

# Why Not Atheism or Creationism?

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## **Why I'm not an atheist**

Some of the best people are atheist. I know two folks with whom I have talked about my faith in God, who both declare, "I have no need for God." One is a woman now in her 80's who is one of the kindest, caring people I know. Another is a retired plant biologist who, through his innovative life's work has done much good. His work has contributed to knowledge of genetics of plants and he personally has contributed through his work to the education of thousands of children all over the country and probably in other countries as well. We just had a recent conversation about faith and science. He is of the mind that our (Homo sapiens) evolution and the process of natural selection have selected for humans to create gods to worship along with religions. It gives us an evolutionary advantage. Hence he explains completely my faith in God. Science is sufficient for him to explain all aspects of life and I would add that he is certain there is not a spiritual dimension.

Now it can be said that we agree entirely on the scientific evidence for the evolution of the universe and the evolution of life. Further, while I probably know more about the science of cosmology, he certainly knows more about genetics a cornerstone of the theory of evolution.

So why am I not an atheist? To make matters worse why do I believe that the Bible is the Word of God (and I would add without exception to any part)?

The short answer is I have Faith. This faith came by hearing the Word of God. This Faith was started in me as young child when God convicted me of my need to be saved and the Word of God as I was taught it told me forgiveness was a free gift through Jesus Christ. I remember how relieved and happy I was when this happened. (So far my atheist friend can say guilt is part of evolutionary explanation)

Next my new faith leads to trusting in the God of the Bible. From trust came obeying, first in small ways and then as I matured in greater measure. Now I look back on my life and realize that in the measure that I trusted and obeyed, God opened the store of blessings always exceeding my expectations. As my faith grew so did the knowledge and recognition of God in my life and in the world. Now I cannot deny this relationship. It is as real as anything else in my daily experience.

Thus I am not an atheist because I am certain that the God of the Bible is good, true and trustworthy.

## **Why I'm not a Creationist**

I attend a church where the Pastor has been an amazing blessing to me personally. His preaching and calls to confession and renewal in Jesus Christ have changed my life in the last six months. I thank God for his Faith and ministry. This pastor has said his view of creation is consistent with the Creationist view and although I'm not certain, he may hold the view that the world and all that is in it was made in six 24 our days about 10,000 years ago. He mentioned the Institute for Creation Research that uses the scientific method to support this view. There are many real scientists who also support this view.

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It is clear to me that the God of the Bible is using this dear Pastor to win souls for Jesus Christ, including renewing my relationship with God.

So why am I not a Creationist, after all I confess that the Bible is the Word of God without exception to any part of the Bible.

The answer lies in my scientific training and experience in the world of scientific discovery. Creation science uses the same scientific evidence that I use to form a view of the origin of the universe and life. There is very little we would disagree on in terms of what makes up the natural world as we observe it today and the forces and interactions that govern that world. So where do we disagree? To answer that question, I quote from the New Answers Book 1\* written in defense of a literal six day interpretation of the Genesis creation story. Specifically I quote from a chapter “Does Distant Starlight Prove the Universe is Old?” by Jason Lisle a PhD Astrophysicist. I am sure Dr Lisle and I would agree on the science of astrophysics. He writes, “Critics of biblical creation sometimes use distant starlight as an argument against a young universe.” He goes on to discuss problems with creationist arguments that would require that either the universe is not as large as it appears or that God created it with the light on its way from the great distances. Regarding the first argument he states “the techniques that astronomers use to measure cosmic distances are generally logical and scientifically sound.” Note that this includes observations of distances that range from a few light years to over 10 billion light-years. He accepts that the universe is huge, filled with distance galaxies. He comments on the second argument “the only problem with assuming that light was created in-transit is that we see things happening in space. For example we see stars change brightness and move. Sometimes we see stars explode. We see these things as light reaches us.” “But if God created the light beams already on their way, then that means that none of the events that we see in space (beyond a distance of 6000 light-years) actually happened.” He goes on to say and I would agree “It seems uncharacteristic of God to make an illusion like this.” He would offer a theory of variable light speed and variable time to reconcile his belief with a six day creation and young earth. His arguments are indeed scientific although they are outside the standard view held by most scientists. I accept the standard view held by the great majority of scientists. I’m not claiming that the majority is always right but rather I rely on the fact that the consensus view is continually tested for its logical consequences and consistency with the evidence.

I would ask why my faith in the God of the Bible and the centrality of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ to all of time and space (the Universe) requires that I accept the literal interpretation of the Genesis creation story.

Now Dr. Lisle goes on to challenge those scientific arguments consistent with the straight forward standard cosmological model of the history and structure of the Universe, often referred to as the big bang theory. I note that his arguments are couched in identifying assumptions in this theory that can be questioned and therefore he would say undermine the entire theory. I would agree with his points on underlying assumptions but disagree that it undermines the entire theory. Again the theory is robust and explains many observations even though it has some loose threads. In my view the Creationist arguments are Ad hoc and have not been completely tested for logical consistency with observation. An underlying theme for creationists is that those that hold to the standard “big bang” theory may be

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seeking answers in which supernatural causes are not allowed (naturalism) or even desired (bias). They would argue that these scientists are therefore blind to the model that would lead to verification of a literal six day creation.

I have had the privilege of knowing many scientists including award winning scientists who have laid the foundations in nuclear science, elementary particle physics and astrophysics that collectively support the straight forward standard cosmological model. It is my experience that each was seeking to understand small corners of the natural world and not to create or support any particular world view or creation view. So I would ask, can God use non believers as well as believers to reveal the workings of his creation and can this cumulative and independent scientific knowledge lead to a logical standard theory of the history of the universe and life? I would say yes.

So I do not accept the arguments of creation science but do accept the standard theories of the greater scientific community. However, I would add that my acceptance is never without skepticism an essential attribute of all good scientists.

Finally, understanding any scientific theory requires that you know many science concepts and principles as well as how technology works and that you can, using this knowledge, connect the evidence with the conclusions. Most people do not have this extensive knowledge and must rely on expert opinion. Further, most of the general public has limited understanding of the body of knowledge of science and the process of hypothesis and testing. This includes the properties of light and its interaction with matter central to experimental evidence for the history of the universe. For example the fact that astronomers and astrophysicists use the word light to mean all forms of electromagnetic radiation is lost on most who think only of visible light and are confused about the nature of anything else (e.g. radio waves, microwaves, and x-rays).

So I write this to testify as one Christian who does understand the standard theories of the evolution of the universe and the origin of life, and knows much of the evidence for these theories. I therefore accept these theories as the best scientific explanations and at the same time hold to my faith in the God of the Bible as Good, True and Trustworthy.

Rollie Otto, December 2010

This article can be downloaded from, <http://www.godsoutrageousuniverse.org/>

\*Lisle, Jason, (2006) Does Distant Starlight Prove the Universe is Old?, In Ken Ham (Eds.), *The New Answers Book 1: Over 25 Questions on Creation/Evolution and the Bible* (Fourteenth Edition, 2010, pp. 245-254). Green Forest, AZ: Master Books.