

# Looking the Right Way through the Telescope

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**H**OW SHOULD WE AS CHRISTIANS RIGHTLY view our gift of life from God if we confess that we truly believe ourselves to be the products of an amazing and indeed somewhat unexplainable and unfathomable creation? Our common confession of God's sovereignty over the whole universe holds as divine miracle the forming of human existence by the creating Lord writ large across history, and that He did this creating as revealed in the language of the biblical accounts. But time and centuries since have brought with them the impacts and interests of a cognitive Renaissance and afterward an Enlightenment of consciousness which has produced in our Western society first an awareness of modern technological capability and then a postmodern mindset of infinite individuality. As a result, the demand for scientific inquiry to provide proof of anything and everything with absolute certainty in the form of empirical positivism has become ingrained in our ordinary expectations. Scientific certainty indeed provides significant value in the physical realm as it extends through chemistry and biology, to an extent such that we have made vital and excellent advances in improving the conditions of human life in many ways, and we continue to explore further possibilities for the benefit of our posterity. But for validating matters of the metaphysical, empirical proof is not to be found and as such metaphysics is not granted the luxury of any commonly accepted authority or approval in the scientific community.

So humanity has found other ways to describe God's role in the "making" of the world: approaches that align with a more recognizable scientific sensibility of "design" and thus feel more credible. But can we simply equate intelligent design as proof of the divine creating Godhead? Does this not imply that the creature seeks and demands proof of its own creator? How can any creature truly "prove" or validate its own creator? Yet humanity insists upon the expectation and demand of verifiable proof for everything. So with time, science has positioned itself as the final authority on all matters related to fact, truth, and reality. Unfortunately, we all too easily fall into simply living and thinking with this mindset because it is what everyone else around us is doing; it is what the world as we know it tells us is "re-

ality.” And this is the problem: when we give empirical positivistic proof the final say and the ultimate authority to *define truth*, we renege on the basic conviction of our confession of faith and betray our genuine acceptance of the sovereign creating God. We’re looking the wrong way through the telescope.

Therefore, I propose an audacious idea: that our intellectual approach to scientific and philosophical discourse should shift its foundational framework by altering how it understands all existence. Rather than determining the truth of our ontological reality from the standpoint of science, we must begin with *the assumption that God is indeed very real* and that all matters of earthly design and scientific understanding should be ultimately explored via a position of *faithful inquiry*. For the past few centuries, we have based what we call “truth” and “reality” on the criteria of scientific definition, on evidence that *we humans* define as authoritative as we find it in *this* world, and solely on that which we consider reliably verifiable. While certain hard evidence is indeed valuable for those matters of physical and tangible determination, scientific inquiry has not succeeded in establishing any verifiability for matters metaphysical—and thereby of its own self-appointed autonomous authority has errantly assumed that faith in a God who cannot be seen is useless. But such an assumption is, as John Lennox describes, a “category mistake.”<sup>1</sup> Even as the realm of faith has comforted humanity across the millennia, the past 400 years or so have seen the human conviction of such a metaphysical truth gradually disintegrate into a spiritual illusion that only serves in lieu of any solidity of absolute assurance.

In order then for Christians to rightly conduct a discussion of faith with a scientific community that seeks a clear understanding of the physical world which it can allow as real, we must grasp our own existence in faithful and biblical terms while still acknowledging the vast and valuable intricacies of the scientific cosmos around us. All of reality is the product of the divine creating Lord formed into a cosmos which is well beyond our comprehension, yet one given and continuously sustained to enrich and feed us through a myriad of complexities with diverse interests and satisfactions. Our response and task here then is to defend the Christian truth, and in so doing not only convince the scientific community to accept our position of faith on the intellectual plain, but in fact also endeavor to persuade it to join us. I posit that any Christian dialectic of philosophical exploration with the scientific community on matters both physical and metaphysical ought to operate from the initial position of a complete assumption that the creating Lord is in fact *fully real* beyond any human proof and acts as the continuous Divine Sustainer via his ever-present theophysical causation in this world.

Let us consider what this means and how it should be articulated in order to be a valid assertion as our thesis. Indeed, how we establish a framework of functional meta-language for understanding such a miracle as creation will require a frank confrontation with the common assumptions readily available in our scientific

world. One may easily posit that the origin of life as we know it in all its complexity cannot be fully explained with any finite and verifiable certainty, even as quantum cosmology has come to represent the structure of our universe by the theoretical options of an open, flat or closed structure, and traces the beginning of time to an initial singularity of  $T=0$ .<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, I am disputing the practice of explaining our existence and seeking proof of God from the starting point of scientific and empirical certainty; instead, I am positing the absolute reality of the biblical God of theophysical causation that we can and should simply assume has produced and governs both the physical and metaphysical realms. Consider how in the Gospel of Matthew the Pharisees come to Jesus and demand from him a “miraculous sign” (Matt 12:38-42); but later Jesus chides them for knowing the evidence as found in the meaning of a red sky in the evening and yet still being unwilling to believe and recognize “the signs of the times” (Matt 16:3b-4) concerning his own dwelling among them. This admonishment also indicts the modern Enlightened community for normalizing the demand for a “sign” which provides proof of God and for its tacit assumption of the authority of science as the starting point in determining the truth of all things. However, once we identify God as proactive in the theophysical causation of the world and the origin of our faith, the evidence and authority of a creating and designing Lord become logically apparent and explicative of our amazing universe, where he is the fully-engaged and divinely-governing Sovereign. Such a position of faith makes both a much more effective use of the design argument and places science in a role that productively systematizes and validates the intricacies of the physical universe.

## The Playing Field

MY OUTRAGEOUS ASSERTION HERE IS hardly new. In fact, the concept it describes is of course quite old and has served as the basis of the Judeo-Christian understanding of sovereignty in the world for centuries before the modern Enlightenment co-opted its own understanding to be the authoritative one which alone is capable enough to approve or dismiss any and all other theories. In the wake of the Enlightenment, an array of ensuing worldviews variously explaining the origins of life has emerged in the thinking of our modern era. These perspectives may be placed into three basic explanatory categories that we can use for evaluative assessment: *theism* (the case for theophysical creation by the divine creating Lord), *deism* (an argument from design, like a watchmaker who completes his creative task and then is done and walks away), and *atheism* (as seen in Darwin’s process of evolution and the natural selection that is responsible for the myriad mutations growing and developing within it). In two of these three, the reference to God as an all-powerful Maker remains in some way central to the discussion. Similarly, the order and chaos that resemble an

intelligent schema surrounding human life and the environment continue to grow and evolve over time.

Nineteenth-century Princeton theologian Charles Hodge used the unusual term “contrivance” to discuss how we understand nature in our physical existence. He critically responded to Darwin’s notion of an evolutionary process completely bound by the physical limitations of a naturalistic and atheistic existence that recognizes nothing metaphysical at all. His descriptions of these contrivances in nature as potential choices for the explanation of our existence easily demonstrate the common options that most people still consider today (except perhaps those who imagine an alien intervention with the delivery of humans from a distant planet). Hodge elaborates on and laments Darwin’s position:

There are in the animal and vegetable worlds innumerable instances of at least apparent contrivance, which have excited the admiration of men in all ages. There are three ways of accounting for them. The first is the Scriptural doctrine, namely, that God is a Spirit, a personal, self-conscious, intelligent agent; that He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being and perfections; that He is ever present; that this presence is a presence of knowledge and power. In the external world there is always and everywhere indisputable evidence of the activity of two kinds of force: the one physical, the other mental. The physical belongs to matter, and is due to the properties with which it has been endowed; the other is the everywhere present and ever acting mind of God. To the latter are to be referred all the manifestations of design in nature, and the ordering of events in Providence.<sup>3</sup>

The second method of accounting for contrivances in nature admits that they were foreseen and purposed by God, and that He endowed matter with forces which He foresaw and intended should produce such results. But here his agency stops. He never interferes to guide the operation of physical causes.<sup>4</sup>

The third method of accounting for the contrivances manifested in the organs of plants and animals, is that which refers them to the blind operation of natural causes. They are not due to the continued cooperation and control of the divine mind, nor to the original purpose of God in the constitution of the universe. This is the doctrine of the Materialists, and to this doctrine, we are sorry to say, Mr. Darwin, although himself a theist, has given in his adhesion.<sup>5</sup>

Hodge’s three contrivances as perspectives for our existence effectively set the stage upon which we can evaluate the reasonability of our thesis assertion. How plausible is any theory behind the origin and maintenance of the universe if it is based on faith in a metaphysical being? Faith as such precludes the need to “prove” the ontological validity of the universe. But other markers can also give us assurance: “Rational intelligibility is one of the main considerations that have led

thinkers of all generations to conclude that the universe itself must be a product of intelligence.”<sup>6</sup> And as Keith Ward states in his book *God, Chance, and Necessity*, “Almost all the great classical philosophers—certainly Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Kant, Hegel, Locke, Berkeley—saw the origin of the universe as lying in a transcendent reality.”<sup>7</sup>

The sensible logic found in the presence of a divine originator for this contrivance of nature and how it assures our survival despite the actions of humanity gives rise to a confidence in a rational intelligibility that is responsible for our ontological status with both its physical and intellectual capabilities. Clearly in the good company of historical philosophers, we can have no other explanation than to favor a worldview contrivance that acknowledges God, or at the very least recognizes the presence of a higher intelligence capable of design, functioning on its own accord as a first cause from the outside, and determining the meaning and purpose of our human life: our destined *telos*.

Let us consider if we might support the argument for a divine Watchmaker who upon completion of his creation leaves the world with a design to be found strictly in natural laws which act as the causes of life itself, working out its own future. This deism still professes (as we require) an assumption of faith in a God who is providentially divine and powerful enough to be the origin of all things, suggesting “God’s there, but he just lets us do our own thing.” Such distancing lacks the ongoing assurance of a daily-present God and relinquishes a fullness of confidence that can be found in a healthy, proactive faith which acknowledges the divine actor of theophysical causation. Still, one might argue that the validity of the case for deistic design remains a plausible contender among philosophers today because “they really are better arguments than most philosophical critics concede. . . [and because the specific] design intuitions do not rest upon *inferences* at all. . . . We are so constructed that in certain normally-realized experiential circumstances we simply *find* that we in fact have involuntary convictions about such a world, about other minds, and so forth.”<sup>8</sup> However, the inability of natural science to explain the origin of the universe via a deist physical rationale plainly reveals “why historical philosophical attempts to *reconstruct* the arguments by which such beliefs either arose or were justified were such notorious failures.”<sup>9</sup> This is still looking the wrong way through the telescope.

Similarly we must indict the atheistic worldview where such a creator and the glory of his design do not exist at all and the entire scope of reality is limited to only what can be naturally verified by human cognizance. Although this viewpoint is still prevalent today, it once suffered a philosophical fate similar to that of seventeenth-century British natural theology. For our purposes, an atheism of Darwinian evolutionary rationale drops out of the discussion because it immediately forsakes the

primary supposition to be considered: that we *must assume* the existence, presence, and identity of a divine, all-creating, all-sustaining God in order to fully understand the universe in which we find ourselves.

## Competing Paradigms

ANY ARGUMENT FOR THE EXISTENCE and function of either a theistic or deistic intelligent designer must provide the human tendency for proof with some necessary recourse to science. As such we can recognize intelligent design as engaging in a *dialogue* with both science and religion, perhaps even leaning toward some kind of cooperative (albeit underdeveloped) form of *integration* with it.<sup>10</sup> Considering the design argument as being in *conflict* with or completely *independent* from religion or science undervalues the significance of design, despite any ongoing debates or conflicts and clear distinctions. Yet we must assume that an intelligent Maker of the universe would certainly be capable of coordinating the current state of human perception to successfully integrate design within and under the scientific natural world. And likewise with religion; but that issue points to human free will: our personal choice to hold differing religious views is subjective. In contrast, when we verify design within a scientific realm, the validation of evidence typically pertains to factual substance and is not a matter of choosing something that is subjective or based on faith. Science demonstrates reliable patterns and requires only a basic functionality of faith in how things operate, whereas religion perceives the meta-physical in a way that no science or theory of design can ever validate.

Twentieth-century philosopher Thomas Kuhn's paradigm<sup>11</sup> identification readily illustrates some key distinctions within our modern thinking and is instructive in a couple of ways. To begin, my thesis position regarding the telescope is clear: rather than seeing our existence from the Creator's viewpoint as designed *for* us, we have been looking through the big eye of science (the larger lens at the wrong end of the telescope) and attempting to verify God's existence as if we can and should be able to discern him entirely on our own (the tiny speck at the far end of our reversed sight in the lens). Since previous scientific inquiries about God have been unsuccessful and are lacking in such verifiability, we have concluded that God must then not exist. This conclusion is in keeping with the scientific process that has emerged with the ongoing Enlightenment which insists upon having proof as it alone comprehends, claiming to hold the authority to declare full knowledge of its own reality. Thus the idea of a paradigmatic conflict marks well a competitive distinction between the theist viewpoint (Judeo-Christianity at large) and the variety of scientific and deist design mindsets capable of relegating God to a vague abstraction or perhaps some nice, benevolent Santa Claus. On one side, the lack of "provability" presses the general assumption that we should instead assert our own human autonomy as

authority for empirical verification. But the position of a confident believer in the theophysical causality of the triune Christian God which willingly allows that there is in fact a *real being* who cannot be seen or verified represents the other paradigm (what would be looking the *right* way through the telescope). Likewise it is the much older paradigm, one that has actually become an underdog contender within much of our modern intellectual mindset, due largely to the successes of materialist technology and the progress of scientific knowledge in general.

This scope of paradigmatic perspective can be illustrated in another valuable classical example. Samuel Clarke's (1675-1729) discussion of causation in his *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* logically substantiates the possibility of a God who can create *ex nihilo* and is an original, self-existent intelligent being.<sup>12</sup> Clarke here makes my case by demonstrating the same paradigmatic distinction as regards the question of the first cause. Paul Russell and Anders Kraal note that for Clarke and others,

The causal adequacy principle ... maintained that it is demonstratively certain that matter and motion cannot produce thought and intelligence. Therefore, the original, self-existent being must be an intelligent, immaterial being. To suppose the contrary ... would be a plain contradiction.<sup>13</sup>

For Clarke,

It is evident that the foundations of this argument rest with the related causal principles that everything must have a cause or ground for its existence and that no effect can have any perfection that is not also in its cause. To deny either of these causal principles is ... to reject the more general principle that "nothing can come from nothing."<sup>14</sup>

He writes in his *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*:

Now that the self-existent being is not such a blind and unintelligent necessity, but in the most proper sense an understanding and really active being, does not indeed so obviously and directly appear to us by considerations *a priori*, because through the imperfection of our faculties we know not wherein intelligence consists, nor can [we] see the immediate and necessary connection of it with self-existence, as we can that of eternity, infinity, unity, etc. But *a posteriori*, almost every thing in the world demonstrates to us this great truth and upholds undeniable arguments to prove that the world and all things therein are the effects of an intelligent and knowing cause.

And first, since in general there are manifestly in things various kinds of powers and very different excellencies and degrees of perfection, it must needs be that in the order of causes and effects the cause must always be more excellent than the effect. And consequently, the self-existent being,

whatever that be supposed to be, must of necessity (being the original of all things) contain in itself the sum and highest degree of all the perfections of all things. Not because that which is self-existent must therefore have all possible perfections (for this, though most certainly true in itself, yet cannot be so easily demonstrated *a priori*), but because it is impossible that any effect should have any perfection which was not in the cause. For if it had, then that perfection would be caused by nothing, which is a plain contradiction. Now an unintelligent being, it is evident, cannot be endowed with the perfections of all things in the world because intelligence is one of those perfections. All things, therefore, cannot arise from an unintelligent original, and consequently the self-existent being must of necessity be intelligent.<sup>15</sup>

Skeptic David Hume, however, disputed Samuel Clarke's position. In his *Treatise on Human Nature*,

Hume develops an account of causation that directly contradicts these causal principles. Contrary to the causal maxim, Hume maintains, it is entirely possible for us to conceive of something beginning to exist without any cause. To deny this implies no contradiction and, therefore, this principle is neither intuitively nor demonstratively certain.... Granting that whatever is conceivable or non-contradictory is possible, it follows that it is possible that there exists a causal series that came into existence uncreated or has always existed without any further cause or ground for its existence.<sup>16</sup>

Hume writes that "we shall find upon examination, that every demonstration, which has been produc'd for the necessity of a cause, is fallacious and sophistical."<sup>17</sup> Hume believes that the necessity of God being the one who brings everything into existence cannot be proven true. On the other hand, however, for someone holding Hume's position, it would also seem they need to admit that neither can the necessity of a cause for everything be proven untrue. Hume's skepticism here, and in other places, actually frees the modern intellect from the rule of a single mindset that requires positivistic empirical proof alone. William Dembski also indicts Hume:

In his *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, David Hume raised two main criticisms against design. One criticism is that design at best constitutes a weak argument from analogy. The other criticism is that design fails as an inductive generalization since there is no prior sample on which to base it. Both Hume's criticisms miss the mark. Inferring design is neither an argument from analogy nor an inductive generalization but an inference to the best explanation. Inference to the best explanation ... remains a valid mode of scientific reasoning. Hume's refutation of design therefore attacks a straw man.<sup>18</sup>

So it seems, then, that in order to break away from being limited by the big eye of science, we need only move to the other end of the telescope.

## Other Problems

IT'S NOT AS SIMPLE AS I WOULD like to make it sound. Various problems arise in the connection between the creation event of religion and a world-order design fitted in and under Darwin's evolutionary process. David Hume had sharply objected to the lack of verification for the metaphysical and insisted on the empirical certainty of natural causes. Over time, numerous instances of miscommunication and misunderstanding have occurred, along with the dismissal of many presuppositions and differing viewpoints, all leading to a common yet formidable stalemate in the paradigmatic debate. But scientific authority has come to be expressed in a rather common assumption: if we cannot understand it on our own terms, then it must not be real. Humans often exhibit a tendency to believe they should be able to grasp all reality in an exhaustive definition and thus attain full knowledge and certain confirmation of everything, much like Adam and Eve desired in the Garden.

So how difficult is it to simply commit to believing in a God we cannot see or verify? The problem here is the question we are asking: how can we know what we are saying, how can we describe our conundrum, or how can we even have topics that prompt us to ask such questions? All these things are the products of a God who created us in the first place. John Lennox effectively illustrates the philosophical and perceptual category error made by deist naturalism, which persists in the current scientific worldview: *the notion that the creature is its own creator*. Lennox's clever story tells of a man who supposed that a Mr. Ford must be inside a Ford car, making it operate. When the man examined the internal functions of the Ford engine, he realized that Mr. Ford could not be found within it because the engine's inner workings showed no evidence of the actual Mr. Ford as the man had expected to find. As a result, he completely denies the existence of Mr. Ford because of Mr. Ford's complete absence from those internal operations. At this point Lennox indicts the errant man's misunderstanding of the ontological situation for assuming Mr. Ford to be only within the creation of the mechanisms of the car itself and not its actual creator. Lennox therefore identifies the indictment:

In philosophical terminology [the man is] committing a category mistake. Had there never been a Mr. Ford to design the mechanisms, none would exist for him to understand. It is likewise a category mistake to suppose that our understanding of the impersonal principles according to which the universe works makes it either unnecessary or impossible to believe in the existence of a personal Creator who designed, made, and upholds the universe. In other words, we should not confuse the mechanisms by which the universe works either with its cause or its upholder.<sup>19</sup>

This logical fallacy sharply illustrates the thinking prevalent in modern science, demonstrating what routinely occurs in our unbelieving world, so much so that even

the confusion it causes has also become blurred. The questions surrounding the existence of an intelligent God behind the design of the world and the evidence of that God within the natural artifacts of physical and empirical observation each create havoc when the baseline for acceptance and truth becomes misplaced. What science provides for our earthly understandings and what religion promises for our spiritual care are easily confused for each other. Our discussion is strongly polarized; even the variety of interpretation within the Christian community is often overlooked and stereotyped into a strict creationism that dismisses any empirical values. The vital distinction between recognizing the intelligence of the design itself and identifying the Designer behind it becomes much obscured.<sup>20</sup>

A vivid and striking example of this global perceptual rift particularly within the academic community is evident in a rather lop-sided academic article on “Creationism.” Its simplistic comparison of intelligent design theory and what it refers to as traditional creationism demonstrates an arrogant self-authority in a dismissive characterization of intelligent design theory and its community as “creationism-lite.” It does so by calling out a prominent creationist member’s request for funding, even as he is “a strong believer in the eschatological significance of Israel,” and complaining as well that “they are always quoting the first chapter of John” and that “they share the same concern about the moral values of the creationists—anti-abortion, anti-homosexuality, pro-capital punishment, pro-Israel (for eschatological reasons) and so forth.”<sup>21</sup> This prejudicial lack of class and its misguided pejorative critique of Christians who seek to understand God’s design in the real world around them are neither helpful nor professional and tarnishes the reputation of the philosophical academy.

Nonetheless, I stand my ground and hold to the outrageous suggestion that we truly return to what once *was* the normal assumption: the simple and genuine acceptance of the reality of a theophysical causality from an all-powerful and life-determining God who acts within us and sustains all life in accordance with his divine and yet unknowable will. This means submission to that which we cannot prove; it means letting go of the empirical umbilical cord that scientific certainty clings to for safety; it means magnifying the perspective of our world telescopically in order for us to see it as intended by the designing and creating God. However, to achieve this, we must take one final critical step in clarifying our position: we must split deism in half. We need to acknowledge the intelligence of intrinsic design by the biblical God of faith and its evidence in the physical world, but we must jettison the crude “watchmaker naturalism” that has previously explained the argument for design as being of a God who can and must be found only within the natural creation itself.

William Dembski agrees, even as he recognizes the ongoing misunderstandings that accompany the leftover assumptions and terminology of naturalism: “Design arguments are old hat. Indeed design arguments continue to be a staple of philosophy and religion courses.”<sup>22</sup> Likewise, his terminology of natural and intelligent causes

for God’s design of the world helps clarify the difference between the creature and the Creator: “Whether an intelligent cause operates within or outside nature (i.e., is respectively natural or supernatural) is a separate question entirely from whether an intelligent cause *has* operated.”<sup>23</sup> This distinction in truly understanding the bigger picture also illustrates the same category mistake mentioned by John Lennox and is likely the best argument to be made for the simple assumption of *faithful inquiry* as the automatic starting point for any discussion: scientific, design-oriented, or spiritual.

## Theophysical Causality as Reality

LET US CONSIDER ANEW HOW TO *think with the assumption* of theophysical causality and examine all aspects of life through the scope of a *faithful inquiry* that perceives God’s creation as it is intended for us by His blessing, allowing us to utilize our free will in order to serve and bear witness to Him. What then does it truly mean to believe this simple yet staggering assumption that God *actually is* real? But the assumption has been with us all along! For is this not simply a restatement of the full and literal understanding of what it means to say “I believe in God”? Yet we have been ensnared by the human comfort of empirical certainty and have been told since Socrates and before that we should seek certain autonomous proof. Even as the details of the ancient Hebrew biblical account of the theophysical causation of all creation provide a rather specific form and description to the way it happened *at that time* in the moment it occurred, evidence of intelligent design within God’s creation is also something observed *after the fact*, and as something which holds an irreducible complexity<sup>24</sup> grasped only in hindsight, and then seen as a product of such creation. Therefore, each must be understood within its own individual context, just as both are intended by God in the form—whether physical or metaphysical—by which they present themselves and are seen as *evidence of reality* because they are *of God*, just as we assume in our *faithful inquiry*.

I am arguing that the kind of *faithful inquiry* I describe does not imply a simple naïveté that might be assumed; it should be understood that a Pauline mindset of mature Christianity employs a stewardship of thought that will prevent simplistic or wildly deductive conclusions about spiritual meaningfulness or even just basic metaphysical concepts. My thesis is not a blind defense that naïvely accepts anything and everything that appears remotely religious without a critical sense of scrutiny or wise understanding. Nor does it wish to discard the worth of scientific inquiry and validation. At the same time, the identifiable presence of design can and should be simply recognized as evidence of God’s creative work in the world and be used wisely and productively. Yet in all this, we must still insist that the acceptance of this *truth of reality* concerning the divine creating God is a matter of faith—*child-like faith*—and is something that by its very nature does not require any scientific

empirical proof. This very concept is what the teaching of our Lord Jesus calls us to embrace: “Blessed are those who have *not seen* and yet have believed” (John 20:29b, emphasis added). These words were spoken to Thomas, who had refused to believe the witness of his fellow companions after they had seen the resurrected Jesus.

The authors of the New Testament were highly concerned about evidence for the resurrection of Jesus. In other words, the writers of the New Testament note that reliable witnesses could attest to having seen, touched, and heard the resurrected Jesus. They did not have “faith” in the resurrection of Jesus. They had actually witnessed the living, bodily resurrected Jesus, who had been dead. What they had “faith” in was the promise of what this real resurrection did *for them*. It demonstrated that Jesus was indeed who he claimed to be, that his death was truly for the forgiveness of *their* sins. This resurrected Jesus had the power to actually give them life, *eternal life*.

Writing some twenty-five years after the event of the resurrection, the Apostle Paul could still give the names of the people who witnessed the bodily resurrected Jesus. He writes to the Christians in the city of Corinth, some of whom were having doubts about the resurrection:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received:  
that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures,  
that he was buried,  
that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,  
and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the Twelve.

After that he appeared to over five hundred brothers at the same time, most of whom are still alive, but some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, and then to all the apostles. Last of all, he appeared also to me (1 Cor 15:3-8a; EHV).

Paul had such confidence in the bodily resurrection of Jesus that he lists the evidence: those people who had actually seen him. Not just one or two, but as many as five hundred, and most of these people were still alive after twenty-five years. At the time of the writing of this article, the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001, is close to being twenty-five years in the past. After all of those years, I can still remember it quite well. If someone who had not lived at that time asked me about it now, I could give an honest, true, and accurate description of it. By listing people who were still alive at the time of his writing to the Corinthians, Paul is saying that the resurrection of Jesus is based on actual evidence.

Philosopher, theologian, and apologist John Warwick Montgomery notes the following in his book *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics*:

Christian faith is not blind faith or credulity; it is grounded in fact. To talk about a real but unprovable resurrection is as foolish as to talk about

supra-historical or spiritual resurrections. They are all cop-outs—sincere, certainly, but terribly harmful in an age longing to hear the meaningful affirmation, “He is risen!” ... [Jesus] rose in the very history in which we are embedded.<sup>25</sup>

A reliable witness is what gives valid evidence to the proof of the resurrection. In the case of the existence of God as divine Creator, it is the universe itself that gives testimony to the reality of this creating God. “The heavens tell about the glory of God,” writes the Psalmist. “The expanse of the sky proclaims the work of his hands. Day after day, they pour out their speech. Night after night, they display knowledge” (Psalm 19:1-2; EHV). Just as a skyscraper is evidence of a designer and builder, so the universe itself bears witness to its designer and builder.

To be alive as a creation of God also means we still live in and grapple with the empirical world which surrounds us, where the evidence of intelligent design is in fact found in the form of reasonable and sound scientific logic. This evidence possesses a uniquely irreducible complexity that seems to satisfy the demand of inquiry found in humanity’s need for proof in and for itself. But since that inquiry must be satisfied on its own terms, it contradicts the straightforward and simple acceptance of a “childlike faith,” which does not need *to see* any human evidence, but simply relies on the testimony of the existence of the universe itself, and so believes like a child. Nonetheless, we remain aware how “childlike” can also imply a naïveté that leads to ignorance and undermines a more effective engagement of Christian intellect in our modern and postmodern world.

But the real case to be made here is for a faith assured by the theophysical causality of a divine creating God who is *unmoved* by the scientific proof of human definition in any way: this very same mindset of faith still advises us that the ultimate *need* for such proof is irrelevant. We can never fully know God’s ways or see the future because it is “prolepsed” and is still in the process of being revealed in anticipation of Christ’s final return and our salvation, as it was begun in Christ’s resurrection—and thus the reason for our acceptance by faith of that which we cannot verify. Twentieth-century theologian and philosopher Wolfhart Pannenberg provides the crucial support for my thesis assertion with this “prolepsed” revelatory connection in the Maker’s ongoing and sustaining intelligence and the theophysical causality of God’s divine sovereignty over the autonomy of the natural human world as its divine creating Lord. Pannenberg identifies God as the “All-Determining Reality”<sup>26</sup> who becomes accessible to us by acting in our present human world as he integrates his loving power and salvation into *our reality*.

And what can it mean for us that God is “all-determining” of reality? If we truly grasp this idea in earnest, we discover that we continually remain in contact with God’s loving and powerful presence. This realization aligns with St. Paul’s encour-

agement to “pray unceasingly” (1 Thess 5:17) as if God truly is “right there” with us at all times. Is this not what we should believe about our God, who is omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient? What we should also believe is that this God possesses *real* power in the present world, and thus is our present reality and the basis of our Christian faith. This *real* God reveals his wise and determining will for us through an ongoing revelation of love which began with the creation of our existence and continues for us through both “the now and the not yet” in a prolepsis with Christ’s resurrection and its currently-unfinished-but-certain-to-be-fulfilled completion on the day of his return in final victory. His *real* historical resurrection guarantees this.

Our faithful response must be to recognize him as the only saving reality by whom we are moved to serve throughout our lives, using his gifts and blessings to respond in grateful thanksgiving. A wise and productive Christian perspective of *faithful inquiry* does just this; and since assuming God *is real* directs us to see all the world from the initial viewpoint of God’s divine sovereignty, science must also reset its parameters and re-orient its method of inquiry toward the objective natural world to be one of a *faithful inquiry* that recognizes the cosmos first from the position of a “creature” who knows its *real* Creator, as well as the faith that his love engenders. Scientific inquiry can still be commonly observed as it always has been, and it may be even further blessed through its *faithful inquiry*, expanding and developing into capacities we cannot currently imagine, provided by a divine Maker who is in fact responsible for *all* natural and intelligent worldly causes and effects. Furthermore, such a dramatic shift in the method of inquiry, away from the big eye of science and the need for certain evidence of metaphysicality, will not cause us to lose out on the benefits of the valuable artifacts placed here by God and found in the incomprehensible yet reassuring design of specified and irreducible complexity; all of these wonders remain within the scope of the natural world.

We must acknowledge that the question at hand ultimately revolves around whether one truly believes God is the *real* Lord and Sovereign of all existence. When reduced to its most basic epistemological tenet, this is the bottom-line issue. By starting from the intended end of the telescope, I posit 1) that science will reveal to us the genuine fruits of the Lord’s creation and blessings upon the physical natural world, and 2) that design in all its complexity makes perfectly logical sense when viewed as coming from a loving God who is the all-knowing, all-powerful, and all-present theophysical causation that is all-determining of the everyday epistemological and ontological expressions of our reality. Our human make-up reflects the very same design as the *Imago Dei*, the image of Christ, who is that same creating Lord and who came to us and became one of us to fulfill his promise of our all-determined reality with him. A *faithful inquiry* in response can do naught else but serve him with our lives, even as he strengthens our own faith

with a power that is internalized into all of our intended being as loved creatures of a divine Creator. We will gain a more profound understanding of this amazingly complex, divine creation and all-determining reality when we truly take the leap of faith and *acknowledge the actual reality* of the divine, creating Lord. In so doing, we will observe and understand through the larger lens of God's wisdom, for that is looking in the *right* way through the telescope.

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## Notes

1. John C. Lennox, *God's Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Oxford, UK: Lion Hudson, 2009), 45.
2. Ian Barbour, *Religion and Science: Historical and Contemporary Issues* (Harper San Francisco, 1997), 195ff.
3. Charles Hodge, *What is Darwinism?* (New York: Scribner, Armstrong, and Company, 1874), 43.
4. Hodge, *What is Darwinism?*, 44.
5. Hodge, *What is Darwinism?*, 47-48.
6. Lennox, *God's Undertaker*, 60.
7. Keith Ward, *God, Chance, and Necessity* (Oxford, UK: One World Publications, 1996), 7.
8. Del Ratzsch and Jeffrey Koperski, "Teleological Arguments for God's Existence," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2023 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2023/entries/teleological-arguments/> [italics in original]. Accessed April 25, 2025.
9. Ratzsch and Koperski, "Teleological Arguments for God's Existence."
10. Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 77-105, is a very helpful chapter on four typologies for describing the relationships and interactions between science and religion. "Ways of Relating Science and Religion" provides a nomenclature of evaluative proximity between the two, showing how each characteristic of a relationship might assist (or not) in discussion. Barbour's four types include 1) conflict, 2) independence, 3) dialogue and 4) integration; my current thesis assumes God's presence in the first place and thus would seek through dialogue to realize design and bring science into a state of integration that productively communicates and reveals the universe as intended by its divine Maker.
11. Barbour, *Religion and Science*, 125ff., likewise describes 20th-century philosopher Thomas Kuhn's process of paradigm recognition in shifting historical eras of thinking with varying and ever-developing theories, worldview mindsets, etc.; it is also an essential assessment tool for any discussion of the relationships between science and religion.

12. See Timothy Yenter and Ezio Vailati, "Samuel Clarke," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2024 Edition) Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/clarke/>. Accessed June 14, 2025.
13. Paul Russell & Anders Kraal, "Hume on Religion," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2024 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-religion/>. Accessed April 25, 2025.
14. Russell & Kraal, "Hume on Religion."
15. Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God and Other Writings*, ed. Ezio Vailati (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 38-39. Philosopher Richard Swinburne writes that in his "view the two most persuasive and interesting versions of the cosmological argument are that given by Leibniz in his paper 'On the Ultimate Origination of Things,' and that given by his contemporary Samuel Clarke in his Boyle Lectures for 1704 and published under the title *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*." Swinburne notes that Leibniz's argument "seems to be" the one "criticized by Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*" and Clarke's argument "is criticized by Hume in the *Dialogues*." Richard Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 2004), 136.
16. Paul Russell and Anders Kraal, "Hume on Religion."
17. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 1888), 80.
18. William Dembski, *Intelligent Design: The Bridge between Science and Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 271
19. Lennox, *God's Undertaker*, 45.
20. Lennox, *God's Undertaker*, 11.
21. Michael Ruse, "Creationism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2022 Edition), Edward N. Zalta & Uri Nodelman (eds.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/creationism/>. Accessed April 26, 2025.
22. Dembski, *Intelligent Design*, 105.
23. Dembski, *Intelligent Design*, 105 [italics mine].
24. Dembski, *Intelligent Design*, 146ff., provides a thorough discussion of Michael Behe's "irreducible complexity," demonstrating how remarkable and unfathomable an autonomous human design of any such system can be, let alone attributing it to the divine Designer. Earlier, Dembski, on 127ff., discusses "specified complexity" as the primary process by which any creative intelligent causes may function. Both sections provide a glimpse at what anyone might yet be convinced is evidence of God's divine providence and all-powerful creating omniscience in the real world.
25. John Warwick Montgomery, *Faith Founded on Fact: Essays in Evidential Apologetics* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1978), 79.
26. cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, trans. Francis McDonagh (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1969), 296.