



October 18, 2005

## Expert Witness Sees Evidence in Nature for Intelligent Design

By [LAURIE GOODSTEIN](#)

HARRISBURG, Pa., Oct. 17 - Michael J. Behe, a biochemistry professor at Lehigh University in [Pennsylvania](#), has spent the last eight years traveling to colleges promoting intelligent design as a challenge to the theory of evolution.

On Monday Mr. Behe brought his lecture and slides to a closely watched trial in federal district court, where a judge will decide whether the town of Dover, Pa., violated the boundary between church and state when it required students to hear a statement about intelligent design in a high school biology class.

The Dover school board is being sued by 11 parents who say intelligent design is inappropriate in a biology class because it is merely religious creationism repackaged to resemble science. Proponents of intelligent design, however, argue that living organisms are so complex that the best explanation is that a higher intelligence designed them.

With the trial in its fourth week, Mr. Behe was the first expert witness for the defense. Asked whether intelligent design is religion, or "based on any religious beliefs," Mr. Behe said, "No, it isn't."

"It is based entirely on observable, physical evidence from nature," he said.

Mr. Behe said the "best and most striking example of design" is the bacterial flagellum, "the outboard motor bacteria use to swim." He projected a drawing of a flagellum depicting what he called a "rotary motor" attached to a "drive shaft" that pushes a propeller, and said it was impossible avoid concluding that the mechanism was "a purposeful arrangement of parts."

Mr. Behe is the author of "Darwin's Black Box," a book published in 1996 that spurred the intelligent design movement. He is also a fellow at the Discovery Institute, a research organization that advocates intelligent design.

For three weeks, the plaintiffs called expert witnesses, including a biologist, a theologian, a paleontologist and two philosophers, who testified that intelligent design did not meet the definition of science because it could not be tested or disproved. They said that intelligent design proponents had not published scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals and that most scientists did not question evolution's basic tenets.

Mr. Behe testified that intelligent design was science and that it made testable claims.

Mr. Behe said he had been able to publish only one article on intelligent design in a peer-reviewed scientific journal, a piece he co-wrote in *Protein Science* in 2004.

Robert Muise, a defense lawyer, asked Mr. Behe, "Do you perceive a bias against publishing articles on intelligent design in peer-reviewed journals?"

Mr. Behe said he did. "My ideas on intelligent design have been subjected to a thousand times more scrutiny than anything I've written before."

Mr. Behe testified that intelligent design did not claim to identify the intelligent designer, or even to "require knowledge of the designer."

However, Mr. Behe, a Roman Catholic, was asked whether he had concluded that "the designer is God." He said yes, but added that his conclusion was not based on science.

"I concluded that based on theological, philosophical and historical facts," he said.

Mr. Behe said he believed schools should teach evolution because it was "widely used in science" and "many aspects are well substantiated." And he said intelligent design was "quite limited" because it challenged only one part of evolutionary theory, natural selection.

Mr. Muise then asked whether natural selection could "explain the existence" of DNA, the immune system or blood clotting. Mr. Behe said no.

As Mr. Behe's responses grew increasingly long and arcane, Judge John E. Jones III slumped in his chair. When Mr. Muise asked the judge whether he should stop for the day, Judge Jones sat up and agreed, saying, "We've certainly absorbed a lot, haven't we?"

Randy Tomasacci, a woodworker who serves on his school board in Shickshinny, Pa., said his district was considering teaching intelligent design. He said Mr. Behe's testimony "reinforces my point of view."

