

On the Age and Creation of the Universe: A Philosophical Perspective

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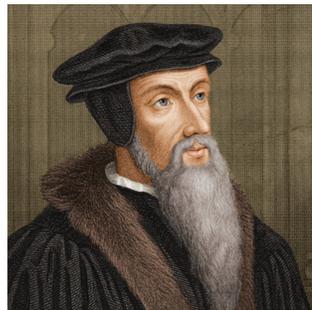
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Abstract

Questions about the origin of the universe have captivated mankind's imagination for thousands of years. As mankind has sought to make sense of its own existence, it has created stories and theories to explain its origin. Based on physical, philosophical and theological evidence, one can support the conclusion that the universe was created by the God of the bible. However, it is likely this creation did not follow the six-day timeline presented in Genesis 1. This paper examines the biblical text, modern scientific literature and the works of Christopher Davis and Paul Davies to understand how a Christian scientist should navigate the supposed conflict between science and religion and what they have to say about the origin of the universe. If the God of the bible is a God of order, who values faith, he would not create a universe with evidence directly proving his existence.

Theology



Calvin's commentary on Genesis

- Importance of creation language throughout the text "it was created an empty chaos of heaven and earth" (Calvin, 1948 p.70)
- A chaotic and empty universe is brought to order by God
- Calvin is skeptical that we can fully understand how God created the universe, or the timeline it was created in
- Uses the word "portions" instead of the word "days" to describe creation narrative

Anchor Bible Commentary on Genesis

- Another account of formless waste brought to order by God
- Highlights similarities of Genesis 1 to Enuma Elish and posits the biblical author drew inspiration from previous texts
- Asserts intended purpose of creation story is not a detailed creation account, instead offers insights into God's character

Interpretation of biblical text

- Multiple scientific difficulties arise when a totally literal interpretation of the bible is defended
- The style of a texts does not always require a literal translation
- The overarching purpose of the bible is to give Christians a picture of the character of God, not definitive scientific or historic text

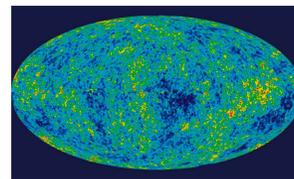
Character of God

- Biblical God is a God of order and committed to faith
- God's character points to a creator that would create the universe through natural processes

Big Bang Theory

Key scientific support

- Temporary universe with a definite beginning and end
- Universal expansion and entropy
- Cosmic background radiation
- Consensus within a majority of the scientific community



Compatibility with Christian faith

- Origin of the universe connected to light
- A God of order driving processes within the laws of physics he created
- Universe indicating a creator vs. universe proving a creator

Davis and Davies

Designed to Evolve - Christopher Davis

- Key argument is that belief in God is not only rational, but supported by evidence from the natural world
- Asserts that the big bang necessitates events outside known physics
- Universal constants point to a calculated creator or a "finely tuned creation"
 - Initial density, strong nuclear force, mass of a proton, proton to neutron ratio etc.

Evaluation of Davis

- Most convincing highlighting improbabilities, cracks in theory and indicators of a creator.
- Falls short when his faith drives to unconvincing assumptions
- Asserts that the universe necessitates a creator rather than just indicates one's presence

God and the New Physics - Paul Davies

- Considers potential causes of the big bang
 - Supernatural event or a singularity where the laws of physics break down
 - Suggests the ultra-hot temperatures of the big bang may have created the matter of the universe
- The creation of the matter is a quantum process, with no direct causes or effects
- Time was created at the origin of the universe, there is no "before"

Evaluation of Davies

- Biblical references that claim God is outside time (2 Timothy 1:9, Ephesians 1:4)
- Little explanation for cosmological constants
- Asserts that there is evidence to suggest that the universe was created completely through natural phenomenon, but he does not insist on this conclusion

Science and Religion



Potential conflict between science and religion

- Temptation to let faith determine the examination of evidence
- Davies critiques this position, "By basing itself on utility rather than truth, science distinguishes itself sharply from religion. Religion is founded on dogma and received wisdom, which purports to represent immutable truth"
- Church history of resistance to scientific progress and suppression of scientists

Potential cooperation between science and religion

- Many scientists hold religious faith, and many scientists are accepting of colleagues regardless of faith commitments
- Science and religion both seek to find truth in the world
- General revelation and special revelation work together toward a more robust knowledge of God - all truth is God's truth
- Christians must be wary of letting faith skew their interpretations of scientific evidence

Conclusions

- Belief in the God of the Bible is not predicated on belief in a six-day creation or a young universe
- The universe had a definite beginning and will have a definite end
- There is physical evidence that indicates the possibility of a creator, but we will never find definitive empirical proof of God or a creator
- The God of the bible is a God of order who values faith, so he would not create a universe with direct proof of his existence
- Christian scientists should seek to better understand God through the special revelation of the bible and the general revelation of the universe
 - Complimentary truths
- Christian scientists should not attempt to prove the existence of God or fear that scientific discovery will somehow disprove God

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