

With so much science around evolution, how do we know God put us here?
September 4, 2022 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

We have a neat question to think about this morning:

With so much science relating to evolution, how do we know God put us here?

That's a good question. And the person asking it has actually asked a question AND made an observation. Here's the observation – there is a lot of scientific evidence relating to evolution – and that's certainly true. From remarkably similar genes between species to genetic scarsⁱ in specific places that suggest a common ancestor, there is a lot of scientific evidence to support the theory of evolution. (That being said, there is 'Dissent from Darwin – an organization with that name has collected hundreds of scientists who have signed on to the statement: "We are skeptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life. Careful examination of the evidence for Darwinian theory should be encouraged.")ⁱⁱ That's a topic for another day – but here's the question – given the theory of evolution, why do we as Christians keep on believing that it is God who put us here? What evidence is there to suggest that it was in fact God who made us?

That's a great question and one that we need to wrestle with. Because on one hand, we want to take these scientific discoveries seriously. Science began as an effort to study and understand and appreciate the world that God created and frankly, God created the world in a way that can be studied and understood and appreciated so we need to listen when scientists find evidence and patterns in all that God has made. We can't just dismiss it as fake news. On the other hand though, we maintain as our primary commitment the conviction that God is the creator of all things and so ultimately, scientific discovery needs to be seen through the lens of God's creative sovereignty.

So... With so much science relating to evolution, how do we know God put us here?

To answer that question, I'm going to follow two lines of evidence that say that God put us here, and those are the world and the Word. There is evidence written into the very fabric of creation itself that points to God as the creator and there is evidence written into the best attested ancient primary document that we have and so we need to look at both.

Let's start with the world – given what we see in the world, how do we know that God put us here?

Let's start at the beginning because that's a very good place to start. According to Francis Collins, the head of the Human Genome Project and author of *The Language of God*: "At the beginning of the twentieth century, most scientists assumed a universe with no beginning and no end."ⁱⁱⁱ Many scientists believed that the universe had always just existed and if there was no beginning, there was no reason to posit a Creator.

But by the 1960's, there was solid evidence to suggest that there WAS in fact a time when everything came into being. Scientists proposed a 'big bang' – a singularity, a moment when the universe began as an infinitely dense, dimensionless point of pure energy.^{iv} In an instant, everything came into being and expanded rapidly outward.

The Canadian astrophysicist Hugh Ross has a memorable illustration – imagine you pulled the pin on a grenade and let it explode. From the remnants of it flung all across the room, investigators could trace it

back to its beginning point and see what happened – same with the universe. Scientists can observe the world now and trace it back towards the beginning and here’s what they find.

According to widely accepted science, in the beginning, there was a superhot burst of energy – what they call the big bang. From there, the universe expanded outwards. The temperature began to drop and as a consequence, atoms and nuclei started to form. The interaction of protons and neutrons and photons produced helium and hydrogen which provided the fuel necessary for the creation of stars. As the stars burned, they created oxygen and carbon dioxide and then eventually went supernova. That meant that they exploded, flinging carbon and nitrogen and oxygen and other important elements out into the universe and then the force of gravity pushed all of this matter together into planets and galaxies. New stars formed and pulled planets into their orbits to create solar systems – our sun is at least a ‘second generation star’ – at least one generation before produced the elements for our world and they made up the earth and everything else in the solar system. That’s widely accepted scientific evidence.

Now that in itself doesn’t prove that God put us here, but it does prove that the world as we know it had a beginning. The world didn’t just always exist; at some point, it came into being and science has yet to explain why. As Tim Keller puts it: “everything we know in this world is ‘contingent,’ has a cause outside of itself. [Nothing just ‘happens’]. Therefore, the universe, which is just a huge pile of such contingent entities, would itself have to be dependent upon some cause outside of itself. Something had to make the Big Bang happen – but what? What could that be but something outside of nature, a supernatural, non-contingent being that exists from itself.”^v

The Big Bang doesn’t prove that God put us here, but it does establish that the world had a beginning. And the nature of the world as we know it tells us that things ‘don’t just happen.’ Something causes it – those two lines of evidence point to a Creator.

And the way that the world came into being is another piece evidence for the idea that it was God who put us here. Think of what I just told you about the big bang – everything happened in such a perfect way as to create the only possible environment here on earth wherein people could live. Tim Keller calls this the ‘Cosmic Welcome Mat.’^{vi}

This is called the ‘fine-tuning’ argument^{vii} by philosophers – the observation that everything ‘just happened’ to be set perfectly to allow human life to exist on earth. Imagine a panel of dials, all of which have to be set at the exact right point for life to exist on earth. The dials represent the many physical constants that govern our world like the force of gravity and the speed of light. All of those dials (between 15 and 41, depending on who you ask)^{viii} got set to the exact right point for life on earth to exist.

Here’s what I mean. When the universe began expanding from its beginning, if its rate of expansion had been smaller by one part in 100 thousand million, the universe would have collapsed on itself. If, on the other hand, it had been greater by one part in a million, stars and planets would never have formed.^{ix}

If the strong nuclear force that holds protons and neutrons together had been even slightly weaker, then only hydrogen would have formed in the universe. If, on the other hand, the strong nuclear force had been slightly stronger, all the hydrogen would have been converted to helium and you never would have had the hydrogen/helium mix needed to create stars, and then the elements like carbon and oxygen would never be formed.^x

And speaking of carbon, which is the basis for all living things, you need three helium atoms to collide and fuse together to make carbon but unless the strong and electromagnetic forces are lined up just the right way, it would never produce enough carbon to make life.^{xii}

The Earth has the water we need for life, steady plate tectonics allow for a protective magnetic field and even the moon is set up right to sustain life. The moon stabilizes the earth's axis and keeps it from flipping back and forth and ensures the only climate in the solar system mild enough to sustain complex living organisms.^{xiii}

Christoph Koch writes – “In short, an amazing number of ‘coincidences’ had to occur to give rise to a universe that was stable for a sufficiently long time and diverse enough in chemical elements to support complex carbon-based life forms.”^{xiii}

Now again, that's not enough to say that the God of the Bible is the one who did it and some people will propose a multiverse situation where there are infinite worlds with infinite possibilities where one world, our world, just happened to get the dials just right through natural causes.

But as astronomer Fred Hoyle says: “A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a super-intellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology.” Physicist Freeman Dyson wrote, “The more I examine the universe, and the details of its architecture, the more evidence I find that the Universe in some sense must have known we were coming.”^{xiv}

And it's not only the universe that is finely tuned; we ourselves are knit together in a fabulously complex way. Francis Collins, the head researcher on the Human Genome Project, points out that we have three billion binary pairs of genes which work together as a genetic code to make us who we are.^{xv} This code consists of a four letter alphabet to denote nucleotide bases, arranged into triplets to make 64 possible combinations, with built-in redundancy to enable DNA to code properly even if it is damaged.^{xvi}

Bill Gates likens DNA to a computer program, albeit one ‘far, far more advanced than any software we've ever created.’^{xvii}

Dennis Sanche (Canadian health/biotech executive): “Computer programs require software engineers to write their code. Cells on the other hand are able to mutate and generate new code, a truly incredible feat. The question is how....and why?”^{xviii}

It's hard to imagine that a genetic code more complex than anything we can currently create ‘just happened’ to evolve, which certainly suggests that there is someone who made it. Again, not specifically proof that God created us but certainly evidence to suggest that He's the one who made us and that we are fearfully and wonderfully made, as opposed to accidentally and improbably happened.

As Stephen Hawking wrote in *A brief history of time*, “It would be very difficult to explain why the universe should have begun in just this way, except as the act of God who intended to create beings like us.”^{xix}

In my mind, it's like the story about Isaac Newton, who had built a model of the solar system, with all the planets properly sized and spaced apart, with the Sun in the centre, with a series of cogs and gears which allowed the whole thing to turn as it does in reality. An agnostic friend came in and marvelled at

it – he saw how the planets aligned and turned and breathlessly asked Newton, ‘who made this?’ ‘No one’ replied Newton. ‘That’s foolishness’ said the friend. “Someone must have made this complex.” To which Newton responded ‘I look at the world and say the same thing – there must be a Creator.’

The world itself points to a Creator; the Word of God tells us who it is. And that’s actually a phenomenon you see reflected in the Bible. The world – general revelation – declares that God is there; the Word – special revelation – clarifies who it is. Psalm 19 for example begins:

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
2 Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.
3 There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard.
4 Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.
(Psa 19:1-4 NIV).

As Romans 1:20 says ‘God’s eternal power and divine nature can be seen plainly in all that He has created.’ What we’ve talked about so far points makes that case. The fact of the beginning, the finely tuned universe, the complexity of life all declare the glory of God.

But you have to go to God’s Word to show you exactly who He is. Psalm 19 continues - 7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.
8 The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.
(Psa 19:7-8 NIV).

The word and the world work together to point to God – special revelation and general revelation – so that we can see both that God exists and who He is. So let’s switch gears here and see what evidence there is in the Bible to suggest that God put us here.

(Now just a quick aside: someone might say ‘wait, why are we looking to the Bible as evidence the God put us here? It doesn’t count as hard, scientific fact. I would beg to differ. For one, the Bible is the best attested primary source that exists from the ancient world. We have almost 2000 copies of Homer’s *Iliad*. We have 251 copies of Julius Caesar’s *Gallic Wars*. And historians consider those trustworthy. There are tens of thousands of copies of the New Testament.^{xx} It is a well attested ancient document that claims to explain who put us here. To dismiss it out of hand is the same as a Christian would dismisses scientific evidence out of hand. Even if you don’t like it, the Bible still makes claims that you have to deal with.)

Let’s start at the beginning – scientists look at the evidence and say the world began with the big bang – the universe didn’t exist and then it did - but they can’t explain why it happened and what caused it to happen. They can trace the evidence back to one trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second after the beginning happened, but what happened just before that – the actual beginning - is a mystery.^{xxi}

Francis Collins writes: “Fifteen billion years ago, the universe began with an unimaginably bright flash of energy from an infinitesimally small point. That implies that before that, there was nothing. I can’t imagine how nature, in this case the universe, could have created itself.”^{xxii}

That's where the Bible comes in. Genesis 1:1 - In the beginning [it was] God – [He] created the heavens and the earth (Gen 1:1 NIV). It was formless and void and then God said 'Let there be light' and there was – as Francis Collins says – an unimaginably bright flash of energy from an infinitesimally small point. Hebrews 11:3 puts it like this: 3 By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible (Heb 11:3 NIV). I.e., He created something out of nothing.

And then, through the unfolding of the universe, the clumping together of matter into galaxies, the creation of the heavens and the earth, God arranged it all – perfectly balancing gravity and electromagnetism and the speed of light – to accommodate life – people like us.

The Canadian astrophysicist Hugh Ross writes: "What does this tell me about the Creator? That God so loved the human race that he went to the expense of building one hundred billion stars and carefully shaped and crafted those hundred billion trillion stars for the entire age of the universe, so that for this brief moment in time, we could have a nice place to live."^{xxiii}

And having made the world just right, He made us. Genesis 1:26-27, He made us just like Him. He made us in His image. Genesis 2:7, God gathered up the dust of the ground, the molecular carbon that the finely tuned helium atoms had produced and made it into a man. And then He breathed life into the man and made him alive. The scientific community has a really hard time explaining how non-living material became living material.

And yet the answer is right there in Genesis 2 – God breathed life into us. Psalm 139 – God knit us together with all the beauty and intricacy of a three billion base pair human genome. It's God that did it.

I like how the agnostic astrophysicist Robert Jastrow puts it –

"At this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."^{xxiv}

Just like Psalm 19 says, when we take what we see in the world (general revelation) and lay what we see in the Word over top of it (special revelation), we can see clearly what happened. God put us here. God orchestrated the beginning, He fine-tuned the universe, He knit us together with incredible complexity and care, all to share Himself with us.

That's why, in spite of evolution and its claims, we hold firm to the conviction that it was God who put us here. The world that He created and the Word that He revealed to us tell us so.

What do we do about it? Two things –

One, know with confidence that God put us here. Listen when the heavens declare the glory of God. Let the leaves of fall and the complexities of your body point you to the One who created us all. I've put lots of resources in the endnotes of this sermon if you want to dig deeper. Know with certainty, on the basis of the Bible and the world that God created us.

And two, marvel that He would do such a thing. Psalm 8 models this for us -

3 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, 4 what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

5 You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.
(Psa 8:3-5 NIV).

The psalmist looks at the world and marvels at the Creator that He sees writ large and marvels at the special place that God has given to humanity as stewards of Creation. Do the same. Let the sunset take your breath away, seeing it as a gift from God. Hold a grandchild in your arms and think – just imagine the muscles and joints and synapses and nerves that had to be knit together to make this little marvel. And marvel at the God who did it all.

ⁱ Darrell R. Falk, “Evolution, Human (Evolutionary-Creation view)” in *Dictionary of Christianity and science*, 229.

ⁱⁱ It’s worth noting that there is dissent from Darwin within the scientific community. The ‘Dissent from Darwin’ group has united scientists from many fields and academic institutions behind the statement: “We are skeptical of claims for the ability of random mutation and natural selection to account for the complexity of life. Careful examination of the evidence for Darwinian theory should be encouraged.” <https://dissentfromdarwin.org/about/>

ⁱⁱⁱ Francis Collins, *The language of God*, 63.

^{iv} Collins, 65.

^v Tim Keller, *The Reason for God*, 133.

^{vi} Keller, 134.

^{vii} <https://www.discovery.org/m/securepdfs/2018/12/List-of-Fine-Tuning-Parameters-Jay-Richards.pdf>

^{viii} Collins, 74; Hugh Ross, *Where did the universe come from?* (1994) Lecture pdf <http://evo2.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/NewScientificEvidence.pdf>, p. 13.

^{ix} Collins, 73.

^x Collins, 73.

^{xi} <https://biologos.org/common-questions/what-do-fine-tuning-and-the-multiverse-say-about-god>

^{xii} <https://www.discovery.org/m/securepdfs/2018/12/List-of-Fine-Tuning-Parameters-Jay-Richards.pdf> (p. 287); Ross, 12.

^{xiii} Cristoph Koch in Darrell R. Falk, “Evolution, Human (Evolutionary-Creation view)” in *Dictionary of Christianity and science*, 234.

^{xiv} <https://biologos.org/common-questions/what-do-fine-tuning-and-the-multiverse-say-about-god>

^{xv} Collins, 110-111.

^{xvi} <https://evo2.org/faq/#immaterial>

^{xvii} Bill Gates, *The Road Ahead*, 228, quoted in Douglas Groothuis, *Christian Apologetics*, 316.

^{xviii} <https://evo2.org/>

^{xix} Collins, 75.

^{xx} Tim Challies, ‘Has the Bible really been preserved for us today?’ *Visual Theology Guide to the Bible*, chp.2.

^{xxi} Scientists think they can pick the story up at about 10 to the minus 36 seconds — one trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second — after the Big Bang. <https://www.space.com/13347-big-bang-origins-universe-birth.html>

^{xxii} Collins, in Keller, 133.

^{xxiii} Ross, 9.

^{xxiv} Robert Jastrow in ‘God and the astronomers,’ quoted in Collins, 66.