

Can Cosmology and Theology Coexist in Harmony?

Modern science and ancient Scripture are often portrayed as opposing voices in the search for truth. Cosmology seeks to understand the origin and structure of the universe through observation and theory, while theology reflects on divine purpose and ultimate meaning. Yet, when carefully examined, these two disciplines need not conflict. Instead, they can be seen as complementary perspectives describing the same reality from different vantage points.

A Universe with a Beginning

The Standard Cosmological Model, supported by multiple lines of evidence including the expansion of the universe, the cosmic radiation background, and the implications of thermodynamics, affirms that the universe had a beginning. Time, space, and matter all came into existence at a finite point in the past. This conclusion aligns closely with the opening declaration of Scripture, which affirms that the universe is not eternal but originated at a definite moment.

Colossians 1:16-17

For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

2 Timothy 1:9

...who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity...

Creation from Nothing

Modern cosmology indicates that the universe emerged from a state in which no physical reality existed. This concept, often described as creation from nothing, arises naturally from current scientific understanding. The Bible expresses a similar idea, describing the universe as brought into existence by divine command, rather than formed from preexisting material.

Genesis 1:1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Psalm 148:5

Let them praise the name of the Lord, for He commanded and they were created.

Isaiah 40:26

Lift up your eyes on high and see who has created these stars, the One who leads forth their host by number, He calls them all by name; Because of the greatness of His might and the strength of His power, not one of them is missing.

Hebrews 11:3

By faith we understand that the worlds were prepared by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible.

A Cause Beyond Space and Time

If the universe began to exist, it must have a cause. Since time, space, and matter began with the universe, this cause must transcend all three. It must be beyond time, beyond space, and immaterial. Cosmology points toward such a cause by necessity, while theology identifies this cause as God. Rather than conflicting, cosmology raises the very question theology answers.

John 1:3

All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.

Luke 24:36-43

While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst and said to them, "Peace be to you." But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. While they still [b]could not believe it because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?" They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate it before them.

John 20:26-28

After eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, "Peace be with you." Then He said to Thomas, "Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing." Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"

John 6:46

Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father.

The Beginning of Time

Scientific models of the early universe imply that time itself began with the universe. This concept is consistent with theological claims that speak of a reality that exists prior to time. Both disciplines affirm that time is not eternal but part of the created order.

1 Corinthians 2:7

No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

An Expanding Universe

Astronomical observations confirm that the universe is expanding. Galaxies are moving away from one another, indicating a dynamic and evolving cosmos. Ancient Biblical language describing the heavens as being stretched out resonates with this modern discovery.

Isaiah 45:12

"It is I who made the earth, and created man upon it. I stretched out the heavens with My hands and I ordained all their host."

Job 9:8

Who alone stretches out the heavens and tramples down the waves of the sea...

Jeremiah 10:12

It is He who made the earth by His power, who established the world by His wisdom; and by His understanding He has stretched out the heavens.

Entropy and the Aging Universe

The Second Law of Thermodynamics indicates that the universe is gradually moving toward disorder and energy dissipation. It is not static or eternal but aging. Scriptural descriptions of the universe wearing out over time reflect this same principle.

Psalm 102:25-26

Of old You founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. Even they will perish, but You endure; and all of them will wear out like a garment; like clothing You will change them and they will be changed.

A Universe Fine-Tuned for Life

Modern science has revealed that the universe appears finely tuned for life. Small changes in physical constants would render life impossible. Theological perspectives describe the universe as intentionally structured to sustain life, suggesting purpose rather than randomness.

Nehemiah 9:6

You alone are the Lord. You have made the heavens, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them and the heavenly host bows down before You.

Harmony Rather Than Conflict

While many ancient cosmologies fail to align with modern scientific discoveries, the Biblical worldview remains consistent with key features of the universe. This does not mean Scripture functions as a scientific textbook, but rather that it reflects the fundamental nature of reality. Cosmology explains how the universe behaves, while theology addresses why it exists. These are complementary, not competing explanations.

Conclusion

Cosmology and theology can coexist in harmony. Modern cosmology points to a universe with a beginning, governed by laws, and finely tuned for life. Theology provides a coherent explanation for these observations, grounding them in the existence of a purposeful, transcendent Creator. Together, they offer a deeper and more complete understanding of the universe, uniting scientific discovery with spiritual meaning.