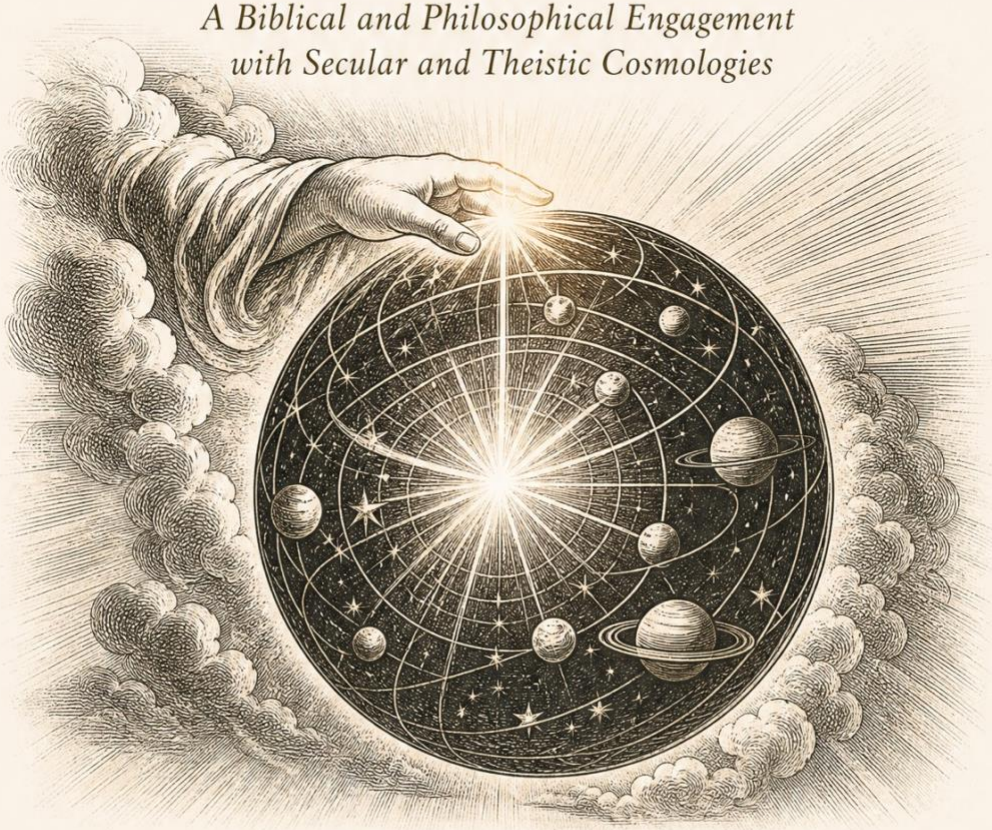
# Cosmological Arguments for the Origin of the Universe

*A Biblical and Philosophical Engagement with Secular and Theistic Cosmologies*



**Pastor Baltazar A. Niangar**

*Pastor Emeritus, Th.B., A.B., D.D.*

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*Apologetics · Cosmology · Creation*

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## DEDICATION

*"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork."*

*— Psalm 19:1*

*To every scientist who has stood at the edge of the knowable and found, to their wonder, that it pointed beyond itself.*

***Soli Deo gloria.***

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# Preface

The question of where the universe came from is not merely a scientific question. It is a theological and philosophical one. The sciences can describe the processes and structures of the universe with remarkable precision, but they cannot, by their own methods, answer the question of ultimate origin: why there is something rather than nothing. That question takes us beyond the domain of empirical investigation into the realm of philosophy and, ultimately, theology.

Apart from the Bible, men guess. Learned men of atheistic philosophy and physics air out their hypotheses and theories with great confidence, but the confidence is *epistemologically* unjustified. (Epistemology is the study of how we know what we know.) No human observer was present at the origin of the universe, and the conditions of that origin are by definition not reproducible under laboratory conditions. My purpose in this volume is not to disparage the genuine achievements of modern cosmology. I honour them. I want to place those achievements in proper perspective, and to show that Biblical Creationism is not only consistent with the best of what science tells us but also provides the only coherent explanation for why the universe is the kind of place in which scientific investigation is possible.

I have written these pages for pastors, elders, and lay leaders, and also for the student, the scientist, and the honest seeker who has met a confident secular account of origins and wants to know whether a thoughtful Christian has any answer. I believe we do. I also believe the answer is not a retreat into private feeling. It is an argument, and it can be followed step by step: first the philosophical proposals of the ancient and modern world, then the findings of the physical and biological sciences, then the attempt of some Christians to join Scripture with evolution, and finally the positive case for the Creator God who is revealed in His Word.

Every serious study of origins begins from a posture, and the Bible names the right one: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding" (Ps. 111:10). I do

not ask the reader to switch off the mind. I ask the reader to begin where wisdom begins, with reverence before the God who made us and the world in which we think.

My prayer is that you will read with your Bible open beside you, that you will work through the Reflection Questions at the end of each chapter, and that you will finish the book with a larger view of God and a steadier confidence in His Word.

***Soli Deo gloria.***

**Pastor Baltazar A. Niangar**

# Introduction: The Question of Ultimate Origin

Both Creationism and Naturalistic Evolutionism are theories, which is to say models for interpreting the evidence of the natural world, because neither can be replicated in cycles of nature and human experimentation. The origin of the universe is a singular event. It happened once, in conditions that no longer obtain, and no human observer was present to record it. This is not a weakness in the case for Biblical Creationism. It is a levelling of the epistemological playing field. The secularist's claim to scientific superiority in this domain rests on a confusion between the descriptive achievements of science (what the universe is and how it behaves now) and the explanatory question of origins (why there is a universe at all and how it began).

> *"By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."*
> — Hebrews 11:3

I hold that only Biblical Creationism is supported by logical philosophy and by the accepted laws of the physical sciences. The Laws of Motion articulated by Isaac Newton, and the principle of causality that undergirds all scientific reasoning, both point toward an Uncaused Cause, a First Mover who is not Himself moved by anything prior. I will test that claim carefully in the chapters ahead, and I will give the opposing arguments their strongest form before I answer them. The argument of this volume is that the Christian doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* (a Latin phrase meaning "out of nothing") is not a retreat from reason but the most rationally coherent account of ultimate origin available.

Let me say plainly what kind of claim this is. Science, when it is practised well, is a patient study of what the universe is like and how it behaves. It observes, measures, repeats, and predicts. The question of origin is of a different kind. We cannot rerun the beginning of the universe in a laboratory, and we cannot send an observer back to watch

it. Whatever we conclude about the first moment must therefore be reasoned out from present evidence together with our deepest commitments about what is real. Everyone has such commitments. The naturalist assumes that nature is all there is. I assume that God is, that He has spoken, and that His Word is true. Neither of us stands on neutral ground, and an honest conversation begins by saying so.

The book follows four steps. Chapter 1 examines the philosophical arguments for origins, ancient and modern, and asks whether matter is eternal, whether life can arise from non-life, and whether natural selection can account for the variety of living things. Chapter 2 turns to the scientific arguments: the Big Bang, the expansion of the universe, the origin of life, and genetic mutation. Chapter 3 considers theistic evolution, the attempt to fuse the biblical account with the evolutionary one, and the day-age, pre-Adamic, and gap proposals that often accompany it. Chapter 4 sets out the positive biblical case for the Creator God, beginning with the first verse of the Bible: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

Let me also explain why the question of origins deserves a whole book. The first three chapters of Genesis are the foundation on which the rest of the Bible is built. The doctrine of the fall depends on them, and so do the doctrines of sin, of death, of marriage, and of the promised Redeemer. When a believer is persuaded that these chapters are not to be trusted, the damage rarely stops there. The crack runs on through the whole wall. That is why I treat the matter as a pastoral concern and not merely an intellectual one. A church that cannot give a clear answer to the question where the world came from will have difficulty giving a clear answer to the question where its hope comes from.

A few practical notes will help the reader. Each chapter opens with a verse of Scripture and ends with three Reflection Questions, and the book closes with Personal Questions and Challenges, grouped by theme, for use alone or in a small group. Every Scripture quotation is taken from the English Standard Version. Technical terms such as *ex nihilo*, *abiogenesis*, and *uniformitarianism* are explained when they first appear, and they are collected in the Glossary at the back of the book. I have tried to

write so that a thoughtful reader who has no training in philosophy or science can follow the argument from beginning to end.

Throughout, I have tried to speak with respect of those with whom I disagree, whether they are secular scientists or sincere Christian brothers. The aim is not to win an argument for its own sake. The aim is to set before the reader the God who made the heavens and the earth, so that the reader may know Him, trust His Word, and worship Him. A book on cosmology that does not end in worship has not yet reached its subject.

CHAPTER 1

# Philosophical Arguments for Origins: Ancient and Modern

*"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."*
— Genesis 1:1

Every worldview must answer a small set of questions, and the first of them is the question of origin. Where did everything come from? Is the universe the product of a Mind, or the product of nothing more than matter and chance? Is matter itself eternal, or did it have a beginning? Before the rise of modern empirical science, these were philosophical questions, and the great philosophical traditions of the ancient world engaged them with remarkable seriousness. Those traditions did not disappear when the telescope and the microscope arrived. They changed their vocabulary, and they returned in the lecture halls and laboratories of the modern age wearing new clothes.

In this chapter I survey three major positions. The first is the eternity of matter, taught in various forms by the ancient Greek monists and dualists. The second is the spontaneous generation of life from inorganic matter, known in its modern form as abiogenesis and associated with Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment thought. The third is the transmutation of simple life forms into complex ones through what would later be called natural selection. Each of these proposals, in its own way, tries to explain the world without a Creator who stands outside it. Each, I will argue, pushes the question of origin one step back without ever answering it.

I do not write as an enemy of philosophy. Philosophy is a good servant and a bad master. When it submits to the Word of God it sharpens our thinking, and when it sets itself above the Word of God it leads the mind into one dead end after another. The verse at the head of this chapter is the standard by which I measure every ancient and modern

proposal. It is a sentence of seven Hebrew words, and it contains a whole philosophy of origins.

What is at stake is more than an academic debate. If matter is eternal, then the universe owes nothing to anyone, and neither do we. If life is an accident, then human dignity is a convenient fiction. But if the heavens and the earth are the work of a personal Creator, then everything that exists is a gift, and the fitting response to a gift is thanksgiving. I invite you to walk with me through each section with that stake in view.

## A. Matter Is Eternal: Greek Monistic and Dualistic Philosophers

The ancient Greek philosophical tradition, from the pre-Socratics through Plato and Aristotle, wrestled with the question of the ultimate substrate of reality: the one thing, or the few things, out of which everything else is made. What these thinkers shared matters more for our purpose than what divided them. Nearly all of them assumed that matter, in some form, is eternal and uncreated. The universe was simply there, and the philosopher's task was to describe its structure, not to ask who put it there.

### 1. The Monists: One Substance Behind All Things

The monists (the word comes from the Greek for "one") proposed that all of reality reduces to a single fundamental substance. Thales of Miletus, often called the first philosopher of the Western tradition, said that everything is water. Anaximenes, his successor, said that everything is air, which thickens into wind, cloud, water, and stone, and thins into fire. Heraclitus chose fire as his image and taught that the world is an ever-living fire, kindled and quenched in measure, always in change. Parmenides pressed the logic furthest. Reasoning that what exists cannot come from what does not exist, he concluded that being has neither beginning nor end. The maxim later attached to this line of thought, that nothing comes from nothing, became one of the most influential axioms in ancient philosophy.

Notice what the maxim does. It does not merely describe a feature of the world. It rules out in advance the possibility that a God could call the world into being by His word. If nothing can come from nothing, then creation from nothing is impossible, and the question of a Creator is closed before it is opened. This is a philosophical decision, not a scientific discovery, and it was made centuries before anyone looked through a telescope.

## 2. The Dualists: Eternal Forms and Eternal Matter

The dualists divided reality into two ultimate things. Plato, the most famous of them, taught that there is an eternal realm of Forms, the perfect and unchanging patterns of things, alongside an eternal matter, the raw and disorderly stuff of the physical world. In his dialogue the *Timaeus*, Plato describes a divine craftsman, the Demiurge, who looks to the eternal Forms and fashions the pre-existing matter into an ordered universe. This craftsman is not the God of the Bible. He does not create the matter he works with, he does not rule over the Forms, and he is limited by the material he finds.

Aristotle disagreed with his teacher on many things, but he too taught that the world has no beginning. For Aristotle the cosmos is eternal, and the highest being, an Unmoved Mover, is the final reason for the motion of all things, not the one who brought them into existence. Epicurus and the atomists went a different way. They pictured an endless void in which eternal atoms swerve and collide and by chance form worlds. Yet they agreed with the others on the main point: the stuff of the universe was never made.

What both the monists and the dualists share is the assumption that matter, in some form, is eternal and uncreated. This assumption is incompatible with the biblical doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*. The opening verse of the Bible does not present God as a craftsman who shaped pre-existing material. It presents Him as the absolute Creator who brought all things into existence from nothing. The letter to the Hebrews carries the same truth into the person of the Son:

> *"You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed, but you are the same, and your years will have no end."*
> — Hebrews 1:10–12

Notice the contrast. The creation is the work of the Son's hands, and it is subject to wear and replacement, like a garment. The Creator Himself remains, and His years have no end. No Greek philosopher could say this, because none of them drew the line between Maker and made so sharply. Plato's craftsman and his material are both eternal. The God of Scripture alone is eternal, and everything else owes Him its existence.

## 3. The Modern Echo of an Ancient Assumption

The ancient assumption did not die with the Greeks. Carl Sagan opened his popular television series *Cosmos* with the words, "The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be." That sentence is a creed, not a measurement. No instrument has ever detected the eternity of matter, and no experiment could. It is the old Greek axiom, spoken now in the language of the planetarium. Marxist materialism held the same belief in a harsher form, and so did every scientific model that was built to avoid a beginning. I will return to one of those models in the next chapter.

The early Christians understood what was at stake, and they did not meet the assumption of an eternal world unarmed. Irenaeus, writing against the Gnostics in the second century, insisted that God made all things by His own will and power and not out of pre-existing matter. In the sixth century John Philoponus, a Christian philosopher in Alexandria, argued against Aristotle that an eternal world is impossible, because an actually infinite number of past events could never be traversed to arrive at the present day. Augustine observed that the world was made not in time but together with time, so that to ask what God was doing before He made the world is to ask a question without meaning. The church has always known that the doctrine of creation is

not an optional ornament to the gospel. It is the ground on which the gospel stands.

When you hear a confident voice announce that the universe simply is, that it needs no explanation, recognize the ancient Greek assumption in modern dress. Ask the question gently: on what evidence is it known that matter is eternal? The honest answer is that it is not known. It is assumed, and the assumption has been carrying a great deal of weight for a very long time.

## B. Abiogenesis and Spontaneous Generation

The concept of abiogenesis, the spontaneous generation of living organisms from non-living matter, has a long philosophical pedigree, though its modern scientific formulation is associated with the application of chemical and evolutionary thinking to the question of life's origin. The French philosopher Henri Bergson proposed a vital impulse, the *élan vital*, which he said drives matter toward ever higher forms of life. It is an influential non-mechanistic cousin of the same idea. Bergson did not think that life arises by chance. He did think that life arises from the material world by its own inner resources, without a Creator who stands apart from it.

### 1. From Maggots to Microbes: The Rise and Fall of an Old Idea

For centuries it was commonly believed that living creatures arise spontaneously from decaying matter: maggots from rotting meat, mice from stored grain, frogs from river mud. In 1668 the Italian physician Francesco Redi showed that maggots appear on meat only when flies have been able to lay their eggs on it. In the 1860s Louis Pasteur settled the matter for microbes with his swan-necked flasks, which allowed air but not dust to reach a sterile broth. The broth stayed clear. Out of that work came the principle that every living thing comes from a living thing already existing. It is one of the best-established findings in the history of biology.

## 2. The Modern Form: Chemistry Becomes Biology

Within a lifetime of Pasteur, the old idea returned in a new form. In the 1920s the Russian biochemist Alexander Oparin and the British scientist J. B. S. Haldane independently proposed that life began gradually, in the oceans of the early earth, through the chemical combination of simpler molecules into more complex ones. In 1952 Stanley Miller, working under Harold Urey at the University of Chicago, passed electric sparks through a mixture of gases meant to imitate the early atmosphere and found that a few of the amino acids used by living things had formed. The result was celebrated, and it deserves respect as careful experimental work.

Yet we should be clear about what it showed. Amino acids are the bricks of living things, but a heap of bricks is not a house, and a pool of amino acids is not a cell. Later research also raised serious doubt about whether the early atmosphere had the composition Miller assumed. And no laboratory has produced anything close to a self-replicating, self-maintaining cell from non-living chemicals, even with intelligent chemists directing every step. In the next chapter I will say more about why that is so.

## 3. The Question That Remains

The philosophical problem with abiogenesis is the same as the problem with eternal matter: it ultimately fails to explain why there is anything at all. Even granting that living matter could arise from non-living matter under the right conditions, the question remains: where did the non-living matter come from? And where did the "right conditions" come from? Every naturalistic account of origins pushes the question back one step without answering it. The regress is infinite unless there is an Uncaused Cause, which is precisely what the biblical account provides.

The Bible does not describe life as the outcome of a long chemical accident. It describes life as the creative gift of God, bestowed in a sequence of purposeful acts:

> *"So God created the great sea creatures and every living creature that moves, with which the waters swarm, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good."*
> — Genesis 1:21

The verse does not offer a laboratory procedure. It gives something more important: the meaning of life. Living things are not accidents of chemistry. They are creatures, made by God, according to His design, and pronounced good by Him. A person who believes this will look at a bird in flight or a fish in a stream with a different eye.

## C. Transmutation of Species: Natural Selection and Its Limits

The third proposal concerns not the origin of life but the origin of the variety of life. Early in the nineteenth century the French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck suggested that living things change over time, passing on traits acquired in a lifetime. In 1859 Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, proposing a different mechanism. Individuals in a population vary, the environment favours some variations over others, and over many generations the favoured traits spread. Darwin called this natural selection, and he argued that, given enough time, it could transform simple forms of life into the full range of living things, all descended from one or a few common ancestors.

I do not deny what can be observed. Variation within populations is real, and so is selection. Bacteria develop resistance to antibiotics, and the beaks of finches change in response to drought. A breeder of dogs or doves knows well that selection can reshape a population. These observations are not in conflict with the Bible, which says that God made living things "according to their kinds" (Gen. 1:25) and which nowhere teaches that every individual is identical to its parents. The real question is whether this observed process can be extended without limit, so that it accounts for the origin of all the complex organs, systems, and kinds of living things.

Here the philosophical issue comes into view. Natural selection is a sieve, not a source. It can only act on organisms that are already alive, already reproducing, and already carrying hereditary information. It cannot explain where the first living thing came from, and it says nothing about where matter, energy, space, and time came from. It is a proposal about how living things change, offered as though it were an account of how everything began. The error is one of scope.

Darwin's theory also gave naturalism something it had long wanted: an account of apparent design without a designer. The biologist Richard Dawkins states the point frankly when he describes biology as "the study of complicated things that give the appearance of having been designed for a purpose" (*The Blind Watchmaker*). The word *appearance* carries the whole weight of that sentence. The Christian answers that the appearance is the reality, and that the design we see in a living cell points to the One who designed it. The Psalmist saw the same thing long before the microscope revealed how much there was to see:

> *"O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures."*
> — Psalm 104:24

The question also has a moral weight that is easily missed. What a person believes about where he came from shapes what he believes about who he is. If human beings are the chance products of a blind process, then the dignity we claim for every person, rich or poor, strong or weak, is a sentiment that we have inherited and cannot justify. The Bible grounds human worth in a different place: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27). The value of a human life is not an achievement of evolution. It is a gift conferred by the Creator, and nothing that happens to us in the course of history can take it away.

At bottom, the three proposals examined in this chapter are three attempts to answer the question of origin from inside the world, without a Creator who made it. Eternal matter says there was no beginning. Abiogenesis says that life began without a Giver of life. Natural selection

says that variety arose without a Designer. Each leaves the deepest question untouched, and each, when pressed, confesses that the world is not self-explanatory. That confession is the opening for the gospel.

**Reflection Questions: Chapter 1**

**1.** The ancient Greek philosophers assumed that matter is eternal. How does the biblical doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* challenge this assumption, and why does it matter for the way we understand the relationship between God and the world?

**2.** Abiogenesis, the origin of life from non-life, remains scientifically undemonstrated. How does this gap in the naturalistic account of origins create an opening for meaningful dialogue about the biblical doctrine of creation?

**3.** I have observed that both Creationism and Naturalistic Evolutionism are theories, since neither can be replicated. How does this epistemological equality change the terms of the conversation between faith and science? Think of one person you know who holds the opposite view, and this week ask that person a sincere question about origins, listening before you answer.

CHAPTER 2

# Scientific Arguments: Big Bang, Expansion, and Genetic Mutation

> *"Lift up your eyes on high and see: who created these? He who brings out their host by number, calling them all by name; by the greatness of his might and because he is strong in power, not one is missing."*
> — Isaiah 40:26

Modern cosmology has produced a remarkable picture of the history of the universe, and the honest theologian must engage it seriously. The Big Bang theory is the proposal that the universe originated in an extraordinarily dense, hot singularity, which by the standard dating occurred approximately 13.8 billion years ago, and that it has been expanding ever since. It is among the most empirically supported theories in the history of science. Its evidence base includes the cosmic microwave background radiation, the large-scale structure of the universe, the observed recession of galaxies, and the measured proportions of the lightest chemical elements. A Christian who ignores this evidence is not defending the Bible. He is only declining to look.

The prophet Isaiah invites us to look, and to look upward: "Lift up your eyes on high and see." But he asks a question as he points, and the question is the same one with which this book began. "Who created these?" The sciences can tell us a great deal about what the stars are, how far away they are, and how they move. They cannot tell us, by their own methods, who made them and why. Isaiah answers in the same breath: the One who "brings out their host by number" and calls each by name.

This is not abstract theology. It is an invitation to wonder. The universe that the astronomer measures is the same universe that lies open above the prophet's worship, and the greater the astronomer's numbers, the greater the worship ought to be. A believer who understands even a little of what modern science has discovered about the scale and order

of the heavens has every reason to say with the psalmist that the heavens declare the glory of God.

In this chapter I consider three scientific arguments that bear on the question of origins. The first is the Big Bang and the expansion of the universe, which gives us a beginning. The second is chemical evolution, which gives us a proposed route from non-living chemistry to the first cell. The third is genetic mutation, which is offered as the engine that turns one kind of living thing into another. I treat each with respect, and I ask of each the question that the first words of the Bible put to every origin story: is this sufficient to explain what we see?

## A. The Big Bang and Primal Light

### 1. A Universe That Began

The Big Bang theory, associated in its early development with the Belgian priest and physicist Georges Lemaître, proposes that the universe began in an explosive expansion from an initial singularity, a point of infinite density from which space, time, and matter emerged together. The path to this theory is worth remembering. Albert Einstein's equations of general relativity, published in 1915, implied that a universe filled with matter cannot sit still. Einstein himself resisted the conclusion and added a term to his equations to hold the universe steady. In the 1920s Alexander Friedmann and then Lemaître showed that the equations describe an expanding universe, and in 1929 Edwin Hubble's observations of the recession of distant galaxies confirmed that expansion. Lemaître drew the logical conclusion: if the universe is expanding, then running time backward brings us to a starting point.

The expansion is not a matter of galaxies flying through an empty space. It is space itself that is stretching, carrying the galaxies with it. A common picture is the surface of a balloon being inflated, with dots drawn on it. Each dot moves away from every other dot, though none of them is moving across the rubber. The picture is imperfect, as every picture is, but it captures the unfamiliar character of the claim.

What is theologically significant about the Big Bang is not the specific mechanism it proposes but its implication that the universe had a beginning. An eternal universe, the assumption of most physics before the twentieth century, requires no Creator. A universe with a beginning requires an explanation of why it began. The history of the theory shows how uncomfortable this was to some. The astronomer Fred Hoyle, who in a 1949 radio broadcast gave the Big Bang its now famous name, was a champion of the rival steady-state model, in which the universe has always existed and new matter appears continuously. The astrophysicist Arthur Eddington said that the idea of a beginning of the present order of nature was repugnant to him. These were honest reactions, and they show that the philosophical stakes were plain to the men who stood closest to the evidence. In 1964 Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson detected the cosmic microwave background, the faint afterglow of a hot early universe, and the steady-state model could not account for it. The astronomer Robert Jastrow, who was an agnostic, later described the scientist who has scaled the mountain of ignorance and, reaching the top, finds a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.

The Kalam cosmological argument, classically stated as "Whatever begins to exist has a cause; the universe began to exist; therefore the universe has a cause," is enormously strengthened by this evidence. The argument is older than the Big Bang. It was developed by medieval Muslim and Christian thinkers such as al-Ghazali and Bonaventure, and it has been vigorously defended in our own day. What the twentieth century added was the observational support for its second premise. The Bible said it first, and said it plainly:

> *"By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host. … For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm."*
> — Psalm 33:6, 9

## 2. Primal Light

The first recorded word of God after the creation of the heavens and the earth is a command: "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). Scripture places the shining of light at the very beginning of God's ordering of the world. Modern physics, whatever else is debated, also treats light as one of the first and most fundamental features of the early universe, and the oldest light we can observe, the cosmic microwave background, was set free when the young universe had cooled enough for light to travel across it.

I am not claiming that the third verse of Genesis is a description of the microwave background, and I would not tie the Word of God to any particular scientific model, since models come and go. I am pointing to a harmony of order and emphasis that should give us confidence. The apostle Paul draws a deeper lesson from the same verse. The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness at the beginning is the God who works the same miracle in a human heart: "For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' has shone in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). The Big Bang tells us that the universe began in light. The gospel tells us that the Creator of that light has come to dwell in us.

## 3. Winding Down: Entropy and the Question of Eternity

A second line of evidence concerns the direction of change in the physical world. The second law of thermodynamics says that in a closed system, usable energy tends to be spent and disorder tends to increase. Hot things cool, ordered things decay, and the stars, which are great furnaces, burn their fuel. If the universe were eternal, so that an infinite amount of time had already passed, then it would long ago have run down to a uniform and lifeless state. A clock that is still running was wound at some time. The universe is still running, and so it must have been wound up.

Some scientists have proposed ways around a beginning, including universes that cycle endlessly through expansion and collapse, and vast

collections of universes in which ours is one. I take these proposals seriously as proposals, but I note that none of them has observational support, and that several of them face serious difficulties of their own. In 2003 the physicists Arvind Borde, Alan Guth, and Alexander Vilenkin published a theorem showing that any universe which has, on average, been expanding cannot be extended indefinitely into the past. Vilenkin, who is no friend of religious conclusions, drew the plain inference that cosmologists cannot hide behind the idea of an eternal past. Science is always revisable, and I do not rest my faith on any single result. But the direction of the evidence is consistent, and it points toward a beginning.

The Bible has said so from its first page. The God of Scripture is the One who was already God when nothing else was: "You are the LORD, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them" (Neh. 9:6). It is He who gives the universe both its beginning and its continuing existence.

## B. Chemical Evolution and the Origin of Life

### 1. The Hypothesis of Chemical Evolution

Even granting the expansion of the universe from an initial singularity, the origin of life from non-living chemistry remains a separate and extraordinarily difficult problem. Chemical evolution is the hypothesis that increasingly complex organic molecules arose from simpler ones under early-earth conditions, eventually producing the first self-replicating system. It is the dominant scientific framework for addressing this question, and it has attracted the lifelong work of able scientists. I admire their patience and their honesty about how much remains unknown.

The honest accounting is that the experiments have fallen far short of the claim. The Miller experiment mentioned in the previous chapter produced a few amino acids, but the first living cell is not a handful of amino acids. Even the simplest known cell contains thousands of

different kinds of molecules, working in coordinated chains of chemical reactions, enclosed in a membrane that decides what enters and leaves, and carrying instructions for making copies of itself. The gap between a pool of simple organic chemicals and such a system is not a small step. It is a chasm, and every proposal for crossing it is a hypothesis awaiting its first demonstration.

The cell is also a place of machinery. It contains a molecular factory, the ribosome, that builds proteins by reading instructions from the genetic code. It contains a tiny rotary motor that spins to produce the energy molecule on which the whole cell runs, and in some bacteria a rotary motor that drives a whip-like tail. These parts are not accidents of nature that merely happen to look useful. Each is made of many parts that work only when they are all present and rightly fitted together. When a visitor to a factory sees an assembly line, he does not ask whether it happened by chance. He asks who built it. The honest scientist is entitled to ask the same question of the cell.

## 2. The Information Problem

The discovery of the structure of DNA by James Watson and Francis Crick in 1953, building on the experimental work of Rosalind Franklin and Maurice Wilkins, enormously complicated the problem by revealing the staggering informational complexity of even the simplest living cell. The genetic code is not merely a chemical pattern. It functions like a language, with letters (the four nucleotides), words (the three-letter codons), sentences (genes), and paragraphs (chromosomes). The cell reads this language and translates it into proteins, using a machinery that is itself built from the proteins that the language specifies.

Here a difficulty arises that has no easy answer. The instructions in DNA cannot be copied or read without proteins, and the proteins cannot be made without the instructions in DNA. Researchers have proposed that an earlier world of RNA molecules, which can both carry information and perform some chemical tasks, may have bridged the gap. This is a fascinating idea, and it remains a hypothesis. In our uniform human experience, a code that carries meaning comes from a mind. The

informational complexity of the genetic code is precisely the kind of evidence that points to an intelligent Author rather than a random process.

## 3. The Breath of Life

The biblical doctrine of creation maintains that life is not the product of chemical accident but of divine creative action. God did not merely start the universe and then stand back. He is the One who gives life to what He has made, and Scripture pictures this with tenderness:

I wish to add one pastoral observation before leaving this subject. The origin of life is not an abstract puzzle for the laboratory alone. Every person who has stood beside a hospital bed or at a graveside has felt the difference between a living body and a lifeless one. Medicine can repair and sustain life, but it cannot create it. The line between the living and the dead is the line over which the Bible says only God has authority, and the Scripture speaks of the whole matter in terms of breath.

> *"then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature."*
> — Genesis 2:7

Two things stand side by side in this verse. The man is dust, which tells us that we belong to the material world and share its chemistry. The man is also the creature into whom God breathed, which tells us that life does not come from the dust. It comes from the Giver. The psalmist says the same of God: "For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light" (Ps. 36:9). If life is a gift from the Giver of life, then even the smallest cell is a sermon, and the scientist who studies it is a reader of the work of God.

## C. Genetic Mutation and the Limits of Natural Selection

The chapter's third argument concerns the mechanism that is said to turn one kind of living thing into another. In the modern account, natural selection, which was the subject of the previous chapter, is joined to genetic mutation. Mutations are changes in the DNA of an organism, caused by errors in copying or by damage from chemicals and radiation. They are random with respect to the needs of the organism, and natural selection preserves the rare ones that help. Over long ages, the argument runs, small changes accumulate into large ones.

I do not deny that mutations occur or that selection acts on them. What I ask is whether the mutations we actually observe can do what the theory requires. Most observed mutations are neutral or harmful. Some produce a benefit in a particular setting, but the benefit often comes through damage or loss. The sickle-cell trait protects against malaria, yet the same change in a double dose causes a serious disease. Bacteria become resistant to an antibiotic, often by losing or altering a function that the drug depended on, and many such bacteria are less fit once the drug is gone. These are real examples of change, and they are also examples of change that tends to break things or trade one thing for another. The theory requires something different: the steady appearance of new, complex, coordinated, functional information, such as the blueprints for an eye or for a new organ system.

There is a further reason for hesitation, and it is found in the cell itself. Living cells carry an elaborate system for proofreading and repairing their own DNA, so that the rate of uncorrected copying errors is held to the order of one in a billion letters copied. A repair system of this kind presupposes the information that it protects. It is a safeguard against change, and it exists because change in the genetic text is usually dangerous. It is hard to picture how the unguided process of accumulating changes could have produced a machinery whose whole business is to prevent them.

Evolutionary biologists answer that small steps can accumulate over time into large ones, and that I underestimate what millions of years can do. I do not dismiss the argument. I observe, however, that it is an inference from the past and not an observation of it, and that the question whether the observed mechanisms are sufficient is a question open to honest debate. Faithful Christians and capable scientists have taken different positions on how that debate should be resolved. I hold the position that the observed mechanisms are not adequate to account for the origin of the complex information in living things, and that the Bible gives a better explanation.

> *"And God made the beasts of the earth according to their kinds and the livestock according to their kinds, and everything that creeps on the ground according to its kind. And God saw that it was good."*
> — Genesis 1:25

There is one further point to be made, and it is the point of the whole chapter. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that I granted the whole of the evolutionary account of how living things diversified. It would still leave unanswered the origin of the universe, the origin of the laws that govern it, and the origin of the first living cell. These are the questions that matter most, and the sciences are silent on them. The Lord put the question to Job in words that remain unanswerable to every generation: "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding" (Job 38:4). No scientist was there. The One who was there has told us what happened, and He has told us in His Word.

**Reflection Questions: Chapter 2**

**1.** The Big Bang evidence suggests that the universe had a beginning. How does this scientific finding resonate with the biblical claim that "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1)?

**2.** The informational complexity of DNA has been compared to a language. How does this analogy from information theory support the inference to an intelligent Creator? Describe how you would explain this inference to a friend who works in science, in terms that neither mock nor overstate.

**3.** Isaiah 40:26 describes God "calling them all by name," each star among the host of heaven. How does this image of a personal Creator who knows and governs the details of creation enrich your experience of the natural world? This week, spend ten minutes outdoors under the sky or among living things, and thank God for three things you can see.

CHAPTER 3

# Theistic Evolution: Fusion and Its Failures

> *"For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities."*
> — Colossians 1:16

Theistic evolution is the attempt to hold together biblical theism and evolutionary naturalism: to affirm that God created, while allowing that He used the evolutionary process as His primary instrument. It is sometimes called evolutionary creation, and it has been held by sincere and learned Christians. Some of the Reformed theologians I most admire, B. B. Warfield among them, were open to considering whether evolution might describe the method by which God works in His world, and I do not question their devotion to the authority of Scripture. My engagement with the position is respectful but critical. The difficulty is not with the theistic element but with the evolutionary element: specifically, with the assumption that the mechanisms of random genetic mutation and natural selection are adequate, without further divine specification, to account for the complexity of life.

I call the position a fusion because it tries to weld two accounts of origins that were built on different foundations. The biblical account begins with a personal God who speaks the world into being and pronounces it good. The evolutionary account, in its standard form, begins with matter and chance and ends with persons. When the two are welded, something has to give, and what gives is usually the plain sense of Scripture. A fusion of this kind is always an unequal one, because the side that is treated as the fixed point is the scientific model, and the side that is made to bend is the Bible.

I raise the matter in a pastor's spirit as well as a theologian's. Many believers, young people in particular, are told by the culture around them that they must choose between science and faith, and some of them accept theistic evolution because it seems to offer a way of keeping both. I understand the appeal. But a bridge that cannot bear the weight of

Adam, of death, and of the cross is not a bridge worth building. In this chapter I look first at the day-age theory and the geological assumptions behind it, then at the pre-Adamic and gap proposals, and finally at what the fusion costs the gospel itself.

## A. The Day-Age Theory and Geological Uniformitarianism

### 1. What the Day-Age Theory Proposes

The day-age theory proposes that the "days" of Genesis 1 represent geological ages rather than twenty-four-hour periods. This reinterpretation is motivated by the desire to harmonize the Genesis account with the long time scales of modern geology. I acknowledge the genuine exegetical questions about the Hebrew word *yom* (day). The word can sometimes refer to a longer period, as when Moses writes of "the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens" (Gen. 2:4). The question is whether it bears that sense in the first chapter of Genesis.

The text itself gives the answer in the way it counts. The days are numbered, and each is bounded: "And there was evening and there was morning, the first day" (Gen. 1:5). A word that is joined to a number and to an evening and a morning is most naturally read as an ordinary day. When God later gave the Sabbath commandment to Israel, He grounded it in this very pattern of days:

> *"For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."*
> — Exodus 20:11

The working week of Israel was meant to mirror the working week of God. If the six days were six long ages, the pattern would not make sense, and the Sabbath command would lose its anchor. I recognize that sincere Christians read the passage differently, and I do not need to settle every

detail of the age of the earth in order to show what is theologically at stake in the day-age proposal, which is the matter of death.

The order of the days adds a further difficulty. On the third day God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation" (Gen. 1:11), and on the fourth day He said, "Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night" (Gen. 1:14). If each day were an age of millions of years, the plants of the third day would have had to live for ages before the sun that sustains them appeared. I do not say that this settles the matter, for those who hold the day-age view have their replies. I say only that the plain reading, in which each day is a day, gives the narrative a smoothness that the long-age reading has to labour to restore.

## 2. Death Before the Fall

The day-age interpretation carries significant theological costs. It imports death, suffering, and natural evil into the pre-fall creation, making them part of God's "very good" design rather than consequences of human sin. At the end of the sixth day, Scripture records God's verdict: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). It is hard to call a world very good if it has already been through millions of years of predation, disease, and extinction, with Adam arriving at the end as the last product of a long record of suffering.

The apostle Paul is plain about the order of events: "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned" (Rom. 5:12). Death comes through sin, and sin came through Adam. Paul also calls death an enemy: "The last enemy to be destroyed is death" (1 Cor. 15:26). If death is the enemy of God, then it cannot also be God's chosen instrument for making the world. A God who made death His servant in the beginning and then destroys it as His enemy in the end would be at war with His own method.

## 3. Uniformitarianism: The Present as the Key to the Past

Charles Lyell's uniformitarian geology, set out in his *Principles of Geology* in the 1830s, and Charles Darwin's subsequent application of evolutionary

thinking to the biological record, represent the intellectual framework within which the day-age theory became theologically attractive. Darwin read Lyell's volumes during the voyage of the *Beagle*. Lyell's guiding idea was that the present is the key to the past: the processes we now see at work, operating at their present rates, are sufficient to explain every rock formation on earth.

The uniformitarian assumption is itself a philosophically loaded claim, and it has been challenged within the geological community itself. Geologists today readily acknowledge that catastrophic events, such as great floods, volcanic eruptions, and impacts from space, have shaped the earth's surface, and the debate about how much weight to give to such events continues. The assumption of steady uniformity is not a fact that has been read off the rocks. It is a principle brought to the rocks.

The apostle Peter described this habit of mind long before Lyell wrote:

> *"They will say, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation.'"*
> — 2 Peter 3:4

Peter goes on to say of such people that "they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished" (2 Pet. 3:5–6). I do not say that every geologist is a scoffer. I say that the assumption that everything has continued as it was from the beginning is an old one, that the Bible anticipates it, and that it ought to be held up to examination and not treated as the neutral starting point of science.

## B. Pre-Adamic Human Race and Gap Theory Errors

### 1. The Pre-Adamic Human Race

The proposal of a pre-Adamic human race, a population of human-like creatures who lived and died before the creation of Adam, is motivated by two things. One is the population-genetic estimates which some scientists take to indicate a founding human population of thousands rather than a single pair. The other is certain texts which speak of beings and men of renown in prehistory. The Bible itself speaks of "the men of renown" who were of old (Gen. 6:4), and writings that are not part of Scripture, such as the Book of Enoch, elaborate on them at length.

I evaluate this proposal against the clear biblical teaching that Adam was the first man, and that death entered the world through Adam's sin, not through a prior evolutionary process. The apostle Paul writes of this plainly:

> *"Thus it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being'; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit."*
> — 1 Corinthians 15:45

Scripture does not leave room for a human race before Adam. Eve is named "the mother of all living" (Gen. 3:20). Paul tells the Athenians that God "made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26). The suggestion that other human beings existed before or beside Adam, with whom his children could have married, solves a problem that the Bible has already answered: Adam, we are told, "had other sons and daughters" (Gen. 5:4), and the first generations of the human family intermarried, as any family would at the beginning of a race.

The usual question put to this reading is about Cain's wife. The Bible says that "Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch" (Gen. 4:17), and the skeptic asks where she came from. The answer is already in the text. Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters, as Genesis 5:4 says, and Cain married one of his sisters. In the first generations of the human family there was no other choice, and the later laws against

marriage between close relatives belong to a later age. The question that looks like an argument for a pre-Adamic race is thus answered from the Bible's own account of the first family.

## 2. The Gap Theory

The gap theory posits a vast period of time between the original creation in Genesis 1:1 ("In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth") and the re-creation after a hypothetical cosmic catastrophe, which it finds in Genesis 1:2. The Scottish minister Thomas Chalmers popularized the idea in the early nineteenth century, and it spread widely through study Bibles. It was an attempt to preserve both the six days of Genesis and the long ages of geology, by placing the ages in a gap before the first of the six days. Like the other proposals, it reads into the text what is not there.

The Hebrew phrase *tohu wabohu* ("without form and void") in Genesis 1:2 is best understood as describing the initial, unfinished state of the creation before the six days of forming and filling: "The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters." It does not describe the aftermath of an angelic revolt that destroyed a previous creation. The prophet Isaiah uses the same Hebrew word for "empty" when he says that the LORD "did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18), which tells against the reading that God made the earth waste and ruined at the beginning.

The gap theory also has the same theological cost as the day-age theory. A fossil record laid down in a long age before Adam brings death, disease, and violence into a world that God had not yet cursed. The proposal does not solve the problem that it was devised to solve. It only moves the problem to a different place in the text, one where the text does not support it.

## C. Why the Fusion Fails: Adam, Death, and the Gospel

The failures catalogued above are not isolated errors. They share a root, and the root is the loss of Adam. The gospel is built on a comparison between two men, the first Adam and the last Adam, and the comparison only works if both are real. Paul states it in a sentence that deserves to be learned by heart:

> *"For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive."*
> — 1 Corinthians 15:21–22

If Adam was a symbol of an evolving population, and death was already at work long before him, then the parallel is empty. Christ then did not come to undo what one man did, but to improve a process that had always included death. The cross loses its explanation, because there was no fall to answer. Our Lord Himself spoke of the first couple as historical persons: "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female" (Matt. 19:4). He did not point to a population but to a pair, and He placed their creation at the beginning.

Paul does not merely say that death came through Adam. He says what death is: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Death is wages, a payment owed for sin. It is not a tool in the Creator's workshop. If death had already reigned for ages before any sin, then the apostle's sentence would be hard to understand, and the gift of eternal life in Christ would be the answer to a question that had never been asked.

The gospel writers keep the same line of thought. Luke traces the ancestry of Jesus back through the generations to the beginning: "the son of Enos, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God" (Luke 3:38). A genealogy that begins in a myth cannot end in a historical Saviour. Luke writes as a historian who had "followed all things closely" (Luke 1:3), and he places Adam in the same line as David and Abraham.

There is a pastoral and evangelistic cost as well. If we tell the unbeliever that the first chapters of Genesis are symbolic, he will ask, reasonably, where the symbols stop. Is the fall a symbol? Is the flood? Is the resurrection? A faith that has surrendered the beginning of the story has already made a concession that the opponent will press to the end. I would rather hand the skeptic a Bible whose history is the foundation of its theology, and let him argue with that.

There is also the matter of how Christians should read the two books of God, His works and His Word. John Calvin likened Scripture to a pair of spectacles that bring a blurred world into focus. The point of the picture is that Scripture corrects the reading of nature, and not the other way round. Science is a human interpretation of nature, which is always partial and always open to revision, while the Bible is God's own interpretation of His world. When the two appear to conflict, I begin by testing the interpretation of nature, though I also hold my own reading of Scripture with humility, as one who can be mistaken.

I do not write to condemn brothers who hold theistic evolution. I write to say, from a lifetime of pastoral work, that the cost is greater than it first appears. Christians who differ on how old the earth is can still stand together on three convictions: that Adam was a real man, that death entered the world as the consequence of his sin, and that Christ came to conquer death by His own. These three are the pillars of the gospel, and the fusion of Scripture with evolution puts every one of them under strain.

**Reflection Questions: Chapter 3**

**1.** Theistic evolution attempts to harmonize faith and science. What do you see as the key theological cost of accepting evolutionary naturalism as the primary mechanism of creation? Is that cost acceptable?

**2.** The day-age theory introduces death and suffering into the pre-fall creation. How does this affect the biblical narrative of the fall and its consequences? Why does the timing of death's entrance into creation matter theologically? Choose one verse from this chapter and explain it to a fellow believer in your own words this month.

**3.** How do you personally navigate the relationship between scientific findings about the age and history of the earth and your commitment to the authority of Scripture? Write down one question that troubles you, and bring it to your pastor or to a trusted Christian friend before the end of the month.

CHAPTER 4

# Christian Biblical Arguments: The Creator God

> *"For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."*
> — Romans 1:19–20

Having surveyed the philosophical, scientific, and theistic-evolutionary accounts of cosmic origins, I now turn to the positive case for Biblical Creationism. This is not a defensive position retreating from the challenges of modern cosmology. It is a confident, forward-looking engagement that draws on both the witness of Scripture and the resources of natural philosophy to make the most coherent case available for a personal, powerful, purposeful Creator.

The apostle Paul sets out the pattern in the verses that open this chapter. God has made Himself known in the things that He has made. The world is not a silent machine. It speaks, and what it says is that there is a Creator of eternal power and divine nature. Paul adds that people who see the evidence and suppress it are without excuse. Yet the world's testimony is not the whole of what God has said. He has also spoken in the Scriptures, and the Scriptures say plainly what the creation only points toward: who the Creator is, what He has done, and why.

I make the case in four steps. First, I set out what the Bible means by creation *ex nihilo*, and who the Creator is. Second, I show that reason, working honestly, arrives at the same place that Scripture begins: an Uncaused Cause. Third, I read the first verse of Scripture closely, and find in it a compact statement of time, space, and matter. Fourth, I face the hardest question that the doctrine of creation raises, the question of the curse, and show that the Bible answers it with a hope. The result, I believe, is not only a coherent argument but a call to worship.

# A. God Created Everything: Ex Nihilo

## 1. Out of Nothing

The foundational claim of Biblical Creationism is that God created the universe from nothing: *ex nihilo*, from the Latin for "out of nothing." This claim is expressed in the first verse of Scripture and confirmed throughout the Bible. The letter to the Hebrews says: "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible" (Heb. 11:3). Paul says that God "calls into existence the things that do not exist" (Rom. 4:17). The psalmist summons all creation to praise the Lord, "For he commanded and they were created" (Ps. 148:5).

> *"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."*
> — Genesis 1:1

The philosophical implications of creation *ex nihilo* are enormous. It means that matter is not eternal, because it had a beginning. It means that the universe is not self-explanatory, because it requires an explanation that transcends it. It means that the Creator is categorically different from creation: not a part of the universe, not subject to its laws, and not limited by its conditions. This is the God of Scripture, the One who was before the beginning, who spoke the beginning into existence, and who will outlast the ending.

## 2. The Creator Is Not the Creation

The difference between the Creator and the creation separates the biblical view from several rivals. Pantheism teaches that God and the universe are one, and so it has no Creator who stands apart. Deism teaches that God made the world and left it to run alone, and so it has no Creator who still rules. The Bible teaches that the God who made the world is the God who sustains it, who is "Lord of heaven and earth" and who "gives to all mankind life and breath and everything" (Acts 17:24–

25). He needs nothing from His creatures. Theologians call this His *aseity*, a word that means that He has His being from Himself alone.

The line between Creator and creature is also the line between worship and idolatry. Paul describes a people who "exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen" (Rom. 1:25). Every system that treats the universe as the ultimate reality, whether it calls that reality nature, matter, or the cosmos, ends by giving to the creature what belongs to the Creator. The doctrine of creation is therefore not a scientific footnote. It is the guard against putting anything in the place of God.

Creation *ex nihilo* also tells us something about the nature of the God who creates. A craftsman who works with pre-existing material depends on that material. He is limited by its qualities and cannot make anything that his material does not allow. The God of the Bible depends on nothing, and so He is free to make whatever He wills. This is what the apostle means when he speaks of the God who "calls into existence the things that do not exist." Our existence rests entirely on His free and generous will.

## 3. The Triune Creator

The Creator revealed in Scripture is the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul writes: "yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (1 Cor. 8:6). The Son is the agent through whom the Father made the world, and John says so in the opening of his Gospel:

> *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."*
> — John 1:1–3

The Holy Spirit is also present at creation. At the beginning "the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2), and Job

confesses, "The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life" (Job 33:4). Paul adds that in the Son "all things hold together" (Col. 1:17). The three Persons are one Creator, and the world is the work of their undivided will.

## B. The Uncaused Cause and the Absurdity of Infinite Regression

### 1. The Principle of Causality

The principle of causality, that every effect has a sufficient cause, is among the most fundamental commitments of rational inquiry. It is embedded in the work of Isaac Newton, whose Laws of Motion govern the behaviour of every massive body in the universe. Newton's laws describe how bodies move and how their motion changes under force. They do not account for why there are bodies at all. Applied to the question of origins, the principle of causality demands that the existence of the universe, a massive, complex, law-governed effect, be explained by a sufficient cause.

Newton himself drew this conclusion. In the General Scholium of his *Principia*, he wrote that the "most beautiful system of the sun, planets, and comets, could only proceed from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful Being." The greatest of the founders of modern physics did not think that his laws made the Creator unnecessary. He thought they made the Creator's wisdom visible.

### 2. Why an Infinite Regression Fails

The naturalist's only alternative to an Uncaused Cause is an infinite regression of causes, an endless chain of effects causing causes causing effects that stretches backward through infinite time. But an actual infinite regress of causes is, as Aristotle recognized and as contemporary philosophers of cosmology continue to debate, logically incoherent. An actually infinite sequence cannot be completed, and the present moment is precisely the completion of all prior moments. Therefore the causal

chain cannot be infinite. It must terminate in a First Cause that is itself uncaused.

The mathematician David Hilbert illustrated the difficulty with a hotel that has an infinite number of rooms, all of them full. A new guest arrives, and the clerk simply moves every guest from room *n* to room *n* plus one, and the new guest has a room. Yet no room is added and the hotel remains full. The illustration shows that actual infinities, when applied to real things and not merely to numbers, lead to absurdities. Thomas Aquinas reasoned in a similar way in the first of his five ways of showing that God exists: everything that is in motion is moved by another, and the chain of movers cannot go back without end, so there must be a first mover that is itself unmoved.

The common objection is, "Who made God?" The question misunderstands the argument. The argument is not that everything has a cause. It is that whatever begins to exist has a cause. God did not begin to exist. He is eternal, necessary, and self-existent, and the Bible announces Him as such:

> *"Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God."*
> — Psalm 90:2

A third reply is sometimes offered, and it deserves a hearing. The philosopher Bertrand Russell, in a famous radio debate in 1948 with the Jesuit Frederick Copleston, answered that the universe is simply there, and that nothing more can be said. This is the claim that the universe is a brute fact. But to say that something is a brute fact is to decline the question, and not to answer it. The question remains why this universe exists and not nothing. Gottfried Leibniz put it in a form that has never been bettered: nothing exists without a sufficient reason. A universe that has no reason for existing, and that came from no one, is not an explanation. It is a refusal to look for one.

### 3. The Echo of Eternity in the Human Heart

The Preacher of Ecclesiastes offers an observation that is the experiential correlate of the cosmological argument. God "has made everything beautiful in its time," and He "has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end" (Eccl. 3:11). The human intuition that there must be a ground, a source, a meaning behind the flux of experience is not mere wishful thinking. It is the echo of the image of God within us, pointing beyond the created to the Creator.

Augustine, who wrestled with these questions in the fourth century, put it in a sentence that Christians have repeated for sixteen hundred years: "our heart is restless until it rests in you." The restlessness is not a mistake of evolution. It is the sign that we were made by Someone, and made for Someone.

## C. Time, Space, and Matter: Genesis 1:1 as Cosmological Statement

I draw your attention to the remarkable cosmological density of the first verse of the Bible: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). The phrase "In the beginning" establishes the creation of time, the commencement of the chronological sequence. The word "God" establishes the existence of the personal, eternal Creator who pre-exists created time and is not subject to it. "Created" establishes the category of divine creative action, distinct from making, forming, or fashioning pre-existing material. "The heavens" establishes the creation of space, the vast expanse of the cosmic arena. "And the earth" establishes the creation of matter, the physical substrate of terrestrial and biological existence. In Hebrew idiom the pair "the heavens and the earth" means the whole of the created order.

In one compact sentence, Genesis 1:1 articulates what modern cosmology has spent a century working toward: that the universe had a beginning, that it comprises space, time, and matter, and that these three are co-originate, which is to say that they came into existence together,

in the same creative event. The standard Big Bang model does not describe an explosion into a pre-existing empty space. It describes the beginning of space and time themselves. Augustine had seen long before that if God made time, then there was no time before the creation in which He might have waited.

The rest of the creation account shows how God makes. Verse after verse, the pattern is the same: God speaks, and it is so. "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). The universe does not arise from a struggle or a process within the divine nature. It arises from a word, spoken by One who needs no tool and no material. That is why the psalmist can say that the heavens were made by the word of the LORD, and why Hebrews says that the universe was created by the word of God. The whole cosmos stands because it is held in being by a word that has never been withdrawn.

The Hebrew verb translated "created" is *bara*, and in the Old Testament, when it is used of the making of heaven and earth, its subject is always God and never man. I do not rest the doctrine of creation on a study of one word, because the whole context of the passage, together with the testimony of Hebrews 11:3 and of the rest of Scripture, makes the claim plain. But the usage fits the claim. This is a kind of making that belongs to God alone, since no human craftsman makes anything out of nothing.

The apostle John deliberately echoes the first verse of the Bible when he begins his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1). He wishes his readers to see that the God who made the world in the beginning made it through the Word, and that the same Word has now become flesh. The first verse of Genesis therefore looks forward to the gospel. The Creator is also the Redeemer, and the One who made the heavens and the earth is the One who has come to make all things new.

The biblical author, writing millennia before the development of modern physics, could not have arrived at this formulation by scientific observation. It is also striking that Genesis breaks with the creation stories of the neighbouring nations. In the Babylonian *Enuma Elish*, the world is fashioned from the body of a slain goddess, and the gods

themselves arise out of a pre-existing watery chaos. Genesis has no pre-existing chaos that is divine, and no sun, moon, or sea that is a god. There is one God, and He made everything. The coherence of Genesis 1:1 with the findings of modern cosmology is a testimony to the inspiration of Scripture, for "no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21).

## D. God Permitted the Curse: Thorns and Thistles

### 1. A World Pronounced Very Good

The present state of the natural world, with its built-in tendency toward entropy, its thorns and thistles, its predation and disease, is not the original design of the Creator but the consequence of the fall. The Bible describes the first world differently. When God made the animals and gave the plants for food, He said: "And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food" (Gen. 1:30). The original creation was at peace, and it was good.

### 2. The Word of Judgment

After Adam's rebellion, the Lord spoke a word of judgment over the ground itself. The divine word to Adam in the garden reads:

> *"Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you."*
> — Genesis 3:17–18

The heading of this section says that God permitted the curse. I hold that He did more than stand aside. He permitted the fall, and in permitting it He righteously pronounced the curse. It was neither an accident nor a

defeat of His purposes. It was a just judgment on a world whose head had rebelled, and it was given in the hope of redemption.

This is not a minor subplot. It is an essential feature of the biblical cosmology. The natural world as we now observe it, which Tennyson famously called "red in tooth and claw," is the natural world under the curse of sin. I recognize that Christians differ about how far these features belonged to the original creation, and about how the curse relates to the second law of thermodynamics. I hold as a conviction, not as a proved fact, that the world's subjection to decay is one of the ways in which the curse shows itself. Paul describes the whole creation in these terms:

> *"For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now."*
> — Romans 8:20–22

## 3. The Hope of a New Creation

The final eschatological hope of the Christian cosmology is not the abandonment of material creation but its comprehensive renewal. Peter writes: "But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells" (2 Pet. 3:13). Isaiah saw the peace of the first world restored: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat" (Isa. 11:6). And the last chapter of the Bible announces the end of the curse itself: "No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him" (Rev. 22:3).

This hope bears on how we live now. The first command given to the man was to care for the garden: "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it" (Gen. 2:15). We are still called to work and to keep. A believer who awaits the renewal of

all things will not despise the earth, and will neither worship it nor waste it. He will study it, tend it, and enjoy it as the work of his Father's hands.

**Reflection Questions: Chapter 4**

**1.** The doctrine of creation *ex nihilo* asserts that the universe is not self-explanatory. How does this conviction shape your daily awareness of the world around you? Do you see it as a gift or as a given? Name one ordinary thing in your day that you will receive this week as a gift from the Creator, and thank Him for it aloud.

**2.** The cosmological argument points to an Uncaused Cause as the necessary ground of all contingent existence. How does this philosophical argument for the existence of God relate to the personal, covenantal God revealed in Scripture?

**3.** The natural world is under the curse of sin (Rom. 8:20–22), when "the creation was subjected to futility," and it is awaiting its renewal. How should this eschatological hope shape the Christian's relationship to the natural environment, to environmental stewardship, to scientific inquiry, and to care for the created order? Choose one practical step of stewardship you will take in your home or church this month.

# Conclusion

The question of ultimate origins (where did the universe come from, and why is there something rather than nothing?) is not answered by the sciences alone, however sophisticated their tools. The sciences describe. They do not ultimately explain. The explanation of why there is a universe at all, why it is governed by rational laws that human minds can investigate, and why it gave rise to creatures capable of asking the question pushes us beyond the domain of empirical inquiry into the domain of philosophy and theology.

In the first chapter I examined the philosophical proposals of the ancient and modern world, and found that eternal matter, spontaneous generation, and natural selection each try to answer the question of origin from inside the world, and each leaves the deepest question where it found it. In the second chapter I turned to the sciences themselves and found that the Big Bang, the expansion of the universe, and the winding down of the cosmos point toward a beginning, that the origin of life from non-living chemistry remains unexplained, and that the genetic code carries the marks of a language. In the third chapter I considered the attempt to fuse the biblical account with evolution, and found that the fusion costs us Adam, and with Adam the very structure of the gospel. In the fourth chapter I set out the positive case: a Creator who made all things from nothing, who is Himself uncaused, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and who has told us the truth about the beginning in His Word.

The Biblical Christian answer is not a retreat from reason but its fulfilment. Creation *ex nihilo* is the doctrine of the God who is before the beginning, who speaks the universe into existence, who governs it by His providence, and who will renew it in the age to come. It is the most coherent, most rationally satisfying, and most personally meaningful account of ultimate origin available. It is the account that makes sense of science by grounding the rationality of the universe in the mind of its Maker. It makes sense of the human person by locating her significance in the image of God. And it makes sense of history by placing it within

the arc of a redemptive narrative moving toward a glorious consummation.

What should a congregation do with these convictions? I would suggest three things. First, teach the first chapters of Genesis to our children as the true history that the Bible presents, so that they enter the university with a settled confidence in the Word of God and not with a hidden fear of it. Second, engage our scientific neighbours with courtesy and with questions, not with ridicule, remembering that many of them are honest seekers after truth, and that we too were once outside the household of faith. Third, let every lesson on creation end where the Bible ends it, in thanksgiving and praise.

I do not claim to have settled every question. The Bible leaves some things unsaid, and the sciences are always learning. But I am persuaded that the Christian who holds fast to the Word of God stands on firmer ground than the one who has to guess. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). May every reader of these pages look at the universe, with its staggering scale, its breathtaking order, and its inexhaustible beauty, and see not an accident but an announcement. And may that announcement lead you, as it has led me through a lifetime of ministry, from the wonder of the heavens to the worship of the One who made them.

***Soli Deo gloria.***

# Personal Questions and Challenges

These questions are for personal reflection or for discussion in a small group. Each group of three ends with one concrete change to make in daily life.

## On the Ancient and Modern Philosophies of Origin

**1.** Of the three positions examined in Chapter 1 (eternal matter, spontaneous generation, and natural selection), which do you meet most often in conversation with friends, colleagues, or the media? How has it shaped the way people around you think about meaning, purpose, and accountability to God?

**2.** The ancient assumption is that the world simply is and owes nothing to anyone. Where do you see traces of that assumption in how you spend your time, your money, and your thanks?

**3.** Choose one daily practice by which you will acknowledge God as the Creator, such as giving thanks aloud on waking or before meals, and begin it tomorrow.

## On the Scientific Account of the Universe and Its Limits

**1.** This book says that the sciences describe the universe but cannot, by their own methods, explain why it exists. Where in your own schooling or reading was the line between describing and explaining blurred, and what difference would it have made to see it?

**2.** How can you honour the work of scientists while keeping Scripture as your final authority? How would you speak to a Christian student or colleague who feels forced to choose between the two?

**3.** This week, read one good article or book chapter on astronomy or biology with your Bible beside you, and write down one thing in it for which you can praise God. Share what you wrote with someone in your household or church.

## On Theistic Evolution and the Authority of Scripture

**1.** Why does it matter for the gospel that Adam was a real man? In your own words, explain Paul's argument that "as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22).

**2.** How should believers treat brothers and sisters in Christ who hold a different view on theistic evolution or on the age of the earth? What convictions do we hold in common, and how can your congregation protect that unity?

**3.** Commit to memory this month the words of Hebrews 11:3: "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible." Recite it to a friend, and tell the friend why you chose it.

## On the Creator God and a Creation Awaiting Renewal

**1.** How does it deepen your worship to know that the Creator is the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and that all things were made through the Son?

**2.** How does the biblical teaching on the curse, and on the hope of a new creation, change the way you think about sickness, decay, and loss in the world around you?

**3.** Set aside one time each week to be outdoors and pray the words of Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork," as you look at the sky. Begin this week and keep it for one month.

# Glossary

**Abiogenesis:**

The idea that living things can arise from non-living matter by natural processes alone, without a Creator.

**Aseity:**

The attribute of God by which He has His being from Himself alone. He does not depend on anything or anyone for His existence.

**Big Bang:**

The scientific theory that the universe began in an extremely hot, dense state and has been expanding ever since. The name was given in a 1949 radio broadcast by the astronomer Fred Hoyle.

**Causality, Principle of:**

The principle that every effect has a sufficient cause. All scientific reasoning depends upon it.

**Chemical Evolution:**

The hypothesis that simple chemicals on the early earth gradually combined into more complex ones, eventually producing the first living cell.

**Cosmic Microwave Background:**

A faint glow of radiation that fills the whole sky. Scientists understand it to be the afterglow of the hot early universe, and it was first detected in 1964.

**Creationism, Biblical:**

The belief that God made the universe and everything in it, as the Bible teaches, by His own word and power.

**Day-Age Theory:**

The view that the six "days" of creation in Genesis 1 stand for long ages of time and not ordinary days.

**Deism:**

The belief that God made the world but then left it to run on its own, without ruling or caring for it.

**Demiurge:**

In Plato's writings, the divine craftsman who shapes pre-existing matter into an ordered world. He is not the Creator of the Bible, because he does not make the matter he uses.

**Dualism:**

The view that reality rests upon two eternal and separate things, such as spirit and matter, or ideal Forms and raw material.

**Élan Vital:**

A French phrase meaning "vital impulse." Henri Bergson used it for a life force which he said drives matter toward higher forms of life.

**Entropy:**

A measure of disorder. The second law of thermodynamics says that in a closed system usable energy tends to be spent and disorder tends to increase over time.

**Epistemology:**

The study of how we know what we know, and of how far our knowledge can be trusted.

**Ex Nihilo:**

A Latin phrase meaning "out of nothing." Creation *ex nihilo* is the doctrine that God made the universe from nothing, and not from anything that already existed.

**Gap Theory:**

The view that a long period of time lies between the first and second verses of Genesis 1, in which an earlier creation is supposed to have been ruined before the six days began.

**Infinite Regress:**

An endless chain of causes, each caused by an earlier one, with no first cause. This book argues that such a chain cannot actually exist.

**Kalam Cosmological Argument:**

An argument for God's existence that says whatever begins to exist has a cause, that the universe began to exist, and that therefore the universe has a cause. The word *kalam* is Arabic for the study of theology.

**Monism:**

The view that all of reality comes from, or consists of, a single substance.

**Natural Selection:**

The process by which living things that are better suited to their surroundings tend to survive and have more offspring, so that their traits become more common in a population.

**Naturalism:**

The belief that nature is all there is, and that nothing exists outside the physical world or acts upon it.

**Pantheism:**

The belief that God and the universe are one and the same, so that there is no Creator who stands apart from creation.

**Pre-Adamic Race:**

The idea that human-like beings lived and died before Adam, who is then understood to be the first of a later or special line.

**Singularity:**

In the Big Bang theory, the starting point of the universe, imagined as a point of nearly infinite density and temperature from which space, time, and matter expanded.

**Theistic Evolution:**

The view that God created through the process of evolution, using random mutation and natural selection as His main means. It is also called evolutionary creation.

**Tohu Wabohu:**

A Hebrew phrase meaning "without form and void," used in Genesis 1:2 for the earth in its first, unfinished state.

**Uncaused Cause:**

The first cause of everything, which is itself without a cause because it never began. Christians identify this cause with the eternal God.

**Uniformitarianism:**

The assumption that the processes now at work in nature, acting at their present rates, are enough to explain everything that has happened in the past.

**Yom:**

The Hebrew word for "day." It can mean an ordinary day or, in some settings, a longer period of time.

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# About the Author

Pastor Baltazar A. Niangar is a Pastor Emeritus who holds the degrees of Th.B. (Bachelor of Theology), A.B. (Bachelor of Arts), and D.D. (Doctor of Divinity). He has devoted his life and ministry to the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the rigorous theological formation of God's people, and the equipping of pastoral leaders for faithful and effective ministry in church and society.

Pastor Bal served for many years as a pastor and theological educator, and has been a central figure in the work of Holistic Enhancement for Lay-leaders and Pastors (HELP, Inc.) — a parachurch ministry committed to equipping the whole people of God for faithful service across every sphere of life. His monthly theological lectures to the HELP, Inc. fellowship have addressed the most foundational questions of the Christian faith, and these studies, expanded, deepened, and formatted for print, have shaped the theological works he continues to write.

His theological formation reflects sustained engagement with the whole of the Reformed and evangelical tradition. Among those whose thought has most shaped his own are Augustine of Hippo, John Calvin, Abraham Kuyper, Louis Berkhof, Benjamin B. Warfield, Oscar Cullmann, Herman Dooyeweerd, Karl Barth, Paul Jewett, Francis Schaeffer, R.C. Sproul, and Ravi Zacharias. He reads every theological question through the lens of the whole counsel of God, and has spent a lifetime teaching others to do the same.

The present work, *Cosmological Arguments for the Origin of the Universe*, represents Pastor Bal's engagement with the oldest and most fundamental question of natural philosophy: where did everything come from? It brings the resources of biblical theology to bear on the philosophical, scientific, and theistic-evolutionary accounts of origins, and sets before the reader the positive case for the Creator God. It is a book for the thoughtful believer who has met secular cosmologies and wants to engage them with both intellectual rigour and biblical confidence.

Other theological works by the author:

- *Spiritual Unity and Personal Diversity in Christ*
- *Why God Did Decree and Allow Evil to Exist*
- *What the Christian Church Should Be*
- *The Reformed Theological Paradigm*
- *The Holy Loving Triune Lord God*
- *The Athanasian Creed Understood by Faith*
- *Biblical Christian Cosmoscope*
- *Biblical Salvation*
- *Comparing and Contrasting Calvinism and Arminianism*
- *Divine Election unto Salvation*
- *Doctrines of Divine Grace Part II*
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- *The Thinking Process of the Christian Mind*

- *The Threefold Understanding of Salvation*
- *The Truth of Divine Election*
- *Vital Words Related to Salvation*
- *The Work of the Holy Spirit*

He lives with his beloved wife, Estrella. He is the father of Dr. Ellazar and Zarelle Grace. He continues to preach, teach, write, and intercede for the reformation and renewal of the Church of Jesus Christ, until the day when faith gives way to sight and the knowledge that is now partial becomes the knowledge that is full.

***Soli Deo gloria.***