

# Free essay about making a big bang: the bible and the creation of the universe

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Charles Darwin published his masterpiece detailing his theory of evolution by natural selection, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* in 1859. Despite the overwhelming consensus of the scientific community, there are still loud and politically active Creationists that insist that the earth is less than 10,000 years old because the Bible says so. However, the Bible never actually states how old the universe or the earth is. Belief that there is a Creator and in the theory of evolution are compatible for followers of the world's the largest monotheistic religions - Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

How do Creationists and believers in Intelligent Design (ID) justify the age of the earth? They use the long list of "begats" that list the paternal lineage of Adam to Jesus listed in Luke. That is 77 names or 77 human generations.

Each generation is roughly 70 years, except for the exceptional life-spans of Abraham at 175 years (Genesis 25: 7) and Methuselah at 969 years (Genesis 5: 27). Even factoring in their superhuman ages, this only a span of 6,000 to 10,000 years (Young, 69 - 71.) This is far shorter than the estimated age of the universe at 13 to 14 billion years.

All of this is far shorter than the Biblical creation story in the first chapter of Genesis, where God creates "the heaven and the earth" in a mere six days. However, the Bible in any version never defines how long a "day" is to God. Some Creationists have pointed out verses such as "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night" (Psalm 90: 4). This is why some Creationists, including influential church fathers Augustine of Hippo (354 to 430) and Thomas Aquinas (1225 - 1274) feel that each "day" of creation was 1,000 years long. If this is true, then

readers should not take for granted that “ one thousand years” mentioned in the Bible actually mean “ one thousand years” in secular terms. Time is treated very loosely in the Bible.

The first verse of Genesis states that “ In the beginning, God made the heaven and the earth.” This is only a summary of the entire creation story. The actual details, such as they are, are expanded upon from verses 2 to 31. The Bible does not state that the heavens and the earth suddenly popped out of nothing at the command of God. Creation took time. Just how much time is the subject of great debate, but the Bible is clear that Creation was a long process for a supposedly omnipotent and omniscient being. This is entirely in line with the theory of evolution, where life on earth changes through natural selection.

The first day of creation is when God made periods of light and darkness. He called the light “ day” and the darkness “ night.” However, just where the first day and night appeared is not recorded. Science does concur with this part of the Creation story. The Big Bang theory states that an explosion of incredibly compacted energy and matter began the universe. The speculation is that the Big Bang did, indeed, create light (Dembski, 65.) This begs the question, “ What happened before the big Bang?” Like the Bible, science is silent on what happened before the Big Bang.

It is puzzling that day and night are made before the planet Earth is made. Day and night occur because of the rotation of the earth. The Big Bang could have been instantaneous and could have caused a brief flash of intense light. How long the first day of Creation lasted in real world terms is unknown because of this mention of creating day and night after the infamous word, “

Let there be light” (Genesis 1: 2.)

In verse two, it states that “ And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” It seems very strange that the universe had water before it had light. Again, like with the problem of the word “ day” and how long of a timespan Scripture means, “ waters” is also a problematic word with an incredibly vague meaning. Waters may not mean physical waters but space or masses of chaotic energy that looked like a dark ocean. It is unknown how many versions of the Creation story there were before the Council of Nicaea created an approved list of biblical books. Some scholars like Karen Armstrong speculate that the Creation story as known today (from the King James Version) was a piecemeal story that had elements added on as time went by. The Jews were enslaved by the Babylonian Empire and were therefor exposed to Babylonian mythology, where Tiamat was the monstrous vast salt water of chaos. She lived with two other gods: Apsu (God of fresh water and Taimat’s husband) and Mammu the Womb. Tiamat’s son Marduk killed her and from her body formed the heaven and the earth. (Armstrong, 8 - 10.)

The unknown author of the conventional version of the Creation story is known to Biblical scholars as “ Priestly Writer” or simply P. Tradition states that Moses was the author. Although Moses may have authored the original version, the version in the King James was quite probably written during the Jews’ time in Babylon or soon after (Rogerson, Moberly & Johnstone, 143). The writings of P became popular as they helped give hope to an enslaved people. P could have only written about used concepts known at the time, since there is no proof that he was merely a tool used by the hand of God. P

most likely wrote his own material. Space was a complete mystery. It was inconceivable that the universe would contain anything more than the Sun, the Moon and the Earth. Not knowing what else to call it, P called it “waters.”

In verse 6, God is very busy on the second day of creation with creating Heaven. He commands. “ Let there be a firmament of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.” Whatever this precisely means is unknown. Perhaps it means that God focused on creating the universe outside of the Earth. According to science, everything came from the Big Bang. Matter and energy was spewed out and gravity helped matter to come together. When enough comes together, stars, planets and moons are formed. They go through billions of years as lifeless raw masses of hot energy. They grow as asteroids or meteorites hit them and gravity helps keep the mass together. It takes many millions of years for hot planets to cool down. The second “ day” took anywhere from 4 to 5 billion years. On the third day, in verses 9 and 10, dry land appears in the waters. According to science, life did begin in water - not on land. When land did appear above the water line, the Earth looked much different than the writers of the Bible knew. About 300 million years ago, there was not seven continents, but one massive supercontinent, sometimes called Pangaea. Over the millennia, Pangaea broke up through the workings of plate tectonics. The continents are still moving and perhaps, in 300 million years, they will reform Pangaea. The third “ day” took many millions of years to accomplish.

God was very busy on the third day. Not only did He separate land from sea,

but also produced plant life. Grasses, herbs and fruit trees are mentioned. Scientists do believe that plants on land appeared before animals did (animals being a term encompassing insects, arachnids, fish, birds, reptiles, marsupials and mammals.)

However, the first life-form is thought to have been a type of blue-green algae, which is a water-based creature and not a land-based creature. This algae, or whatever it was, is the originator of all life on earth, animal, vegetable or human. It is a common misconception that one species descends from another species, such as humans came from chimpanzees. The theory of evolution states that humans are not descended from chimpanzees, but share a common ancestor with chimpanzees. Perhaps the common ancestor is God. Perhaps not. All species, including humans and chimpanzees, continually evolve. Evolution never stops.

In verses 14 - 19, where God creates the sun, the moon, the stars and the seasons on the fourth day, does not square up to scientific facts. The sun is needed to make a solar system, which is needed to make planets in order to make plant life, which was apparently made the day before. Again, the Bible plays fast and loose with time. If only the fourth day and the second day had switched, there may be a lot fewer atheists in the world.

During the fifth day, God is described creating all sea life, including whales, and all bird life. According to the paleontology and biology, this is not the order of how life evolved on earth. First there was simple single-celled life, then cells got together to form colonies and then multi-celled animals and plants evolved. First there was fish, then amphibians, then reptiles, then dinosaurs, then birds and then marsupials and mammals. Whales, for

example, are mammals. Their evolution does not coincide with Genesis.

Whale ancestors first lived in the sea, then moved to the land and then went back to the sea. Warm-blooded animals that produce milk for their young are a relatively recent event in geological history. The first mammals did not appear until 60 to 70 million years ago, right before the dinosaurs were wiped out by modern insurance companies call " an act of God", collision with a large asteroid. The extinction of the dinosaurs left less competition for the mammals, which prospered. They prospered so much that some found better chance of finding food in the sea.

If the Bible is supposed to be inspired by God, why would He allow such an elementary mistake in His Holy Book about the evolution of whales? Did God fail Bio 101? No one knows the answer. It could be that the evolution of whales was not considered important enough to God in order to intervene in the writing of the Bible. It could be that the Bible was written by fallible people and not by an omnipotent God. However, many believers think that the point of Genesis is not a science lesson, but a metaphorical look at how the world and the universe was created. It sets the background for all the other books in the Bible to come. It also presents God as the most important character in the universe. As the Bible is to praise God and teach people about God, it certainly accomplishes that right off the bat in Genesis when nothing exists except God who, finally, decides to go to work creating life, the universe and everything. The main purpose of the Creation story is to let humans know about God and not about how God creates (Dembski, 143.) What is there left for God to do on day six, the last day of creation? In verses 24 - 31, God is seen creating more birds, land animals and Adam and

presumably Eve, since verse 27 states " So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." There is no mention of Eve being formed from Adam's rib until Genesis 2: 21. There is no specific mention of whether or not this was done during the sixth day of creation or afterwards. How long did day six take? The first land animals are thought to have appeared about 400 million years ago. That is certainly a long " day." No wonder He rested on the seventh day. How long the seventh day took is unknown, since the seventh day could conceivably take from when animals first appeared to today.

The theory of evolution was not just thought up by Charles Darwin. Evolution was also thought up by Alfred Russel Wallace (1823 - 1913). It was Wallace's plans on publishing his paper that spurred Darwin to publish *The Origin of Species*. Before that came out, Wallace and Darwin produced a joint paper to introduce to London's scientific community. Wallace would go on to champion evolution except for one point - he refused to believe that humans evolved. Humans had souls. However, there is no mention of souls in the first chapter of Genesis. When humans first had souls or if their ancestors ever did is not mentioned in the Bible. Science has yet to find any proof that humans even possess such a thing as a soul. So far, humans have no other characteristics unique to other earthly life forms except the ability to destroy all life on the planet. Perhaps proof of souls will be found by science in the future. Perhaps not. The point now is - we do not know if people have souls. Each person has to decide the existence of his or her own soul for themselves.

There is no mention in the Bible of what Adam, Eve or any of the " fowls of



the air” or the “ fish of the sea” or anything else looked like. Creationists believe that species are immutable or unchanging. How they are today is how they were at the time of Creation. This immutability belief was championed by many in the early Christian church and continues today in sects of Judaism, Islam and Christianity. The first chapter of Genesis makes no mention of this immutability. Therefore, by not mentioning it, evolution or species that gradually change over long periods of time can conceivably be compatible with a belief in God as Creator.

Species evolve all the time but not all evolve or change at the same rate. For example, the common bedbug (*Cimex lectularius*) has evolved to resist certain pesticides. How do we know this? Because the United States Army has kept a colony of bedbugs since World War II. This colony has never been crossed with any bedbugs outside the colony. The colony’s very DNA differs from that of a bedbug from today. (Hamilton, 1). Although the theological beliefs of bedbugs is not known, bedbugs evolve just the same.

In conclusion, the Bible is not and never was meant to be a science textbook. It is not about precise dates or causes in the story of Creation. Had the writers of the Bible, especially P, deeply described space, the solar system, the origin of life and used time periods other than “ day” and “ night” then one can take the literal words in Genesis with more gravitas than just a pinch of salt. The Bible is about the interior world of individual souls, how to have hope even in the midst of great suffering and a positive look at life after physical death.

Some say that “ evolution is just a theory” but so is gravity. No one sane debates the existence of gravity. Even if such an insane person declares that

he or she does not believe gravity, gravity still works on that person. Gravity does not require belief to work. This is the same with evolution. It does not require belief in order to work. If a God-fearing person believes in gravity, he or she is not ostracized by the religious community. Evolution has over and over again proved to me far more than “just a theory.” It is testable and provable by looking at fossil evidence, the super-quick mutations in viruses and bacteria and through genetics. The proof that evolution is true takes up many bookshelves in libraries. Gravity is not described anywhere in the Bible and yet the theory of gravity is an allowable belief for many religions. Why should evolution be any different?

It is allowable, or should be allowable, for people to believe in God to also accept the truth of evolution. Evolution could very well be the way that the Creator creates. Evolution has required testable facts in order to be accepted as fact. Belief in God does not require any testing to prove facts. Belief just IS. Some people prefer beliefs to facts. The fact is that people can kill others. It can be proved that one man murders another. However, the reason why or the belief of why there is murder cannot be proved for all murders. This is similar to the evolution and creationist controversy. Although evolution can be proved, just why the Big Bang and subsequently life happened cannot be proved.

Why is there such opposition to the theory of evolution? One argument is the “slippery slope” reasoning – that if a step is taken in one direction then everything collapses. If one core belief from the Bible can be disproved, such as the Creation story, then does that mean that the rest of the Bible is false? Many people prefer an absolute version of events. Either something is true or

it is false. However, there are many aspects to life that are both. Love would be one such thing. Everyone knows someone who both loves and hates a single person. The theme pops up again and again in literature, from Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* to the television comedy *Moonlighting*. If one can love and hate someone simultaneously, then it takes a very little stretch of the imagination to believe both in the first chapter of *Genesis* and evolution. Darwin himself knew about people's preferences for beliefs as opposed to facts. He knew that he, his family and his friends would be persecuted or vilified in the usual "kill the messenger" tradition of human history. He also knew that a lot of people invested a lot of time and energy to belief in God as Creator. The Church received their authority from God. Kings and Queens were seen (even in Victorian times) to rule with divine authority. The class society in England was partially based on things always being the same (such that people of lower classes always will have children that live their entire lives in the lower class.) These are some reasons why he took decades to refine his theory of evolution. He was not only gathering evidence for his theory, but he was also testing his own "belief" in evolution. Evolution again and again tests beliefs. People can get angry when they are shown that their most dearly held beliefs are wrong or at least not exactly how they first appeared.

Evolution does not, however, state implicitly that there is no God or no Creator. Individual evolutionists such as the best-selling evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins may profess that God does not exist, but the theory of evolution completely avoids the issue of God. Being told that there is no God or at least no Biblical creation story is a bit like learning that Santa

Claus does not exist. There is disappointment in realizing the falsehood. This realization is almost like a modern coming of age ritual. Instead of having to be circumcised or sit on a rock until visions appear, young people realize that Santa Claus is just a story. However, they tend to put their children and grandchildren through the Santa Claus ritual. Why people continue to teach their children the Santa Claus story knowing that it is just a story, is unknown. Some may argue that anyone who gives a present on Christmas is Santa Claus and so therefore Santa Claus is an idea or state of mind rather than a single supernatural fat man who lives at the North Pole. The point about comparing Santa Claus to the Creation story in Genesis is this – people like to hold on to their favorite beliefs in the face of all evidence.

Darwin knew that there would be massive resistance to his idea of evolution from inside and outside the religious community. He believed that evolution was just as awe-inspiring as belief in God. He now had to persuade others to see his point of view on how life began and continues on, with or without a belief in God and the Bible. Darwin did this best when he wrote in 1859 in *The Origin of Species*:

“ There is grandeur in this view of life with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.”

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