

blackwell companion to natural theology

Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology: Exploring Faith, Reason, and the Divine

blackwell companion to natural theology stands as a pivotal resource for anyone fascinated by the dialogue between faith and reason, especially within the context of understanding the divine through natural means. This comprehensive volume brings together a wealth of scholarship that examines the foundations, arguments, and implications of natural theology—a discipline concerned with knowledge of God based on reason and ordinary experience, without reliance on revealed scripture. If you're intrigued by questions about the existence of God, the nature of divine attributes, or how reason and observation can lead us to theological truths, this companion offers a deep dive into those themes with clarity and rigor.

What Is the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology?

At its core, the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology is an edited collection of essays by leading philosophers, theologians, and scholars who specialize in the study of natural theology. Published by Wiley-Blackwell, this book serves as a modern reference that surveys classical and contemporary arguments for God's existence, discusses the interplay between science and religion, and explores the philosophical challenges that natural theology faces today.

Unlike a single-author treatise, this companion benefits from the diverse perspectives of multiple experts, each contributing insights on specific topics such as cosmological arguments, teleological arguments, and the problem of evil. This multi-voiced approach enriches readers' understanding, revealing the complexity and vitality of natural theology as a living discipline.

Why Natural Theology Matters

Natural theology has always occupied a special place in philosophy and religious studies because it attempts to reach conclusions about God through reason, independent of doctrinal authority. The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology highlights how this tradition helps bridge the gap between secular philosophy and religious belief, making it accessible to a broad audience including skeptics, believers, and academics alike.

In an age where scientific discoveries often prompt questions about meaning and existence, natural theology remains relevant by providing rational frameworks that complement empirical knowledge. The companion emphasizes this relevance by updating classical arguments to engage with contemporary scientific theories and philosophical debates.

Key Themes Explored in the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology

The richness of the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology lies in its thorough exploration of several foundational themes. Here are some of the prominent topics covered:

1. Classical Arguments for God's Existence

One of the central pillars of natural theology is the set of classical arguments that aim to demonstrate God's existence through logical reasoning and observation.

- **The Cosmological Argument:** This argument posits that there must be a first cause or necessary being that explains why anything exists at all. The companion provides detailed analyses of different versions, from Aquinas' "Five Ways" to contemporary cosmological reasoning.
- **The Teleological Argument:** Also known as the argument from design, this approach looks at the complexity and order in the universe as evidence of an intelligent designer. The book addresses modern challenges and refinements, including responses to evolutionary theory.
- **The Ontological Argument:** A more abstract, philosophical argument asserting that the very concept of God implies God's existence. The companion examines historical formulations and modern critiques of this argument.

2. The Relationship Between Science and Natural Theology

Natural theology does not exist in isolation from scientific progress. The Blackwell Companion navigates the often complex relationship between scientific discoveries and theological claims.

For instance, chapters discuss how cosmology, quantum physics, and evolutionary biology impact traditional arguments about God's existence and action in the world. The interplay between science and religion is portrayed not just as conflict but as a fertile ground for philosophical and theological reflection.

3. The Problem of Evil and Natural Theology

No discussion of natural theology is complete without addressing the problem of evil—how to reconcile the existence of suffering and moral evil with the idea of an all-good, all-powerful deity. The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology offers nuanced treatments of this challenge, exploring both classical theodicies and contemporary responses.

Readers encounter thoughtful debates on how the presence of evil affects arguments for God's existence and the implications for faith rooted in reason.

Who Should Read the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology?

Whether you're a philosophy student, a theologian, or simply a curious reader, the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology caters to a wide range of intellectual interests. It's especially valuable for those who want to:

- Gain a comprehensive overview of natural theology's history and current state
- Understand the philosophical underpinnings of arguments for God's existence
- Explore how contemporary science interacts with theological claims
- Engage with ongoing debates about faith, reason, and the nature of the divine

Because the volume is edited to include accessible yet scholarly essays, it strikes a balance between academic rigor and readability, making it suitable for both classroom use and individual study.

Tips for Getting the Most Out of This Companion

To truly appreciate the depth of the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology, consider the following approaches:

1. **Start with the introductory essays:** They provide essential context and outline the scope of natural theology, setting the stage for more detailed chapters.
2. **Focus on thematic sections:** Depending on your interests, you might prioritize essays on cosmology, design arguments, or the problem of evil.
3. **Take notes and reflect:** Many arguments presented invite critical thinking—jotting down questions or counterpoints can deepen your engagement.
4. **Pair with other resources:** Complement your reading with classical texts by Aquinas, Paley, or modern philosophers to see the evolution of ideas.

The Impact and Legacy of the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology

Since its release, the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology has been recognized as a significant contribution to philosophy of religion and theology. It revitalizes natural theology by situating it within contemporary debates and demonstrating its ongoing philosophical vitality.

Academic reviewers often praise the companion for its balanced treatment of contentious issues and its ability to make complex arguments approachable. It has become a staple reference for scholars writing about the intersection of faith and reason, and a valuable tool for anyone looking to understand or teach natural theology in the 21st century.

By integrating historical insight with modern scholarship, the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology helps readers appreciate how enduring questions about God and existence continue to inspire rigorous inquiry and meaningful dialogue.

In sum, the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology offers an enriching journey through the landscape of natural theology, inviting readers to explore profound questions with both intellectual curiosity and open-mindedness. Its blend of classical wisdom and contemporary analysis makes it

a go-to resource for deepening one's understanding of how reason and experience can illuminate the divine.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology?

The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology is a comprehensive anthology that explores various arguments, perspectives, and issues related to natural theology, which is the study of knowledge of God based on reason and ordinary experience rather than revelation.

Who are the editors of the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology?

The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology is edited by William Lane Craig and J.P. Moreland, both renowned philosophers and theologians specializing in philosophy of religion and Christian apologetics.

What topics are covered in the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology?

The book covers a wide range of topics including classical arguments for the existence of God such as the cosmological, teleological, moral, and ontological arguments, as well as contemporary discussions on the problem of evil, divine attributes, and the relationship between science and religion.

How is the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology useful for students and scholars?

It serves as a valuable resource for students and scholars by providing critical essays from leading experts, offering diverse viewpoints, in-depth analysis, and up-to-date research on natural theology, making it ideal for academic study and research.

Has the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology been updated or revised recently?

Yes, there have been updated editions of the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology that include new essays and revisions reflecting the latest scholarship and debates in the field of natural theology.

Additional Resources

****Exploring the Depths of Faith and Reason: A Review of the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology****

blackwell companion to natural theology stands as a significant scholarly resource that delves deeply into one of philosophy's most enduring questions: the relationship between reason and belief in God. This comprehensive volume, published by Blackwell Publishing, serves as an essential reference for students, academics, and anyone interested in the intellectual tradition of natural theology. The book gathers contributions from leading philosophers, theologians, and historians, offering an extensive survey of arguments for God's existence, the nature of divine attributes, and the interplay between science and theology.

Natural theology, broadly defined, is the discipline that seeks to understand and demonstrate religious truths through reason and empirical observation, rather than relying solely on revealed scripture or faith-based claims. The Blackwell Companion distinguishes itself by contextualizing these arguments within contemporary philosophical debates, historical developments, and theological implications, making it a valuable bridge between classical thought and modern inquiry.

Comprehensive Coverage of Natural Theology

The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology is structured to provide a multidimensional perspective on the field. It begins by tracing the historical evolution of natural theology, from ancient philosophical roots through medieval scholasticism to Enlightenment rationalism and beyond. This historical framing is critical to understanding how natural theology has adapted to shifting epistemological landscapes and scientific advancements.

One of the book's strengths lies in its balanced presentation of classical theistic arguments alongside critical assessments and alternative viewpoints. Contributors engage with the cosmological argument, teleological argument, moral argument, and ontological argument, among others, scrutinizing their premises, logical coherence, and relevance in contemporary discourse.

Key Themes and Arguments Explored

Several recurring themes emerge throughout the companion, reflecting the complexity and diversity within natural theology:

- **The Cosmological Argument:** The book thoroughly examines versions of the cosmological argument, including the Kalam argument and the contingency argument, discussing their philosophical rigor and challenges posed by

modern cosmology.

- **The Teleological Argument:** Also known as the argument from design, this theme receives nuanced treatment, especially in light of Darwinian evolution and complexity theory. Contributors debate whether natural processes undermine or reinforce teleological claims.
- **The Moral Argument:** The exploration of moral experience as evidence for God's existence is another focal point, with considerations of ethical objectivity, divine command theory, and alternative secular explanations.
- **Epistemology of Religious Belief:** The volume also investigates the conditions under which natural theology can legitimately claim knowledge of the divine, including discussions on faith, reason, and the limits of human understanding.

Interdisciplinary Approaches and Contemporary Relevance

A distinguishing feature of the Blackwell Companion is its interdisciplinary approach. It incorporates insights from philosophy of science, metaphysics, and theology to address how natural theology interacts with developments in physics, biology, and cosmology. For example, some essays engage with the fine-tuning argument, analyzing whether the apparent precision of universal constants points toward a designer or can be explained through multiverse hypotheses.

Moreover, the book does not shy away from contentious debates surrounding natural theology's place in secular academic environments and its relationship to religious traditions. It acknowledges critiques from atheistic perspectives and explores the implications of natural theology for interfaith dialogue and pluralism.

Assessing the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology

From an educational standpoint, the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology offers several advantages that make it stand out in the crowded field of philosophical theology:

1. **Authoritative Contributors:** The volume features essays from renowned scholars such as William Lane Craig, Alvin Plantinga, and Richard

Swinburne, whose expertise lends credibility and depth to the discussions.

2. **Accessibility:** While academically rigorous, the text is structured to be accessible to graduate students and informed lay readers, balancing technical detail with clear exposition.
3. **Comprehensive Bibliographies:** Each chapter includes extensive references, providing readers with pathways for further research and critical engagement.

However, some readers may find the sheer density and breadth of the text challenging, particularly those new to philosophy of religion. The diversity of perspectives, while enriching, occasionally leads to overlapping discussions or diverging terminologies that require careful navigation.

Comparisons with Other Works in Natural Theology

When compared to other seminal works such as Richard Swinburne's *The Existence of God* or Alvin Plantinga's *God, Freedom, and Evil*, the Blackwell Companion serves more as an encyclopedic collection rather than a singular argumentative treatise. This makes it a preferred resource for those seeking a panoramic view rather than a focused defense of a particular theological standpoint.

Unlike introductory texts that may simplify natural theology for general audiences, the Blackwell Companion expects readers to engage critically with complex arguments and philosophical nuances. Consequently, it complements rather than replaces foundational textbooks, serving as a supplementary volume for deeper study.

Impact and Scholarly Reception

Since its publication, the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology has been widely cited in academic journals and conferences addressing philosophy of religion and theology. Its role in reinvigorating interest in natural theology—especially at a time when secularism and scientific naturalism dominate intellectual discourse—cannot be overstated.

The volume has also contributed to bridging gaps between analytic philosophy and theological tradition, encouraging dialogue that respects both intellectual rigor and spiritual inquiry. This dual commitment reflects a broader trend in contemporary philosophy of religion to reconcile faith with reason without sacrificing critical scrutiny.

Ultimately, the Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology invites readers to confront profound questions about existence, causality, morality, and the ultimate nature of reality. Whether one approaches these discussions from a theistic, agnostic, or atheistic perspective, the volume provides a rich repository of ideas and arguments that fuel ongoing exploration and debate.

As interest in the philosophical foundations of belief continues to evolve, resources like the Blackwell Companion remain indispensable for advancing nuanced understanding and fostering informed dialogue across disciplines and worldviews.

Blackwell Companion To Natural Theology

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blackwell companion to natural theology: Natural Theology James K. Dew, Jr., Ronnie P. Campbell, Jr., 2024-04-16 Natural theology is a matter of debate among theologians and Christian philosophers. In this book, top scholars in the fields of theology and Christian philosophy introduce

readers to five prevailing views on the topic. Contributors include John C. McDowell, Alister E. McGrath, Paul K. Moser, Fr. Andrew Pinsent, and Charles Taliaferro. The contributors offer constructive approaches from major perspectives--contemporary, Catholic, classical, deflationary, and Barthian--in a multiview format to provide readers with the state of the question on natural theology. Each unit consists of an introduction by a proponent of the view under discussion, responses from the other contributors, and a final response by the proponent. James Dew and Ronnie Campbell provide a helpful introduction and conclusion. Offering a model of critical thinking and respectful dialogue, this volume provides a balanced, irenic approach to a topic of ongoing debate. Students of theology, Christian philosophers, and readers interested in the theology and science dialogue will value this work.

blackwell companion to natural theology: The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology

Russell Re Manning, 2013-01-17 The Oxford Handbook of Natural Theology is the first collection to consider the full breadth of natural theology from both historical and contemporary perspectives and to bring together leading scholars to offer accessible high-level accounts of the major themes. The volume embodies and develops the recent revival of interest in natural theology as a topic of serious critical engagement. Frequently misunderstood or polemicized, natural theology is an under-studied yet persistent and pervasive presence throughout the history of thought about ultimate reality - from the classical Greek theology of the philosophers to twenty-first-century debates in science and religion. Of interest to students and scholars from a wide range of disciplines, this authoritative handbook draws on the very best of contemporary scholarship to present a critical overview of the subject area. Thirty-eight new essays trace the transformations of natural theology in different historical and religious contexts, the place of natural theology in different philosophical traditions and diverse scientific disciplines, and the various cultural and aesthetic approaches to natural theology to reveal a rich seam of multi-faceted theological reflection rooted in human nature and the environments within which we find ourselves.

blackwell companion to natural theology: Negative Natural Theology Christopher J.

Insole, 2024-11-21 How can we live in harmony with the universe, and not just in it? What is it to feel at home in the world? Some thinkers who feel the force of these questions reach for the concept of God. Others do not. This book asks what might be at stake in the choice of whether or not to speak about God: not just in terms of abstract reasoning or arguments about God, but in relation to deeper undercurrents of motivation and yearning. The book is interested in sites in contemporary thinking, where the concept of the divine beckons, or looms, but also, perhaps, repels, or hides. It asks 'what is at stake' in the decision (if it is that) to talk about God and the divine, or not to do so, with a wide and deep curiosity about what this might include: reasons and arguments, certainly, but also more biographical, intuitive, and affective dimensions, including imagination, and feelings about what is valuable. Also relevant are unconscious drives and factors. Concepts can convince, or fail to convince, but, also, they can attract and repel. The book draws on both analytical and continental post-Kantian sources, treating individual thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, William James, Carl Jung, Karl Rahner, Albert Camus, Saul Kripke, Thomas Nagel, Derek Parfit, Karen Kilby, and Janet Soskice, as well as cultural movements such as modern paganism, new atheism, and humanism. 'Natural theology' involves speaking about God without reference to revelation, tradition, or sources of authority, using the resources of 'reason alone'. 'Negative theology' is concerned with the way in which a type of abstract reasoning and rational argument run out, without this necessarily being an ending: other types of speech and communication may become possible and essential. Speaking into this space, the book draws on philosophy, theology, anthropology, literature, and psychology.

blackwell companion to natural theology: Contemporary Arguments in Natural Theology

Colin Ruloff, Peter Horban, 2021-06-17 In recent years there has been a bold revival in the field of natural theology, where "natural theology" can be understood as the attempt to demonstrate that God exists by way of reason, evidence, and argument without the appeal to divine revelation. Today's practitioners of natural theology have not only revived and recast all of the traditional arguments in the field, but, by drawing upon the findings of contemporary cosmology, chemistry, and biology,

have also developed a range of fascinating new ones. Contemporary Arguments in Natural Theology brings together twenty experts working in the field today. Together, they practice natural theology from a wide range of perspectives, and show how the field of natural theology is practiced today with a degree of diversity and confidence not seen since the Middle Ages. Aimed primarily at advanced undergraduates and graduate students, the volume will also be of interest to researchers in philosophy, theology, biblical studies, and religious studies, as an indispensable resource on contemporary theistic proofs.

blackwell companion to natural theology: A Natural History of Natural Theology Helen De Cruz, Johan De Smedt, 2024-06-11 An examination of the cognitive foundations of intuitions about the existence and attributes of God. Questions about the existence and attributes of God form the subject matter of natural theology, which seeks to gain knowledge of the divine by relying on reason and experience of the world. Arguments in natural theology rely largely on intuitions and inferences that seem natural to us, occurring spontaneously—at the sight of a beautiful landscape, perhaps, or in wonderment at the complexity of the cosmos—even to a nonphilosopher. In this book, Helen De Cruz and Johan De Smedt examine the cognitive origins of arguments in natural theology. They find that although natural theological arguments can be very sophisticated, they are rooted in everyday intuitions about purpose, causation, agency, and morality. Using evidence and theories from disciplines including the cognitive science of religion, evolutionary ethics, evolutionary aesthetics, and the cognitive science of testimony, they show that these intuitions emerge early in development and are a stable part of human cognition. De Cruz and De Smedt analyze the cognitive underpinnings of five well-known arguments for the existence of God: the argument from design, the cosmological argument, the moral argument, the argument from beauty, and the argument from miracles. Finally, they consider whether the cognitive origins of these natural theological arguments should affect their rationality.

blackwell companion to natural theology: Ramified Natural Theology in Science and Religion Rodney Holder, 2020-10-15 This book offers a rationale for a new 'ramified natural theology' that is in dialogue with both science and historical-critical study of the Bible. Traditionally, knowledge of God has been seen to come from two sources, nature and revelation. However, a rigid separation between these sources cannot be maintained, since what purports to be revelation cannot be accepted without qualification: rational argument is needed to infer both the existence of God from nature and the particular truth claims of the Christian faith from the Bible. Hence the distinction between 'bare natural theology' and 'ramified natural theology.' The book begins with bare natural theology as background to its main focus on ramified natural theology. Bayesian confirmation theory is utilised to evaluate competing hypotheses in both cases, in a similar manner to that by which competing hypotheses in science can be evaluated on the basis of empirical data. In this way a case is built up for the rationality of a Christian theist worldview. Addressing issues of science, theology and revelation in a new framework, this book will be of keen interest to scholars working in Religion and Science, Natural Theology, Philosophy of Religion, Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology, and Science and Culture.

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blackwell companion to natural theology: Christianity and Religious Diversity Harold A.

Netland, 2015-05-12 This book explores how religions have changed in a globalized world and how Christianity is unique among them. Harold Netland, an expert in philosophical aspects of religion and pluralism, offers a fresh analysis of religion in today's globalizing world. He challenges misunderstandings of the concept of religion itself and shows how particular religious traditions, such as Buddhism, undergo significant change with modernization and globalization. Netland then responds to issues concerning the plausibility of Christian commitments to Jesus Christ and the unique truth of the Christian gospel in light of religious diversity. The book concludes with basic principles for living as Christ's disciples in religiously diverse contexts.

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blackwell companion to natural theology: The Fallacy of Fine-Tuning Victor J. Stenger, 2011-04-15 A number of authors have noted that if some physical parameters were slightly changed, the universe could no longer support life, as we know it. This implies that life depends sensitively on the physics of our universe. Does this fine-tuning of the universe suggest that a creator god intentionally calibrated the initial conditions of the universe such that life on earth and the evolution of humanity would eventually emerge? In his in-depth and highly accessible discussion of this fascinating and controversial topic, the author looks at the evidence and comes to the opposite conclusion. He finds that the observations of science and our naked senses not only show no evidence for God, they provide evidence beyond a reasonable doubt that God does not exist.

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blackwell companion to natural theology: Christian Theology and the Secular University Paul A. Macdonald, Jr., 2017-02-24 If the secular university by definition is non-sectarian or non-denominational, then how can it accommodate a discipline like Christian theology? Doesn't the traditional goal of theological study, which is to attain knowledge of the divine, fundamentally conflict with the main goal of secular academic study, which is to attain knowledge about ourselves and the world in which we live? So why should theology be admitted, or even care about being admitted, into secular academic life? And even if theology were admitted, what contribution to

secular academic life could it make? Working from a Christian philosophical and theological perspective but also engaging a wide range of theologians, philosophers, and religious studies scholars, *Christian Theology and the Secular University* takes on these questions, arguing that Christian theology does belong in the secular university because it provides distinct resources that the secular university needs if it is going to fulfill what should be its main epistemic and educative ends. This book offers a fresh and unique perspective to scholars working in the disciplines of theology, philosophy, and religious studies, and to those in other academic disciplines who are interested in thinking critically and creatively about the place and nature of theological study within the secular university.

blackwell companion to natural theology: Fundamental Theology Matthew L. Becker, 2024-01-25 Encyclopedic in scope, this book offers wide-ranging coverage of the foundational teachings and practices within the mainstream of the classical Christian tradition. It begins with their roots in the Scriptures, and also branches out into Eastern and Western Christianity, ancient, medieval, and modern, to the present-day. Part I provides an overview of some of these routes, then presents an historical survey of Christianity's major traditions. Part II unpacks some of the character of that revelation, focusing particularly on epistemological and procedural questions. Finally, Part III looks at Christian theology in a university setting: the possibility and shape of theology as a university discipline, its major subfields, and its relations with humanities and the sciences respectively. *Fundamental Theology: A Protestant Perspective*, 2nd edition, includes a wide range of pedagogical features: - each chapter begins with an outline thesis statement, highlighted in bold - charts and graphs - relevant headings and subheadings employed throughout the book - keywords - provides a survey of pertinent reference literature - questions for review and discussion - annotated suggestions for further reading

blackwell companion to natural theology: Richard Hooker Philip Hobday, 2023-09-07 For some, Hooker and Anglicanism are basically reformed; for others, fundamentally Catholic; for some embodying a 'middle way' between Roman Catholic and Protestant extremes; and for others simply confused and incoherent. This book challenges those perceptions by showing that 'reformed' and 'catholic' are not intrinsically opposed. Reading Hooker alongside a representative theologian of each tradition (the 'catholic' Aquinas and the 'reformed' Calvin) on theological method, Hobday shows there is much greater congruity between theologies and theologians often considered in tension. On the role of scripture in theology, the theological capacity of human reason, and the place of tradition, these 3 theologians have far more in common than many subsequent commentators have understood. This book shows how both Hooker and the Anglicanism he defended in such elegant prose, can be coherently both 'catholic' and 'reformed' (rather than one, or the other, or some middle way). Relocating Hooker, and Anglicanism, in this way reveals them to be rich, fruitful conversation partners in ecumenical dialogue and theological debates across Christian traditions.

blackwell companion to natural theology: The Intelligent Design Debate and the Temptation of Scientism Erkki Vesa Rope Kojonen, 2016-04-28 The controversy over Intelligent Design (ID) has now continued for over two decades, with no signs of ending. For its defenders, ID is revolutionary new science, and its opposition is merely ideological. For its critics, ID is both bad science and bad theology. But the polemical nature of the debate makes it difficult to understand the nature of the arguments on all sides. A balanced and deep analysis of a controversial debate, this volume argues that beliefs about the purposiveness or non-purposiveness of nature should not be based merely on science. Rather, the philosophical and theological nature of such questions should be openly acknowledged.

blackwell companion to natural theology: A Universe From Someone¹⁹ Peter S. Williams, 2022-10-27 After a substantial author's preface recounting Peter S. Williams's life journey with the question of God's existence, *A Universe From Someone* pulls together essays and opening speeches from debates (including the 2011 God is not a delusion debate at the Cambridge Union) that jointly cover a wide variety of theistic arguments. Together with a foreword by noted philosopher J. P. Moreland, an annotated bibliography highlighting Four Dozen Key Resources on

Apologetics and Natural Theology in an Age of Science, and other recommended resources, A Universe From Someone offers an informed overview of the contemporary case for God.

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