



DOES GOD EXPLAIN THE UNIVERSE?

"The question of why anything at all exists is the most profound question of philosophy. The philosopher Derek Parfit says, 'No question is more sublime than why there is a universe, why there is anything rather than nothing.' Typically atheists have answered this question by saying that the universe is just eternal and uncaused. But there are good reasons, both philosophically and scientifically, to think that the universe began to exist." [William Lane Craig (WLC), in a debate with Christopher Hitchens at Biola University in 2010]

Here we see WLC, regarded even by many atheists as the most formidable of all Christian apologists, obscuring the difference between "anything at all" and the observable universe. For no sensible person, theist or atheist, would say that only things that we know (or believe) to exist actually do exist. There are many speculative ideas about "where" the Big Bang and the origin of the universe "came from." But by far the least justifiable is that some superhuman being created it. Even if there were such a being, it would have to have pre-existed and we may then well ask "why is there this superhuman/divine being rather than nothing?"

"Philosophically, the idea of an infinite past seems absurd. Just think about it: If the universe never began to exist, that means that the number of past events in the history of the universe is infinite. But mathematicians recognize that the existence of an actually infinite number of things leads to self-contradictions. For example, what is infinity minus infinity? Well, mathematically you get self-contradictory answers. This shows that infinity is just an idea in your mind, not something that exists in reality. David Hilbert, perhaps the greatest mathematician of the twentieth century, wrote, 'The infinite is nowhere to be found in reality. It neither exists in nature, nor provides a legitimate basis for rational thought. The role that remains for the infinite to play is solely that of an idea.' But that entails that since past events are not just ideas but are real, the number of past events must be finite, therefore the series of past events can't go back forever. Rather, the universe must have begun to exist." [WLC, *ibid*]

WLC's mathematics is about a century out of date since it evidently takes no notice of the work of German mathematician Georg Cantor in transfinite numbers. Worse, WLC makes Hilbert appear to be dismissive of the idea of the infinite when, in fact, Hilbert was a contemporary of Cantor and defended Cantor against the critics who, like WLC, said that infinities were absurdities. WLC's argument simply echoes, intentionally or ignorantly, similar objections that were once made against the alleged "absurdity" of zero (which appears for the first time in English in the 16th Century!), of negative numbers, and of i , the square root of -1 , the basis of imaginary (the adjective was at first applied derogatorily!) numbers.

The further irony is that what WLC calls "absurd" figures prominently in theism, including WLC's favored Christianity. Georg Cantor himself equated what he called "absolute infinity" with an apparently Spinozan conception of God. And it is easy to see that, in the spirit of mathematics, we may simply substitute "God" for "the universe" in WLC's equation. If we do so we see that WLC's own argument proves that his deity cannot be infinite and so "must have begun to exist."

"What makes the Big Bang so startling is that it represents the origin of the universe from literally nothing, for all matter and energy, even physical space and time themselves, came into being at the Big Bang. As the physicist P. C. W. Davies explains, 'The coming into being of the universe, as discussed in modern science, is not just a matter of imposing some sort of organization upon a previous incoherent state but literally the coming into being of all physical things from nothing.'"

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Now, this puts the atheist in a very awkward position. As Anthony Kenny of Oxford University urges, 'A proponent of the Big Bang theory, at least if he is an atheist, must believe that the universe came from nothing and by nothing.' But surely that doesn't make sense. Out of nothing, nothing comes. So why does the universe exist, instead of just nothing, where did it come from?"

WLC makes a habit of quoting "authorities," though he usually edits them as well. And he does so, as here, in ways that confuse, distract, and pretend to serve as evidence. When Davies refers to "the universe," for example, Davies can obviously only be referring to the observable universe and to "physical things" that we know of. But we do know that we cannot see or otherwise detect the entire universe, to say nothing of other possible universes, and that most of what exists in our cosmological vicinity consists of invisible "dark matter" and "dark energy." Kenny, while he is "of Oxford" is not a physicist and actually only said – years ago – that the Big Bang seemed to him to imply that "the matter of the [emphasis added] universe came from nothing and by nothing." But even in physics "nothing" is a problematic term. And in physics something does in fact come from "nothing" all the time and is the basis of Hawking radiation. But even if the "something" of the universe, observable, unobservable, and perhaps even a "multiverse," had to have a beginning, then so did WLC's deity.

Thus, not only does "God" not explain the universe, the positing of "God" only obscures the serious questions at issue. "God" creates far more problems than it purports to solve. "God" is, in short, a roadblock to serious inquiry and to honesty and integrity of thought.

**PLANNED FOR NEXT MONTH:
"THE END (OF 2013)
IS NEAR!"**

**>>> Sunday, December 1st, 2013 <<<
SHERATON GRAND DFW AIRPORT
SE CORNER OF 114 AND ESTERS**

**YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS TO THE
NTCOF ARE NEEDED, APPRECIATED,
AND TAX-DEDUCTIBLE!!**

All NTCOF events can be found through our website calendar , or through our meetup page, from which you can RSVP, at:
- www.meetup.com/church-of-freethought -
JOIN THE NTCOF MEETUP GROUP !!!

Social Luncheon: Today, immediately after our Service, join us for lunch and discussion at the Golden Corral Buffet and Grill in Grapevine, located just across from the Grapevine Mills Mall, at 2605 E. Grapevine Mills Circle, phone (972) 874-7900. To reach Golden Corral from the Sheraton, cross over the freeway and make a left onto John W. Carpenter Freeway (114) going west. Then take the first exit RIGHT onto International Parkway (121), then Grapevine Mills Parkway exit. Turn LEFT on Stars and Stripes Way, continuing on to E. Grapevine Mills Circle.

Freethought Salon: Get together to discuss today's service topic or other conundrums of interest for Freethinkers. Most Sundays, over breakfast, at the Hilton DFW Lakes Hotel restaurant in Grapevine beginning 10:30 AM; see the meetup site!

Game Night: The regular game night crew meets nearly every Friday night at the IHOP on 2310 Stemmons Trail (I-35), near Northwest Highway (Loop 12). Plan to arrive at about 7:30 PM, and stay late playing Risk, Rummikub, and other fun games!

"Seek and ye shall find,' I remember being told in church as a young lad. I thought it was a sinister injunction because it's all too likely to be true. We are pattern-seeking mammals and primates. If we can't get good evidence we'll go for junk evidence. If we can't get a real theory we'll go with a conspiracy theory."

- Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011)



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Dallas-Fort Worth Coalition of Reason

The North Texas Church of Freethought
The Fellowship of Unbelievers

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