

Prepared Remarks for the Klein S. Gilhausen Lecture: Conversation between Faith and Science

Robert C. Maher -- July 6, 2017 -- Hager Auditorium, Museum of the Rockies, Bozeman, MT

Thank you to Dr. Eric Priest, our guest speaker this evening. Thank you also to Dr. Jay Smith, director of the Yellowstone Theological Institute, and to the YTI trustees, staff, friends, and members of the public who are here this evening.

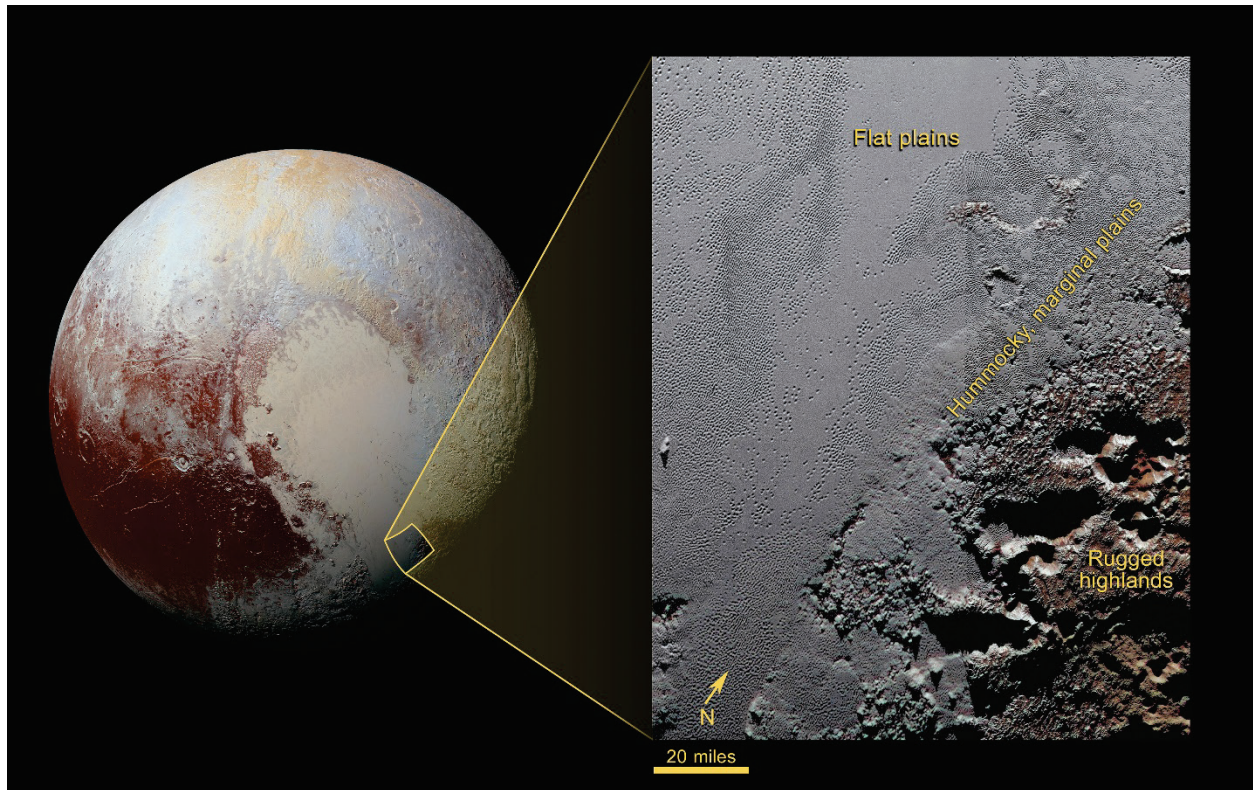
It is truly an honor and privilege to be asked to appear as part of the Inaugural Klein S. Gilhausen Lecture for the Conversation between Faith and Science.

I know we all want to enjoy the promised refreshments in the lobby as we continue with “the Conversation between faith and science,” so I will keep my own remarks very brief.

Many of you may be familiar with a photographic image known as the “Hubble Deep Field.” The image is a magnification of a tiny region of the sky within the constellation Ursa Major, one 24-millionth of the whole sky, that was assembled by 342 separate exposures of the Hubble Space Telescope over ten days at the end of December, 1995. That image of a tiny spec of the sky includes nearly 3,000 astronomical objects, nearly all of which are galaxies, each containing perhaps 100 billion stars.



In 2015 I eagerly awaited images from the New Horizons spacecraft that had made its way from the earth to Pluto. Launched in 2006, the probe took 9 years to cover the nearly 5 billion miles to reach the icy dwarf planetoid. New Horizon's electrical power of only 200 watts came from a radioisotope thermoelectric generator, since at Pluto's distance the sun's light is only about as bright as the full moon on earth, so photovoltaic cells would not be useful. The radio transmitter on New Horizons is about 100 watts in power—let than a tenth of the power of your hair drier or your microwave oven—yet communications technology allows that signal to travel 5 billion miles through space and be detected here on the earth.



As a person of faith and as a professional engineer and educator, I wonder about a lot of things. In fact, as a Doctor of Philosophy, it's arguably my *job* to wonder about things, and to encourage a similar curiosity in my students and colleagues!

As a person of faith, one of the things I wonder about is why God devoted so much of His creation and established the physical laws of the universe such that we find incredibly bizarre, dumbfounding, yet beautiful natural objects completely outside our physical Earth? As we see in the Hubble Deep Field, or in the images from Pluto, we are only glimpsing an infinitesimal part of what's really out there. Why did God pay so much attention to these features that are barely within our vision, and certainly outside our physical grasp?

I don't recall any Biblical accounts of Jesus teaching about the Periodic Table of the Elements, the structure of DNA, why frozen water is less dense than liquid water, nor explaining why the Red Spot swirls on Jupiter. But we do find in the Bible many references to the diversity of the world and the diversity of gifts of the spirit: some receive the gift of wisdom, some the utterance of knowledge, some receive the gift of healing, others the gift of languages.

Thus, it is my assertion today that those of us driven in scientific pursuits and innate curiosity about what is around us are merely expressing a gift of inquisitive wonder about the universe. Some of us are acting upon the gift of teaching and explaining these discoveries. And some of us are expressing talents in creating instruments of discovery, such as the telescopic instruments used by Dr. Priest to understand the sun, and the cameras and communications systems used on the New Horizons spacecraft at the edge of our solar system. Or the invention of Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA) that came from the inspired mind of the late Klein Gilhousen, the namesake of tonight's discussion. How grateful we all are to have these God-given talents expressed in our discoveries and inventions. I know that Klein was grateful.

Many people imagine that science is all the things we know, like the things written in books, the facts and figures, the formulas, and so forth.

But we need to remember that science is actually the things we DON'T know. Science is the mysteries, conundrums, and open questions. And scientists are really like detectives, trying to study and solve these mysteries. And I believe that the same sense applies to theology: it is the drive to understand the mysteries, conundrums, and open questions, that underlie our Faith. Our destiny may well be in striving to comprehend the existence of virtually uncountable galaxies in a tiny spec of our visible universe—galaxies that lie outside our physical grasp, if not outside our capacity to wonder and to comprehend.

Therefore, in conclusion, I remain optimistic about our Conversation between Faith and Science. Thank you for your attention.