

ANN GAUGER, PH.D., EDITOR

GOD'S GRANDEUR

The Catholic Case
for Intelligent Design

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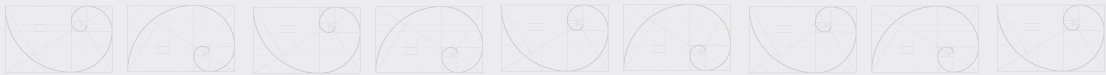
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*“For from the greatness and beauty of created things
comes a corresponding perception of their Creator.”*

(Wisdom 13:5)



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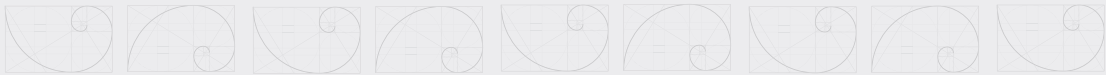
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PREFACE





Chapter 1

God's Grandeur: The Catholic Case for Intelligent Design

Ann Gauger

*The world is charged with the grandeur of God.
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil;
It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil
Crushed. Why do men then now not reck his rod?*
— Gerard Manley Hopkins

THE WORLD — indeed, the universe — is charged with grandeur. Everything speaks of beauty, power, and purpose — of design. The elegant relationships of the laws of physics, the stunning elemental properties that permit life, the sophisticated ways of living things, and the interdependence of the biosphere all reveal the hand of a designer.

This should come as no surprise to believers in God. The three great monotheistic religions all acknowledge God as Creator of all things. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,” Scripture says (Gen. 1:1). This can be clearly seen, the apostle Paul declares, so we are without excuse, because God’s works reveal His nature and power (see Rom. 1:20).

Scripture also says that when God created human beings, He created them in His own image and likeness, male and female, and it was very good. Pope Benedict XVI put it this way: “We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary.”¹

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, Homily (April 24, 2005).

Man's Refusal

Clearly, though, many do not acknowledge this, despite the grandeur of creation. Victorian-era poet and priest Gerard Manley Hopkins raises the necessary question, "Why do men then now not reckon [i.e., have regard for] his rod?" Why do they not recognize God's power and His tremendous gift in Creation? This question is both profound and urgent. Unbelief is not new, but it is omnipresent now, and it must be said that this is in large part due to the influence of radical materialism in our culture, not the kind that urges us toward the endless accumulation of goods, but the kind that claims we are nothing more than molecules in motion, matter, and energy. *Scientific materialism*, as it is called, denies anything immaterial, including the soul, goodness, truth, beauty, free will, and God. Everything is self-defined and relative. There is no ground of being, no ultimate cause, no reason. The universe is meaningless, the product of blind, purposeless forces. Says atheist evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, "The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference."²

One charge brought against God is that He is unnecessary. Physics and cosmology can explain the universe's existence and fine-tuning. Purely unguided natural processes can explain the wondrous forms of life, past and present. And we humans are the product of blind evolutionary processes that did not have us in mind. Our young people are taught this doctrine in school, often with an overt challenge to religious belief. The materialist doctrine is also preached by nearly all secular media.

I write this to you as a scientist and a Catholic. It disturbs me that science should be used to deny purpose and meaning and everything immaterial. It angers me that it is used as an argument against God, when it is clear to me that science, rightly understood, points toward God, not away from Him, and evidence of His design is everywhere.

Science as Challenge to Faith

Unfortunately, it is not only materialist scientists who deny nature's intelligent design. Many Catholic proponents of evolution are convinced that

² Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden: A Darwinian View of Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), 133.

the evidence for evolution is profound and undeniable. They simultaneously deny that there is any evidence of intelligent design. This is a curious thing. *Evolution* is an ambiguous word. It can mean change over time, as in “over time, the population of bacteria evolved antibiotic resistance,” an unexceptional, observable statement of fact. One also hears statements that claim common ancestry between groups: “Dogs, foxes, and wolves are all evolved from a common ancestor.” This statement is based on the idea that similarity implies ancestral relatedness, an idea that predated Darwin. Neither of these statements is intrinsically inimical to the Faith — change over time and common ancestry can be argued from the fossil record and the record in our genomes. However, neither record conclusively reveals which processes might be responsible, either evolution or intelligent design, or a combination of the two. Provided one acknowledges that God guided the evolutionary process in some manner, Catholics are free to accept common descent, with one exception — the Creation of man. We are all descendants of two first parents (monogenesis). Further, God directly creates each human soul at the moment of conception. This will be discussed in more detail in the chapter on human origins.

So why would some Catholics deny the detectable design of creation? I believe it is because it goes against scientific orthodoxy. They would rather find a theological work-around or reinterpret theology entirely than find themselves on the wrong end of the evolutionary biologists’ stick.

To handle the cognitive dissonance, Catholics like biologist Kenneth Miller, a Brown University professor, opt out of orthodoxy. Miller has said that if the tape of evolution were run forward again, “events might come out differently at every turn.” He expands on this unorthodox thought by opining, “Surely this means that mankind’s appearance on this planet was not preordained, that we are here not as the products of an inevitable procession of evolutionary success, but as an afterthought, a minor detail, a happenstance in a history that might just as well have left us out.”³

John Haught, a theologian at Georgetown University, has taken it a step further, by embracing evolution as a way for God to let the universe participate in its own Creation:

³ Kenneth R. Miller, *Finding Darwin’s God* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2002), 272.

A creator who makes a world that can make itself is much more deserving of our reverence than one who holds the world on puppet strings. An unrestrained imposition of divine “design” would in effect leave no room for anything other than God, no room for a world at all. A world that is perfectly “designed” from the outset would be incompatible with the biblical notion of creation. In fact, the whole thrust of Biblical literature is to have us look for perfection not in the world’s past or present but in its future. The creation is not a design, but a promise that turns the emergence of matter, life and mind into a dangerous but magnificent [*sic*] story.⁴

Known as *process theology*, Haught’s view smacks more of panentheism than Catholicism. It is also reminiscent of Teilhard de Chardin, who was a Jesuit priest, mystic, and paleontologist. Chardin was not a theologian, it must be noted, and his passionate writings about a new way to interpret the Gospel in the light of evolution drew fire. His writing was suppressed by the Church and is still viewed as heterodox by many. Yet from my limited reading, it is clear he was a man of deep devotion to Christ. He saw all of material creation aflame with God and growing toward perfection in God through human cooperation with God.⁵

For him, the figure of Christ had “three natures” — the human and divine in the Incarnation, and the cosmic, the Omega Point, toward which all things converged. I am no theologian either, but to me the traditional Christian view of Christ being both fully human and fully God makes any notion of a cosmic Christ superfluous.

Teilhard de Chardin died in 1955, only two years after the discovery of the structure of DNA. He knew nothing of the marvels of molecular biology that have been revealed in the last seventy years. How he would revel in the glories seen in nature now!

Other philosophers and scientists, including Edward Feser and Stephen Barr, declare that intelligent design theory is at odds not just with science, but

⁴ John Haught, “God after Darwin,” *The Montréal Review*, May 2011, accessed Feb 1, 2016, <http://www.themontrealreview.com/2009/God-after-Darwin.php>.

⁵ Teilhard de Chardin, *The Divine Milieu*, rev. edition, ed. George Wall (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1968), 63.

also with Thomas Aquinas and metaphysics. They claim that Aquinas's teaching on primary and secondary causation allows the acceptance of evolution, full stop. God holds all in His hands, but He allows all things to act according to their natures as secondary causes of their own change over time. This means that God ordained evolution as the means by which life came to be what it is today, but also that if He guided the random processes of evolution, He did so in such a way that His action was indistinguishable from blind material processes. Therefore, design is not detectable.⁶ Thomist philosophers who make this argument against intelligent design also accuse the theory of being mechanistic, and of denying Thomistic ideas of form, substance, and accident.

Whew. We address these arguments in chapters by theologian Michael Chaberek, O.P., biologist Richard von Sternberg, and philosopher Jay W. Richards. Briefly, the position of neo-Thomists who reject intelligent design relies on a philosophical dodge — namely, an equivocal definition of *randomness*. Scientists say that evolution is the result of random processes winnowed by natural selection. By *random* scientists mean unguided, without regard to the needs of the organism. They don't mean apparently random, yet guided by God. It should also be pointed out that even God cannot guide an unguided (random) process. Quantum indeterminacy is no help — see philosopher Robert C. Koons's chapter, "Design and Teleology." Also, this disagreement with intelligent design hinges on a faulty reading of Aquinas.

I offer a few additional comments. The first and most obvious is that theistic evolutionists are baptizing a theory first composed by Darwin as a substitute for the doctrine of special Creation, and intended to take the place (at least regarding the living world) of God the Creator. This theory is not toothless. Yet theistic evolutionists are doubling down on their commitment to evolution precisely at a time when many mainstream scientists have begun to question the efficacy of unguided evolution to account for life.

Sadly, their unquestioning acceptance of evolutionary theory in its entirety undermines the Faith, as explained below.

⁶ Francis Crick, co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, disagrees. "Biologists must constantly keep in mind that what they see was not designed, but rather evolved." So design is detectable!

Evolution and Creation

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, writing when he was Cardinal Ratzinger, in his book *In the Beginning* (1990), connected the loss of Creation theology to loss of faith in the Scriptures and the Church:

In fact, a theologian said not long ago that creation has now become an unreal concept. If one is to be intellectually honest one ought to speak no longer of creation but rather of mutation and selection. Are these words true? ... One answer was already worked out some time ago. ... It says that the Bible is not a natural science textbook, nor does it intend to be such ... one must distinguish between the form of portrayal and the content that is portrayed ... and its purpose ultimately would be to say one thing: *God* created the world. ...

I believe that this view is correct, but it is not enough. ... And so the suspicion grows that ultimately perhaps this way of viewing things is only a trick of the Church and of theologians who have run out of solutions. ... For one can ask: If theologians or even the Church can shift the boundaries here between image and intention, between what lies buried in the past and what is of enduring value, why can they not do so elsewhere — as for instance, with respect to Jesus' miracles? ...

Such an operation often ends up by putting the faith itself in doubt, by raising the question of the honesty of those who are interpreting it and of whether anything at all there is enduring. As far as theological views of this sort are concerned, finally, quite a number of people have the abiding impression that the Church's faith is like a jelly fish: no one can get a grip on it and it has no firm center. It is on the many halfhearted interpretations of the biblical Word which can be found everywhere that a sickly Christianity takes its stand — a Christianity which is no longer true to itself and which consequently cannot radiate encouragement and enthusiasm. It gives, instead, the impression of being an organization that keeps on talking although it has nothing else to say, because twisted words are not convincing and are only concerned to hide their emptiness.⁷

⁷ Cardinal Josef Ratzinger, *In the Beginning* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 1990), 12–17.

Theistic evolution is not a peripheral matter. It affects how we view ourselves, and that in turn affects how seriously we take the words of Scripture. I notice that every Easter Vigil Mass, the highest of high holy days, the first few readings are the first chapters of Genesis. The Church unites the first Adam in Genesis with the second Adam, Christ, in the Resurrection, to emphasize who we are destined to be. Think of it: we are destined to be with God forever and share in the fullness of His joy.

We are not meat machines. We are not souped-up apes. We are not determined by our genes or our upbringing, unable to choose right or wrong. We are children of God made in His image. We have a purpose in life. We have intellects and souls and free will. We are able to grow in knowledge about the deep mysteries of the universe in which we live because it is intelligible to us — we are rational beings and the world is ordered for discovery.

These are things we profess as Catholics. These are things for which evolutionary biology cannot give an account.

At some point we must face the issue honestly. Materialist evolution, and some forms of theistic evolution, are not in line with the teachings of the Church. Rather, science shows that the world is the Creation of an intentional and intelligent designer.

Outline of This Book

The scope of what can be drawn from the theme of design in creation is vast. We have chosen subjects most relevant to our theme, that is, how materialist evolution contradicts Catholic teaching on creation and how intelligent design confirms it. To eliminate some possible confusions at the outset, in the introduction philosopher Logan Paul Gage clarifies what we mean by design and what we don't.

The chapters that follow are organized into three main sections. The first section examines the scientific evidence for intelligent design. We present evidence from cosmology and the origin of life (physicist Brian Miller), paleontology (paleontologist Günter Bechly), and biology (biochemist Michael Behe and biologist Ann Gauger) that reveal the necessity of a designer. We discuss what human nature and Catholic teaching reveal about our origin, and how Catholic teaching may fit with scientific evidence.

In the second section of the book, we look at the philosophical arguments about design and evolution. We discuss teleology (how things are made for a purpose), how it contradicts materialism, as well as any idea that God had no knowledge of how things would turn out (philosopher Robert C. Koons). We consider the philosophy of mind (Dr. Michael Egnor), the distinctiveness of the human person (Dr. Scott Ventureyra), natural law (philosopher Benjamin Wiker), moral law (philosopher J. Budziszewski), the intelligibility of nature (Benjamin Wiker), and the existence of beauty as a transcendental (Logan Paul Gage).

In the final section, we look at what theology says about the design of nature. We highlight that Scripture is full of references to God's design (theologian John Bergsma), and the glory of God revealed in creation (Fr. Pedro Barrajón, L.C.). We engage the argument by theistic evolutionists and others, who claim that God's design is hidden and cannot be detected (Fr. Michael Chaberek, O.P., biologist and philosopher Richard von Sternberg, and philosopher Jay W. Richards). We offer a challenge to the Church on why she needs to embrace the debate over intelligent design, not suppress it (Bruce Chapman).

The concluding chapter of the book (Dr. Anthony Esolen) offers a broad vision of nature that abandons reductive materialism and embraces the reality that nature is much more like a living symphony than a machine, a formula, or a random collision of atoms.

The reader may choose the chapters of most interest or read from beginning to end. Citations and additional reading are provided. Some chapters are more technical than others, so when necessary, we provide definitions and explanations in the footnotes.

I want to thank Discovery Institute's founder Bruce Chapman for his role in initiating this book project and for his constant encouragement. This book would not be the same without him. I also want to recognize Jay W. Richards and Fr. Michael Chaberek, O.P., for serving as contributing editors for philosophy and theology, respectively. I am most grateful for their expertise. This volume brings together in one place arguments from some of the best minds in Catholicism, arguments against materialism and in support of God's intentional design in all created things, in a form that anyone can read and appreciate. The clarity brought by viewing each subject through the lens of design is bracing. Beauty takes her rightful place, philosophy shines her light, and theology's

magnificence is revealed. Biology, no longer mistress, is handmaid, and physics and chemistry announce God's wonders. Christian anthropology reveals the mystery of grace, and, like children, we sweep away the dust and cobwebs and find every kind of plenitude beneath.



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Scott Ventureyra is author or editor of several books: *On the Origin of Conscientiousness*, *COVID-19: A Dystopian Delusion*, and *Making Sense of Nonsense*. Dr. Ventureyra completed his Ph.D. in theology at Carleton University/Dominican University College in Ottawa, and he has written in the domains of philosophical theology, systematic theology, natural theology, philosophy of religion, and science-theology interaction. He has published in academic journals such as *Science et Esprit*, the *American Journal of Biblical Theology*, *Studies in Religion*, *Maritain Studies*, and *Dialogue*. He has written for magazines such as *Crisis*, *Convivium*, and *Catholic Insight*, and newspapers such as *The National Post*. He has served as the secretary-treasurer of the Canadian Jacques Maritain Association/L'association canadienne Jacques-Maritain and on the editorial board of the *American Journal of Biblical Theology*.

Benjamin Wiker

Benjamin Wiker, who is now retired, was a professor of political science and director of human life studies at Franciscan University of Steubenville. He is a senior fellow with Discovery Institute's Center for Science and Culture and the St. Paul Center for Biblical Theology. He received his Ph.D. in theological ethics from Vanderbilt University. He has published hundreds of articles, and 15 books, including *In Defense of Nature: the Catholic Unity of Environmental, Economic, and Moral Ecology* (Emmaus, 2017), *The Catholic Church and Science* (St. Benedict/TAN, 2011), and *A Meaningful World: How the Arts and Sciences Reveal the Genius of Nature* (IVP, 2006).