

# My Rebuttal of the Lutheran Witness Critique of the Big Bang

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by Gary Jensen, Pastor of Zion Lutheran Church (LCMS), Snohomish, WA \*\* M.Div., and M.A. in Science and Religion  
[gjensen549@gmail.com](mailto:gjensen549@gmail.com) \*\* [christianityontheoffense.com](http://christianityontheoffense.com) \*\* [offensivechristianity.blogspot.com](http://offensivechristianity.blogspot.com)  
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## Rationale and Justification

*“Because Scripture always stands as the final judge and norm...every member of the Synod has the **right and responsibility to test**...adopted resolutions and statements, lest the Synod become guilty of ‘teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ — Matthew 15:19.”* (boldface mine)

-- Introduction. [This We Believe: Selected Topics of Faith and Practice in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod](#), p. vii.

*“If any religions are left standing, they (or it) must have claims made not in a corner somehow immune from rigorous examination, but testable by all serious inquirers using methods that have been employed in other fields dealing with truth claims.”*

Craig Parton. [Religion on Trial: Cross-Examining Religious Truth Claims](#). (Concordia, 2018), p. 7.

## Foreword

Although the articles authored separately by Charles St-Onge and Paul Edmon are united in their rejection of the Big Bang (BB), in the context of *science* the respective grounds for their opposition are logically **impossible** to reconcile with each other. In addition the former author reflects ignorance about the BB at a simple level (see I.3, below). Furthermore, on that same matter, in their respective ways, both **disobey** a fundamental prohibition highlighted in Romans 1:18-20 with respect to the high authority that the Apostle Paul places on the testimony of nature. In terms of *exegetis* the authors both assert, by differing means, that the BB is incompatible with the text of Genesis 1. I emphatically disagree. In any case, each of their assertions demand scrutiny (1 Thess. 5:21) against both the *scientific* facts of the case and the *Scriptures* to which we together appeal (Acts 17:11). That’s our “responsibility” (see above)!

### I. “In the Beginning,” by Charles St-Onge, pp. 4-5.

#### The unedited primary text:

*“Both the Book of Genesis and John’s Gospel begin with the words: ‘In the Beginning.’ Both books are tied together in the Church’s Good Friday liturgy, where we’re reminded that Satan ‘who by a tree once overcame might be overcome (by Christ).’ Yet the scriptural account of the beginning of creation and life is dismissed by most in the West as a fanciful story, something told by less educated people around ancient Middle Eastern campfires. Even some Christians have given up on Genesis as a historical but simple account of creation. Science has given us antibiotics, airplanes, and the internet. Why would we not trust science to give a better explanation of creation than the Scriptures?”*

*What many people fail to realize is that the greatest scientific advances of our age have little to do with understanding “the beginning.” General relativity, which allows our GPS units to function, does not depend on the theory of the Big Bang. Cancer research does not depend on a belief in Darwinian evolution. The attempt to explore creation through science is a different enterprise from examining creation as it now exists. To exchange the scriptural account of creation for the Big Bang theory and the*

concept of evolution is not to exchange myth for science, but to exchange one untestable account of an unobserved event for another.

### **Observation and Experimentation**

*The best science tests hypotheses about the world through observation and experimentation. Yet we cannot observe the beginning of life or of the universe. They are non-repeating and unique historical events. We can observe the effect of such an event on the present and make educated guesses as to how that event came to pass, but the best way of understanding such an event is to have an actual observer give us an account.*

*Those who deny any involvement of a Creator in creation need an explanation for the origin of all things that does not require an observer. Such an explanation of creation must start with what we know now and work backwards. Assumptions must be made about conditions in the past that cannot be proved, since there is no way of confirming the assumptions through observation. For example, it must be assumed that the way the universe seems to work now is how it worked in the past.*

### **God Has Spoken**

*By contrast, Christians know the basic outline of creation, because it was provided to us by One who brought all things into existence (Heb. 1:1). God's Son, Jesus Christ, is the one who reveals God to us (John 1:18). The Holy Spirit reveals God's work to us by speaking "through the prophets" (Nicene Creed, Third Article). God has spoken accurately about our salvation in Christ and everything connected to it. That includes the perfection of the original creation, the calamity of the Fall, the wonder of the cross and promise of our future resurrection into a recreated world.*

*Genesis' account of creation does not tell us everything we would like to know about creation. But the account does reveal what we need to know. When very young children ask their parents where they come from, they are often told they came from their mommy's tummy. This is true from a certain point of view. The account of children being brought to their parents by a stork, in contrast, stands in complete contradiction to the actual reality.*

*In the same way, to believe in the Big Bang or evolution is to believe that the account of creation in Genesis is not unlike the story of the stork. The order, the time scale and the state of things in the beginning described by Genesis can no more be reconciled with the Big Bang and evolution than the birth of a child can be likened to a stork delivery service. When we turn the seven days of Genesis into ages, for example, we are accusing God of an inability to communicate clearly with His creatures. When Jesus left His disciples, perhaps He meant to promise that He would be with them always, to the end of the day: (Matt. 28:20). If God is not able to communicate to us a basic, factual account of creation then why should we not doubt the account of our salvation in Christ as well?*

*The devil's main tool is doubt. He wants us to doubt the promise of our salvation in Jesus. That includes doubting God's revelation about creation. But the Spirit spoke through the prophets about all things, including the beginning."*

### **My reply:**

- A. Assertion:** St-Onge equates Big Bang cosmology with evolution by stating, "To exchange the Scriptural account...for the Big Bang **and** the concept of evolution..." (boldface mine)

**Reply:** Since “evolution” is variously understood as 1) upward biological development by *unguided* processes (Darwinism), 2) upward biological development by *guided* processes (theistic evolution), and 3), lateral variation (micro-evolution), St-Onge’s failure to clarify his definition of “evolution” renders his linking of the BB with evolution incoherent.

1. The expansion and development of the material universe that follows after the Big Bang singularity shares NO conceptual relationship with biological evolution.
2. Since it is not unreasonable to postulate that God is the cause of the Big Bang, then every aspect of its subsequent unfolding could very well entail a process that is guided by His providential hand (note the secondary-causation implied in Gen. 1:11, 20, 24).
3. Many Christians, including the organization, *Reasons to Believe*, to which I belong, embrace the BB while rejecting both forms of macro-evolution (above).

**B. Assertion:** “[S]cience tests hypotheses...through observation and experimentation. Yet we **cannot observe the beginning of life or of the universe**...We can observe the effect of such an event on the present...but the best way of understanding [it] is to have an actual observer give us an account...[One must assume] conditions in the past that cannot be proved, since there is **no way of confirming the assumptions through observation.**” (boldface mine)

**Reply:** False! Although it is correct that no human being was *present* at the time of beginning of the universe, it is also true that current technology enables scientists to both observe and document the entire history of the expansion of the universe. What cosmologists *observe* through their instruments is that galaxies are 1) more widely separated and larger today than when the universe was younger, 2) the separation of galaxies from one another (expansion) has been slowing down,<sup>1</sup> and 3), the universe is cooling down. These observations are made possible because our vision of light from celestial bodies entails looking into the past. For example, on account of light-travel duration (186,000 miles per second), the light that both our eyes on Earth perceive, and instruments record, took 1.3 seconds to travel from the Moon, 8 minutes from the Sun, variously between 63 and 210 years from stars in the Big Dipper, 25,000 years from the core of our galaxy, and 2.4 million years from our closest galactic next-door neighbor, the Andromeda Galaxy. Taking now a gigantic leap, the *Extreme Hubble Deep Field* telescope produces images of galaxies emitting their light from the time they were first forming around 13 billion light-years ago. Tracing backward the trajectory pattern just noted, insofar as technology enables, the scientific capacity to witness *unfolding* of the cosmos<sup>2</sup> extends virtually all the way back to the ultimate beginning of the universe out of nothing in the Big Bang. Since it is this *observationally*-apprehended data that is broadly acknowledged by cosmologists to substantiate their confidence that the BB is

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<sup>1</sup> I write, “has been slowing down” (pluperfect) for the reason that the expansion of the universe is now observed to be accelerating. See: <http://www.reasons.org/podcasts/science-news-flash/astronomers-confirm-einstein-s-theory-of-relativity-and-accelerating-cosmic-expansion>.

<sup>2</sup> Job 9:8, Psalm 104:2, Isaiah 40:22; 42L25; 44:24; 45:12; 48:13; 51:13, Jeremiah 10:12; 51:15, Zechariah 12:1.

scientifically correct, it is utterly inexplicable for St-Onge to insist that “*there is no way of confirming [BB] assumptions through observation.*”

For this reason, those who neglect the legitimacy of scientific implications from the speed of light that the universe is 13+ billion years old are denying that the witness of nature is trustworthy on its face. Yet this posture contradicts the Apostle Paul’s declaration in Romans 1:18-20, which not only forbids suppressing that testimony, but affirms its data to be an aspect of God’s self-revelation before which all people will be accountable who reject Him. Insofar as Christians dismiss this evidence, they/we are both obscuring one indicator of God’s existence (Psalm 19:1f) and blunting one aspect of God’s law which serves to convict sinners (Romans 3:19-20).

**C. Assertion:** “*Assumptions must be made about conditions in the past that cannot be proved, since there is no way of confirming the assumptions through observation...it must be assumed that the way the universe seems to work now is how it worked in the past.*”

**Reply:** Data embodied in the light beams from celestial objects, irrespective of their source, identify the very elements that they embody, thereby indicating that the principles of physics and mathematics are identical everywhere and in all of history.

**D. Assertion:** “*The order, time scale, and state of things in the beginning described by Genesis can no more be reconciled with the Big Bang and evolution than the birth of a child can be likened to a stork delivery service.*”

**Reply:** To the contrary, it is the *young-earth* interpretation which cannot be reconciled with Gen. 1:1. For the reason that Gen. 1:1 is not a heading, but the initial portion of the creation narrative, it is a summary of God’s very first creative activity. Prior to Day 1 (v. 3f.), God already created (*bara*) the heavens and the earth, including the Sun and Moon. Indeed were it the case that 1:1 was a heading (as opposed to narrative), there would be no mention of the creation of either the heavens or the earth within the actual narrative of the entirety of Genesis ch. 1. I highlight the strong exegetical case for this perspective in two of my essays: 1) the broader and more general, “*The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look: Ten Exegetical Reasons the Creation Days of Genesis are Non-24-Hour,*” and 2) the more specific “*Genesis 1:1-2 Anticipates Big Bang Cosmology.*” These and related essays of mine can be found at my website referenced above.

Consequently it is an exegetical error for young-earth creationists to suggest that the “two lights” highlighted on Day 4 had no prior existence (the Hebrew word translated “made” in Day 4 is not *bara*, but the weaker word, *yehee*, meaning “to cause to appear”—notice the prior atmospheric conditions on the earth in 1:2). In addition, since 1:1-2 both precedes the first creation day, and gives no indication of duration, it is exegetically permissible to posit any finite extent of time entailed in the creation “*of the heavens and the earth,*” including 13.7 billion years. For example, even the late LCMS professor Dr. Paul Zimmermann has stated that if Genesis 1:2 “*lies outside the limits of*

*the first day and indicates a preliminary activity [which it does], then certainly **a great amount of time** could be included in this verse” (boldface mine).<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, 1:2 implies that the light which God commanded (1:3), was directed to shine onto an earth which was initially dark, watery, and without form (1:2). In other words, it was a work in progress.*

## **2. Stars, Galaxies, Light, by Paul Edmon, pp. 16-17.**

**The unedited primary text:**

***“How does the sun – perfectly situated to give us heat and light – bear witness to a caring Creator?***

*First, it is a demonstration of the First article gifts the Lord gives us, as Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount: ‘For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good’ (Matt. 5:45). The gift of the sun gives us many and great blessings that are for all men. It gives us enough light so we can see but not so much that we are damaged by harmful radiation. It gives us heat, but not too little or too much, so that our planet can have the wonders of water vapor, ice and water all on the same planet. The sun also gives us the marvels of the seasons where we get to see the ever-changing world of life around us, which is also beneficial for growing food and life in general. Need I go on about the awesomeness of eclipses (there is one this year on Aug. 21, 2017, that cut across most of the US) or sunrises and sunsets? The sheer beauty of the sun shows the wonders the Lord gives us, and this is only one star among many billions in the whole cosmos He created for us.*

***Is the earth unique, or it is simply one among many inhabitable planets?***

*This is one of the major questions in astronomy, planetary science, and astrobiology (yes, there is a field called astrobiology). The recent results of the Kepler space telescope went a long way in helping us answer this question. As it turns out, the more we look at this question the more we find that the earth is both common and unique at the same time. For example, it is and remains the only planet where life is, making it completely unique in that respect. However, we now know, thanks to planet-finding projects like Kepler, that there are planets of all shapes and sizes that live in the habitable zone around a star (the [area] around a star where you can have liquid water). We are starting to learn how common the earth really is in terms of its physical conditions but also beginning to show how many unique features God created the earth to have.*

***Does observational science prove the Big Bang theory, or does it leave the door open to an intelligent Designer?***

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<sup>3</sup> *Bible Science Newsletter*. (Caldwell, Idaho). Also Paul Zimmermann, ed., Raymond Surburg. “In the Beginning God Created.” *Darwin, Evolution, and Creation*. (Concordia, 1959), pp. 47, 161, 165.

*From a purely naturalistic scientific view, the Big Bang theory is the best, and frankly only, viable theory for the origins of the universe. It explains the age, the size, the composition and many other features we see in the world around us. If you assume that God does not exist or that Scripture is unreliable and science is your only standard, you pretty much have to accept the Big Bang theory as your model. It fits most of the evidence we see. Note, I said ‘most.’*

*But there are problems with the theory. Why is there something rather than nothing? Why does the universe happen to have physical laws that support life? Where did the energy come from? Why is the universe comprehensible to us? Why are there physical laws at all? All of these questions are most easily answered with God.*

*Sadly, for most standard scientific practice you have to provide a purely naturalistic reason, so that the divine cannot be invoked. From a strictly scientific approach, the Big Bang is the primary theory based purely on the observational evidence. It is not flawless, but many believe that if you can get the Big Bang started, it essentially produces the universe we see (frankly, it would not be a good scientific theory if it did not!).*

*However, this can’t rule out God’s existence or His creative work. Just because you can explain something without God does not mean God does not exist. It also doesn’t mean that the Lord cannot create the universe in six days roughly 6,000 years ago, as He says in Genesis, but make the world look old. (After all, Adam and Eve are full adults when they are created, not little babies! So were all the animals and plants.)*

*If the Lord can make living creatures as adults, certainly He in His almighty power can create a universe that appears to be 14 billion years old full of stars, galaxies, and light. As it stands, science does not, and frankly cannot, rule out the Creator.”*

My Reply:

**A. Assertion:** While Edmon correctly states that “*From a purely...scientific view, the Big Bang theory is the best, and frankly only viable theory for the origins of the universe,*” and that “*it fits most of the evidence we see,*”<sup>4</sup> he then qualifies his point by suggesting that this theory is naturalistic and consequently built on the assumption that God does not exist. It is this very supposition which leads him to list what he takes to be fatal challenges to the BB theory:

1. *“Why is there something rather than nothing?”*
2. *Why does the universe happen to have physical laws that support life?*
3. *Where did the energy that makes the universe come from?*

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<sup>4</sup> Basing its assertion that the universe had a beginning on the cosmological argument, The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) of the LCMS states, “[I]n light of the virtually unquestioned authority attributed to science by many today, scientific data might be especially persuasive in attempts to establish a natural knowledge of God... Before the twentieth century there was little reason to believe, on the basis of natural evidence alone that the universe came into existence.” Yet, they continue, “Advances in astronomy during the twentieth century... led to the discovery that the universe is not static, but is expanding. This and related discoveries thus suggested (by projecting backwards) the now generally accepted conclusion that the universe of space and time had a beginning in the finite past.” The Natural Knowledge of God: in Christian Confession & Christian Witness. ((The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 2013), pp. 58-9, incl. n. 215).

4. *Why is the universe comprehensible to us?*
5. *Why are there physical laws at all?"*

He then concludes by stating, *"All these questions are most easily answered with God."*

**Reply.** While Edmon's conclusion is obviously correct, it is utterly incoherent for him to then suggest from his five-fold premise that BB cosmology is therefore irreconcilable with Gen. 1:1. Atheists initially opposed the BB precisely for the reason that it implied a personal creator as its cause (see addendum, below). Today atheists habitually evade the *observable* evidence supporting the BB by instead resorting to abstract hypothetical theories which are simply untestable (e.g. the "multi-verse").<sup>5</sup> Far from the BB being atheistic, the scientific discovery of the universe having a beginning out of nothing demands an answer which both science and naturalism are incapable of supplying, that the cause of the universe is indeed, as Edmon notes, is "God" (Gen. 1:1).

Edmon's assertion here entails confusing the vital categorical distinction between causes and effects. Yet prior to adjudicating that question, the first scientific order of business is to specify the phenomenon that must be explained. On the basis of observable and measurable scientific evidence, are there indicators of an absolute beginning of all matter and energy, space, and time out of nothing, which scientists identify as the Big Bang? Once this reality is conceded (if it is), only then may the next question be posed, which is, is the BB a cause? Or is it an effect? Theists state that it is an effect resulting from a causer (God) who exists entirely outside of the natural order, who brought matter, energy, space, time, physical laws, rationality, personality, morality, design, beauty, etc. into existence. Nothing can't create something. Which hypothesis then best accounts for these things? Unguided events (naturalism)? Or *"God the Father Almighty, the Creator of heaven and earth"*? Obviously it is the latter.

**B. Assertion:** *"Just because you can explain something without God does not mean God does not exist."*

**Reply:** Contrary to Edmon's presumptive suggestion, there are aspects of the BB which are utterly unexplainable without God. Firstly, consider the ramifications which follow from Edmon's helpful list (pt. 2.A). Then reflect on the logical reality that prior to the BB there would have been neither matter, energy, space, nor time out of which scientific processes could even conceivably happen.

**C. Assertion:** *"[Science] cannot prove that God cannot create the universe in six days roughly 6,000 years ago, as He says in Genesis, but make the universe look old."*

**Reply:** Of course God could have created the universe in the time-frame that Edmon asserts. He could indeed have created everything in an instant. Yet these are entirely separate considerations from how God, who transcends (stands outside of) time, *chose* to create. Edmon insists that Genesis ch. 1 is unambiguously clear about the ways and means by which God created. Yet although Martin Luther embraced the young-earth

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<sup>5</sup>See my blog, *"Sean Carroll's Sleight of hand Evasion of the Creator,"* (August to Nov., 2014) at [offensivechristianity.blogspot.com](http://offensivechristianity.blogspot.com).

position, he nevertheless conceded on the very first page of his *Genesis Lectures* that the text of Genesis 1 is “*difficult*.” However, what is clearly suggested in Genesis is that during the six creation days, in some *unspecified* manner, God did His creative work through natural processes (1:11, 20, 24). Furthermore, the creation of “*the heavens and the earth*” (Gen. 1:1-2), which preceded the first creation day, could easily have entailed billions of years (see pt. I.D, above). Finally, Romans 1:18-20 (see I.B, above) warns readers against suggesting that the testimony of nature is untrustworthy. While Adam and Eve were obviously made as “full adults,” it does not follow that we are to assume the creation of nature *as a whole* happened in the same manner. God, speaking through the Apostle Paul, summons people to draw our conclusions about the cause and maker of nature; not by second-guessing nature’s specifics, but by studying it for what it tells us on its face about both God’s existence and His “*eternal power and deity*.”

**D. Assertion:** In his first paragraph, Edmon identifies just a few aspects of scientific data which indicate that God’s providential oversight leads to Earth being a habitable planet.

**Reply:** Edmon’s correct appeal to scientific data rests on the assumption that scientific evidence is trustworthy on its very face. Yet that is precisely what he denies near the end of his article. On this count he employs a double-standard by cherry-picking his “science” on the basis of a non-biblical presumption that the universe must be young. It is this ploy which undermines our apologetics by suggesting that evidence can be chosen selectively.

Addendum

### Have Atheists and the Big Bang been Happy Bed-Fellows?

“The Big Bang” (BB) is the name atheist astrophysicist Fred Hoyle derisively gave to the 20<sup>th</sup> century scientific conclusion that the universe had an absolute beginning out of nothing.<sup>6</sup> He was echoing the disgust of his fellow atheists that implications from this conclusion smacked of the biblical doctrine of creation.<sup>7</sup> While Albert Einstein too initially rejected the BB for the same reason, he both relented of that posture and renounced his atheism for the reason that he became persuaded that the evidence in its favor is inescapable.<sup>8</sup> For these reasons alone it is incorrect for young-earth creationists to call the BB an atheistic theory. Despite the antipathy the two authors referenced above hold with respect to the BB, it does NOT imply atheism, but to the contrary stands as the **strongest scientific evidence** that points to the existence of the God of the Bible (“*The heavens declare the glory of God*” – Psalm 19:1).

Pastor Gary Jensen  
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<sup>6</sup> <http://articles.latimes.com/2001/aug/23/local/me-37483>

<sup>7</sup> Fred Hoyle. *Astronomy: A History of Man’s Investigation of the Universe*. (Crescent Books, 1962), p.304.

<sup>8</sup> Walter Isaacson. *Einstein: His Life and His Universe*. (Simon & Schuster, 2007), pp. 353-356; 383-393.