**In 1802, William Paley (1743-1805) set out what is regarded by many as the *classic* design argument - the *watch analogy*!**

Paley's watch analogy was published in his book [*Natural Theology*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0192805843?ie=UTF8&tag=wwwfaithnetor-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0192805843)*ir?t=wwwfaithnetor-20&l=as2&o=1&a=0192805843* (1802), twenty three years *after* David Hume (1711-1776) had critiqued (and rejected) design arguments as a basis for proving God's existence in [*Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0140445366?ie=UTF8&tag=wwwfaithnetor-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=0140445366) (1779).

As with Aquinas, Paley's basic premise is that physical matter cannot become complex and ordered, without the involvement of some higher (ordering) intelligence (i.e. God).

[](http://www.skepticreport.com/creationism/watchdesert.htm)

In crossing a [field], suppose I pitched my foot against a stone, and were asked how the stone came to be there; I might possibly answer, that, for any thing I knew to the contrary, it had lain there for ever... But suppose I had found a watch upon the ground... I should hardly think of the answer which I had before given, that, for any thing I knew, the watch might have always been there. Yet why should not this answer serve for the watch as well as for the stone?... For this reason... that, when we come to inspect the watch, we perceive (what we could not discover in the stone) that its several parts are framed and put together for a purpose, e. g. that they are so formed and adjusted as to produce motion, and that motion so regulated as to point out the hour of the day [etc.]... This mechanism being observed... the inference, we think, is inevitable, that the watch must have had a maker. (William Paley)

The central premise of the watch analogy is that we would not be surprised to see a stone lying in a field, but we would if we saw a watch. This is because we *know* that watches have been made for telling the time, *not* lying in a field. In fact, if a watch was left in a field, it would soon stop working, likely rust and fall apart. However, just as we know a watch in a field is not fulfilling its purpose, we also know that a stone is (or could be)! Now Paley's point is that the difference in our responses to finding a stone or a watch in a field, is largely due to what we know of the complexity, purpose and order of the latter. In other words, when walking through a field we would not say, 'Someone dropped a stone', but we would say 'Someone dropped a watch!' because it meant to be on someone's wrist (or in their pocket), so that they might be able to know what the time is.

**Something to think about and discuss:** Paley uses the complexity of a watch *made by humans*, to suggest that a simple stone has been *made by God*. What would happen if he reversed this? Could Paley show (through analogy) that God created the world by comparing the complexity of a watch, with the simplicity of a stone?

There are many things in the world which theologians have used as evidence of design. For example, *the eye* is so complex that it could not have been the product of 'chance', but must be the result of intelligent design. As William Paley argued, to suggest that something complex has been formed by 'the accidental outworking of natural forces', rather than being designed and 'made', is too much to accept (well, for him anyway).

Nature is meaningless and valueless, without God behind it and man in front. (F. R. Tennant)

Modern design arguments have presented evidence *for* design, such as those things which have led to life appearing and flourishing. For example, the conditions which allowed the formation of the world and the universe to occur must have been *fine-tuned* do so. Theists, who hold this view, believe that God is the 'fine-tuner'.

A different set of initial inequalities would have resulted in a very different detailed galactic distribution. (John Polkinghorne)

Theologians who believe God worked through natural processes to allow life to develop, often argue that if the forces which led to this world and universe coming into existence had been even slightly different at the time of the 'the big bang', then our universe would most likely be devoid of intelligent life, or certainly the forms of life we currently have in the universe. Many Christians who are scientists believe that without God's specific intervention, the chances of life developing in the universe as we know it were millions to one.

The idea that the world and the universe was 'set up' in order to 'create' human (intelligent) life, is known as the **Anthropic Principle**. In theology, this was popularly introduced and explored by F. R. Tennant, in his book *Philosophical Theology* (1930).