



Hawking v. God: A Classic Mismatch

By Jeffrey Breshears

One of the publishing sensations of 2010 is *The Grand Design* by Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow. As a best-selling author and perhaps the world's most recognizable scientist, Hawking needs little introduction. Mlodinow is a physics professor at CalTech who is best-known in scientific circles for developing a new type of perturbation theory for eigenvalue problems in quantum mechanics. (Please read on: you'll encounter no more such terms.) Until the debut of *The Grand Design*, Mlodinow's most popular book was *The Drunkard's Walk: How Randomness Rules Our Lives*, a title which aptly expresses his worldview orientation.

Stephen Hawking is an intriguing character. He has a dazzling mind, and despite a neuromuscular dystrophy that has rendered him paralyzed for most of his life, he has flourished in his career as a theoretical physicist and cosmologist. On the subject of the existence of God, he has, for most of his career, remained ambivalent, which has given Christians some hope that he might eventually come to faith (and truth).

Twenty years ago, in his most famous work, *A Brief History of Time* (1988), Hawking hinted that he might believe in an Intelligent Designer of the universe. Playing off one of Einstein's most memorable quotes, "I want to know the mind of God," Hawking wrote, "If we discover a complete theory [a "Theory of Everything"], it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason – for then we should know the mind of God."

Apparently, Hawking is no longer riding the fence regarding God's existence. However, and unfortunately, he's dismounted on the wrong side and now makes common cause with the likes of Richard Dawkins, who heralds *The Grand Design* as the next best thing to the Second Coming of Christ. As Dawkins exclaims with unbridled enthusiasm, "Darwinism kicked God out of biology, but physics remained more uncertain. Hawking is now administering the *coup de grace*." I find it most unimpressive that Dawkins is so easily impressed.

The central thesis of the book is that the theory of quantum mechanics and the theory of relativity explain how universes can be formed out of nothing. (Yes, *universes* – plural. Like many other anti-theists, Hawking and Mlodinow (H&M) embrace as fact

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The Areopagus Calendar

— Fall Seminar —

"A History of Christianity in America, Part II: From the American Revolution to 1900"

Instructor: Dr. Jeffrey Breshears

**Tuesdays, Aug. 31 - Nov. 16, 7:30 PM
 at Perimeter Church**

**Wednesdays, Aug. 25 - Nov. 17, 7 PM
 at Mt. Bethel Community Center.**

Part 2 in a 3-part series that highlights the major people, issues and events in American Christianity from colonial times to the present, with a particular emphasis on the controversies surrounding the proper relationship between church and state.

— Fall Forums —

**"Reflections on the Campus P.C. Battles:
 The Georgia Tech Case"**

by Ruth Malhotra and Orit Sklar

**Thursday, Oct. 14, 7:30 PM
 Mt. Bethel Community Center.**

**Thursday, Oct. 21, 7:30 PM
 Perimeter Church.**

How two students took on a liberal university administration and a dishonest media, and faced relentless harassment from campus critics... and won a major case for academic freedom.

For their courageous stand against Political Correctness and the suppression of free speech on campus, Orit Sklar and Ruth Malhotra were awarded the 2009 Ronald Reagan Award by the American Conservative Union.

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one of the most speculative and preposterously unscientific theories out there – the much discredited multiverse concept. According to this notion, universes are popping up all over the place, except that you can't see them and there's no evidence for them. But they're there. Trust us – we're scientists, you know.)

Beginning with the premise that “philosophy is dead” and that science is the only reliable guide to truth, the authors make their case that the universe evolved without any design or superintending oversight by God. If that sounds too much like a philosophical assertion rather than something that is scientifically verifiable, Hawking tries to cover his derriere by declaring, “One can't prove that God doesn't exist, but science makes God unnecessary.” For evidence, he puts forth his own Theory of Everything (or “M-Theory”), which is transparently philosophical and conjectural – a fact that many of his scientific colleagues have been quick to point out. In what is probably the most memorable passage in the book, H&M boldly declare:

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. It is not necessary to invoke God to light the [fuse] and set the universe going.

An audacious claim, and one that is unsupported by any existing scientific evidence.

The *Grand Design* appears to be intelligently designed to counter the claims of Intelligent Design. Ironically, the early chapters actually make quite a

good case for I.D., only to have the authors twist the plot and take an irrational leap of faith into the speculative realm of atheistic naturalism – another philosophical detour that is unwarranted and unsupportable.

Promising scientific answers to questions such as “Why is there something rather than nothing?” and “Why do we exist?” the authors fail to deliver – and rightly so, since these are metaphysical issues that are clearly outside the parameters of science. In his review of *The Grand Design*, Andrew Halloway zeroes in on the book's fundamental flaw:

At the end of the day (or the universe), science can never be used to finally prove or disprove God, as even Richard Dawkins has admitted. Science is the study of the natural, not the supernatural. It has the wrong tools for the job.

Hawking is certifiably brilliant, but as a mere creature he's no match for his Creator. If you do an Internet search for reviews of *The Grand Design*, you'll encounter some excellent critiques from both Christian and non-Christian scientists, philosophers and even theologians. For atheists and others who were hoping (and perhaps even praying) that the book would destroy once-and-for-all that antiquated and annoying “God hypothesis,” they must surely be disappointed.

Ruminating on Hawking's central thesis and his futile attempt to argue that the universe is self-created, I'm reminded of the apostle Paul's warning in Romans 9:20 – “But who are you, O man, to challenge God?”

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“How Should Christians Relate to Muslims?”

by Dr. Sasan Tavasoli

Thursday, Nov. 11, 7:30 PM
Perimeter Church

Sasan Tavasoli (Ph.D. in Islamic Studies from the University of Birmingham, England) is a former Shi'ite Muslim from Iran, co-author with Norman Geisler of *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross*, and one of the foremost Christian scholars on Islam. Since 2006 the main focus of his ministry has been teaching on Christian satellite TV, and his Farsi broadcasts are aired in Europe, the Middle East and Iran.

“The Liberation of Black Theology”

by Dr. Anthony Bradley

Date and Time: To Be Announced

Two New Areopagus Publications

by Dr. Jeffrey Breshears

Why Study Christian History?

The Value of Understanding The Past

– and –

The Problem of Christian Anti-Intellectualism:
Why Christians Should Study Apologetics

