the universe challenging our investigation. Here are the truths which we have seen so far. Come, study with us! See what we already have seen and then look further to see more, for science is an intellectual adventure for the truth." Can you imagine any man who is worthwhile turning from that call to the church if the church seems to him to say, "Come, and we will feed you opinions from a spoon. No thinking is allowed here except such as brings you to certain specified, predetermined conclusions. These prescribed opinions we will give you in advance of your thinking; now think, but only so as to reach these results."

My friends, nothing in all the world is so much worth thinking of as God, Christ, the Bible, sin and salvation, the divine purposes for humankind, life everlasting. But you cannot challenge the dedicated thinking of this generation to those sublime themes upon any such terms as are laid down by an intolerant church.

Intelligent Design is not science. It is but another version of the God of the Gaps argument – trying to insert God to explain a natural phenomena in science’s progressive history of explaining what we as of yet don’t know. In other words, that’s God, until science comes up with the answer. God of the Gaps.

Actually, a major proponent of the Intelligent Design theory exposes this very concern. Prof. Wm Dembski, challenges the evolutionists with,

“Give us detailed, testable, mechanistic accounts for the origin of life, the origin of the genetic code, the origin of ubiquitous biomacromolecules and assemblages like the ribosome, and the origin of molecular machines like the bacterial Flagellum, and intelligent design will die a quick and painless death.”

Exactly! Within the empirical sciences as experimentation progresses, new fossils are discovered, and further integration of studies proceed, irreducible complexity just may be explained by science, without looking for the divine in action!

Once again – The God the Gaps!

But, as I look at this cultural phenomena, with its dynamism from Kansas to Dover, PA – I wonder “why?” Why this fervor? Why this evangelistic drive?

It seems to me to be a reaction to the felt – Cultural Malaise of our society. Each of us fit somewhere on the spectrum of what today is being called the “Culture Wars.” There is fear in living in a violent, cold, callous, survival of the fittest, a moral, meaningless universe, where our traditions, faith, religion is seemingly constantly under attack, demeaned and displaced;

- Where our religious history is being eclipsed (which also involves values).
- Where our religious holidays are just one vote away from being labeled unconstitutional.
- Where the context of religion is emptied, on the public square, and Santa Claus takes precedence over a nativity scene on public grounds.

I understand the frustration, the fear, the resolve to, if not stop, then slow down the denuding of our long and proud American religious history and commitments. And Intelligent Design is a major declaration of the need for our culture to regain those higher values of meaning and purpose, not only for our own individual lives, but for the life of our culture and civilization.

Again, Intelligent Design is not science, and it should not be taught in high school science classes, but by all means engage the youth of our nation in philosophy, sociology, psychology, or history classes, discussing, and debating the origins of life, intelligence, meaning and purpose! Let’s treat their minds as really important! Challenge them to integrate their lessons into a whole, a system of meaning.

Perhaps the Intelligent Designers are good for us, in that they are pushing us to ask questions about higher purposes, and to consider whether materialism is sufficient to guide one’s life. Pure secularism will not suffice for most of us. Intelligent Design is stirring the cultural pot.

Physician, geneticist, director of the Human Genome project, and Christian, Francis S. Collins declares;

“Science explores the natural world. Faith explores the supernatural world. If I want to study genetics, I am going to use science. If I want to understand God’s love, then that is where the Faith world comes in.”

Give science the respect it deserves, but do not give it the veto on religious issues, on God.

I’m amazed that some of our Christian friends are so eager to hand to science the keys to the kingdom! How intelligent is that?!

Amen.