

Creation

by Roland Foster

[Disclaimer: I am not a professional theologian. I'm an amateur; a layman who loves to dabble in Christian theology. I don't present my ideas as "truth," but rather as "this works for me." Use at your own risk.]

Most scientists who have an opinion seem to be in agreement nowadays about how the Universe began — with the “Big Bang.” They can tell you in fascinating detail what was present at the instant of its beginning, and after one or three or a dozen “Planck times,” which are units of time way too small to measure with even the most sophisticated instrumentation.

What happened was this: an infinitely small point of pure energy somehow existed or came into existence, and it somehow (or just by its very nature) “exploded.” As the explosion moved away from its center, portions of the energy became less energetic and began turning into matter — things like subatomic particles, then eventually electrons and protons and neutrons, which are the building blocks of atoms. And so hydrogen atoms formed, and some of them, being in the midst of this fearsome explosion, turned back into energy; but others entered into fusion reactions and formed helium, and lithium. Eventually, after about 13.7 billion years, we have the physical universe we see today.

What caused the Big Bang? The typical answer is, “We don’t know. Since none of us was there, we can’t say. Probably it just happened.” Or maybe it was just one event in an endless cycle of universes being born, expanding, then finally contracting back to an infinitely energetic point and starting over again.

I think I know what happened. Really. “In the beginning ... God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” A little simplistic and unscientific, perhaps, but entirely consistent with the known facts.

Many scientists balk at saying a Creator God created the Universe. They think that “religion” is something real scientists have to stay away from, or they might become contaminated with doctrines that are unscientific. So they wind up believing, or professing to believe, propositions that take a lot more faith than simply believing in God.

Let me just say this: If there was Something that brought about the Big Bang by focusing that point of infinite energy that created space and time and all the rest those billions of years ago, that Something might very properly be called God, no matter what religion you confess or don’t confess. To suppose that it could happen without being helped to happen is simply denial of the obvious. If you see an effect, there was a cause. This is one of the very most basic tenets of all of science.

So we wind up with a Mystery. The scientists call theirs “We don’t know” and “It just happened.” I call mine “God.” I think the evidence is on my side.

Time, and the Laws of Physics

The Laws of Physics are fascinating stuff. They are what govern the properties and behaviors of things like atoms, and light, and sound, and all sorts of other interesting phenomena. Let me give you an example: Water freezes at a certain temperature (0 degrees Celsius or 32 degrees Fahrenheit), but it behaves rather strangely. As it cools down toward the freezing point, it does what most materials do — it contracts; takes less space; gets more dense. But at about 39 degrees Fahrenheit it reaches its highest density. After that, as it cools toward freezing, it actually expands and gets a bit lighter. This is what accounts for the fact that ice floats.

This rather untypical behavior on the part of water is a consequence of the shape of the water molecule. In other words, it's one of the "Laws of Physics" at work.

Why are the Laws of Physics what they are? Well, the scientists may say, "As a natural consequence of the nature of things — of space, time, matter and energy." In other words, they are what they are because they are. If you think this is double talk, you're right. But it's all they have to work with.

I have a different take on the question. I think the Laws of Physics are as they are because God made them that way.

Look at the beauty of it. All matter is made up of atoms, and atoms are made up of neutrons, protons, electrons, and various subatomic particles. All atoms are made up of the same basic ingredients. But when they are combined in various ways they produce atoms with vastly different characteristics. And when atoms are combined to make molecules, the fascination abounds.

Consider common table salt — sodium chloride. Sodium is a highly reactive metal. It has to be kept under kerosene because if it is exposed to air for a few seconds it will burst into violent flame. Chlorine is also pretty nasty stuff, a very poisonous gas. Yet an atom of sodium and an atom of chlorine get together and become what? A molecule of salt. Common, everyday salt that we eat too much of. Over the centuries salt has been a very useful and valuable commodity, so it's a good thing there is a lot of it around.

The properties and behaviors of matter form a fascinating study. But one wonders — "What if this or that were a little different?" I believe two things about the Laws of Physics:

- (1) They are as they are because God designed and created them to be as they are;
and
- (2) They may not be the same today as they were a long time ago.

Consider this passage from Genesis:

And God said, "Let there be an expanse between the waters to separate water from water." So God made the expanse and separated the water under the expanse from the water above it. And it was so. God called the expanse "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

However you want to treat the word “expanse,” it seems that at Creation there were waters “down here” and waters “up there.” This has led, among other things, to the notion that the reason folks lived so long in Genesis is that the waters “up there” constituted a cloud cover that blocked harmful, age-causing cosmic and other radiation from reaching the earth’s surface.

Then what happened? Lo and behold, later on God decides to destroy the world by flood water. Where could that much water have come from? “Up there.” Why did it fall? It’s mere conjecture on my part, but I believe that God changed the Laws of Physics in order to cause the rain to fall.

If you’ll buy that (and why shouldn’t you?), consider this next thought: radiocarbon (Carbon-14) dating of ancient organic material is based on a couple of assumptions:

- (1) The level of Carbon-14 in the atmosphere in past ages can be derived or estimated fairly accurately; and
- (2) Carbon-14 decays into Nitrogen-14 with a half-life of about 5730 years, and has always decayed at that same rate.

If God can change the Laws of Physics whenever He wants to, what does that do the second of these assumptions? It at least makes it a bit shaky.

Consider another implication. The age of the Universe is estimated based on astronomical distance measurements and the speed of light, which (in the vacuum of space) is a constant value of around 186,000 miles a second. But suppose early on that God had set the speed of light at, say, ten times that fast. That would mean that the Universe is only maybe 1.4 billion years old.

You see where this gets us? We can say a lot about what we can observe today. Everything that is buried in the past, beyond our ability to observe it directly, is conditional on the assumptions that we make about the reality that existed in the past. But those assumptions are simply assumptions; they may not be right.

Is there Intelligent Life on Other Planets?

If you don’t believe in God, you almost have to believe that life has spontaneously come into being on other planets, just as it has on Earth. After all, there must be a nearly infinite number of other planets, considering the number of stars there are and the fact that the ones nearest to us seem to have some planets. Of that huge number of planets, surely some must have the nearly ideal conditions of temperature and composition that pertain on Earth. And if conditions are right, and given a sufficiently long time, surely life would have developed; and then by natural selection some dominant life form would have become “intelligent.”

Besides, it would be disgustingly anthropocentric of us to suppose that we might be the only game in the Universe. Of course there are other intelligent life forms. We wouldn’t dare be the only one!

Once again I go to the Bible. In John 10:16 Jesus says, "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd." Usually this is thought to mean the gentiles who will become Christians, but I am bold enough to believe that He may also have been referring to "sheep" on other planets. Why not?

On the other hand, we have a very extravagant God. Though it is mind-boggling, it is also conceivable that the entire Universe was created, and exists, just to provide a backdrop for this tiny rock on which we live.

I hope there are intelligent life forms on other planets. If there are, I expect I will meet some of them in Heaven. I'm looking forward to it.

In Conclusion

It is comforting to me to think and trust that the One who knows the answers to all of our questions, and the importance or frivolity of them, is the same One who, quite a long time ago, said "Let there be light." He gave us a lot more than the Universe — He gave us life and, ultimately, Eternity with Him. What a hope. How very sad for those who don't have that hope. Maybe those of us who do should tell them about it.