

a god who surrenders his wisdom and creative capacity and allows an interplay of chance and necessity to produce physical suffering in the world. This, Polkinghorne believes, is a 'great good' and its necessity is further denoted by a fecundity of death and extinction that enabled the world to produce us.<sup>4</sup>

Theistic evolutionists have little wiggle room. The consequences of McGrath's belief that God can, and did, use evolution can be read from Polkinghorne's writings. This entails a ubiquity of death, struggle and misery, and is a Mephistophelian barter that says goodbye, forever, to a revelation of the God who is love and who would use wisdom over happenstance.

McGrath's book is a veiled apologetic for a very pagan and paralogical idea. It also wants the Christian to believe that an atheistic pseudo-scientific explanation of a cosmos emptied of God can somehow be shanghaied into the service of Christianity, without providing an iota of argument as to how it is possible to accomplish this act. In the very least it hubristically implies that atheism doesn't even understand its own ideas.

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## Paley: still relevant

A review of  
*Natural Theology or the  
Evidences of the Existence  
and Attributes of a Deity*  
by William Paley  
Coachwhip Publications  
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As Darwin's *Origin of Species* is considered the bible of evolutionary naturalism, likewise William Paley's *Natural Theology* is considered the bible of both Creationism and Intelligent Design. Once required reading in British Universities for several decades, it was a highly influential work for generations.<sup>1</sup> First published in 1802, it has been out of print for many years. Now available in rare book shops only, a copy typically costs hundreds of dollars (if one can be located). Many printings and editions of Paley exist. My copy is the 1835 edition, and is too expensive (and fragile) to study. A 1997 edition, edited by Bill Cooper, was abridged and the language updated.<sup>2</sup> The edition reviewed here is a low-cost, newly-typeset, paper-bound reprint that allows this classic to again be read (and appreciated) in its original form by modern readers. This edition contains a list of print resources that support design arguments grouped by subject (pp. 283–290). It also contains many line drawings and provides an excellent conclusion.

### The importance of Paley

Often attacked by atheists and Darwin supporters alike, few of whom have read the book, Paley's masterpiece is as relevant today as it was 200 years ago. This is in marked contrast to Darwin's work, which is now widely recognized as full of errors, such as his pangenesis claim and Lamarckian



teaching.

Paley's *Natural Theology* inspired a set of eight treatises (10 volumes) published in the 1830s.<sup>3</sup> The set was commissioned in accordance with the Last Will and Testament of the eighth Earl of Bridgewater to illustrate 'the Power, Wisdom, and Goodness of God, as Manifested in the Creation'. The main goal of these volumes, collectively known as the *Bridgewater Treatises*, was to demonstrate God's existence from a careful detailed study of nature.<sup>4</sup> Several of the volumes were 'written by leading scientists of the period, including William Whewell (who coined the term scientist) and William Buckland (one of the period's foremost geologists)'.<sup>4</sup>

It was Paley's *Natural Theology* that greatly impressed Darwin when he was a student at Cambridge. Darwin respected these arguments to the 'highest degree', and even claimed that his study of Paley was the only part of his university training that was of use to educate the mind. He was 'charmed and convinced by the long line of argumentation'. Paley's was also one of the few books that Darwin took with him on his five-year-long voyage aboard the *Beagle*, and Paley's work had, according to Proctor,

'... exercised a profound influence on the early development of his

thought. Here was a catalogue of countless wonderful adaptations—the downy feathers on ducks, beautifully adapted for warmth; the long tongues of woodpeckers, perfectly designed for catching grubs in trees. Darwin did not deny these facts, but simply interpreted them through a different lens. The mechanisms discussed by Paley ... were evidence not of design but of evolutionary adaptation. ... Paley ... had made many good observations, but he simply got the theory wrong.<sup>5</sup>

Darwin's *Origin of Species* is in some ways a rewrite of Paley, only the designer in Darwin's work is natural selection instead of God. As Proctor concluded:

'Darwin did not deny the wondrous beauty of natural adaptations. This was apparent to anyone who bothered to look. Darwin differed from others, however, in his views on the *origins* of this beauty. The origin of apparent design was the adaptation to changing environments resulting from competition and the struggle for existence. It was an irony of natural history that the struggle that appeared so cruel in nature was, in fact, the very force responsible for the appearance of design.'<sup>6</sup>

Paley's *Natural Theology* is essentially a book of human and animal anatomy and physiology. It was written to demonstrate the natural world's incredible complexity and the harmony of design, a fact that precludes its creation by evolution, thus arguing for the existence of God. A few examples include the membrane protecting a fish's eye and the lens, as a set, are perfectly compatible with the refractive index of water, thus preventing light distortion. Spiders that can ambush or chase down pray hunt, as do most carnivorous insects. Those spiders that cannot procure their food by actively hunting for it make ingeniously designed webs and wait for their prey to come to them. Similar examples surely must be in the millions.

The main topic of this work is of central importance for theism because most people today list the existence of the creation as the *number one reason* why they believe in God—they correctly reason that a creation demands a creator. As Shermer concluded, 'the good design, natural beauty, perfection, and complexity of the world or universe compels us to think that it could not have come about without an intelligent designer. In other words, people say they believe in God because the evidence of their senses tells them so.'<sup>7</sup>

For this reason, many militant atheists attack the classic cosmological design argument as elegantly expressed in Paley's work, to win converts to the atheism faith.

The teleological argument, often called the argument from design, has for centuries been listed by theists as the *major* evidence of the Creator's existence. The best known illustration of teleology is Paley's watch analogy, first introduced in his *Natural Theology*. The analogy is as follows:

If a traveler unfamiliar with mechanical timepieces finds a watch on a road, its design and specific complexity will convince him that it has an intelligent maker. Furthermore, we would be even more convinced that intelligence had created the watch if we learned it has built within it a tiny system of machines such as milling machines, drill presses, and hand tools like hammers, all of which function together to produce other watches similar to the first. If we learned this: 'Would this not make us wonder even more at the greatness and intelligence of its creator?'<sup>8</sup> When the design and construction of life is evaluated, one is forced to conclude that, it too, consists of a complex mechanism that has many similarities to a watch. If a traveler found a detailed working model of a human eye on a road, he would also quickly conclude that its mechanical design and precision indicated that it was designed by

some genius.

This analogy has traditionally been used to argue for theism in the biological world, and the discoveries of the last century show that physics also can now be used to prove design in the atomic world as well.<sup>9</sup> If a traveler found a working model of an atom on the road, he would likewise marvel at it. The universe functions due to laws that result from its tailor-made precision, and this is best illustrated by life itself.

One of the many examples that Paley provided as evidence for design include what he called *preparation* or prospect contrivances. This is where biological events appear to be designed, not with an immediate goal, but with an *end goal* in mind. A simple example is the development of the human body. A specific example Paley discusses includes the development of teeth and bones, but thousands of other examples could be given with little trouble by any anatomist or embryologist. Although Paley's preparation idea was elaborated before Darwin's 1859 work, it argues against Darwinism because natural selection can select an organ or structure *only* when the organ or structure is functional and provides a clear selection advantage—and developing teeth are not functional, nor do they confer an advantage on an organism *until* they are functional. Until they are functional they may actually lower the survival odds slightly or more. *Preparation* implies purposeful design to achieve a *future* state or condition.

Many of the arguments that Paley refuted are still being used today by atheists and Darwinists. For example, many atheists and Darwinists try to argue that the body is full of examples of what they consider poor design, proving that no designer exists. In Paley's words, some question the existence of an intelligent creator by claiming that certain 'imperfection, inaccuracy, liability to disorder, occasional irregularities' exist in the body. Many of the examples once commonly used have now been decisively refuted by medical research, such as the alleged

poor design of humans. The back, the knee, and the eye retina (which critics claim is backward), are just a few examples of alleged poor design that still persist today in the literature critical of creationism in spite of the clear scientific evidence.<sup>10-12</sup> Paley then concludes that this claim does not argue against a Creator, noting that just as a watch may malfunction, or not keep perfect time, or some parts may be defective

‘without the smallest ground of suspicion from thence arising that it was not a watch, not made, or not made for the purpose ascribed to it. When faults are pointed out ... in order to vindicate the artist’s skill, or at least the perfection of it; as we must also judge of his intention, and of the provisions employed in fulfilling that intention, not from an instance in which they fail’ (p. 35).

Paley also uses *comparative anatomy* to argue for design, concluding that variations of a basic design are actually evidence of intelligence. The example he gave was an Arkwright’s mill, which was invented for spinning cotton, but was modified as necessary for spinning wool, flax, or hemp. Only those modifications of the original design that are required for the machine to work with different materials were made. The same is true in the natural world. In Paley’s words:

‘Whenever we find a general plan pursued, yet with such variations in it as are, in each case, required ... we possess ... the strongest evidence that can be afforded of intelligence and design—an evidence which ... completely excludes every other hypothesis’ (p. 111).

Paley concludes the proof that a machine was designed,

‘if it were possible to doubt while we saw it only under one mode, and in one form, when we came to observe it in its different applications ... we could not refuse any longer our assent to the proposition, that intelligence, properly and strictly so called—including, under that

name, foresight, consideration, reference to utility—had been employed, as well in the primitive plan as in the several changes and accommodations which it is made to undergo’ (p. 111).

As to Darwin’s favorite argument, homology, Paley argued it proves that intelligence produced an idea first, then modified it for other specific uses:

‘The idea is modified, not deserted. Strip a wing of its feathers, and it bears no obscure resemblance to the fore-leg of a quadruped. The articulations at the shoulder and the cubitus are much alike; and, what is a closer circumstance, in both cases the upper part of the limb consists of a single bone, the lower part of two’ (p. 120).

### The problem of evil

Paley also considered the problem of evil in nature, noting that what we may judge as cruel is often in this fallen world another creature’s way of making a living. Snakes must eat, and it is better that they first stun their victims with poisonous fangs, or frogs and mice might otherwise ‘be swallowed alive’ and suffer much. Another example is, one would hardly claim that a sickle was made to cut the reaper’s hand; although, due to the construction of the instrument and the manner of using it, this event often does follow (p. 273).

In contrast, instruments of torture or execution, pain and misery are the very purpose of their design. This is not found in the natural world; in most cases pain and misery are an unintended result, not the object, of the design. Conversely, pain that warns of disease or an unhealthy condition is a gift, necessary for health designed to get our attention, not to cause pain for the sake of pain.<sup>13</sup> Of course, suffering cannot be explained away so easily. This explanation, while it has some truth, overlooks the central Christian teaching that pain and suffering entered the world as a result of Adam’s sin. This fact is often overlooked in both

secular and sacred attempts to explain suffering. The claim that God would not create a world with so much of what seems like senseless suffering proves that God did not create the world, as Brown University Professor Kenneth Miller argues, requires an understanding of the effects of the fall.

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