

Science and Religion are Incompatible

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“In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth” (Genesis 1:1). Apparently it took God six days. Science says otherwise. Science says it took roughly 13.7 billion years for the Universe to become what it is today, and it is still going strong, ever expanding outward. Such discrepancies create a popular belief that science and religion are incompatible and constantly contradict one another. It is at times like these that what the Bible says should not be taken literally, because this is not the case. Science and religion are compatible, even complimentary, and it is in fact the story of creation that shows this most comprehensively.

So let's begin. “In the beginning...” Well, was there really a beginning? According to Science.com, a popular scientific theory is that before the Big Bang, the entire Universe was squashed into a tiny ball. Imagine: all of the matter that would ever exist, every particle of every star, and planet and dust cloud of the uncountable galaxies condensed into a ball of plasma the size of a peach. It is impossible. When matter becomes that condensed, we can't comprehend what it could be. Gravity doesn't work in the same way, atoms can't even form and time becomes so convoluted, it essentially doesn't exist. If there is no time, is it possible for there to be a beginning? The fact is, we don't know. And that is where religion comes in and says that this is exactly what God would be like: timeless, with no beginning and no end. Only this God, this ‘Higher Being’ could comprehend, or even exist in, what we call “The Beginning.” But this was all before the Big Bang, before the Universe expanded into what we call existence.

So, “God created the Heavens.” Basically, the peach sized ball of plasma inexplicably decided it would quite like to expand infinitely, and so it did. After a while, well, a few billion years, stars and galaxies and planets and nebulas and black holes and many more unnamed, undiscovered mysteries formed out of this rapidly expanding matter, with an awful lot of...well...space in between. This new Universe is much more suitable for existing in, with recognisable laws of gravity, atoms that can actually form and distinguish themselves, and time is much better behaved. Still, scientists have not discovered exactly what caused the Universe to expand like this. The Big Bang is another unexplainable mystery, but one that religion provides an answer for. Religion says that there is a God who thought it would be quite lovely if the Universe became something where everything could exist, including an inconsequential blue-green planet, circling an insignificant star in a galaxy known by some of its eccentric inhabitants as the Milky Way.

God created the Heavens *and the Earth*. The Earth is perfect for life. Everything from the tilt of its axis, the precise distance from the Sun, its orbit, even its size and shape makes life possible. In fact, the Earth itself could be said to be alive: the thermo-saline conveyor of the ocean currents, the redistribution of heat in the atmosphere via the winds and pressure belts, the convection currents of the molten magma in the mantle that constantly recycles

the composition of the Earth's crust; all of this prevents the Earth from solidifying, vaporising, *dying* like the other stagnant planets in our Solar System. If even one of these essential conditions wasn't met, the Earth would die, or would not have been 'born' in the first place. There would not have been a perfect Eden, thriving with life. The Earth is a miniscule oasis in the endless desert of space. Space is big; infinitely big. So of course there is the possibility that there is other life out there, but just by looking at our own Solar system we can see that the probability of randomly meeting the exact conditions for life is minute. The fact that these conditions were created out of atoms that randomly exploded into something as big as the Universe is what makes the Earth such a miracle. This is another indicator that there is a God who wanted to create life, even if it was in a seemingly convoluted way. Some may argue that in an infinite Universe, anything is possible, so these conditions would have been met somewhere in the vast expanses of space. This is true, and that is why the Universe is infinite. Something (religion says God) made that tiny ball of plasma explode into infinite possibilities, no matter how small some of those possibilities may be. If you keep on throwing darts at a dart board, forever, you are almost sure to hit a bulls-eye, even if that bulls-eye is as small as the eye of a needle. Essentially, if there is a God (and religion says there is), then this is the logic that She/He used to create life, except She/He threw infinite amounts of darts at the same time, during the Big Bang, and in this case the Earth is that miniscule bulls-eye.

"Now the Earth was formless and empty..." (Genesis 1:2) and needed to be filled with life. This was 4.5 billion years ago, and six hundred million years later, a multitude of atoms decided to bond together in a certain way to form the very first organism, and so life on Earth started. From this single unsung hero of a bacterium evolved the vast menagerie of creatures and plants we see today. True, this did take almost four billion years, but here we are, living, breathing, moving, *thinking* beings, and yet our cells are literally made up of the very same atoms that exploded out of a supernova billions of years ago. The stars are literally our ancestors. How on Earth can the atoms of stars bond in such a way as to ignite the spark of life? Scientists have been trying to do this artificially for fifty years, by recreating the conditions of the then 'toddler' Earth. Earth's constant tantrums (i.e. volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, storms, meteor showers etc) created a potent atmosphere and seas of 'chemical soup,' out of which life enigmatically formed. Scientists have many theories of how this happened, from lightning strikes to living 'bubbles' of atoms, but so far they have not found the key to catalyse the enigma of life. Never fear! We can turn to religion for an answer: there must be a God who thought it would be wonderful to watch little creatures experience life, and to share in the joy of this remarkable mystery.

This essay has discussed three mysteries that science has tried, and failed, to solve. Religion says that these mysteries are mysteries because we do not have to understand them. Religion says there is a God who set these incomprehensible events to occur: the Universe in its timeless state, the trigger of the Big Bang, the perfect conditions for life on Earth and what the spark of life actually is. All are unanswerable by scientific means, just as we cannot

scientifically prove that God exists. The Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy describes it succinctly: "The argument goes something like this: "I refuse to prove that I exist," says God, "for proof denies faith, and without faith I am nothing." " so if this essay proves that God exists, then God cannot possibly exist, because She/He would be "nothing". This is where I point out that this essay was never meant to try and prove that God exists. What it has done is show that faith and religion provides possible answers for questions that science cannot hope to explain. Religion fills the gaps in our scientific knowledge. In this way, science and religion are not incompatible, but are more than compatible: They are entirely complimentary.