

GOD IS

Exploring the Nature
of the Biblical God

by Randy C. Finch

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Kindle Edition

Cover Photo

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About the Author

I was born into a poor family. My father was raised a sharecropper in the southern Tennessee / northern Alabama area and only attained a fourth grade education. My mother was raised on a farm in northern Alabama and only finished the eighth grade. Despite this, my parents did well. I grew up in Louisville, KY, where my father was an assembly line worker for many years. He made a sufficient salary to provide for my mother and me, even purchasing a small house when I was in the third grade. After graduating from high school, I entered college, obtaining a MS in Chemical Engineering from the University of Louisville. I then took a job back near where my mother and father were raised in north Alabama.

As I was growing up, I always considered my parents to be Christians even though my father never went to church and my mother only went sporadically. When I was young, I attended church occasionally with my mother. Later I attended with several friends. Based on what I learned in those years, I ultimately concluded that the God of the Bible was not real. I believed there was a God, but he was not the one described in the Bible. Even so, upon starting my career as an engineer, I became interested in the Bible and discussed it frequently with believing friends. I ultimately decided to become a Christian. However, over the next several years, my nascent faith began to wane as I read more and more things in the Bible that just didn't square with what I personally knew about how the world works. After much reading, thinking, and soul searching, I ultimately came to the conclusion that I had been right back in high school and college. The Bible was strictly the writings of men and the God it describes is not the one that really exists, if one even exists. After many more years of reading and thinking, I have not changed in this belief.

I finally decided that I needed to write down all the thoughts that led to my conclusions concerning the Bible before I began to forget them. This book is the end result.

I am also the author of two other books. [Beginnings to Endings: Philosophical Ramblings for Avoiding Global Destruction](#) is a humorous book about various topics related to philosophy. [Passion is a Harsh Taskmaster](#) is a mystery romance novel. Both books are available in Kindle format and in paperback on Amazon. Additionally, I have written many computer related articles for a number of journals and magazines and have had several poems published.

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Amazon Author Page:

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Home Budgeting Blog (with my wife):

<http://finchhomebudget.blogspot.com>

Personal Blog:

<http://rcfinch.blogspot.com>

Acknowledgements

For an undertaking such as this book, many people obviously played a role in its completion; more than I could ever thank here. Many authors have written about topics similar to those in this book. Some of them I have quoted; others I have listed in my Recommended Reading section. Thanks to them all for giving me food for thought. Given that we humans are not omniscient, there is always a chance that anyone of us can be wrong about things we believe. The beauty of sharing ideas with one another is that it gives each of us a chance to hear points of view not considered before and determine if they make sense in light of the information we currently possess.

I would like to thank my wonderful wife, Kathy. Although she is a Christian, she does not enjoy reading books such as this one. Nevertheless, she has acted as a sounding board for the ideas I present herein. She also helped me decide on the final subtitle for this book.

My son, Andrew, like many other people, has struggled with his beliefs and modified them a number of times. Being a lover of history, languages, and ideas, he was one of my earliest readers. We have had a number of late night discussions about religion and philosophy over the years.

My father was also one of my early readers. Although he was not a highly educated man, he enjoyed reading the Bible and discussing many of its teachings. I had many discussions with him over the years. He and I shared many of the same beliefs. I am sorry to say that he passed on before this book was ready for publication. I miss you Dad.

First and foremost among my non-family early readers was Dr. Joel Anderson. Joel is a teacher at Shoals Christian School where my wife works. He recently received his PhD in the Old Testament and is a prolific writer, having published a book of poetry as well as his own translation of the New Testament: The JAV. He is currently working on his own translation of the Old Testament and maintains a blog at resurrectedorthodoxy.blogspot.com. He has promised to devote a few posts to commenting on my book once it is released. When Joel read an early version of my book, he wrote many lengthy comments in response. I thought that he was going to end up writing a book of equal length to mine. That would have been fine as he could have then released his notes as a rebuttal to my book. I liked his comments so much that I incorporated several of them into a revised version of this book. Thanks so much, Joel, for the tremendous amount of time you spent reading and commenting.

Another person who read and discussed my book with me was Dr. Carl Gebhardt. Carl was a minister for many years in a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), but is now retired. He also teaches religion classes at a local university, my son having been his student several times. Thanks, Carl, for sharing your views of the Bible and being a fellow amateur photographer.

I would also like to thank Jerry Rea, the pastor at the church I attend occasionally and where my wife is a member. He read portions of my book and we had a vigorous debate about them in his office. Occasionally Jerry and I see each other at the YMCA when we are there to work out. It never fails that we get into a one to two hour theological discussion. I always enjoy our conversations.

At the time of this writing, my friend Jeff Boles, a fellow engineer, has been reading the latest version of this book, and we have been discussing it online and in person. He also gave me suggestions concerning the title of my book as well as the cover art. Thanks, Jeff.

Other early readers were Kim Abbott, who is a Data Project Manager with a Masters in Environmental Studies, and Neil Buchanan, who has a BS in Physics and Math as well as an MA in Philosophy. Both read portions of my book and provided useful comments. Danielle Fain, a Facebook friend, read my book and pointed out a number of grammatical errors. Thanks to you all.

My experience with writings is that no matter how many eyes look at them and no matter how often the author reads through them, some errors persistently remain. I assume that is true for this book as well. If you find any of those remaining problems, I would appreciate you letting me know about them so they can be corrected in a future release.

Early Readers

Here is what early readers of “God Is” have said:

“I thought the book was well researched, and I'm in awe of the level of effort and detail put into it. Regarding the style and grammar, I have very little to nitpick. Well done! The writing is clear, concise and engaging.” – **Kim Abbott, Data Project Manager with a Masters in Environmental Studies**

“I love the structure of the book. The idea of devoting an individual chapter to debunking the ‘rational’ basis of each of the traditional attributes of the Judeo-Christian God is new to me and has a great deal of appeal. I found the book to be extremely well reasoned. I believe Mr. Finch has shown that in every case these purported attributes do not square either with other attributes of God or with other things we know or strongly believe to be true. He has put a great deal of very good work into this book.” – **Neil Buchanan, BS in Physics and Math, MA in Philosophy**

“Randy's passion for such in depth and rigorous research, investigation, and analysis of this subject originates from his heartfelt desire to discover truth and to benefit others in their quest for truth. Understanding Randy's motivation in this pursuit is important in view of the controversial nature of this subject. In this excellent work, Randy explores many issues in which I and probably others have had unanswered questions over the years. It is clear Randy shares his long path of study, logical analysis, and evolution of beliefs without bias or preconceived notions and purely out of his genuine desire to find truth and to share his results with others. Randy's writing is a skill set of its own. His clear and well-organized style consistently piques my interest and keeps me impatient for the next sentence -- all while clearly explaining the subject matter and logical analysis in a way I've never seen accomplished so effectively. Randy intelligently conveys his detailed understanding and astute logical analysis of this subject in an appealing, down to earth way all can understand and enjoy. His style has always kept me glued to his writings on any issue, including his enjoyable fiction.” – **Jeff Boles, Retired Chemical Engineer**

“Randy Finch has engaged some of the most important and sensitive issues in the ongoing debate concerning Scripture and Christian beliefs. As a long-time pastor, I think it is important for believers to do more than simply accept and recite the time-honored answers they have always been taught. It is more important to keep those answers in play; that is, in discussion. The discussion needs to include both the assumed positions AND the scripture that may or may not agree, both the believer AND the non-believer or skeptic. Unless believers continue to engage the issues and the answers in this manner, how will they ever be able to give an adequate accounting of themselves to other believers who do not agree with them,

much less to those outside of the ‘faith’ for whom a reasonable answer is crucial? This book is important in that conversation!” – **Dr. Carl R. Gebhardt, Retired Minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

“Randy’s analysis and critique are obviously coming from a very rationalistic Enlightenment-minded point of view. While he says he is critiquing the ‘Biblical attributes of God’, in reality he is critiquing the past 100 years or so of Fundamentalist theology. His use of the word ‘Biblical’ is actually more influenced by rationalistic Enlightenment thought than he realizes. Therefore, the things I criticize him for are ironically the exact same things many Evangelical Christians believe. The only difference is that Randy takes them to their logical conclusion and thus points out some obvious flaws in such thinking. That makes some Christians very uncomfortable. Simply put, if this book makes some Christians feel uncomfortable, perhaps it is because it shows them that in some ways their theology is more influenced by the Enlightenment than it is by the Bible and Church Tradition.” – **Dr. Joel Anderson, Bible Teacher at Shoals Christian School**

Enter

The thoughts that led to the writing of this book have been building over many years. There came to be so many thoughts about so many topics swimming about in my mind that I could feel them yearning to be freed and forever manifested in written form. Writers sometimes say that they did not write a particular book, the book wrote itself. Of course, these writers meant that the words and flow of the book were so vivid in their heads it was as though an outside force was pushing the pen or pressing the keys. I can identify with this.

Background

I am not a theologian that has studied the Bible in great depth over a lifetime. However, I have read extensively from the Bible and related literature, both pro and con, and have thought a lot about various Biblical topics. I grew up with parents that believed the Bible and lived mostly by its morals, but did not attend church regularly. It wasn't until I was in college that I began reading the Bible seriously. When I was 25 years old I became a believer and joined a Church of Christ congregation. I made many Christian friends and was quite happy with my beliefs. Yet, just a short two years later I was beginning to doubt. I was recently married when my wife and I began studying the Bible together, starting in Genesis. Many of the things we studied just seemed unbelievable to me. I talked to church leaders and Christian friends trying to find answers, but none were forthcoming. It was very frustrating. Over the next five years I tried to maintain my faith to no avail. I finally had to admit that I no longer believed the Bible to be the inerrant word of God. I still believed in God, but I could no longer honestly say that I believed the Bible. This was a difficult time since my wife remained a Christian, but we worked through it and remain happily married to this day. I also continued to associate with my Christian friends. For several years now, I have been attending a Baptist church with my wife. Our Sunday School teacher is a very good friend and coworker. All of the class members know of my unbelief, yet have been gracious enough to allow me to attend the class and even express my skeptical opinion. We should all be searching for truth, *wherever it may appear*, regardless of how secure we are in our current beliefs.

As you may have surmised, I was a bit hesitant about writing this book given that my wife and many of my friends are firm believers in the Bible. Yet, as I said earlier, I had an internal compulsion to put my thoughts into words and share them with others. I harbor no delusions concerning the efficacy of my words changing anyone's current beliefs. I have shared my thoughts with many believers over the years and am unaware of any that have modified their beliefs as a result. However, for those readers that are

currently on a mental journey in search of the holy grail of truth, perhaps my thoughts can aid you along the way.

About the Book

While thinking about the title of this book, I needed a theme to bring all the differing topics together as a cohesive whole. I ultimately came up with the idea of creating chapters in which I explore in detail the individual attributes of the Biblical God that many people believe make up his nature. This idea worked well, and I was able to fit what I wanted to say into the resulting chapters. When my son showed me the book **I Am: Inheriting the Fullness of God's Names** by John Paul Jackson, I decided it would add a bit of interest to provide the equivalent Hebrew words in my English chapter titles. I further decided that it would be beneficial to provide the modern-day definitions of the attributes, so I placed the relevant definitions from the **Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary** at the top of each chapter. Some may question the relevancy of the modern meanings of these words since the definition of a word can change over time. One must keep in mind, however, that the scholars who create modern translations of the Bible use, to the best of their ability, English words that currently have the same meaning as the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek words did thousands of years ago. Thus it is helpful to know the modern day meaning of these words.

As you may have guessed by looking at the chapter titles, some of the attributes of God I discuss overlap one another. For this reason some ideas are presented more than once. However, I promise that the bulk of each chapter will present unique thoughts related to its topic.

All the Biblical quotes are from the **New International Version (NIV)** translation of the Bible. This translation was first published in 1978 after more than 100 scholars studied the best available texts. It has since gained much acceptance as being an accurate, easy to read translation of the Bible. Yet, no matter which version of the Bible is used, there will always be challenges to the accuracy of the translation. I don't know how many times I have heard preachers expound on the *true* meaning of a Biblical passage when the translation they are reading from doesn't quite match the point they are making. My internal response has always been, "How is it that you are able to extract the *real* meaning behind this passage when hundreds of scholars in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek languages missed it?" A personal example comes to mind.

Back in 1980, when I had been a Christian for just a short time, the man who baptized me said that he had heard that I didn't believe it was wrong to drink alcohol. I told him that I believed the Bible taught that it was wrong to get drunk, but drinking in moderation was not sinful. I directed him to **1 Corinthians 11:17-34** where Paul denounced the Corinthian church for their misuse of the Lord's Supper. Paul says

that while some were going hungry, others were getting drunk. That indicated that the cup used for the Lord's Supper was filled with wine, not grape juice. My friend, who knew Greek and taught at a Bible college, responded that the word translated "drunk" really meant "to become full." He took me to his office, pulled out his Greek New Testament, and showed me the relevant Greek word. He then pulled out his Greek dictionary to show me what the word really meant. The dictionary said it meant "to be drunk." My friend said he would have to do further study on this issue. I never heard back from him on the matter.

One given throughout this book is that the Bible can and should be examined rationally. This means that the writings of the Bible should be filtered through the common rules of logic to determine whether any errors, contradictions, or illogical statements are present. There are some people who do not believe the Bible should be subject to such scrutiny. A number of people have told me that the Bible must be accepted by faith rather than reason. In one particular case a scientific friend told me that Christianity was indeed irrational, and she would never have accepted it by reasoned persuasion. This person had to set aside her logical scientific thinking and use pure faith when it came to accepting the Bible; this despite the fact that she would never do this at her job as a scientist.

Faith Problems

The problem with accepting belief systems by faith is that it becomes impossible to know which belief system, if any, is the correct one. There are thousands of competing belief systems that are based on faith, so how does one determine which is the true one? You might say that the belief system that makes the most sense is the true one. However, the words "makes the most sense" are equivalent to saying "are the most logical." This leads to admitting that religious documents can, indeed *must*, be examined rationally since this is the only way to accurately determine which are true and which are false. If, on the other hand, you believe that religious documents must be accepted by faith rather than by logic, you have to admit that the only way to select from among those available is to simply *choose*. All are equally valid using this method unless, of course, you have had a personal revelation from God himself. But a revelation presents its own difficulties since you must consider how you *know for sure* that the revelation was indeed from God and not some deceptive entity such as the devil, a demon, or your own deluded mind. And even if you are able to know beyond doubt that the message was from God, how do you go about convincing others lacking in revelation that God has communicated truth to you without them believing you to be in need of psychiatric therapy?

Many years ago a relative told me that he believed that if he had chosen the wrong beliefs God would let him know in some way. Of course, I challenged this idea by asking why it was that people who believed differently than him had not been informed of *their* incorrect beliefs. He really had no response

to this, but still persisted in his beliefs. Could it be that the way God informs us of our incorrect beliefs is by giving us rational minds to see how our beliefs stand up to the laws of logic which God himself created?

One morning in Sunday School class our teacher pointed out the dangers of accepting as truth everything said by a preacher, elder, deacon, teacher, or anyone, including himself, since all these people are *human* and thus capable of believing and speaking error. I responded by asking if that same skepticism should also apply to the Biblical authors who were themselves all *human* and also capable of error. Just as we need to be discerning when listening to people alive today, we must likewise be discerning when listening to people who are now dead. I find it interesting that so many people understand that no one today has a corner on the truth, even a beloved family member or a loyal friend, and yet accept centuries old documents written by people they have never met, and in some cases written by the ubiquitous author known as Anonymous, as absolute truth.

Religion, Reason, and Logic

I have heard it said that it is easy for people to see the fallacies of religions other than their own. There is a lot of truth to that statement. A friend once told me that while talking to a former classmate, the latter started ridiculing the idea of reincarnation. Knowing that his classmate believed in a resurrection, he queried, “Why is being reincarnated any harder to believe than being resurrected?” The classmate was stymied trying to answer this question. The fact is that when considering supernatural matters that can in no way be directly experienced by humans living in a physical universe, anything makes as much sense as anything else. All things can be accepted by faith.

Another interesting aspect of religions is how practitioners of one religion use logical arguments against other religions, but fail to do so for their own religion. Many years ago I read a tract discussing problems with the Book of Mormon. The author was pointing out the illogic of God telling a man to build a boat with a hole in its bottom (**Ether 2:20, Book of Mormon**). Would not God know that a boat with a hole in the bottom is not seaworthy? Well, in like manner, would not God know that a man holding up his hands with a staff cannot cause the Red Sea to part (**Exodus 14:16**)? If you are going to use the laws of nature and logic to argue against another religion, then be prepared to have them used against your own. Personally, I think the laws of nature and logic should be used when examining *any* religion, philosophy, or belief system. If there is *any* natural explanation for a reported supernatural event, it is to be preferred. This is not to say that the supernatural event did not actually occur. It is just acknowledging that when claims of a supernatural nature have been investigated thoroughly, a large percentage of them are found to have natural explanations. And what about those that remain? Well, it could be that there *is* a natural

explanation, but it was just not forthcoming at the time of the investigation. More and more seemingly strange occurrences can be explained as scientific knowledge increases.

After many years of discussing faith issues with friends and family and reading a wide variety of literature from many sources, I have concluded that it is possible to harmonize *any* two statements, no matter how contradictory they are, if sufficient rationalization is used. Because of this, one must be very careful not to distort any passages in the Bible in order to harmonize them with other passages. If this is allowed, then, by default, there *cannot* be any contradictions in the Bible. By the same token, that would also mean that all people in the world are in total agreement with one another since, no matter what is said, all statements can be harmonized.

Physicist Steven Weinberg said, “With or without religion, good people can behave well and bad people can do evil; but for good people to do evil—that takes religion.” (**A Designer Universe?**) Most people have probably known or heard about a good person who fell under the spell of a religion that ultimately led that person to commit evil acts. Still, Weinberg only got it half right. The other half is that for evil people to do good things, that takes religion. Many bad people have turned their lives around once they “found religion.” So, the total truth is this. Without religion, some people are good and some are bad. Religion can lead some of the good people to become bad, but can also lead some of the bad people to become good. It’s all a matter of how each individual interprets the teachings of his chosen religion and how seriously he takes those interpretations.

At issue in this book is whether the Biblical God, Jehovah, makes sense from a rational standpoint, not whether or not belief in this God leads one to do good or bad things. A religion should not be judged based on how its followers act. It should be judged based on how well its teachings pass the test of reason. Keep in mind that just because *some* of the teachings of a religion do not pass the test of reason does not suggest that *all* teachings therein must be rejected. Of course, when a person admits to there being just one error in the Bible, or any religious text for that matter, they must accept that either the authors are indeed fallible and capable of writing error or that errors have crept in over the years since the texts were originally written. Either scenario is problematic for many people since, for them, they are left without a standard by which to judge the truthfulness of any given statement or the morality of any given action. But this is really not the case. Our Creator, whether an intelligent being or blind natural forces, has given humankind a great gift that is lacking in other species of life on Earth. He has given us the gift of reason. By its use we are capable of discerning many truths, albeit sometimes with great difficulty.

The Bible reports that God said, “Come now, let us reason together” (**Isaiah 1:18**). That is what I would like for us to do: reason together. Let us together discover *truth* wherever it may be found. While I may be direct and passionate with the words in this book, it is not my intention to belittle anyone. We are all on this extremely complex planet in a very small corner of an unbelievably vast and complex universe

with very little information about how or why we are here. People have been struggling for millennia to understand man's nature and purpose. Some believe answers are only forthcoming by faith, others reason, and yet others by some combination of the two. My beliefs have changed a number of times during my years here on Earth, and I still struggle. So, consider this book to be a snapshot of my understanding of Jehovah and the Bible at this point in time. For the sake of brevity, I will not discuss every possible aspect of a topic, but will simply pen my thoughts about some of the more nagging questions that come to mind when I study the Bible. Please consider my thoughts to be food for further thought.

Fundamentalism vs. Orthodoxy

Let me state right from the beginning that much of this book is written with the fundamentalist view of God and the Bible in mind. The primary reason is that this view is the one with which I am most familiar and that seems to be quite prevalent. One of my Christian friends, Joel Anderson, who has a PhD in the Old Testament, recently published his own translation of the New Testament (**The JAV**). He disagrees with much of my analyses of God and the Bible in this book. For instance, he believes that Biblical inerrancy is a modern concept and that historically the importance of scripture was manifest in its inspiration and canonicity. In other words, when a particular writing is determined to be the result of its author being truly inspired, that writing can be added to the canon of other inspired writings. This collection of writings known as the Canon of Scripture is not to be viewed as inerrant, but rather as a guide to the truth through the eyes of truly inspired people. Thus, it can be used to help us determine how well modern writers line up with those inspired by God in the past.

While my friend and I agree that the Bible is not inerrant, I have a few problems with his position on inspiration and canonicity. First, who determines who is inspired and who is not? Does it take an inspired person to recognize another one? In common vernacular, does it take one to know one? Second, if it was possible for the writings of inspired men of the past to make it into the Canon of Scripture, shouldn't it be possible for all writings of inspired men throughout the ages to be canonized? Why only allow in writings from the first century and earlier? It is probably these and other problems associated with a person's faith being dependent on inspired, but errant, scriptures that prompted men to push the doctrine of inerrancy. I believe it is difficult to defend the idea that men inspired by God could write something that contains errors. What method should be used to separate the wheat from the chaff, so to speak?

So, again, my main focus in this book is to examine the attributes of God as described by fundamentalist and mainstream protestant Christians. Keep this in mind as you continue to read.

Sailing

I don't claim to have a corner on truth any more than anyone else. I believe all humans are on their own individual boats sailing for the island of Truth. Some are close, others far away, but none have yet gone ashore. While the storms of ignorance can make our sailing rough, there are some tools that can help us on our quest. Two are the compass of reason and the sextant of logic. Without them, we are all simply floating about on a sea of confusion with absolutely no means to know the proper direction to sail. But with them, I believe we can come ever closer to that elusive island destination.

God is Self-Sufficient (Jehovah-Hayah)

***SELF-SUFFICIENT (adjective):** Able to maintain oneself or itself without outside aid : capable of providing for one's own needs. Having an extreme confidence in one's own ability or worth : haughty, overbearing.*
(Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary)

On July 4, 1776, after a number of disputes with England and over a year of being at war, the Continental Congress, representing the original 13 colonies of what would become the United States of America, declared its independence. The colonies were basically saying they no longer needed the crown for their survival. They would form a new country and become independent of England, thus becoming self-sufficient. In like manner, a self-sufficient individual can survive, even flourish, independent of other people. However, independence does not necessarily mean that a person can survive in the *absence* of other people. For instance, I consider myself a self-sufficient, independent person even though I do not have the survival skills necessary to stay alive if left alone for very long in the wilderness. But as part of a society, I do have skills that I can voluntarily exchange for money that allows me to purchase the items I need to survive, such as housing, clothing, and food, without having to mooch off others. However, I freely admit that a person who can survive and flourish equally well in the wilderness and in society is *more* self-sufficient than me.

Eternal, Immortal, and Invisible

Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. **(1 Timothy 1:17)**

If God is uncaused, self-existent, and eternal, he takes self-sufficiency to a whole new level. If he by nature has always existed and cannot cease to exist, then survival is a piece of cake requiring no effort. However, this means there is no reason to laud his fortitude as we do self-sufficient human beings. We humans started our lives as totally dependent beings, requiring other humans to care for and raise us. We had to learn skills and develop proper attitudes to become independent. This required a lot of hard work. But as far as we know, no such period of growth occurred for God. It was not necessary. God just was, is, and will always be. Survival is simply a part of his nature.

People generally consider God's self-sufficiency to be such that he requires *nothing*. I have heard many say "God doesn't need us; we need God." The conundrum is that if God doesn't need us, then why did he create us?

Another related aspect of God's nature is his perfection. It is spoken of often in the Bible as these few verses show.

He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he. **(Deuteronomy 32:4)**

As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him. **(2 Samuel 22:31)**

O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness you have done marvelous things, things planned long ago. **(Isaiah 25:1)**

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will. **(Romans 12:2)**

Here we learn that God's works, way, faithfulness, and will are perfect. If every aspect of a being is perfect, then we can say that the being itself is perfect. A perfect being is expected to be totally self-sufficient, not needing anything. However, as we shall see, the idea of a perfect God before he created anything is problematic.

The Way He Was

Let's consider God as he was before creation. He existed alone in all his perfection. What did he do? Did he bask in his own glory and sing praises to himself while bowing down in reverence to himself? Or, if God is three persons in one, did each person rotate worshipping the other two? What prompted this God to create something that at best could only equal his perfection, but at worse could be miserably imperfect? Did he create the entire physical Universe for fun or was there a deeper reason for the creation, such as having a need for something he did not have? Could it be that he desired companionship or was simply bored? I don't know about you, but sitting around basking in my own perfection sounds really boring, even with two other perfect people around. It brings to mind an old TV episode of Rod Serling's **The Twilight Zone**.

A Serling Example

In the episode entitled **A Nice Place to Visit**, a man named Rocky gets shot while committing a robbery. He wakes up to find himself greeted by an angelic person named Pip. This person tells Rocky that he can have anything he wants. All he has to do is ask. And so it happens. On the break, Rocky pockets all 15 pool balls. He has beautiful girls at his side. He always wins at the casino. Nothing negative ever happens. Eventually this becomes monotonous to Rocky. Everything is predictable and no fun anymore. He complains to Pip who responds that he can arrange for him to lose sometimes. But Rocky knows that is not the same as the uncertainty that comes with true randomness. He wants to gain good things for himself through his own efforts. He wants the results to be truly uncertain, not arranged. Rocky finally tells Pip that he is not cut out for heaven and that it might be best if he were in the other place. Pip responds, “This *is* the other place!” (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Nice_Place_to_Visit for more details of this episode.)

Did God find that his own perfection was in reality his own private hell? Was pure perfection too predictable, thus leading to boredom as it did for Rocky? Did God need a bit of imperfection to make things more interesting?

Why Create Anything?

Concerning God creating the Universe, there appear to be four possible scenarios.

1. God is an imperfect being incapable of creating a perfect Universe, so created an imperfect one.
2. God is a perfect being, but considered perfection boring and unacceptable, so created an imperfect Universe to make things more interesting.
3. God is a perfect being and created a perfect Universe. It remains perfect to this day and will always remain perfect.
4. God is a perfect being and created a perfect Universe. However, through no fault of his own, the Universe became imperfect.

From a Biblical perspective the first option must be rejected out of hand since the Bible is full of references (some given previously) that speak to God’s perfection. Since the verse quoted above (**Deuteronomy 32:4**) says that God’s works are perfect, the second option would have to be rejected

because Creation was a part of God's works. The third option must be rejected since a perfect Universe cannot contain any imperfections like sinful men. This leaves the fourth option as the only viable one.

There are several nagging questions related to the fourth option. Why would a perfect God who is totally self-sufficient by nature feel compelled to create anything at all? Further, why would he create a perfect Universe that was capable of becoming imperfect? Would not a "perfect" Universe that can fall into imperfection be considered somewhat flawed to begin with and thus less than perfect? Or could it be that perfection consists of things that are capable of becoming imperfect? If so, wouldn't that mean that a perfect God would be capable of imperfection? Do any of these questions boggle your brain as much as they do mine?

Perhaps God was lonely and in need of more companionship than he could provide to himself. This, however, implies that there was something lacking in God, an unfulfilled need. But a God lacking in anything, regardless of how small, suggests that God was less than perfect since he was not complete in and of himself. This proposal can be inferred to some degree from Bible verses indicating that God created man in his own image (**Genesis 1:26**). It makes sense that a being seeking companionship would want it from others like himself.

Perhaps God has an innate need to be praised and worshipped by beings other than himself. But again, can a God that has a need for anything be considered self-sufficient in its purest sense?

It may be surprising to some, but Genesis does not say directly why God created the Universe. However, it does give us a hint at why he created Man.

God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (**Genesis 1:28**)

So, interestingly, the apparent intent of God in creating the Universe appears to be so he could create sentient beings known as humans, creatures that in some sense were like God, that would have dominion over the rest of creation. Further, these humans were allowed to do anything *except* eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. There were no commands to worship God, make offerings or sacrifices, etc. In fact, we are told that God walked with Man in the garden that he created (**Genesis 3:8**), thus in some fashion appearing and acting like a co-equal with Man.

Alleviating Loneliness

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." (**Genesis 2:18**)

Apparently God did not think it was good for the person he created in his own image to be alone. Could this imply that God created Man because he did not believe it was good for himself to be alone? Perhaps. But why create Eve? After all, God had Adam as a companion and vice versa. Why did God say it was not good for Adam to be alone when in fact he was not? God was there and capable of walking alongside Adam. The answer appears to be that Adam was sufficiently different from God such that he needed a more suitable companion, one with which he could procreate. Based on this theory, consider these questions.

Why did God create Man as a physical being which required creating an entire physical Universe first? Why was Man not created as a spirit?

Why did God feel a need to create Man when he had already supposedly created angels? Did not the angels keep him sufficient company so he did not feel lonely?

Some have said that God created humans with free will so that their worship would have more meaning due to it being freely given by choice. However, we are told that Satan and his demons were once angels but became fallen after a heavenly rebellion (although the Biblical evidence for this is skimpy; see **Isaiah 14:12-13, Luke 10:18, 2 Peter 2:4, Revelation 12:4**). If this is true, doesn't that mean that the angels also have free will, so any worship God receives from them is also freely given? So, why Man?

Would not angels be created more in the image of God than Man given that they are spiritual beings in heaven rather than physical beings on a planet?

So many questions with so few answers.

Let's now get back to the topic of God's self-sufficiency from a Biblical perspective. About the best we can say is that for some reason, most likely loneliness, God decided that he needed more than just himself. He first created heavenly beings, including the angels. They possibly had free will, and they worshipped God, but, for some reason, that was insufficient. So he decided to create physical beings. Since there was no physical place for these physical beings to exist in, he had to create a physical Universe first. Why he created such a large Universe, we don't know.

Unsatisfactory Existence

As we have seen, God evidently did not consider his own existence along with other heavenly beings to be sufficiently satisfying. He wanted more. Our conclusion must be that the self-existent God is not

self-sufficient in the purest sense, but *is* self-sufficient in the sense that he has the power to create anything he needs or desires. Perhaps we need God, but apparently he needs us, also.

Billy Graham disagrees.

God didn't make Adam and Eve because He was lonely or because He needed someone to love Him in return. This is true with human love, but it isn't true with God's love. God is complete in Himself; He lacks nothing. But His love *compelled* Him to create those first humans. His love needed to be expressed. Just as an artist has a compelling urge to create a beautiful painting, or a skilled woodworker has a compelling urge to create a fine piece of furniture, so our loving God had a compelling urge to create humanity. His love was expressed in the creation of the human race. **(Billy Graham, The Journey, p. 27)**

I am surprised that Graham missed the fallacy in this argument. First, the artist and the woodworker are compelled to create paintings and furniture because they are *lacking* in something. They are compelled to manifest their creative abilities by *actually* creating something so they can feel complete within themselves. A being that is already complete in himself and lacks *nothing* would not have an urge to create anything. To be complete is to not need or want or feel a compelling urge for anything beyond oneself. Also, it seems very strange that God's love would compel him to create sentient beings if he had foreknowledge that the great majority of these beings would have to be destroyed for lack of faith. How is this compulsion a result of *love*?

Graham continues.

Biologists speculate about *how* we came to be here, but the crucial question is *why* we came to be here. Don't miss what the Bible says about this: *God created us to have a personal relationship with Himself. To put it another way, He created us to be His friends.* **(Billy Graham, The Journey, p. 28)**

Wait a minute! Graham had just said that God was not lonely and he lacked nothing. Why would anyone want friends if they are not lonely and lack nothing? I believe Graham deep down agrees that the only explanation for God creating *anything* is that he lacked *something*. He, like many others, just cannot bring himself to the point of admitting it since this in some sense diminishes God's perfection.

Need and Perfection

So far I have been implying that God having a need of any kind is a sign of imperfection on his part. I did this because I have heard and read many Christians expressing this position. But perhaps having a

need has nothing to do with perfection. Perhaps it is just the inevitable state of any sentient being, whether eternal or temporal. As I said earlier, sitting around in a state of complete and utter self-sufficiency actually sounds quite boring. What is there to look forward to? Perhaps it is the state of looking forward to fulfilling a need or a desire that is perfect rather than the state of complete self-sufficiency. It definitely sounds more exciting. Striving for a goal and the sense of accomplishment once reached is something most, if not all, humans take pleasure in. Perhaps we inherited this trait from our creator God. On the other hand, perhaps we humans, in our search for the nature of our creator, simply ascribed this trait to God.

I now leave to you a final thought concerning perfection. I originally posted this on Facebook to challenge people's thinking. "Is it possible for an imperfect person to recognize perfection given that the person's perception of perfection is imperfect?"

God is Creator (Jehovah-Bora)

CREATOR (noun): *One that creates usually by bringing something new or original into being.*

CREATE (transitive verb): *To bring into existence. To produce or bring about by a course of action or behavior. To produce through imaginative skill. Design.*

CREATE (intransitive verb): *To make or bring into existence something new.*

(Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary)

From its very first verse, the Bible makes it abundantly clear that God is the creator of everything; except himself, of course. We are not told how God himself came to exist. Rather, we are told that he is eternal with neither a beginning nor an ending. Eternity is incomprehensible to our temporal minds. I have personally tried many times to comprehend it and have failed every time. The problem is not with an eternity that extends forever into the future, but an eternity that extends forever into the past. The idea of something not having a beginning makes my neurons tie up in knots. And the idea proposed by some that eternity is outside the realm of time altogether causes those knotted neurons to implode!

A Universe Without God

For millennia, the general consensus concerning the Universe was that it was created by God (or the gods). However, with the coming of the scientific method and its overwhelming success in helping we humans understand the workings of the cosmos both on a large and small scale, scientists began to believe that science would one day be able to explain the origins of the Universe without God. The challenge to this community is great. There appears to be only two general explanations for the existence of the Universe without God: (1) the Universe proceeded from absolutely nothing or (2) the Universe is eternal. (The idea that the Universe really does not exist, I am rejecting out of hand.)

A few years ago I was discussing the idea of the Universe proceeding from nothing with an atheist. He told me that there was some recent scientific research that was showing promise in explaining how this could occur. I responded by stating that that made no sense. From *everything* we know about the cosmos, anything that had a beginning had a cause. He went on to explain that there were originally some zero fields. I interrupted to say that he had already violated his premise. If there were fields, even if they were zero (whatever that means), there was *something*, not *nothing*. He persisted with the theory, but I kept rebutting it by saying that for there to be absolutely nothing, there can be no space, time, matter, energy, fields, potentials, charges, spins, etc. There can not even be a possibility of something as that is

still *something*. We can't even comprehend nothing. When someone speaks of it in day-to-day language, we usually think of empty space. But space is something. So, it's just not feasible that the Universe could have proceeded from absolutely nothing. The idea of an eternal Universe is more comprehensible, but only a tad more.

It's mind-boggling to think of the past extending so far back in time that there was never a beginning. However, I freely admit that since the Universe does indeed exist, something *has* to be eternal. It could be the Universe itself, or it could be an entity that exists apart from the Universe that is generally referred to as God or the Creator. From a purely philosophical standpoint, either makes as much sense as the other. However, from a scientific standpoint, the idea of an eternal cosmos is difficult to explain.

Thermodynamics

The First Law of Thermodynamics states that energy cannot be created or destroyed, it can only change form. Keep in mind that matter is just a concentrated form of energy. Einstein discovered that the equivalency of the two can be expressed as $E=mc^2$ (energy equals mass times the speed of light squared). This law implies that the Universe is eternal. Since energy exists and its amount cannot change, the Universe must of necessity have the same amount of energy no matter how far into the past one travels. But there is more to the story.

The Second Law of Thermodynamics states that for all energy exchanges, the potential energy of the final state will always be less than that of the initial state, given that no other energy enters or leaves the system. In other words, even though the total amount of energy stays the same (as stated in the first law), the potential of that energy always goes down. As some would say, the Universe's clock is winding down. The measure of how much it has run down is called entropy. As energy potential decreases, entropy increases. If the Universe's clock is winding down, it must have been wound up to its maximum at some point in the past. That point is thought to have been at the time of the Big Bang when, incredibly, the entire energy of the Universe was supposedly bound up in a ball infinitesimal in size. Obviously, this law implies that the Universe had a beginning.

Putting these two laws together one must conclude that at some point in the past all the energy that currently exists burst forth carrying its maximum potential. Since that time energy has changed form, but not quantity. However, the potential for that energy to do useful work started going down and will continue to do so. Eventually the Universe will reach its minimum potential at which point all its energy will be in a non-useful state. Essentially, the cosmos will be dead. Where did all that high potential energy come from if the physical laws of our Universe cannot account for it?

Scientists don't usually address the issues of how and why the Universe began, but rather limit themselves to studying what happened after the Big Bang. Using our known physical laws they have been able to ascertain the history of the cosmos all the way back to just a small fraction of a second from the beginning. Before that time they do not believe the known physical laws applied. Scientists have a host of scientific explanations to offer for the existence of the Universe. Some believe, and are trying to prove, that the Universe proceeded from absolute nothingness. Some believe that our Universe is just one of many in what is called the Multiverse. Some proffer that the Big Bang did not occur; rather, the Universe is eternal. Others agree that the Universe is eternal, but believe the Big Bang is just one among an infinite progression of bangs that happened beforehand.

If mass-energy cannot be created or destroyed, and if the universe is entirely composed of mass-energy, then the law of the conservation of mass-energy may be extrapolated to this startling conclusion: the universe, in one form or another, in one density or another, always existed. There was never a time when the mass-energy comprising our universe did not exist, if only in the form of an empty oscillating vacuum or an infinitely dense theoretical point called a singularity, consisting of no volume whatsoever. **(David Mills, Atheist Universe, p 74)**

But even if the Universe continually expands and contracts, that does not invalidate the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Entropy would not magically begin decreasing in a contracting Universe. So, for there to be an infinite progression of Universal inflation and deflation, a mechanism for entropy reversal must exist.

The Last Question

The prolific author Isaac Asimov considered the possibility of reversing entropy back in 1956 when he wrote a short story entitled **The Last Question**. A supercomputer is asked how to reverse entropy. The response was "INSUFFICIENT DATA FOR MEANINGFUL ANSWER." Over the following trillions of years, better generations of the original computer are built, and man begins populating other planets and other galaxies. Each generation of computer is asked this same question with the same response. When the Universe reaches the point of being essentially dead and man has merged with the computer, the computer contemplates the entropy question once again. But now there is sufficient data for an answer. However, no man exists to whom to give the answer. The computer is undeterred and simply says, "LET THERE BE LIGHT!" And there was light----

This is an intriguing story; one that I enjoyed reading for the first time when I was a teenager and an aficionado of science fiction. Yet, as things currently stand, no one knows how entropy can be reversed. Perhaps it can, or possibly just reset, in that infinitesimal fraction of a second just before the Universe completely collapses during the Big Crunch wherein the known physical laws are no longer applicable. No one really knows. Further, we don't even know for sure that the Universe will collapse. Some evidence suggests that the Universe's speed of expansion is increasing rather than decreasing.

Anthropic Principle

The anthropic principle has been written about by many authors, theists and atheists alike. Many people accept this principle as a proof of God's existence. Read what Dinesh D'Souza says about it.

Physicists stumbled upon the anthropic principle by asking a simple question: why does the universe operate according to the laws it does? Think about it: the universe seems to follow a very specific set of rules, and yet it didn't *have* to have these rules. So why these rules and not other rules? To take a simple example, the various forces in nature, such as the force of gravity, operate in ways that can be measured. Why is the gravitational force just this strong, and not stronger or weaker? Or consider that the universe is approximately fifteen billion years old and at least fifteen billion light years in size. What would have happened if the universe was much older and bigger or much younger and smaller?

The physicists who asked these questions arrived at a remarkable conclusion. In order for life to exist—in order for the universe to have observers to take notice of it—the gravitational force has to be precisely what it is. The Big Bang had to occur exactly when it did. If the basic values and relationships of nature were even slightly different, our universe would not exist and neither would we. Fantastic though it seems, the universe is fine-tuned for human habitation. We live in a kind of Goldilocks universe in which the conditions are “just right” for life to emerge and thrive. As physicist Paul Davies puts it, “We have been written into the laws of nature in a deep and, I believe, meaningful way.”

(Dinesh D'Souza, *What's So Great About Christianity?*, pp. 129-130; Paul Davies quote from *The Mind of God: The Scientific Basis for a Rational World*, p. 21)

This argument for the existence of God has always been a compelling one for me. How can we explain the finely tuned Universe we live in that allows for our existence if no supernatural intelligence exists? However, the more I have thought about it, the more I am convinced that I have been wrong.

Consider what is being implied when one says that the Universe has *just* the right properties for man to arise within it with a consciousness that can contemplate it. The implication is that *if* nature exists at all, it will *always* respond to physical constants and natural laws a *particular way*. Thus, if the constants are this, the Universe will collapse quickly; if they are that, the Universe will expand and cool too quickly; and if they are just right, the Universe will expand at just the right rate for Homo sapiens to arise. This in turn implies that when God created the cosmos, he really *did not* have a choice about how he created it *if* he wanted sentient humans to appear. This would mean that the creator of the Universe is *not* the God presented in the Bible, for the latter is portrayed as an all-powerful God that not only created everything in the physical Universe, but the laws it obeys *and* the way it responds to those laws.

So, if God is all-powerful, he could have created *only* the Earth and man and it would work. No pesky constants and laws of nature could get in his way. When you really think about it, a small, young, constant sized Universe would be much greater evidence for the existence of God than is the vast cosmos we actually see. It would be much more difficult to explain our existence in a nascent limited cosmos than in an old expansive one. The reason is that the vastness and extreme age of our actual Universe allows for chance to explain our existence whereas a small young Universe would not. If you counter that the size and age of our Universe is still not sufficient for chance to bring us about, then keep in mind that our Universe could very well be cyclical, moving constantly between big bangs and big crunches. Since it is believed that the laws of nature as we know them are no longer in effect when all the matter, energy, space, and time become smaller than a certain size, it is possible that each bang brings about a Universe with completely different properties. If these cycles occur an infinite number of times, then chance *can* explain our existence. Humans would only arise during cycles conducive to our existence. We would have to be in one such cycle right now.

Many people understandably balk at an uncaused, self-existent Universe. Hey, so do I. It's incomprehensible! But so is an uncaused, self-existent God. So, choose your medicine. With our current level of knowledge, both theories require faith. But other options, such as the Universe making a onetime appearance from absolutely nothing or the Universe not existing in reality, appear even more nonsensical. I believe that most people who do not like the idea of there being no God in reality do not like the idea that they exist without an intelligent being projecting purpose onto their life. They do not believe they have the ability to find a purpose for their life without a higher being providing it for them. However, I also understand that if God, as a higher being, is necessary to provide us purpose, then to what higher being does God look to get *his* purpose? Your response may be that God provides his own purpose. But if it is possible for a sentient being to provide his own purpose in the absence of a higher being, then why cannot we do the same? Does it really take an infinite being for purpose to exist? Is not purpose that which we determine has importance to ourselves?

A Universe Without a Big Bang

As I said earlier, there are dissenters that believe the Big Bang never happened. One such person is Eric Lerner who wrote, in the early nineties, a book entitled **The Big Bang Never Happened: A Startling Dominant Theory of the Origin of the Universe**.

The Big Bang theory of cosmology—the idea that the universe originated in a single cataclysmic explosion some ten or twenty billion years ago—was popularized in the fifties and sixties, and has become central not only to astronomy, but to all current theories of the basic structure of matter and energy as well. Yet in the past few years, observation after observation has contradicted the predictions of this theory. Rather, such observations are far more consistent with new theories based on the idea that the universe has existed for an infinite time—without beginning or end. **(Eric Lerner, The Big Bang Never Happened, pp. 3-4)**

Yet the Big Bang theory is still going strong all these years later.

A more recent attempt at refuting the Big Bang came from Terrance Witt with his 2007 book **Our Undiscovered Universe: Introducing Null Physics, The Science of Uniform and Unconditional Reality**.

Null Physics is, for the first time in the history of science, both a complete answer to the riddle of our existence and a quantitative theory of universal properties. It does not divert the question of our existence to the murky past of some nascent version of the universe. It does not depend on unseen mechanisms or unknowable precursors. This book answers the question of why the universe exists fully and finally, using nothing except logic and reasoned extensions of known physics. It leads to testable conclusions and surprising results, precisely the way real science is supposed to work. **(Terrance Witt, Our Undiscovered Universe, p. xv)**

Both of these books attempt to explain an eternal Universe without beginning or end. For the layman, these books are a challenge to understand. Even with my scientific background I found them difficult to comprehend, especially Witt's book. Witt takes on the great challenge of explaining *why* the Universe exists, not just *how* it works. This is a formidable task, one that seems impossible. Yet if either one of these theories can be validated, there would be no need to invoke a Creator since no creation would have taken place. But given that *no* scientific theory explaining the Universe's existence has been

sufficiently verified, we, for now, must go on the assumption that the predominant theory, the Big Bang, is correct.

The Age of the Universe

How old is the Universe? Big Bang theory tells us it is about 14 billion years old. That makes for a huge birthday cake and a lot of candles. Young Earth creationists tell us that the Universe is a mere 6000 years old, 10,000 at the most, making for a much more reasonably sized cake. If you like specificity, Bishop James Ussher calculated in the 17th century that the date of God's creation was September 21, 4004 BC on the Gregorian calendar. He based this date on a literal reading of the Old Testament's chronology. I am aghast that such a precise date could be calculated given that most of the genealogy in the Bible is given in years, not days. Nonetheless, a 6000-year-old Earth fits with several Biblical statements.

For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. (**Exodus 20:11**)

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. (**2 Peter 3:8**)

I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (**Revelation 20:4**)

For those that believe the end times are upon us, it makes sense that the Earth is about 6000 years old. Each thousand year period corresponds to a creation day. The seventh day, the day of Sabbath rest, will correspond to Christ's thousand year reign. All nice and tidy. But, there are so many avenues of scientific investigation that indicate a very old Earth and an even older cosmos that it is very difficult to accept a young Earth theory.

Keep in mind that while most young Earth creationists are religious people, not all religious people believe in a young Earth. As a new Christian back in 1980, I first discovered these differing viewpoints when I saw in our church lobby a copy of **Reason and Revelation**, a newsletter published by Apologetics Press out of Montgomery, AL. In that particular issue, Bert Thompson had an article defending the young

Earth position and chastising John Clayton, a former atheist and then science teacher who was heading up a ministry named **Does God Exist?**, for his theistic evolution position. Theistic evolution is the term used for the belief that the cosmos is very old and evolution took place by God's direction. Based on this article I sought out Clayton's ministry. Ultimately I began receiving newsletters from both Thompson and Clayton and began contrasting the differing positions of these two Christians, both of whom attended Church of Christ congregations. Being an engineer, which gave me a background in both science and math, I ultimately came down on the side of Clayton.

While some statements in the Bible indicated the Earth was young, Clayton convinced me that other legitimate interpretations were possible that better fit with the best current scientific knowledge. Clayton is fond of saying, "It's scientists vs. preachers, not science vs. the Bible," and "The lesson of history has been that when there was a perceived conflict between science and the Bible, there was either bad science, bad theology, or both." I found Clayton to be one of the most careful of believers when trying to ascertain the truth from conflicting claims of science and religion. He laid out the case for his beliefs in his 2001 book **The Source: Creation – Eternal Design or Infinite Accident?**

A few years after discovering the writings of Thompson and Clayton, I heard that the latter was going to conduct a weekend seminar at a church in a nearby city. My wife and I decided to attend. Many things were said that weekend, but the thing that still stands out in my mind was when he began discussing the age of the Earth. He discussed some of the scientific evidence for an old Earth and then asked if God could have created the heavens and Earth 6000 years ago with the appearance of age. After all, Adam and Eve were not created as babies, but rather as young adults with the appearance of age. His response was that God could have indeed done that. However, it was also possible that God created the Universe five minutes ago, putting everyone in their current location with memories of a past that never happened in reality. He, however, believed the Bible taught that God was not deceptive, and to put the Universe here with the appearance of an age reaching into the billions of years while in reality being only 6000 years old was deceptive. Of course the young Earth creationist would respond that it is not deceptive if God told us what he did, as he did in the Bible. Still, Clayton's statement made an impression on me.

One of the most convincing pieces of evidence for an old Universe is the fact that we can see distant stars and galaxies. For instance, the Andromeda galaxy is estimated to be 2.5 million light-years away. It takes light 2.5 million years from the time it leaves the stars in that galaxy until it reaches our eyes here on Earth. If the Andromeda galaxy and our own Milky Way galaxy were both created just 6000 years ago, then the light from Andromeda would have barely started its journey to Earth and we would therefore be unable to see it for another 2,494,000 years. If the cosmos is only a few thousand years old, this would mean that God created light that had the appearance of coming from Andromeda already *in transit* to the Earth. The same would be true for all the other galaxies we observe and for all the stars, nebulas, etc. in

our own galaxy. Further, if the end of time is indeed upon us, it would mean that God would not have even had to create those distant celestial objects since all will pass away before the light from the actual objects reach us. If God indeed created *fake* light rays from nonexistent celestial objects, perhaps he also created *fake* fossils from nonexistent animals. This seems like a rather bizarre way for God to operate. Some apologists have suggested that the speed of light has changed over the years, having been much higher in the past, to explain how we can see distant celestial objects. This is pure speculation since no scientific evidence for this exists.

Both an Old and a Young Universe

Let's look at another theory. This one says that the creation of the Universe took six days and it took 15.75 billion years *simultaneously*. In other words, both the young Earth creationists *and* old Earth creationists are right. I know this sounds ridiculous on the surface, but hear it out. This theory is based on Einstein's relativity principles. It is presented by Gerald L. Schroeder in his 1997 book entitled **The Science of God: The Convergence of Scientific and Biblical Wisdom**.

To measure the age of the universe, we look *back* in time. From our perspective using Earth-based clocks running at a rate determined by the conditions of today's Earth, we measure a fifteen-billion-year age. And that is correct for our local view. The Bible adopts this Earthly perspective, but only for times after Adam. The Bible's clock before Adam is not a clock tied to any one location. It is a clock that looks *forward* in time from the creation, encompassing the entire universe, a universal clock tuned to the cosmic radiation at the moment when matter formed. That cosmic timepiece, as observed today, ticks a million million times more slowly than at its inception. The million millionfold stretching of radiation since *boh* caused that million-million-to-one ratio in this perception of time. (Gerald L. Schroeder, **The Science of God**, p. 58)

Based on this theory, Schroeder created a couple of tables showing how the six days of creation break down based on our current day timeframe. I have summarized the content of these two tables below.

DAY ONE

Years Before Present: 15,750,000,000 – 7,750,000,000

Years in Length: 8,000,000,000

Bible's Description: The creation of the universe; light separates from dark. (**Gen. 1:1-5**)

Scientific Description: The big bang marks the creation of the universe; light literally breaks free as electrons bond to atomic nuclei; galaxies start to form.

DAY TWO

Years Before Present: 7,750,000,000 – 3,750,000,000

Years in Length: 4,000,000,000

Bible's Description: The heavenly firmament forms. (**Gen. 1:6-8**)

Scientific Description: Disk of Milky Way forms; Sun, a main sequence star, forms.

DAY THREE

Years Before Present: 3,750,000,000 – 1,750,000,000

Years in Length: 2,000,000,000

Bible's Description: Oceans and dry land appear; the first life, plants, appear (**Gen. 1:9-13**); kabbalah states this marked only the start of life, which then developed during the following days.

Scientific Description: The earth has cooled and liquid water appears 3.8 billion years ago followed almost immediately by the first forms of life: bacteria and photosynthetic algae.

DAY FOUR

Years Before Present: 1,750,000,000 – 750,000,000

Years in Length: 1,000,000,000

Bible's Description: Sun, Moon, and stars become visible in heavens (**Talmud Hagigah 12a; Gen. 1:14-19**)

Scientific Description: Earth's atmosphere becomes transparent; photosynthesis produces oxygen-rich atmosphere.

DAY FIVE

Years Before Present: 750,000,000 – 250,000,000

Years in Length: 500,000,000

Bible's Description: First animal life swarms abundantly in waters; followed by reptiles and winged animals. (**Gen. 1:20-23**)

Scientific Description: First multicellular animals; waters swarm with animal life having the basic body plans of all future animals; winged insects appear.

DAY SIX

Years Before Present: 250,000,000 – Approx 6000

Years in Length: 250,000,000

Bible's Description: Land animals; mammals; humankind. (**Gen. 1:24-31**)

Scientific Description: Massive extinction destroys over 90% of life. Land is repopulated; hominids and then humans.

So, according to Schroeder, we can have our cake and eat it too. The Universe is a little over six days old *and* it's over 15 billion years old. As a person who has been interested in Einstein's relativity theory for many years, I found this analysis fascinating. I have to admit that I don't have a deep understanding of how the numbers were generated, even though the equations are presented in Schroeder's book, but I do understand to a limited extent the concept of time dilation and differing time perspectives.

However, one question came to mind while I was studying the tables. What about the seventh day, the day God rested? There is no indication in the Bible that that day was referring to a different time perspective than the first six. So, how long was this seventh day of rest based on Schroeder's theory? It's easy to determine. Notice that the first day was eight billion years long from our current day perspective. Each succeeding day was half as long as the previous one. So, since day six was 250 million years long, the seventh day would be 125 million years long. Day six just ended about 6000 years ago, so God must still be resting, and will continue to do so for another 124,994,000 years! Thus after over 30 years of waiting, Schroeder finally answered **Time Magazine's** question on the cover of their April 8, 1966 issue: Is God Dead? The answer is: "No. He is just resting."

Yeah, I'm being a bit facetious, but I'm making the point that if Schroeder's theory is correct, then why does it only apply to the six days of creation and not the seventh day of rest? And if it does apply, how is it that God can be resting while destroying the world with a flood, killing Egyptians in the Red Sea, and converting himself into a man to redeem the world through a crucifixion? If you answer that God can do all those things without any effort, then I submit that he could have created everything those first six days with no effort, thus making the story of creation followed by a day of rest nonsensical.

By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done. (**Genesis 2:2-3**)

Biblical Creation

The story of creation as presented in **Genesis chapters 1 and 2** make my "reason" antennae go up. It just doesn't ring true, kind of like those Emails about how someone in Africa wants to transfer millions of dollars into my bank account. If this story only appeared in the ancient writings of, let's say, the Mithra

religion, Bible believers would most likely think the same thing. But since it's in *their* writings, it must be accepted as truth.

I recently heard in a class at church that perhaps when Genesis said, "And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day," and identical verses for the remaining five days of creation, the author was referring to the timing of his revelations rather than the timing of the creation events. In other words, the author had a dream from the evening to the morning of day one of God creating light. Then on the second evening he had a vision of God creating the expanse and the sky, and so on. While the language of the creation verses doesn't prevent this interpretation, later verses, such as **Exodus 20:11**, which I quoted earlier, interprets these verses in the traditional way by saying, "in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them." These words are quite convincing that the proper interpretation is that the days mentioned in Genesis are actual creation days, not days of revelation *about* the creation. Furthermore, these words from Exodus are claimed to be from God himself as he was giving Moses the first set of commandments.

Interestingly, the creation story seems to actually be two different stories. This has been recognized by many scholars and written about extensively. In **Genesis 1:1-2:3**, the Hebrew word "Elohim" is translated as "God," even though this term is generally recognized as being the plural form of "El." Thus, according to many scholars, "Elohim" is more appropriately translated "the gods." This idea is supported by other verses in Genesis.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." (**Genesis 1:26**)

And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever." (**Genesis 3:22**)

Notice the use of the term "us" when God is referring to himself (themselves?), thus supporting the idea that Elohim refers to multiple gods. While "Elohim" is used in **Genesis 1:1-2:3**, the term "Yahweh Elohim," translated "Lord God," is used starting in **Genesis 2:4**, thus apparently referring to the specific god Yahweh within the group of gods. Many Christians would, of course, argue that the plural usage is referring to the Trinity consisting of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The problem is that nothing resembling the Trinity is ever mentioned in the context of Genesis. What's important is what the writer of Genesis had in mind when putting pen to parchment. It seems quite obvious that he had no conception of a Trinity.

The creation story that appears in the Elohim verses is quite different from the Yahweh Elohim verses. In the former, God creates everything in a systematic fashion with each day of creation bringing something new into existence, with man being last. In the latter, there's just a general reference to the creation of the Earth and the heavens. Interestingly, we are told that no plant of the field had yet sprung up because no man existed to work the ground. So, the Lord God creates man and places him in a garden. Yet in the earlier account of creation, plants were created on day three, three days before man and a day before *the sun!*

True or False?

I have read the Biblical account of creation and many differing opinions concerning it, both pro and con, and have to conclude that the stories are fiction. Or could it be that the creation stories are part of another category of writing called myth. Many people today consider myth to be the same thing as fiction, but my friend Joel Anderson disagrees. Speaking of the Biblical account of creation he says this:

They are myth. One might say, “Well, since they are myth, that means they’re fiction, right?” The answer is no—“fiction” is a modern genre of literature, and you cannot impose modern labels on ancient texts. Yes, the stories in the creation account are not factual and didn’t happen in a historical, factual, scientific sense, but the genre of the stories is not that of “fiction.” In fiction, there are characters who do not exist in real life, who are simply “made up” in the mind of the author. In myth, the characters often are representative of humanity, or some other real entity in this world. Yes, there was no literal talking snake, but the snake is representative of a real force in the world that deceives human beings. Yes, there was no literal Adam and Eve, but “Adam” represents humanity as a whole—“Adam” is me and you, and the story in Genesis 3 is our story. To call it “fiction” is to fail to see the connection such a story has with our real life, even today. (Joel Anderson, PhD, from a critique of a prerelease copy of this book)

I can live with that. When I said that I believed the creation stories in the Bible are fiction, I meant that there were no actual individual human beings named Adam and Eve, and they were not created at the end of a literal six-day creation spree. However, I would also say that many modern day stories that we call fiction have characters that represent real entities. One that comes to mind immediately is George Orwell’s **Animal Farm**. This book is obviously allegorical in that the animals on the farm represent the various types of humans that populate our planet and it shows the political shenanigans that occur as they jockey for positions of power. Should **Animal Farm** be called myth instead of fiction? Perhaps. But I

believe most people understand that if a story is not literally true, then it is fiction, whether mythological fiction or regular fiction.

But concerning the actual existence of God, I tend to believe, based on our current scientific understanding of the Universe, there is a non-physical eternal entity, not restricted by the laws of nature, that created the Universe. I refer to that entity as God, but I do not believe this God is the one referred to in the Bible, or any other religion for that matter. He is not even necessarily omnipotent, omniscient, or omnipresent. Perhaps one day science will advance to the point of being able to explain the existence of an uncaused Universe, but until then I identify with Thomas Paine, one of America's founding fathers.

It is only in the Creation that all our ideas and conceptions of a *word of God* can unite. The Creation speaketh an universal language, independently of human speech or human language, multiplied and various as they may be. It is an ever-existing original, which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds; and this *word of God* reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God. (**Thomas Paine, The Age of Reason, p. 32**)

