

CHAPTER 7

AN ANCIENT AND DYNAMIC UNIVERSE

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE SPUN THREE WAYS

Sometimes when the Big Bang model and other results from astronomy are presented in the media or in popular books, they are given an atheistic spin. That spin can make it difficult for Christians to separate the legitimate scientific evidence from the atheistic worldview in which it has been packaged. Below we've provided three ways to describe the same history of the universe, first with neutral language, then with an atheistic spin, and finally with a theistic spin,

- ▶ *Neutral.* We don't know what happened before the Big Bang. We do know that 13.7 billion years ago, the universe was densely filled with extremely hot particles. Space itself expanded, carrying the particles with it and spreading them out. The gasses began to cool, and within a few minutes the particles had merged together to make hydrogen, then helium. About 300,000 years later, the universe had cooled down to about 3,000 degrees Celsius, and light began to travel freely through space. Some regions in the universe were slightly more dense than others and began to collapse under gravity, forming the first generation of stars. Gradually, billions of galaxies formed throughout the observable universe, each containing billions of stars. About 4.6 billion years ago the sun formed within the Milky Way galaxy. A disk of dusty particles around the sun condensed into planets, and the Earth was formed.
- ▶ *Atheistic.* The universe started as an accident—a purposeless, unplanned event. We don't yet understand how, but somehow all of the matter and energy and space and laws of physics of this universe sprang into existence. Space expanded and matter cooled, and all these particles went about obeying the laws of physics, moving around and colliding with each other and sticking together when the forces were strong enough. As luck would have it, the laws of physics cause clouds of atoms to collapse under gravity to form stars, hydrogen in these stars to fuse into heavier atoms, and stars to explode and spread these atoms around into new clouds. And out of one of these clouds of atoms our Sun and our Earth formed. There was no God, no designer. The beginning of the universe can be explained as mindless matter obeying mindless laws.

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- ▶ *Theistic.* In the beginning there was God. From nothing, God created time and space, matter and energy, and the very laws of nature. God spoke, and the universe began 13.7 billion years ago in a blast of light, heat, and extremely energetic particles. At God's command, space expanded and the universe cooled. God used nuclear and electric forces to fuse the particles together and gravity to bring the atoms together into stars. God made billions of stars in billions of galaxies, extravagantly filling the whole universe over billions of years. In the stars God used nuclear fusion to make atoms of all sorts and dispersed them throughout space. About 4.6 billion years ago, God used gravity to shape some of this stardust into the sun and its planets, bringing together all the material necessary to form the dry ground, oceans, and atmosphere.