





# *Adrift in a Sea of Stars*

How Belief in God Gives Purpose and Meaning  
to Our Scientific Inquiry

By Dr. Chris Berg

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**INTRODUCTION**

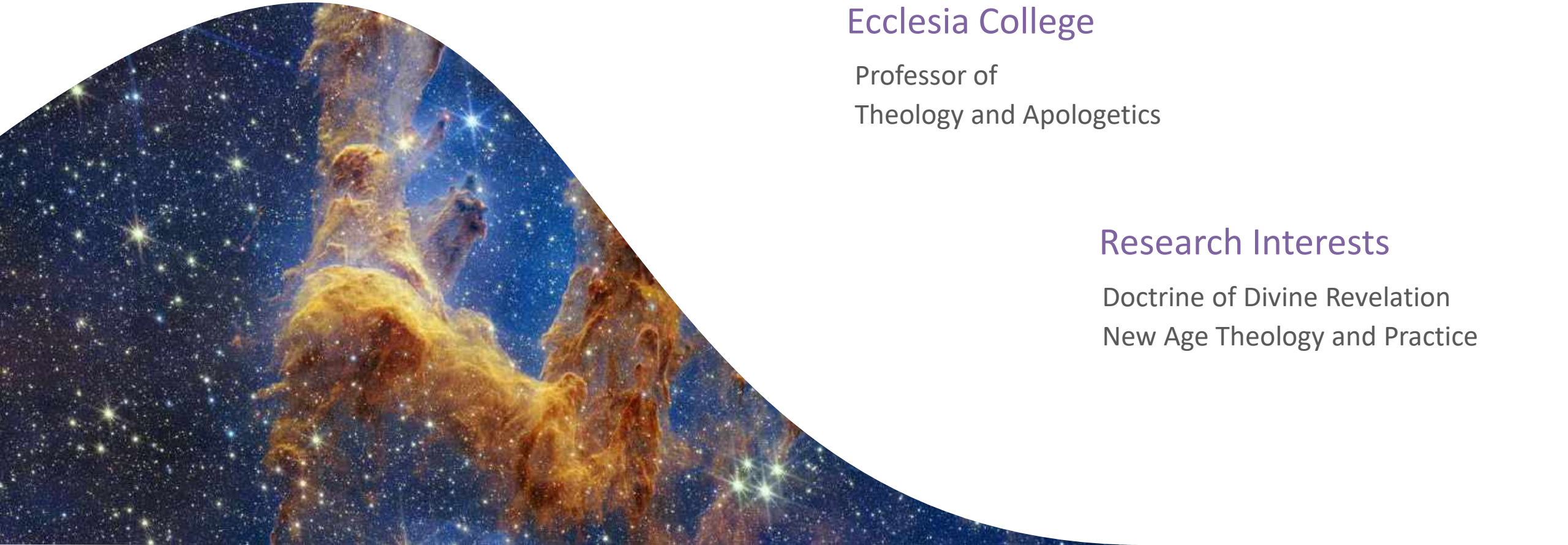
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Research Interests

Doctrine of Divine Revelation  
New Age Theology and Practice



# - Intersection +

- At the bedrock of every scientific quest is a worldview made up of presuppositions that the scientist holds
- These presuppositions are metaphysical in nature and always carry religious connotations



## - Examples +

- Nature will act in a consistent way.
  - A personal God exists who created the universe in a consistent and orderly way.
- Fundamental laws are immutable.
  - The universe was created to reflect the glory of God and be observable by humanity.



## - Examples

- Physical effects always have a physical cause connected to them.
  - (Listen to a talk on the nature of causality and you'll be jumping for a "God of the gaps" solution too!)



# - Reasoning +

- Scientists then use the tools of philosophy to set up experiments and, through sound logic, arrive at well formed conclusions.



# - Reasoning +

- The power of a scientist's presuppositions cannot be overstated
  - They direct the course of inquiry
  - They affect the rational/logical interpretations of the data
  - They restrict the number of valid conclusions





## - Examples +

- Ones worldview and presuppositions also determine the purpose and meaning of our scientific endeavors
  - Why do we conduct scientific experiments, ultimately?
  - How do we aesthetically view our discoveries?
  - In what ways do our discoveries bring us joy?





Perspective

## – Foundation<sup>+</sup>

- Perspective: In order to study the world fruitfully, you must look at it the right way
  - Polytheism – Capricious gods – no reason to expect the world to operate in a consistent way
  - Atheism – Lack of coherence, design, or patterns; there is no rational justification to assume stability
  - Monotheism – A personal God created an impersonal creation that follows regular patterns



# Motivation

## – Foundation<sup>+</sup>

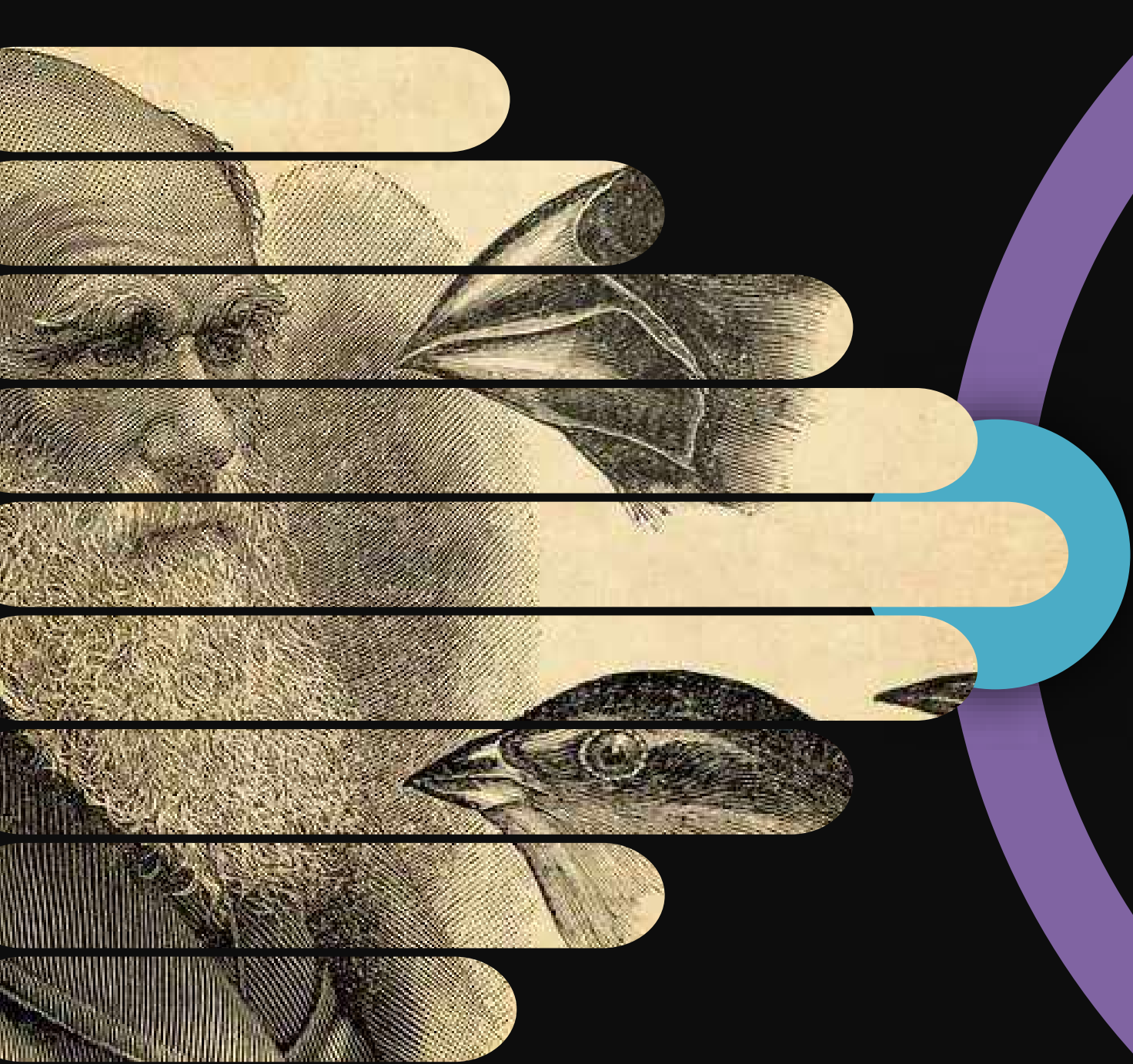
- Motivation: In order to study the world, we need the proper motivation to do so
  - Polytheism: The gods are capricious, thus the study of nature is a futile endeavor
  - Atheism: There is no guarantee of tomorrow, and no absolute purpose to the study of nature – existential futility. Additionally, the laws could change
  - Monotheism: The study of nature is a worthy pursuit to gain wisdom and glorify God. There is intrinsic value to studying nature because it is God's creation.



## Approach

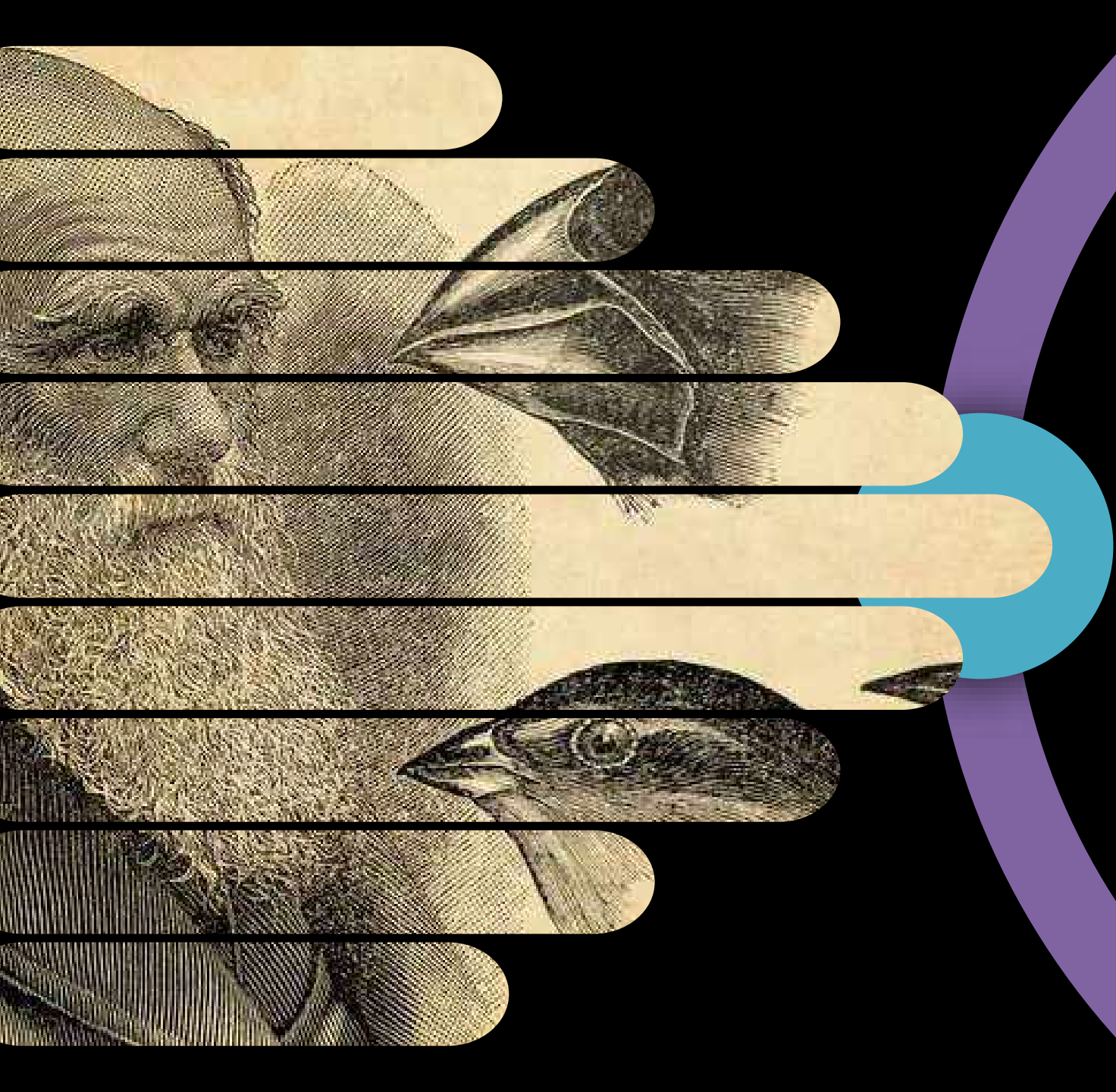
# – Foundation +

- Approach: In order to study the world, you need to be patient, expect the unexpected, and trust others
  - Polytheism: Progress is linked to appeasing the gods
  - Atheism: survival of the fittest and the ethics that follows
  - Monotheism: Teaches that hard work is good and satisfying
    - Going out into the world is the best way to investigate it
    - Feynman – “Science is the belief in the ignorance of experts”
    - Ethics – Teaches collegiality and high ethical standards



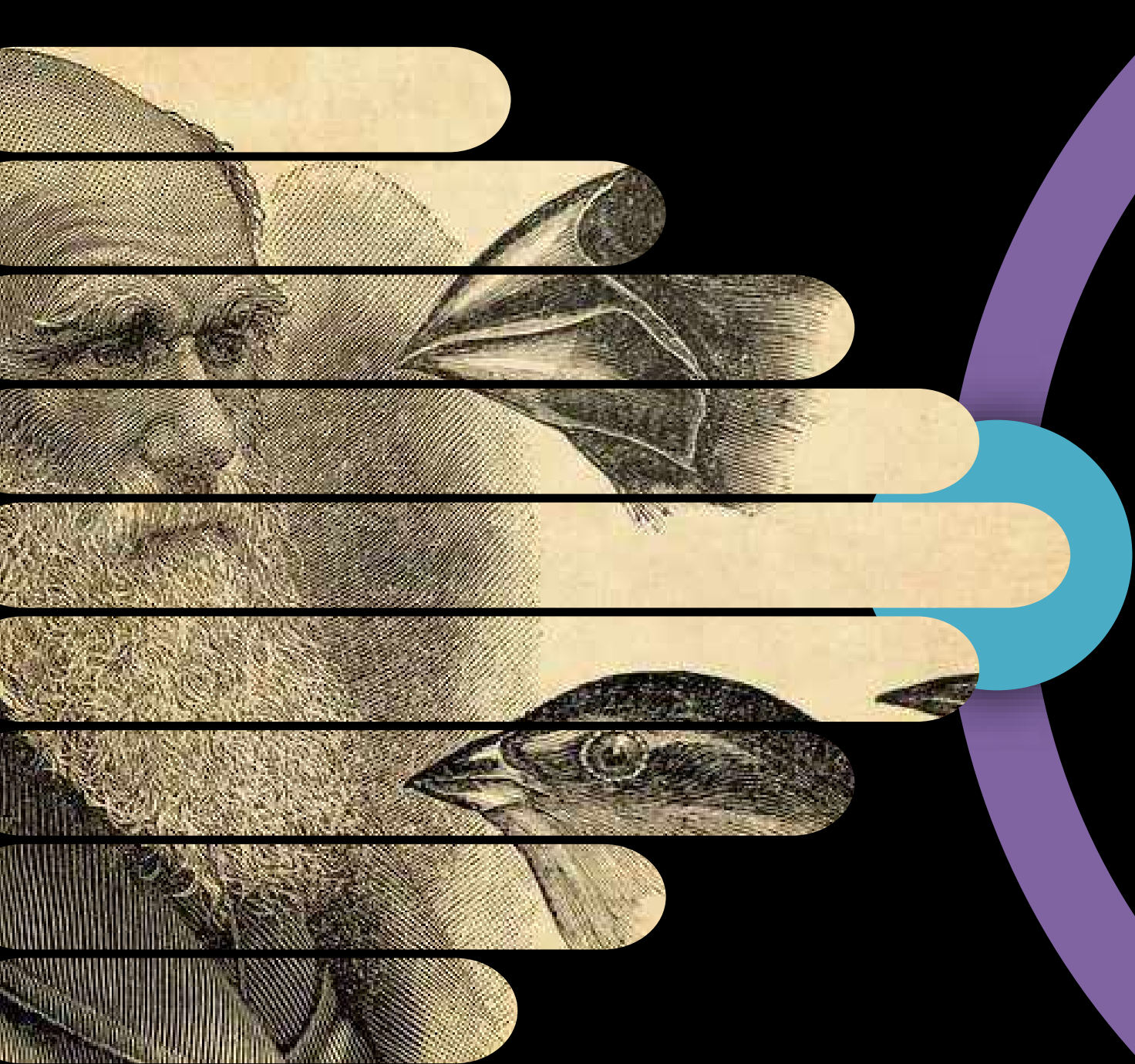
# THE STANDARD THEORY OF EVOLUTION

**“Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural.”**



# THE STANDARD THEORY OF EVOLUTION

**“We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, in spite of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism.”**



# THE STANDARD THEORY OF EVOLUTION

**“It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated.”**



# THE STANDARD THEORY OF EVOLUTION

**“Moreover, that materialism is  
absolute, for we cannot allow a  
Divine Foot in the door.”**

**- Richard C. Lewontin  
(Professor of Biology, Harvard)**





## ORPHAN GENES

**“researchers compared the genomes of seven different types of ants with other known insect genomes. When comparing the ant genes to other insects, researchers discovered 28,581 genes that were unique only to ants and not found in other insects. While the various ant species shared many groups of genes, only 64 genes were common to all seven ant species.”**



# ORPHAN GENES

**“The researchers concluded that on average, each ant species contained 1,715 unique genes—*orphan genes*. Researchers not only found dramatic differences for protein-coding genes, but also for other types of regulatory DNA sequences that control how and when genes are turned off and on.”**



# GERD MULLER

- “Royal Society of London for Improving Natural Knowledge
  - This was the pinnacle conference for Evolution
- The keynote speaker and attendees (major players in theoretical evolutionary biology) affirmed that the standard theory of evolution did not explain the major and central phenomena in biology
  - My UNC encounter...



# REFLECTION IMPLICATIONS

- **Worldview and presuppositions guided inquiry and inhibited scientific progress**
- **The convictions were not based on science, but on a "religion" of materialism or a materialistic worldview**
- **The simple act of attributing something to God or not**
  - **Aesthetics, Glory, Purpose, Meaning**

+

– **BEAUTY AND  
AESTHETICS**

- Photosynthetic phytoplankton
- The scientific reason is that movement in the water can be caused by predatory animals, thus the plankton engage in bioluminescence to ward off predators
- However...
- What do we say of our reaction to seeing this in real life? To the happiness we experience when we engage with nature like this? To our sense of the beauty and wonder in nature?



*Sea of  
Stars*

+

– **BEAUTY AND  
AESTHETICS**

- Scientists are primed to experience the wonder of the world in ways most people only dream of, and they often express wonder and awe at the natural world.
- But, when scientists attempt to explain their wonder, awe, or beauty through scientific study it ends up destroying the very thing under examination

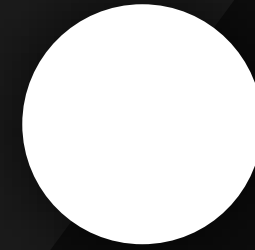


*Sea of  
Stars*



**BEAUTY**

Pillars of Creation by the Webb Telescope



## **AND** **AESTHETICS**

- **A materialistic explanation for beauty would look something like this:**
  - **There are certain types of things that look a certain way that will increase our fitness and survivability**
  - **Thus, we have developed a hormonal system to respond positively to the way certain things look in order that we may select them over other things so that our f/s will increase.**



**BEAUTY**

Pillars of Creation by the Webb Telescope



# AND AESTHETICS

- Second possibility
- Evolution has developed humanity in such a way that we experience regular dopamine hits in response to certain visual/auditory/sensory stimuli that we sociologically call "beautiful" because it improves our mental outlook and thus our f/s.





**BEAUTY**

Pillars of Creation by the Webb Telescope



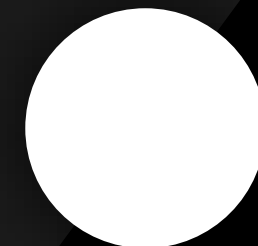
## AND AESTHETICS

- What is common in these situations is that the metaphysical concept of beauty is rejected and replaced with a definition that detaches beauty from any intrinsic real property—  
thus, beauty ceases to be beautiful
- Objective beauty: there is an intrinsic property that a thing possesses that can cause the sensation of beauty  
when rightly observed
- Relativistic beauty: things are not inherently beautiful;  
we only have a conditioned response to certain stimuli  
that we ignorantly call the sense of beauty



**BEAUTY**

Pillars of Creation by the Webb Telescope



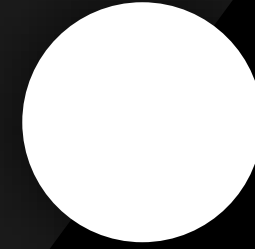
## **AND** **AESTHETICS**

- However, if we hold a monotheistic religious world view...
- God designed the phytoplankton for a multitude of reasons
  - To provide a defense mechanism that is investigable through science
  - To bless His creatures with beauty in their world for His glory
- To reflect His nature and character in the world He built
  - To engage His creatures with a fun, whimsical, and fantastical spectacle that elicits our wonder, awe, and respect at His greatness, majesty, and beauty.



**BEAUTY**

Pillars of Creation by the Webb Telescope



**AND**  
**AESTHETICS**

- **Additionally, rather than being frivolous, our scientific inquiry is now justified as time well spent because we have linked our study of the world to worshiping and glorifying the Creator.**



# Science Meaning and Purpose

- We are adrift in a sea of stars
- But we also have a Creator who can guide us and give us our endeavors meaning
- From the smallest subatomic particle to the largest star, our universe is lavishly garnered with beauty, meaning, and purpose
- But we will only truly see and appreciate it through a theistic worldview

*Thank You*

University of Chakwal and the  
Center for Religion, Science  
and Social Wellbeing

Dr. Bilal Kahn – Vice Chancellor,

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