

The Big Bang and God

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by Ian McDade

Department of Earth and Space Science & Engineering
Lassonde School of Engineering, York University, Toronto, Canada
Home address: 249 Warner Crescent, Newmarket, ON L3X 2G6
Home Tel: 905 853 3009
Email: mcdade@yorku.ca
Ian's own web site: www.yorku.ca/mcdade

The Big Bang is a Cosmological theory which attempts to explain the origins of the universe, everything in it and us. Since it relates to the origins of everything it is of fundamental theological significance. To see that, let's start at the beginning.

I am first going to look at the first book of the Holy Bible (King James version). The first chapter of the first book, and the first three verses of the first chapter of the first book - Genesis 1- 1,2,3 reads:

¹ *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*

² *And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*

³ *And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*

Is this a biblical version of the Big Bang or is Big Bang Theory a modern scientific interpretation of Genesis ?

Let's look at the history of Big Bang Theory.

Before the early 60's there were two main schools of thought about the origins of the universe.

One school adhered to the notion that the universe is continuous, always been there, or here, with no beginning and no end - although possibly oscillating in size. This view was most notably expounded by Sir Fred Hoyle – a very famous English astronomer, philosopher and writer:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred_Hoyle#Rejection_of_the_Big_Bang

Ironically, it was Sir Fred Hoyle who first coined the name '*Big Bang*' in a radio broadcast where he mocked the notion of anything other than a continuous universe. But as you'll see the name stuck.

The other school of thought adhered to the notion that the universe was created in an instant in some cataclysmic event which became known as the Big Bang – instant universe if you like! This view was originally due to a Belgian Catholic Priest Monseigneur Georges Lemaître who first noticed what subsequently became known as Hubble's Law, *i.e.*, the most distant galaxies are retreating from us faster than the closer ones. With the implication that they all started at one point at the same time. For

example if we have two cars travelling away from us with one travelling at 60 km/hr and 60 km from us and the other travelling at 30 km/hr and 30 km from us, then one reasonable inference would be that they both started together beside us one hour ago ! See:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georges_Lema%C3%AAtre

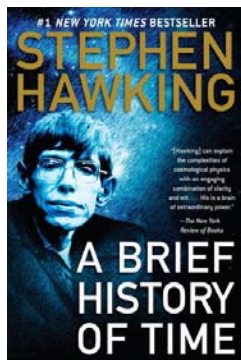
During the 60's the Big Bang view became generally accepted. The question then was '*How and why did this happen and what instigated it?*'

Many cosmologists, who were generally happy with the scientific evidence about the evolution of the universe after the Big Bang, saw it as circumstantial evidence that a grand designer, God, played a hand in all of this. However, a brilliant young mathematical physicist at Cambridge University, a Stephen Hawking http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stephen_Hawking, came up with more theoretical details about the Big Bang and although originally belonging to the theist group he de-converted himself to the atheist group claiming that the Big Bang just happened spontaneously on its own. He convinced himself but not really this speaker.

That is because there are still many questions and many physicists and philosophers see it as potentially a stack of cards lacking a basic foundation. You are advised to build your house upon a rock. When asked about some niggling details of basic components of the entire theory, cosmologists often come up with yet another strange idea – they deflect the issue – yes, it is not just politicians who do that. This is known as recursive theory – but more on that later.

One of the questions often asked is '*What was there before the Big Bang?*' Well, there is a very good answer to that – the answer is nothing! Big Bang theory claims that at the moment of the initial bang all space, all the basic building blocks of the material world, and time itself were created. The current view is that the Big Bang occurred 14.7 billion years ago from our perspective. That means that we are now at 14.7 billion years after the creation of time. The Big Bang happened at time zero so it is meaningless to ask what happened before that. An analogous meaningless question would be '*What is north of the North Pole?*'

The more difficult questions relate to how and why it actually happened. This is addressed in Stephen Hawking's famous bestseller of 1988 '*A Brief History of Time – from the Big Bang to Black Holes*'



So where do we stand about God and the Big Bang? Well I think the jury is still out. There is a misconception that physicists, astronomers, cosmologists, *etc.*, are all atheists. Nothing could be further from the truth. I know of many who are devout Christians (of all denominations), devout Islamists, devout many things.

An anecdote may be warranted here.

A famous astronomer once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the center of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy – the Milky Way. At the end of the lecture, a lady at the back of the room got up and said: "*What you have told us is total rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.*" The astronomer replied, "*What pray is that tortoise standing on?*" The lady replied "*It is standing on the back of another tortoise of course - it is tortoises all the way down!*". This is an example of fraudulent recursive theory. Rather weak and unconvincing irrespective of one's faith - unless you adhere to '*Blind Faith*'.

May I conclude with an ancient Irish blessing. I could give it Irish Gaelic if you wish, but here it is in English. It very much relates to "*Let there be light*"

May the blessing of light be on you - light without and light within

May the blessed sunlight shine on you and warm your heart, till it glows like a great turf fire

If you would like some Irish Gaelic, here is something that is very reflective of the Christian Lord's teaching:

Níl gach uile fhánaí cailte
Not all who wander are lost