

GENESIS ACCEPTED



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Am Buchaille (Staffa)

What is it saying?

Turn on your television sets and find a natural history programme, one such as 'Coast', and it's not long before you are being bombarded with long age definitions of how old the rocks are and how they evolved. Often they are superb productions but, reflectively or unreflectively, they buy in to the belief that the Earth is thousands of millions (or billions, if you are American) of years old. Whatever else is questioned, this 'fact' never is. Once you do this, you interpret the scene before you from this perspective and make, or try to make, everything fit into that given framework.

Those of us who believe that the Earth is somewhere in the region of just over 6,000-years-old do exactly the same, of course, but we don't get the help of massive television production teams and learned experts to help, so we have to go out on a limb and do it for ourselves. This is both challenging and exciting but it can also be frustrating and possibly somewhat controversial, especially if we get it wrong because of something we were unaware of as being in the mix. (For example, in the case we are going to look at in this article, I only got one hour actually on the isle of Staffa to take my photographs and make any on-the-spot assessments concerning interpretation. Thereafter it has had to be analysis from the photos alone.)

For both the Old Earth believers and the Young Earth believers the data is exactly the same and is not in dispute. It's what they each make of it and how they interpret it where the differences lie - and these differences can be massive, as we know. Both too have an agenda. Reflective Old Earthers are usually

either agnostic or atheistic when it comes to questions about God, or are Theistic Evolutionists, i.e. they believe that the scientists have got it right and it was by slow evolutionary processes that we



Archbishop James Ussher
(c 1654 portrait after
Sir Peter Levy.)
National Portrait Gallery

came to be here on our planet, which has been fashioned astonishingly slowly over the millennia, but that God actually, somehow, guided and controlled these processes for His own purposes.

Young Earthers are exclusively biblical Creationists who accept that the Bible is telling historical, and literal, truth in the early chapters of Genesis, so the Earth must only be close to 6,000-years-old, as archbishop James Ussher (1581-1656) once famously calculated, much to the sneering derision of today's intelligentia. So let us now move on to an interesting case study from the Isle of Staffa (Scotland).

The Isle of Staffa

Staffa is a small island just over six miles west of the island of Mull, and just under six miles north-east of the isle of Iona - famous for its associations with the missionary activities of Columba, who built an abbey there (563AD), and as the burial place for several Scottish kings including Macbeth, Duncan and Malcolm (Macbeth did not murder Duncan as suggested in the 'Scottish Play' by Shakespeare). It is in Argyll and Bute in the In-



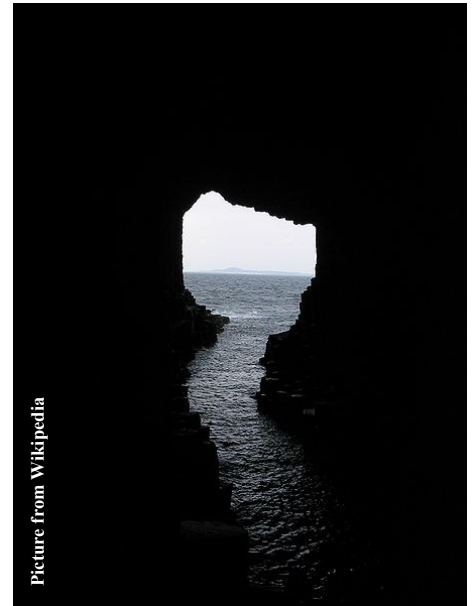
Entrance to Fingal's Cave (close-up)

ner Hebrides and is best accessed through the mainland port of Oban. It is a little over half-a-mile long by about a quarter-of-a-mile wide, has nobody living on it and no natural landing place. There is a difficult landing spot near the little pyramid on its eastern side called 'Am Buchaille' (see picture over) but disembarking is difficult and can only be achieved in very calm weather. (I have visited Staffa twice and was privileged to land on both occasions!)

Staffa has two claims to fame: Fingal's Cave and its columnar layer of basalt rock which is a very distinctive geological formation. It is the columnar layer, of course, which is to be the subject of a simple analysis in this article.

Fingal's Cave

This is probably the most famous cave in the British Isles. It's an impressive site and extends over 200ft in depth and is over



Picture from Wikipedia

Fingal's Cave looking out towards Iona

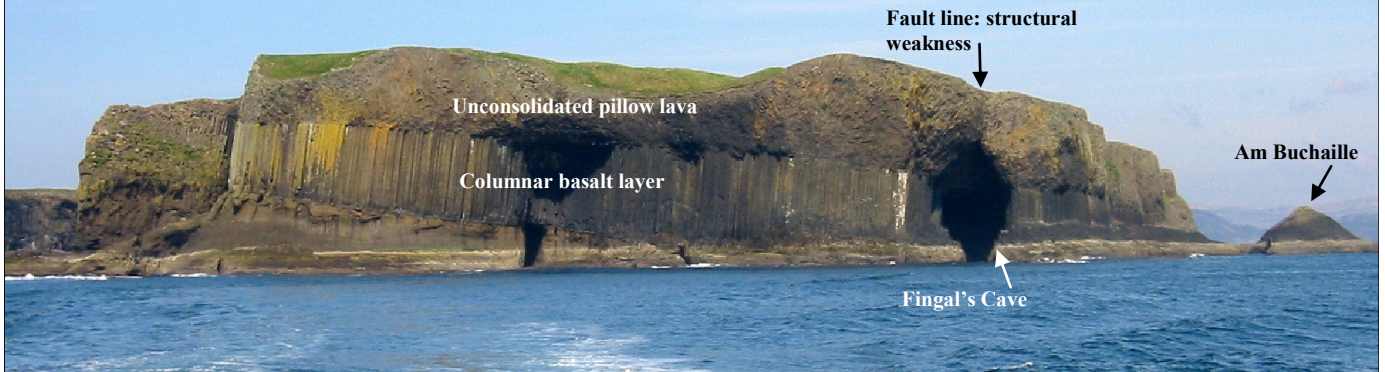
70ft high (it is difficult to get absolutely accurate figures as they vary according to the authority being consulted). The basalt columns, which are the main feature of the cave's structure, give it an impressive grandeur, which is almost cathedral-like, and an air of mystery, especially when it is associated in legend with the giant Finn McCool, who supposedly built Giant's Causeway in Northern Ireland as a pathway across to Scotland but who ripped it up to prevent his enemy, Benandonnor, from crossing it and getting to him. The columnar basalt rock formation of Staffa most certainly links across to Antrim and the Giant's Causeway.

The water sluicing around in the Cave creates wonderful echoing sounds which inspired many people to wax lyrical about it. Felix Mendelssohn, who visited it in 1829 was inspired to write his Fingal's Cave Overture in its honour. The Cave, of course, was formed by water action eroding along a line of weakness which is quite visible, and is picked out on the photograph at the top of page 2. There are several such fault lines; the water channel between the main island and Am Buchaille has also been carved out along one of them.

How Staffa was formed

Staffa is made entirely of volcanic rock, so it is very uncomplicated on that score. The magma of which it is formed is mainly basalt, which is what geologists call a basic magma. Most non-geologists call it lava, not magma, (magma is lava plus gases). So to all intents and purposes the term 'lava' will suffice. A basic lava is runny, or non-viscous, so instead of building up into a nice, classically-shaped volcanic cone around a central vent, as do the acid lavas, these basic lavas spill out relatively evenly over the

The Isle of Staffa



surrounding countryside and end up forming lava plateaux. Some of these plateaux are enormous, for example the Deccan Plateau of India or the Columbia-Snake Plateau of the USA. Usually these lavas pour out of a fissure along a vast fault or crack in the surface, as opposed to a pipe in a more typical, archetypal volcano. Consequently it is almost impossible to tell exactly where the extrusion point is, but that doesn't matter for our purposes. The lava plateau, of which Staffa is an outpost, reaches out somehow from the Giant's Causeway in County Antrim, Northern Ireland, which is about 80 miles away. The same columnar basaltic formation makes up the Causeway, as we can see in the picture below.



Giant's Causeway, Co Antrim, (NI)

The basaltic columns

Look at the pictures of Staffa and you will note that there appears to be three different layers: the basement rock on which the columns sit, the columns themselves and a top layer which is very poorly structured, indeed its structure is not to be structured! The lower layer is tuff, an earlier volcanic deposit, and the top layer is an unstructured, crystalline basalt - it's the same rock as forms the columns but it didn't form any. Why?

The columns are the product of slow

cooling at depth and the top layer was cooled at speed, giving it no time to form columns. So the top layer, which would have been massively thicker at one time, erupted out of a fissure and spread over the then existing landscape very quickly. Its upper-most parts cooled quickly but the underneath parts were able to remain in a plastic state for longer and thus cooled much slower. Under these conditions the crystals tend to consolidate around reasonably equi-spaced centres, which drew them immediately towards these centres, giving a honeycomb appearance when exposed. The columns are clearly defined by cracks at their boundaries and the favoured number of sides is six - but this is not an absolute. There's a lot of physics to explain all of this which need not concern us here. After a long time cooling down and forming, subsequent erosion of the surface reveals these natural hexagonal columns. Occasionally they are quite spectacular, becoming of interest to tourists and geologists, as they do both at Staffa and Giant's Causeway.

The general picture

Looking at the large picture at the top of the page we see a classic set up of columnar basalts, dipping very gently eastwards but essentially upright. Their instant message is that here we had a fissure eruption of basic basalt lavas which spread out over the landscape, forming a low-lying



Hexagonal columns at Fingal's Cave

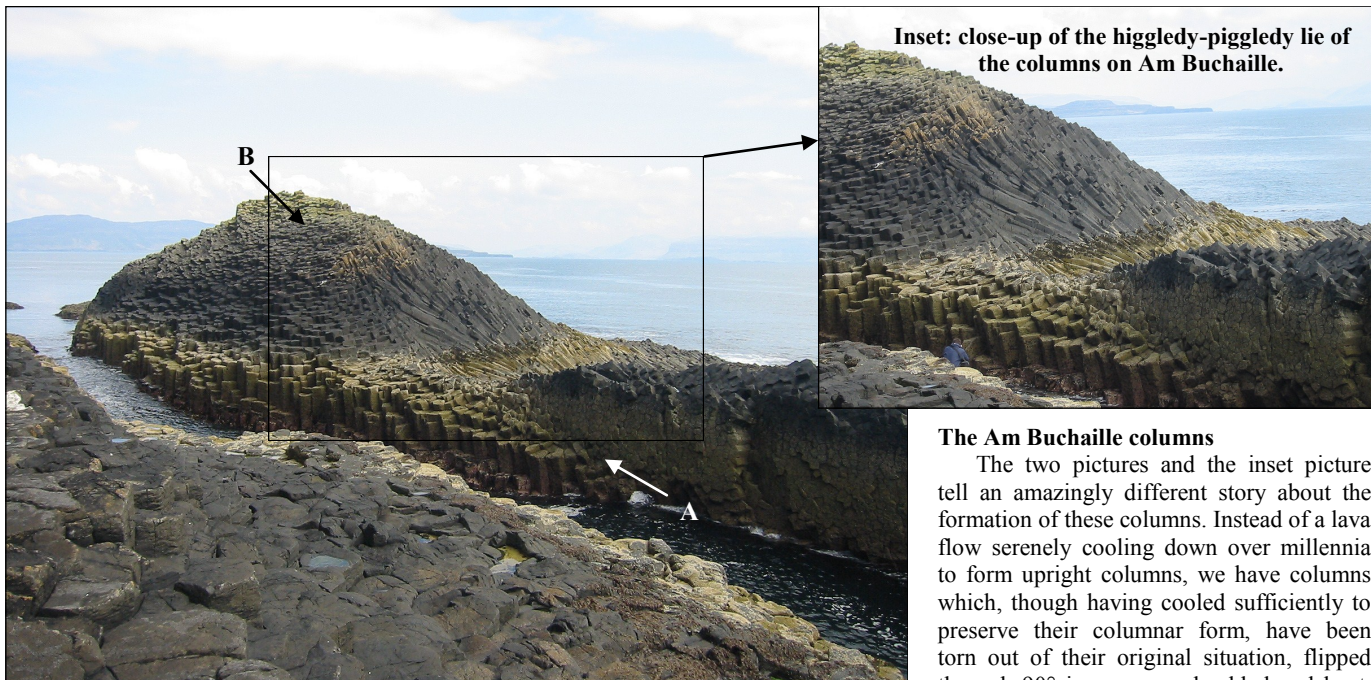
lava plateau which in due course cooled at depth thus forming the columnar layer. Geologists tell us that this occurred in fairly recent geological times but before the Ice Ages. It presents a consistent picture of slow processes creeping gently across the pages of time - aeons of time - once the causes of the original eruption, which had to be sudden and catastrophic, had died down. And looking at the columns from the sea off the east coast, as in the picture below, they look like secure sentinels, guardsmen and protectors of Fingal's Cave - the entrance of which lies to the south on the left of the picture. Thus most would think and thus I thought when first I saw it, apart from the evolutionary time-frame into which geologists want to set these events.



Columns like guardsmen on the east side

Enter Am Buchaille

I mentioned earlier that I was privileged to land on both of my visits to Staffa. The first time was in 1970, long before the invention of the digital camera. The second was in 2004 and my photos all date from that visit. (The sharp-eyed amongst you will notice that the sky in the photo at the top of this page is a beautiful blue but the others are the off-white of a typical grey day in Britain. It was the same day, in fact. The clouds disappeared as if by magic as we were leaving.) As you can see on the blue-skied picture above, there is a distinct tide-line and we were obviously there at low tide. At high tide the pyramid island of Am Buchaille is barely exposed and is quite unremarkable. In 1970 I saw nothing of it to capture my attention but in 2004, at low tide,



Inset: close-up of the higgledy-piggledy lie of the columns on Am Buchaille.

Am Bucaille showing the narrow channel separating it from Staffa even at low tide

The Am Buchaille columns

The two pictures and the inset picture tell an amazingly different story about the formation of these columns. Instead of a lava flow serenely cooling down over millennia to form upright columns, we have columns which, though having cooled sufficiently to preserve their columnar form, have been torn out of their original situation, flipped through 90° in one area, buckled and bent. The presence of several fault lines too indicates violence and swift catastrophe in their past. Far from being a beacon for the uniformitarian, slow evolutionary scenario, this little island, hidden by the waves at high tide, reveals an enigma which requires a very different explanation for the formation of Staffa, and it's one which can be accommodated comfortably within a biblical time scale and a catastrophic explanation.

What do the pictures tell us?

Looking at the photographs above I am struck by the similarities with forests after a devastating hurricane or a catastrophic blast from the skies such as occurred in Tunguska, Siberia, in 1908, or the volcanic eruption of Mount St Helens in Washington State, USA, in 1980. Logs became piled up, as trees were flattened and, though not nearly as consolidated as these basalt columns are, nevertheless there are striking resemblances. Some lie prone in a horizontal form, as in the picture at the bottom of the page, while others pile up as if they have been jammed into a solid wall. However, nowhere do they bend into either a synclinal (trough-like) structure (as seen on photo above left), or an anticlinal arch (not spotted on Staffa). A photograph of the devastated forest in Tunguska, taken some 20 years after the event took place, can be seen at the top of page 4. None of these pictures show rocks which have been formed thus over countless

I was actually far more interested in this little island because it is an enigma - besides which I'd already seen Fingal's Cave, though I did go down to it again for the sake of my photographs.

We've noted the fault line of weakness along which Fingal's Cave is being eroded. The water seeks out the weakest points and attacks them. It's not the only line of weakness and another runs parallel to it between Am Buchaille and the main island. A complete channel has been eroded between the two (see picture above) and even at low water tidal surges rush up it. Though the channel is not wide and could easily be jumped by the fairly fit, these surges would make you think twice about attempting it. I didn't!

my tracks is the way the columns lie on it. If you examine the photo above carefully, you will see a fault line running from A to B. To the left, or west, side the columns are upright, as they are under my feet on the main island of Staffa. On the right, or east, side, however, they are all lying at amazing angles. Rather than me describing the situation verbally, I am going to let a series of pictures do it for me below.

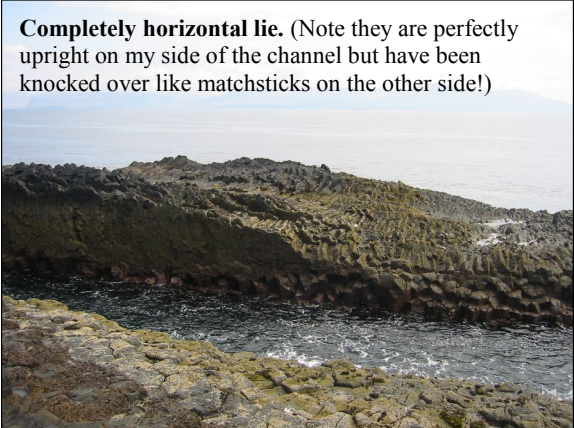


Tidal surge up the channel at low water

It could well be that Am Buchaille is actually what geologists call a stump, having once been a cave attached to the main island which eroded through into an arch, like Durdle Door in Dorset, which is Britain's most famous arch. In time the linking arch erodes and collapses, leaving a stack, and then the stack erodes down to a stump. I think Am Buchaille is at the end of this process and is now a stump. Whatever it is is only of passing interest to us because what stopped me in



Synclinal trough and steeply inclined pile



Completely horizontal lie. (Note they are perfectly upright on my side of the channel but have been knocked over like matchsticks on the other side!)



Picture from Wikipedia

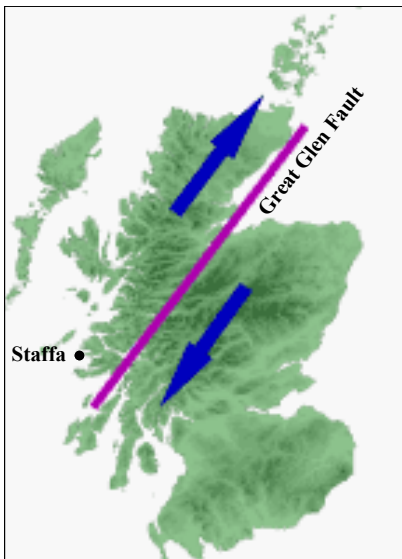
Devastation in Tunguska

millennia. They were formed swiftly and catastrophically in days, not in aeons of time.

In *Genesis Accepted* Number 19 we noted that rocks do bend but that they can't do so once they are set solid. They have to be in a plastic state or they will simply fracture. Those bent into a synclinal trough must have cooled rapidly but not completely before being bent. We only assume such things take almost countless periods of time because we have been told that they do. Massive rock structures can be formed catastrophically very quickly, as the Mount St Helens volcanic eruption demonstrated when a 200ft deep canyon was formed in a few days in 1980.

Catastrophic scenario

So what have we here? Clearly the Staffa formation of the west was achieved very differently from that of the Am Buchaille formation to the east. The presence of fault lines on Staffa indicate that there was strong pressure tearing at the rocks, which were essentially solid, and therefore well cooled, by the time it happened. They cracked but did not bend significantly. To the east, however, the movement sheared the rocks and the warmer, more plastic rocks, were bent and turned through many degrees of orientation, including 90° from vertical to horizontal. They had sufficient cohesive strength to retain their basic hexagonal structure but were plastic enough to warp and bend instead of simply shearing and moving.



Picture from Wikipedia

The Great Glen Fault

The Great Glen Fault is one of the most significant geological features of the highlands of Scotland. It runs northeast to southwest across the country and is like a gash on the face of the countryside because it was a line of weakness, which the ice etched into the surface by eroding along it. Today its most famous and obvious evidence is Loch Ness. The Caledonian Canal follows it from Inverness down to Loch Linnhe and Fort William, but it actually extends across into Northern Ireland.

It is a transverse, or slip, fault. By that we mean it moves horizontally not vertically and is akin to the famous San Andreas Fault in California, USA. However, in its day, it was every bit as big as its North American counterpart. It has a displacement of 67 miles. By that we mean that if you want to match up the rocks on both sides you have to travel 67 miles to do so. That represents massive movements.

Geologists tell us that it was actively moving in each of the three major periods of mountain building: the Caledonian, Hercynian and Alpine. They have them separated by hundreds of millions of years. We have them as a catastrophic outcome of the Flood, but recognising three phases fits our Staffa study well. Though Staffa is not directly on the line of the fault, the amazing movements which created it affected vast areas in this part of the country, including splitting the ground apart thereby allowing lavas to spill on to the surface and create basaltic plateaux such as we recognize and study here.

The Great Glen and Staffa

It would appear therefore that the upheavals which opened up the earth to allow vast quantities of magma (lava + gases) to spill over the surface, moved the land swiftly along the fault line of the Great Glen and created Staffa and the Antrim Plateau. It was not just one continuous movement but came in possibly three phases during the year of the Flood. Thus the main island outpouring represents one phase, but the Am Buchaille followed on at a slightly later date but with a more violent outpouring than the initial phase, hence the tortuous twisting and bending of the columns on Am Buchaille.



Loch Ness in the Great Glen

It would need a significant amount of field study to produce an accurate estimate of the sequence of events from a Creationist/Catastrophist point of view, and not just a relatively cursory assessment from a few photographs hastily gleaned from a one-hour, unplanned trip to Staffa. The trip was not unplanned but studying this problem most definitely was. I had no idea at all this situation even existed let alone that it was worth studying. Fortunately I recognized that something exciting was going on here so I did my best in the time available but wished I'd had longer.

Conclusion

Whatever the final verdict is on Staffa and Am Buchaille it cannot conclude that these rocks demonstrate millions of years of unending serenity. The Staffa rocks could lull you into believing this to be the case but the juxtaposition of the tortured rocks of Am Buchaille are telling an entirely different story. You won't read it anywhere in the literature since orthodox geologists are locked into their millions of years scenario. I'm not aware of any Creationist analysis of this phenomenon so this article is a pioneer on this score at least.

Is it right? Maybe I'll never know but a couple of things are well worth pointing out to encourage us. There is plenty of evidence of violent catastrophe having fashioned the Earth's surface and we can speculate with boldness as we try to find and fit the evidence into a biblical framework. The Flood was the major catastrophic event which fashioned the surface of the Earth but we believe there were other, lesser ones too. As Bible-believers we need have no fear since looking again at the landscape through biblical eyes will open up the wonderful world of God's creation and handiwork as we fight to reverse the faith-destroying interpretations of the data that we see in every magazine and television presentation.

The evidence is on our side.

The Priesthood of Melchizedek

I remember being in a history lesson in school at about the age of 14 and we were discussing some historical topic which reflected on an interpretation, or more accurately a misinterpretation, of the Bible. Now, I can't remember what it was exactly but it could well have been one of the three easiest to identify: the notion of the Divine Right of Kings - which ultimately cost Charles I his head - Slavery, or Henry VIII and all the biblical nonsense he got tangled up in, including his failure to produce a son and heir on the grounds that he had married



Photo from Wikipedia

Henry VIII

the wife of his dead brother, Arthur, when he married Catherine of Aragon. If you don't know what that was about, there is a verse in Leviticus 20:21 which reads: *'If a man takes his brother's wife, it is impurity. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness; they shall be childless.'* It doesn't fit Henry's situation at all - Catherine was far from childless but failed to produce a living male heir for Henry. However, it was the best verse he could find to legitimize his claims, so he twisted this scripture and the situation he was in, to get their marriage annulled. And that cost Sir Thomas More his head, so misapplying the Bible could have very serious consequences in the past. Anyway, whichever one it was I made the comment that the Bible doesn't teach that. My teacher looked at me and said: 'Fisher, you can make the Bible teach anything you like if you want to.' My spirited reply was, 'Not if you interpret it correctly.' He came back at me with, 'And who is to say what is correct interpretation? How, for ex-

ample, do you interpret the Book of Revelation correctly?' I was 14. I stood no chance against an onslaught like that but I'd made my point, which I still believe was correct.

Religious dispensations

One of the great contributions our 19th century forefathers made to our understanding of the Bible was to recognize that there are three dispensations revealed in it. Each had different covenants which governed how worship was to be conducted and access to God thereby obtained, including especially the forgiveness of sins. The first was the **Patriarchal Age** which ran from Adam to Moses but flowered from Noah to Moses. The second was the **Mosaic Age**, which obviously ran from Moses to Christ. Finally we have the **Christian Age** which runs from Christ, or the Cross, to the end of time.

Dispensational problems

Many of the problems presented in history, and possibly in some of our personal decisions too even today where reference is made to the Bible for justification, are down to a failure to recognize these three Ages, and that the details in an earlier one were not necessarily carried over into the succeeding one. This is especially true of the transition from the Mosaic into the Christian Ages. By having a high view of the authority of the Bible and its primacy in religious matters, and then by not allaying it to an understanding that Jesus nailed the religious practices and regulations of the Mosaic Law to the Cross (Col. 2:14) - thereby cancelling them - religious authorities developed a mishmash mixture of Old Testament and New Testament ideas.

Some results

Consequently in many denominations even today we find a sacred altar, though we no longer need one for sacrifices, and a separate priesthood where the priest has to dress up in fancy robes as a sign of his authority, and through whom believers are supposed to go for forgiveness. Some even add at least another spiritual layer between the priest and Christ, and possibly even two layers. These are saints who carry our petitions to Jesus for us, and His mother, Mary, who seems to be on her own layer at Christ's right hand, significantly higher and closer to our Lord even than the saints. This is pure Old Testament in its basic concepts, though the saints and Mary layers have no place in the Old Covenant, of course, let alone in the New. The New Testament tells us that we are a 'royal priesthood' (1 Peter 2:9) and therefore now don't require any human being to intercede for us and carry our petitions to the Father through Christ, since we can do it directly ourselves. And if we stumble and fumble

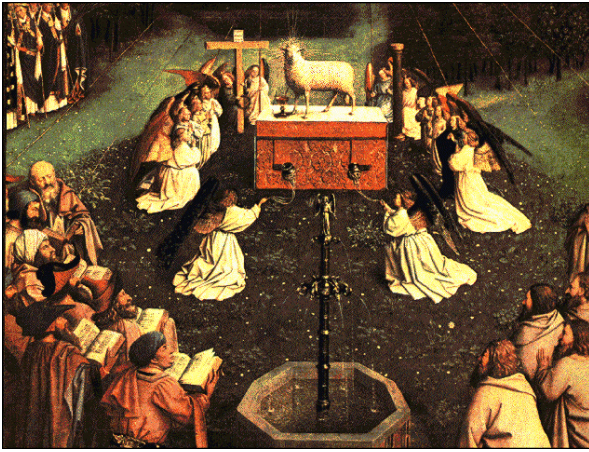
around, we have the Holy Spirit there to guide, help and even unravel our feeble fumbings and groanings so what we really intended to ask the Lord, but stumbled over articulating clearly, is made clear for us to the Lord by the Holy Spirit. Paul tells us this in Romans: *'...the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. And he who searches hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.'* (Ro 8:26-27). With the Holy Spirit doing this for us, who needs the intervention of saints and priests? Besides which we also learn that *'there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all,...'* (1 Tim. 2:5-6), so to insert other mediators between us and the Father is unnecessary at best and downright blasphemy at worst, since it denies the effectiveness of the work of the Saviour.

Carefully planned messages

I am sure we can all recognize some of these attitudes and practices. However, this is not the occasion to go on a spree of declaring the denominations to be wrong and us to be right, but rather to look at a surprising revelation we may not have realised was there, or what its implication might be. For various reasons I have been looking into the Book of Hebrews, and recently I preached on some ideas based around the Holy of Holies and its similarity to the tomb of Jesus. We asked the question, 'Why did Jesus first appear to Mary Magdalene on resurrection morning?' and we concluded that it was because access to the Holy of Holies, and getting close to God, was now open to all, including those who had always been kept at arms' length in the past. It wasn't accidental that she was the first but was part of a planned message being sent out to future believers and also that she was a wonderful representative of those who were now to be given a new status in Christ. There is now neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but we are all one in Christ once we have been baptized into Him (Galatians 3:27-28).

Priestly problem presenting Jesus to Jews

The Hebrew writer was speaking, indeed probably preaching, for the Book reads surprisingly like the transcript of a sermon, to Jewish Christians, many of whom apparently were thinking of drifting back into Judaism because of the threat of persecution. He was busy pointing out the superiority of Christ as both High Priest and sacrifice to that of the Aaronic priesthood to which the Jews belonged. He had a problem, however, because Jesus could never be a legitimate High Priest under the Mosaic Covenant. These Jewish converts could readily accept Him as 'the



The adoration of the Lamb
(J. van Eyck - 1432)

Lamb that was slain' and therefore a perfect sacrifice for sins but they had difficulty accepting His rôle as High Priest. Jesus had no connection to the tribe of Levi, let alone to the line of Aaron, whence all High Priests came. He was from Judah, the kingly line, and it is not unreasonable to decide that He was actually the true and legitimate King of the Jews had they still had an earthly king in place.

Not a fudge

Now some might think it's a fudge that the Hebrew writer shows us that Jesus is in fact a king/priest 'after the order of Melchizedek', which predates Moses and was foretold in the Psalms (110:4), simply to justify his claims and sway them into remaining faithful. This would be a legitimate point if we did not believe in the inspiration of scripture, but since we do, we must accept it as true. Not only does he argue this way, he also makes a most astonishing statement in Chapter 7:7: *'It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.'* which indicates, in context (see below), that the priesthood of Melchizedek is in fact superior to that of Moses. So what is going on here? What was the priesthood of Melchizedek and why was it superior to that of Moses?

Religion has not evolved

We can all be as guilty as anybody else of thinking that just as society is thought to have evolved so too has religion. We are so used to being bombarded with the notion that we all evolved from apes, and that societies have progressed upwards from the primitive to the current advanced, through the Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age until we reach written records and can trace things through. We can readily buy into the notion that our religions have evolved as well. Consequently we assume that the religion of the Patriarchal Age was primitive; the Mosaic was less so and that the Christian is the most sophisticated and evolved as the pinnacle of religious evolution. Certainly the last point is correct. Christianity is the most developed and sophisticated religion there has ever been, and I think we can say that our current society, especially the developed Western

society **IS** the most highly developed yet. It is far from perfect but it is the most advanced of all of the societies we know and understand. But what about those earlier ones?

The Biblical Picture

First of all the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages are myths. There never was a Stone Age, which developed into a Bronze Age and thence into an Iron Age. Yes there were societies where stone tools were used and then bronze and then iron but they existed side-by-

side. Just as we today have primitive societies living at the same time as our Western sophisticated societies, so they did too. The biblical picture of social development is that of highly developed people using bronze, playing instruments, herding animals, building an Ark, and, after the Flood, navigating around the world mapping strange new continents and islands, who understood maths and could build towers, cities, and hence monuments to amazing degrees of accuracy AND who knew how to write, so must have known how to read too, from well before the Flood; this society regressed and lost a good deal of its knowledge until many of the ancient achievements were only rediscovered sometimes in our day. I would love to develop some of the evidence for all of this but it's out there, usually in books about ancient mysteries. The event which caused the decline was the confusion of the languages at Babel. Some groups retained the best of the ancient knowledge and flowered instantly into great civilizations such as Egypt, Mesopotamia (Chaldea and Babylon) and the Indus Valley people, while others drifted into being hunter-gatherers and some lived in caves and did indeed become very primitive. They fell from a sophisticated level to a base level.

Patriarchal superiority based on faith

Now, this verse in Hebrews 7:7 indicates that religion did a similar thing. It tells us a simple truth that *'it is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior.'* The context concerns Abraham bowing down to Melchizedek and offering him a tithe (Gen. 14:17-20). The Patriarchal Age and its religious system, represented by Melchizedek, was superior to the Mosaic, represented here by Abraham.. It did not evolve upwards from one to the other and thence on to Christ; it was up and went down before coming back up again. So let us very briefly survey what we know about both of them and then try to see why the earlier could be deemed to have been superior.

Patriarchal Religion

We know very little about how the Patriarchal religious system worked. Authority and priesthood was in the hands of the heads of the families and those who were heads of dynasties were King/Priests and particularly esteemed. We have considered in depth in *Genesis Accepted* Numbers 1 and 3 who Melchizedek was and we concluded positively that he had to be none other than Shem, Noah's eldest son and therefore head of the Shemites (now called Semites). This was the very old, mysterious king/priest who came to meet Abraham after he was returning from a battle to rescue Lot from the clutches of a raiding party who had captured him. He lived in Salem, which is Jerusalem, and when Abraham met him he bowed down to him and gave him a tithe of his goods and received a blessing. It makes perfect sense that Abraham would bow the knee to his amazingly illustrious ancestor, whose origin was lost in the mists of time and whose beginning was in the now forgotten world before the Flood. His name means 'King of Righteousness' and if ever a man deserved that title, he did. He remained faithful before the Flood, helping his godly dad build the Ark when the rest of the world mocked. He remained faithful after the Flood when Ham's children at least went off the spiritual rails, as no doubt did Japheth's and some of his own too. Terah, Abraham's father, was an idolater. Shem remained faithful through the rebellion at Babel and the falling away of the values God wanted. This faithfulness is part of the key to the superiority of this order of priesthood, for the covenant had few rules and regulations for worship. It was based on faith, loyalty and love for God. There were other faithful King/Priests who were staunch and loyal, like Job, and later like Moses' father-in-law Jethro, but Melchizedek/Shem was easily the prime example and type of Christ figure he is seen to be in the New Testament. His was a priesthood based on faith.

The Law held true faith at bay

You see we learn that the Mosaic Covenant was introduced as a schoolmaster or guardian, as Paul said in Galatians 3:24. He wrote: *'Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.'*

Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you



The rainbow also speaks of Christ.

are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' (Gal 3:19-28).

The purpose of the Law

The Law was introduced because of transgressions. It was there to teach obedience, duty, and a strict moral code (necessary in some areas like close marriages because the gene-pool was now far more corrupted, c.f. problems over first cousin marriages in our day; though not forbidden by the Bible they are very unwise). It taught reverent worship, the awesome nature of God who was now far more distant and unapproachable than He had been in the Patriarchal Age. Though it was still a faith system it was much more an imposed faith system than a voluntary one. Under Melchizedek there was much more of a joyous freedom, which had obviously been abused, hence God needed it to pull us back into line.

Restored freedom in Christ

Christ restored faith and easy access to God. He abolished sacrifices from both earlier systems so He ended both the Jewish system and the Patriarchal system but He brought back love and joy into the frame. He

retained the lessons of obedience, duty, loyalty and morality, for these are very important.

The Noachian covenant

However, as the final pointer as to why His and Melchizedek's priesthood is the superior one, we must also not forget the covenant under which Melchizedek operated: *"I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." And God said, This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."* (Gen. 9:11-16)

Noah's covenant still holds good

This covenant still holds good and will

do until the end of time. So Jesus restored the system of voluntary faith and brought access to God back, thus bringing us closer in love. He retained the morality and sense of awe and wonder taught by the Mosaic schoolmaster but nailed its legal impositions to the Cross, thus releasing us from its bondage into the love of the Father. Had the people been obedient and not transgressed, Melchizedek's priesthood would not have been overlain by that of Moses. It never actually vanished but we lost sight of it. Jesus came and fulfilled the legal requirements under Moses and released us back to Melchizedek in faith and love. Now we are free again under Him for though Melchizedek's priesthood is everlasting, it is only everlasting under Christ who brought it to perfection and fulfilled it too by His sacrifice.

The rainbow also speaks of Christ

So when you see a rainbow and it lifts your spirits as it will, remember it not only speaks of the Flood and God's covenantal promise to us, it also tells of the One who is the perfect priest and sacrifice who has set us free to be God's children through faith as He always wanted us to be. The rest is up to us but I think we can now see why Abraham bowed the knee to Melchizedek and why this was the inferior bowing to the superior.



Daily Mail 30.9.08

By Design

Couch's Spadefoot Toad

These toads are not endangered or rare, which means that they thrive in their habitat, yet their habitat is both exacting and difficult. Everything has to be just right or there would be no reproduction and therefore extinction would soon follow. Not only do things have to be right, they had to be right from the start. Their situation could not have evolved slowly over millions of years.

Couch's Spadefoot Toad is native to the south-western United States, northern Mexico, and the Baja peninsula. They can be found throughout the Sonoran Desert, which includes parts of southern Arizona and California. They were



Photo from Wikipedia

named after the American naturalist Darius Nash Couch who worked for the Smithsonian Institution and brought back the first specimen.

They usually lie dormant for about eleven months of the year but are ready to spring into action when water is around. You see they need water in order to reproduce and water often arrives very suddenly in the desert in the form of storms. These toads have built-in sensors that tell them when a violent desert rainstorm occurs. They can detect vibrations of pounding rain miles away.

Spadefoot toads have large eyes and their hind feet have spade-like ridges on them, which they use to dig themselves in up to three feet into loose, sandy soil. They can remain dormant under the soil for almost a year, and to protect themselves they create a watertight cocoon by shedding several layers of skin. This cocoon breaks down when the rains begin and they make their way quickly up to the surface.

Somehow they know when to emerge from the sand when it rains so that the male

toad can call for females as soon as pools of water form. The egg-laying comes very quickly afterwards and they hatch within 36 hours, metamorphosing into toads in seven to ten days. This is only when conditions are right, because after mating the adult toads return to the safety of the sand to escape the burning heat of the daytime sun. Most often the pools dry up killing the eggs but when conditions are right they develop as planned and as designed.

At best the toads might get a few weeks to eat enough food to survive before burying themselves in the sand for the next eleven months. The diet of a Couch's Spadefoot Toad consists of insects, mainly winged termites and they can eat enough termites in 1 - 2 nights to survive for one year.

It might not seem to be much of a life but they are superbly adapted and designed to thrive in it. They can live up to 13 years. Before the Fall they would not have needed these facilities but afterwards it was absolutely necessary that they were there and working perfectly or the continuation of a species like this could not have occurred - and it was not just one adaptation which they needed but several, including separate abilities and instincts in both sexes.

The Spadefoot toad was carefully designed by the Master Designer so it could live successfully in the marginal and harsh habitat of the south-western part of the North American continent. No amount of slow adaptation could, let alone would, have worked here. There is absolutely no margin for error so God made them perfectly for where and how He wanted them to live.

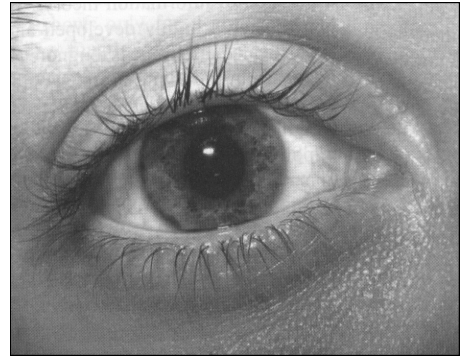
Hair

I never minded going to have my hair cut. It's soporific and I can almost fall asleep as they are doing it. But in recent years there is one practice the barber does which I never enjoy. At the end he will take down a mirror and hold it so I can see the back of my head. That reveals that I really need to ask him for, "A short back and sides and a polish on top, please." It's not quite all gone but I've felt the need for a warm, protective hat in the



winter for over 25 years.

Evolutionists tell us that hair is a leftover skin covering; it's not. It provides warmth and improves appearance - the Bible sees it as a woman's crowning glory (1 Cor. 11:15) - but it has multiple design functions to enhance life. Hair is an integral part of the body's protection system. Eyelashes protect our eyes by triggering them to close almost



instantly and involuntarily when dust strikes the lashes. Both men and women have body hair, though it grows differently in the sexes, as we know. It serves as levers, connected to muscles, to squeeze oil from glands that keep skin from drying out. Hair even acts as a filter for particles caught in the nose and ears. The picture is of an Indian grocer called Radhakant Bajpai, whose ear hair is

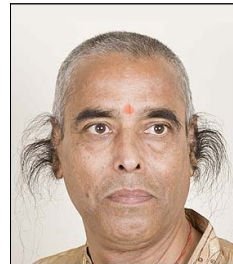


Photo: from *The Sun* 17.2.09

10 inches (25 cm) and still growing. He's the world champion, and he reckons it has brought him luck. Well, it's got him into the *Guinness Book of Records*.

Hair is also 'programmed' to grow to specific lengths and thicknesses in various places on the body. Eyelashes do not grow as long or thick as scalp hair. They grow to a certain length and then fall out and are replaced by new hair. Who planned it this way? The clear evidence of design can be seen in the function and placement of all sorts of hair on our body.

But our hearts can go out to the 11-year-old Thai girl, Supatra Sasuphan: officially the world's hairiest girl. She is one of just 50 known sufferers of Ambras Syndrome - caused by a faulty chromosome - to be documented since the Middle Ages. Before the disease was understood, sufferers were branded 'werewolves.' She says she's happy because it's made her popular at school. She's got to grow up!



Photo: *Daily Mail*. 3.3.11

Don't let Stephen Hawking upset your faith



Suppose that if you were to ask reasonably informed people to name two famous, living British scientists, most would pick out Richard Dawkins and Stephen Hawking. Dawkins is not famous for his theories and original insights into the depths of his subject speciality, but rather for his self-promotion and evangelistic zeal supporting the causes of atheism and evolution—which, of course, are interlinked. Hawking, however, is a theoretical physicist who *has* made such a contribution to his subject over the years. Whether his theories will stand the test of time remains to be seen but at least we can all recognize him as having a brilliant mind.

Hawking's illness

Sadly, Stephen Hawking is probably going to be better remembered not for his theories but for his amazing fight to overcome his physical handicap. According to medical science he should have died in the mid-1960s, yet here we are in 2011 and he's still alive - well, just about. At the age of 21, in 1962, he was diagnosed with a motor neuron disease known as Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), or as Lou Gehrig's Disease in the USA, after the man in whom it was first identified. He died after two years in 1941 and it was not expected that Stephen would fair any better. He should have died around 1965 but he's still here, probably breaking world records for survival with this dreadful affliction. With amazing technological help he has not only survived but also lived as full a life as anybody could under those circumstances. By 2009 he was almost completely paralysed. As human beings our hearts must go out to him for his amazing will to live, determination to make a useful, nay a brilliant, contribution to science and to overcome as many obstacles as he possibly could given his circumstances.

Hawking the atheist

No matter how sympathetic we are to his battle against illness, we must remember that he is an atheist. His mother was a great influence on him and she was a Communist and he came to develop an admiration for the philosopher Bertrand Russell, who was very

anti-Christian. Though we recognize Stephen as a brilliant mind, we must not stand in awe of all his ideas, especially his religious and philosophical views, and accept them simply because we can't match up to him as scientists. He has an agenda and his agenda is driven by his world view which, as we noted above, is atheistic. He would love to be able to

prove that there is no God. And this he has tried to do in his latest book *The Grand Design*, which he co-authored with Leonard Mlodinow, whoever he might be. Hawking is only a man, a fallible human being, and we must not allow ourselves to be carried along by his views on the back of a sympathy vote because we admire him in other things. His notions must be assessed critically in every area, which is what his fellow scientists are doing in his field because, as yet, many of his theories have not been backed up by experimental evidence; he has not yet been awarded a Nobel prize because he has not passed their criteria.

Creation

*There once was a metaphysician
Who claimed that he didn't exist.
So, when he explained his position,
They said, "Well, you'll never be missed."*

We are here; Stephen Hawking does not deny this—though there are some who do! The questions which flow as a result of our existence are: 'Who made us?' 'How did we get here?' 'Is there purpose and meaning to life?'

The fact of our existence is indisputable both for the Christian and the atheist, but the answers to the above questions cannot be decided by laboratory experimentation in the here-and-now. Both have answers but their answers are very different. For the Christian the answers are that God made us by specially creating us many years ago (some may argue about when this happened, though we believe in *GA* it was about 6,000 years ago), and that we are here to love and serve God, to witness to His love, might, power and majesty, and then to be with Him for all eternity. The atheist will say that nobody made us, we simply evolved over billions of years, and there is absolutely no meaning or purpose to life at all. The Christian is not obligated to provide a scientific explanation to support his assertions but the atheist is, and does so with a will because he is intent on destroying theistic belief, as he believes

they are irrational. As predictive viewpoints we can examine the facts, particularly of how the universe works, and see which description of origins and purpose best fits them, and then decide which to believe. Our decision will very definitely influence how we behave and the choices we make in all sorts of spheres of life.

Hawking's creation

Hawking believes that science has all the answers, or that they will ultimately be found in science. He said: "*Because there is a law such as gravity, the Universe can and will create itself from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the Universe exists, why we exist.*" He added: "*It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the Universe going.*"

This may sound profound and unanswerable but a few minutes thought will reveal that it is no such thing. The phrase 'spontaneous creation' is an oxymoron. The term 'creation' involves decisions being made, whether thorough or not, and creative actions following as a result. But, as Jonathan Sarfati points out in his review of *The Grand Design* (*Journal of Creation* vol. 25 (1), 2011), 'Something can do something—including create—only if it exists; something not yet existing has no power to do anything, including create itself.' Laws have no independent life in them. They merely describe how observable data operates, or perhaps should operate, but they never cause anything to operate at all.

Jonathan quoted Oxford Prof. John Lennox in his review cited above: '*But contrary to what Hawking claims, physical laws can never provide a complete explanation of the universe. Laws themselves do not create anything; they are merely a description of what happens under certain conditions.*

'What Hawking appears to have done is confuse law with agency. His call on us to choose between God and physics is a bit like someone demanding that we choose between aeronautical engineer Sir Frank Whittle and the laws of physics to explain the jet engine.

'That is a confusion of category. The laws of physics can explain how the jet engine works, but someone had to build the thing, put in the fuel and start it up. The jet could not have been created without the laws of physics on their own—but the task of development and creation needed the genius of Whittle as its agent.

'Similarly the laws of physics could never have actually built the universe. Some agency must have been involved.

'To use a simple analogy, Isaac Newton's laws of motion in themselves never sent a snooker ball racing across the green baize. That can only be done by people using

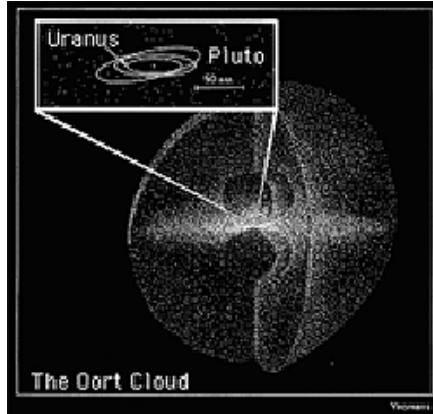
a snooker cue and the actions of their own arms.'

As Christians we do not have to bow the knee to spurious reasoning no matter how exalted the person might be propounding it. Any answer to nature which finds the source of ultimate existence in nature will flounder on the rocks of the fact that some natural *thing* had to exist, e.g. gravity, before any creating could happen.

Multiverses

There is a strange mist which falls over the eyes of many scientists when grappling with questions of origins and existence. Our ancient ancestors frequently invented gods, fairies, dragons, hobgoblins and the like to account for phenomena for which they had no explanation. Our sophisticated scientist will laugh at them, and then by extension if he's an atheist, he will laugh at Christians for their belief in angels, archangels, demons and the devil, sometimes to fill in the gaps of our knowledge. 'They' would never do that!

Well, normally they wouldn't but when it comes to questions of God and origins strange things occur. For example the existence of short-term comets is embarrassing to them because if the Solar System was billions of years old those comets should long since have melted away and disappeared. The fact that they haven't is a pointer to the truth that the Solar System is young. There-



fore to explain the existence of these comets the Oort Cloud has been suggested. Supposedly this is a cluster of ice and rocks lying just beyond the known limits of the Solar System and which can be disturbed by a passing astral body which knocks some of them in towards the Sun. These then form comets. Thus any comets we see have been 'recently' ejected from the Oort Cloud and, as comets, are not therefore very old. Hey presto the comets' problem has been solved! Unfortunately for the theory, strongly advocated as it is on *The Sky At Night*, hosted by Sir Patrick Moore, to date it is a work of fiction. It lies outside the range of our telescopes, even the magnificent Hubble Space Telescope, so nobody has ever seen it, or detected it but it must be there because we see short-term comets and we 'know', don't we, that the Solar System is not just thousands of years old but billions, so it must exist. Similarly the existence of Cold Dark Matter (CDM), which must make up 90% of the universe to account for phenomena which otherwise won't fit into a Big Bang Theory of origins, is postulated and believed, yet no evidence exists for it at all, and therefore favours a young universe. It is a belief, based on an atheistic faith that there is no God and that the Big Bang occurred some 13,000,000,000 years ago, and that the creationist/biblical estimate of 6,000 years approximately, is nonsense.

Well, Hawking has done exactly the same with his concept of multiverses. He theorises that there is

not one universe (to use a tautology) but that we live in one of countless multiverses. Indeed there are so many of them that any and every combination of phenomena must exist somewhere. Needless to say this includes countless aliens too—well, the universe is simply too big and we are simply too small to be important, so there must be alien life 'out there' somewhere, and amongst multiverses the chances of there not being any other life forms is so infinitely small that there has to be.

Conclusion

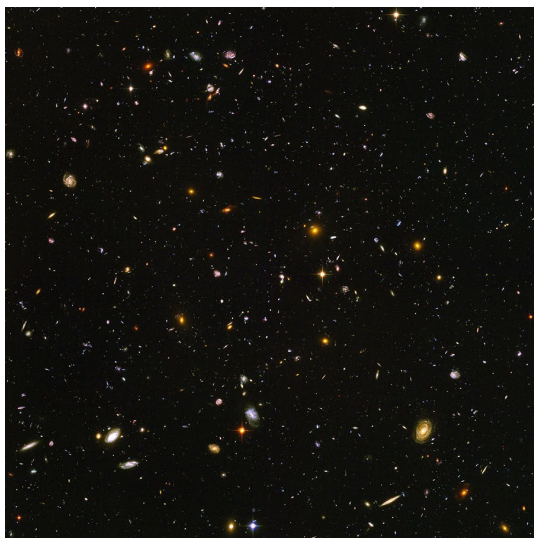
Well, you can guess it! There's not one single shred of evidence for multiverses, or parallel universes, or anything like this. God made a universe and gave mankind a special, unique part to play in it.

How do we know this? The answer, as always, lies in Jesus. His coming to Earth as the Son of God, and dying at Calvary some 2,000 years ago tells us that the Earth is special, it was made for a unique purpose, and that sinful humankind is so precious to God that He gave His Son for us (John 3:16).

How do we know this? There was a silent, almost unnoticed, spiritually cosmic Big Bang three days after He died. Satan was defeated, the stone across the door of His tomb was opened and He arose from the dead. The world has never been the same since. By examining all the facts and the evidence surrounding this claim, the conclusion is reached that on the third day He rose from the dead.

The resurrection of Jesus is not a theory put out as an idea for peer review, it is an historical fact, or series of facts, which can be scientifically investigated and conclusions reached. Christianity is the only religion which invites such close and careful examination, such as a diligent scientist might make if he could be bothered. But then if the answer is 'Yes, He rose from the dead', there are life-style implications and most would rather believe in an atheistic myth and mock the Christian for his faith in the examinable rock of Jesus Christ.

Yes, don't be upset by, or afraid of, the ideas of Stephen Hawking. He has an agenda, and it is anti-Christian.



The Hubble Space Telescope reveals multiple galaxies each one has 100,000,000 stars in it

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