

# The Multiverse and God

*Is there real evidence that other universes exist? And if there were — would it argue for God, against God, or for a God who was once a man? Three questions, taken in order, with the evidence graded honestly in both directions.*

## The Big Idea

Somewhere in the last thirty years the multiverse escaped the physics journals and became a fixture of ordinary conversation. It is in the films, in the documentaries, and increasingly in the questions people bring to church: *if there are infinite universes, doesn't that explain away the fine-tuning? Doesn't it make God unnecessary?* And from another direction entirely: *doesn't "worlds without number" mean the Latter-day Saints were right?*

Both questions assume something that has never been established. So we are going to do the unglamorous thing first and ask whether there is any **veridical evidence** — evidence that actually tracks the truth, not merely evidence that a theory is elegant or popular. Only then will we ask what it would prove.

Here is the short version, so you know where we are going. **There is no direct evidence for a multiverse; every observational search so far has come back empty; and the theory currently cannot make predictions at all.**

If one were confirmed, it would not disprove God — it would weaken *one* argument for God while leaving the others untouched. And it would give no support whatever to Mormonism. In fact, on the point where Latter-day Saint theology is most distinctive, the physics cuts the other way.

**The rule we are going to follow.** We will grade the evidence honestly in *both* directions. That means naming where multiverse cosmology overreaches — and also naming where our own side, Christian apologetics, overstates the fine-tuning case. A believer has no need of a rigged scale. "Test everything; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Most of the confusion in this debate comes from one word doing four jobs. The physicist Max Tegmark sorted the proposals into four levels, and the levels are wildly different in how much they ask you to believe. Someone who says "the multiverse is basically established physics" is usually thinking of Level I. Someone who says "the multiverse explains fine-tuning" needs Level II. They are not the same claim, and the evidence for them is not the same evidence.

| LEVEL | WHAT IS BEING CLAIMED                                                                                                                                                                                      | EVIDENCE       |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| I     | Space keeps going past our horizon. Same laws, same constants, different arrangements of matter. Far enough out, a region much like this one.                                                              | MODEST         |
| II    | Inflation never fully stops. It keeps budding off "bubble" universes — and each bubble can cool into <i>different physical constants</i> . This is the level that does the work in the fine-tuning debate. | SPECULATIVE    |
| III   | Everett's "many worlds" reading of quantum mechanics: the wave function never collapses, so every outcome is realised on its own branch.                                                                   | INTERPRETATION |
| IV    | Tegmark's own proposal: every mathematical structure that could exist, does exist, as a physical reality.                                                                                                  | UNTESTABLE     |

A few honest notes on that table.

- I** **Level I is the cheap one.** It follows almost automatically if space is flat and very large, and the Planck satellite's 2018 measurements are consistent with a flat universe (curvature  $\Omega_K = 0.0007 \pm 0.0019$ ). But notice how little this buys you. Level I universes have *the same physics as ours*. They cannot explain why the constants are life-permitting, because they all share our constants. Level I is irrelevant to the God question, and it is the level with the best evidence. That is not a coincidence — it is the pattern.
- II** **Level II is the one that matters — and it needs two unproven things.** It needs *eternal inflation* (that inflation, once started, never entirely stops) and it needs a *landscape* of possible physics for the bubbles to fall into. The landscape comes from string theory, where different ways of folding up the extra dimensions yield different low-energy constants — the often-quoted figure is around  $10^{500}$  possibilities, though the estimates vary enormously. String theory has produced no confirmed experimental prediction in fifty years. So Level II is a conjecture resting on a conjecture.
- III** **Level III adds no new physics — and no new evidence either.** Many-worlds is a way of *reading* the equations we already have. Its rivals make the same experimental predictions. You may find it elegant or absurd; you cannot currently find it true or false in a laboratory. And note: many-worlds branches all share our constants too, so like Level I it does no work against fine-tuning.
- IV** **Level IV is metaphysics wearing a lab coat.** Most physicists sympathetic to Level II want nothing to do with it. It is not testable even in principle, and it is worth saying plainly that a claim of that shape is not more scientific than the doctrine of creation — it is less, because at least the doctrine of creation does not pretend to be a result.

## PART TWO • WHAT WOULD COUNT AS EVIDENCE?

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Here is the difficulty at the root of the whole subject. On nearly every version of the theory, other universes are **causally disconnected** from ours — no light, no signal, no influence has ever reached us from them, and none ever can. That is not a temporary limitation of our telescopes. It is built into what the theory says they are.

So the evidence, if it exists, has to be indirect. There are only three plausible routes:

- 1 A scar in the sky.** If our bubble ever collided with a neighbouring one, the impact could leave a circular imprint in the cosmic microwave background — the oldest light in the universe. This is the one genuinely direct test anyone has devised.
- 2 Confirmation of the parent theory.** If the physics that *generates* the multiverse were independently confirmed — if string theory made a prediction that came true, or if inflation's eternal regime could be established — the multiverse would come along as a package deal, unobserved but implied.
- 3 A statistical prediction that came true.** If reasoning "we are a typical observer in a vast ensemble" successfully predicted a number we later measured, that would be real evidence — the way we accept the existence of atoms partly because atomic theory kept predicting the right numbers.

Route 1 has been tried and has failed. Route 2 has not happened. Route 3 has one interesting case, which we will treat fairly in Part Four. Let us take them in that order.

## PART THREE • THE SEARCHES THAT CAME BACK EMPTY

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This is the part that rarely makes the documentaries. Actual observational searches for multiverse signatures have been carried out by serious people with the best instruments ever built. Here is what they found.

#### SEARCH ONE · BUBBLE COLLISIONS

### Circles in the oldest light

*Feeney, Johnson, Mortlock & Peiris, Physical Review Letters 107, 071301 (2011); Planck Collaboration 2013 results XXVI*

In 2011 a team at University College London ran the first serious observational test of eternal inflation, hunting the WMAP sky maps for the circular temperature discontinuities a bubble collision would leave. They found four candidate features — and then, to their credit, reported that the data did not support claiming a detection.

The Planck satellite, with substantially better resolution and sensitivity, ran the definitive version of the search. **Nothing.** No statistically significant bubble-collision signature exists in the best map of the early universe we have.

#### STATUS

The one direct test that could have detected another universe has been run, carefully, twice. It returned a null result.

#### SEARCH TWO · DARK FLOW

### Something pulling from outside

*Kashlinsky et al., Astrophysical Journal Letters 686 (2008); Planck Collaboration results (2013–2014)*

In 2008 a team reported that distant galaxy clusters seemed to be streaming in a common direction faster than standard cosmology allows — and suggested the pull might come from beyond our observable horizon, possibly from structures in another region of a larger multiverse. It made headlines everywhere.

Planck's measurements did not confirm it. The bulk flow, measured properly, came out consistent with ordinary cosmology. The result is now generally attributed to systematic error in the original analysis. **This one is not merely unconfirmed; it has largely been withdrawn from the field's working evidence.**

#### SEARCH THREE · THE ANOMALIES

### The Cold Spot and the lopsided sky

*CMB anomalies as claimed multiverse traces*

Two features of the microwave sky get invoked: a large cold region in the southern sky, and a slight asymmetry between the two hemispheres. Both have been proposed at various times as bruises from a neighbouring universe.

The honest reading is that their statistical significance is *modest*, and that it shrinks further once you account for the fact that we went looking through an enormous sky for *something* unusual — find enough patterns and one of them will look striking by chance. Ordinary explanations are available for both. **They are curiosities, not evidence.**

**Keep this straight.** A null result is not proof that no multiverse exists — you cannot prove a negative about regions you cannot reach. But it does dispose of the popular claim that there is "growing evidence." There is no evidence. There are failed searches, and there is theoretical motivation. Those are different things, and the difference is the whole of Part Two.

Fairness requires us to state the best argument on the other side as strongly as its advocates do, and this is it.

In **1987**, more than a decade before anyone had measured it, the Nobel laureate Steven Weinberg published an argument about the cosmological constant — the energy of empty space, the thing now called dark energy. His reasoning was explicitly *anthropic* and explicitly assumed something like a multiverse: *if* this constant varies across a vast ensemble of regions, then observers can only arise where it is small enough to permit galaxies to form. So we should not expect to measure zero; we should expect to measure a small non-zero value, near the largest that still allows galaxies.

**A word we will use several times: *anthropic*.** It comes from the Greek ἀνθρώπος (*anthrōpos*), "human being," and the physicist Brandon Carter coined "the anthropic principle" in 1973. It has nothing to do with any company that has since borrowed the same Greek root. In cosmology it means *observer-related selection*: the reasoning that we should not be astonished to find ourselves in a life-permitting universe, because we could not have found ourselves in any other kind. Note carefully what that does and does not do. As a caution against a certain kind of surprise, it is perfectly sound and no Christian need resist it. As an *explanation* of why the constants are what they are, it does no work at all unless there really are many universes to select from — which is the whole question. Keep those two uses apart and most of the confusion in this debate disappears.

In **1998** two teams measured the accelerating expansion of the universe and found exactly that: a small, non-zero cosmological constant. Weinberg's paper had, in a real sense, called it in advance.

*This is the single best piece of evidence multiverse advocates have, and no honest treatment can wave it away. If a framework predicts a number before it is measured, that counts for something.*

Three qualifications, all of which the physics community itself acknowledges:

1

**The prediction was in the right neighbourhood, not on target.** Depending on the assumptions fed in, the anthropically predicted value comes out roughly an order of magnitude or more above what we observe. Being close is impressive; it is not the kind of decimal-place agreement that settles a question.

2

**It is a statistical argument, not a detection.** It tells us what a typical observer in a hypothesised ensemble should see. It does not show the ensemble is there.

3

**It depends entirely on the "measure" — and nobody has one.** To say what a *typical* observer sees, you need a way of counting observers across the ensemble. This turns out to be the deepest problem in the whole subject, and it is where we go next.

If you take away one technical idea from this lesson, make it this one, because it is the thing the popular treatments never mention and it is decisive.

In an eternally inflating multiverse, bubbles keep forming *forever*. Every kind of universe that can occur, occurs — infinitely many times. Now try to ask a question like "what fraction of observers see a cosmological constant like ours?" You are dividing one infinity by another. The answer depends entirely on the order in which you count, and different reasonable-looking counting rules — physicists call this the **measure problem** — give radically different answers.

**This is not a small technical wrinkle.** Until the measure problem is solved, an eternally inflating multiverse makes *no predictions at all*. Anything you want to observe, some measure will tell you to expect. A theory that predicts everything predicts nothing.

And the problem has teeth. The most notorious consequence is the **Boltzmann brain**. In a universe that lasts forever, random thermal fluctuations will occasionally assemble a conscious observer — complete with false memories of a life and a coherent-looking moment of experience — out of the void. On most proposed measures, these fluctuation-observers *vastly* outnumber ordinary ones like us who arose through billions of years of orderly cosmic history.

Which means that on most measures, the theory predicts you should be a Boltzmann brain, and your next moment of experience should dissolve into chaos. It does not. The room is still here; the sentence still parses; the world remains stubbornly orderly. Sean Carroll — himself an advocate of many-worlds — has argued that theories predicting Boltzmann-brain dominance are thereby *cognitively unstable*: if you believed one, you would have no grounds for trusting the reasoning that led you to believe it.

This is why the criticism from inside physics is so sharp. **Paul Steinhardt**, one of the architects of inflationary cosmology, has publicly argued that the multiverse turns inflation into a theory that cannot fail and therefore cannot be tested. **George Ellis** and **Joe Silk** went so far as to publish a warning in *Nature* (2014) that the field was abandoning the empirical standards that make physics physics. These are not creationists at the door. They are the discipline's own senior figures.

### "You are using the wrong standard"

The most serious reply, argued by Sean Carroll among others, is that demanding direct falsifiability of every entity in a theory is bad philosophy of science. We accept the interiors of black holes and the quark content of protons without observing them individually; we accept them because they fall out of frameworks that succeed elsewhere. On this view the multiverse should be judged by ordinary standards of theoretical fit and simplicity, not by whether we can photograph one.

**That is a fair point, and we should grant it.** But grant it and the conclusion still holds: judged by ordinary theoretical standards, the framework it comes packaged with has no confirmed predictions and an unsolved measure problem at its heart. Loosening the standard of evidence does not create evidence.

## PART SIX · WHY THE MULTIVERSE IS ARGUED FOR AT ALL

Nobody arrived at the multiverse by looking through a telescope and finding one. It became attractive because of a genuine, agreed-upon feature of the universe we do observe: **the constants of physics sit in an extraordinarily narrow range compatible with anything interesting existing at all.**

Three of these are worth taking seriously, and are not disputed as facts:

- **The cosmological constant.** The naive theoretical estimate of the energy of empty space exceeds the observed value by a staggering factor. Larger, and the universe would tear itself apart before galaxies formed; negative and larger, and it would recollapse.
- **The nuclear constants.** Fred Hoyle famously predicted a specific energy level in carbon on the grounds that without it, no carbon — and it was found. Small shifts in the strong force or the neutron-proton mass difference and you get a universe of hydrogen only, or no hydrogen at all.
- **The initial entropy.** Roger Penrose calculated that the low-entropy starting condition of our universe represents a precision of one part in  $10^{10^{123}}$  — a number that cannot be written out in ordinary notation because there is not enough matter in the universe to print the zeros.

Given facts like these, there are essentially three responses available: it is a brute accident; it is the product of a selection effect across many universes; or it is the product of intention. The multiverse is the second. It exists in the literature *as an alternative to design* — which is exactly why Christians should understand it accurately rather than caricature it.

**Where our own side overstates — read this carefully.** Popular apologetics often inflates the fine-tuning case in three ways, and each one hands the other side an easy win. (1) The famous " $10^{120}$ " for the cosmological constant is a comparison against a *naïve* theoretical estimate, not a measured quantity; the real puzzle is serious but the number is doing rhetorical work it cannot support. (2) Long lists of "hundreds of fine-tuned constants" circulate that are not independent of one another and were never vetted by anyone competent to vet them — use the few solid cases, not the long list. (3) "Fine-tuned for life" is often smuggled in as "fine-tuned for *us*," which is a stronger claim than the physics delivers. A case that needs padding is a case you should be suspicious of. Ours does not need it.

## PART SEVEN · FOUR THINGS THAT BLUNT THE ARGUMENT

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that the multiverse were confirmed tomorrow. Would fine-tuning then be explained away, and God with it? Four considerations say no — and we will grade our confidence in each, because two of these are much stronger than the other two.

### CONSIDERATION ONE · CONTESTED

#### The inverse gambler's fallacy

*Ian Hacking, Mind 96 (1987); Roger White, Noûs 34 (2000)*

Walk into a casino, watch one player roll double sixes, and conclude "there must have been many rolls tonight." That is a fallacy — the other rolls do nothing to make *this* roll more likely. Roger White argued the multiverse commits the same error: what needs explaining is not that *some* universe is life-permitting but that *this one* — the one we are in and observing — is. A larger ensemble raises the odds of the first and leaves the second untouched.

**The honest caveat:** this argument is genuinely contested, and it has taken serious fire. Critics reply that the case is disanalogous because of an *observation selection effect* — you could not have found yourself in a non-life-permitting universe, so the sampling is not like watching an arbitrary roll. The debate has run for twenty-five years and is not settled. **Use it as a live philosophical objection, never as a knock-down.**

### BOTH SIDES WORTH READING

For White's case: *Noûs* 34 (2000). For the replies: Manson & Thrush (2003), Juhl (2005), Bradley (2009). For a careful book-length survey that leans against the theistic use of it: Simon Friederich, *Multiverse Theories* (Cambridge, 2021).

#### CONSIDERATION TWO · STRONG

### The machine that makes universes is itself finely tuned

*Robin Collins, in The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology (2009)*

A universe generator is not nothing. Eternal inflation requires an inflaton field with a suitable potential, a mechanism that actually varies the constants from bubble to bubble, and background laws stable enough for any of it to work. Change those and the machine produces nothing, or produces uniformly sterile universes.

So the fine-tuning has not been eliminated. It has been *relocated* — pushed up one level, into the mechanism. This is the reply that has held up best over thirty years of debate, and it has never been satisfactorily answered.

#### CONSIDERATION THREE · STRONG

### Penrose's objection: it would have been far cheaper to fake it

*Roger Penrose on the initial entropy*

The anthropic argument runs like this: of all the universes in the ensemble, we necessarily find ourselves in one of the rare ones that permits observers, so no further explanation is needed. Fine. But now ask what the *cheapest* observer-permitting arrangement is. Penrose's point is that a vastly smaller, more probable fluctuation — a solar system, a room, a brain — would have been enough to produce an observer having your exact current experience. Producing 13.8 billion years of orderly cosmic history first is an astronomically extravagant way to make one observer.

So anthropic reasoning does not predict the universe we actually see. It predicts a much smaller and messier one. That is the Boltzmann-brain problem again, and it is a genuine strike against selection as an explanation.

#### CONSIDERATION FOUR · STRONGEST

### It does not touch the question underneath

*Borde, Guth & Vilenkin, Physical Review Letters 90, 151301 (2003)*

Grant a multiverse. It is still a *thing that exists* — contingent, structured, law-governed, and utterly unexplained by its own contents. Why is there an ensemble rather than nothing? Multiplying universes multiplies the question; it does not answer it.

And there is a hard result here, not just a philosophical intuition. The **Borde–Guth–Vilenkin theorem** (2003) shows that any spacetime which has been expanding on average throughout its past cannot be extended infinitely into the past. *This applies to eternal inflation itself.* The multiverse is eternal into the future, not the past. Alexander Vilenkin, an atheist and a co-author of the theorem, put it bluntly: cosmologists can no longer hide behind a past-eternal universe; they have to face the problem of a cosmic beginning.

#### WHY THIS IS THE STRONGEST OF THE FOUR

It does not depend on any contested philosophical premise, and it does not depend on fine-tuning being a good argument. It is a theorem plus a question that no amount of extra universes can answer.

Notice what the Bible does *not* do. It never tells us how many worlds there are, and it never offers a cosmological model we could test. What it claims is something a physics result can neither establish nor overturn: that whatever exists, exists *because* God spoke it, and that it is not self-explanatory.

## SEPTUAGINT (LXX) & GREEK NEW TESTAMENT

**Gen 1:1** Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν.

**Ps 19:1 · LXX 18:2** Οἱ οὐρανοὶ διηγούνται δόξαν θεοῦ, ποίησιν δὲ χειρῶν αὐτοῦ ἀναγγέλλει τὸ **στερέωμα**.

**Ps 33:6 · LXX 32:6** Τῷ **λόγῳ** τοῦ κυρίου οἱ οὐρανοὶ ἐστερεώθησαν, καὶ τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ πᾶσα ἡ δύναμις αὐτῶν.

**Isa 45:18** ...οὐκ εἰς **κενὸν** ἐποίησεν αὐτήν ἀλλὰ **κατοικεῖσθαι** ἔπλασεν αὐτήν· ἐγὼ εἰμι, καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ἕτι.

**John 1:3** Πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν ὃ γέγονεν.

**Rom 1:20** Τὰ γὰρ **ἀόρατα** αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ κτίσεως **κόσμου** τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα **καθορᾶται**, ἥ τε αἰδῖος αὐτοῦ δύναμις καὶ θεϊότης.

**Col 1:16–17** ...τὰ πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ καὶ εἰς αὐτὸν ἔκτισται· καὶ αὐτός ἐστιν πρὸ πάντων καὶ τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ **συνέστηκεν**.

**Heb 11:3** Πίστει νοοῦμεν κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς **αἰῶνας** ῥήματι θεοῦ, εἰς τὸ μὴ ἐκ φαινομένων τὸ βλεπόμενον γεγονέναι.

## ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION

**Gen 1:1** "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

**Ps 19:1** "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork."

**Ps 33:6** "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, and by the breath of his mouth all their host."

**Isa 45:18** "...he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): 'I am the LORD, and there is no other.'"

**John 1:3** "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."

**Rom 1:20** "For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made."

**Col 1:16–17** "All things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together."

**Heb 11:3** "By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible."

**An honest note on the Greek and the Hebrew.** Two places where the Septuagint and the Hebrew text are not saying quite the same thing, which we flag rather than paper over. (1) **Genesis 1:2** — the Hebrew reads *תהו ובהו* (*tohu wabohu*), "formless and void," while the LXX translators rendered it *ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος*, "invisible and unformed." The Greek carries a philosophical flavour the Hebrew does not, and later Greek-speaking theologians built on that flavour. (2) **Psalm numbering** — from Psalm 9/10 through 147 the Septuagint runs one behind the Hebrew, so our Psalm 19 is the LXX's Psalm 18, and its verse 1 is verse 2 there because the superscription is counted. We print both.

## αἰῶνας

*aiōnas* — "the ages," *Hebrews 11:3*

Older English Bibles render this "the worlds," and that translation has been pressed into service as a biblical multiverse. It will not bear the weight. Αἰών is fundamentally a word for *an age, a span of time*, and in the plural it means the whole created order considered across its duration — time and everything in it. The ESV's "the universe" catches the sense correctly. Hebrews is not counting worlds; it is saying that the entire stretch of what exists was *fitted together* (κατηρτίσθαι) by a spoken word, and that the visible did not come from the visible. That last clause, incidentally, is one of the strongest scriptural supports for creation out of nothing.

## συνέστηκεν

*synestēken* — "hold together," *Colossians 1:17*

A perfect tense: a state established in the past and still standing. Paul is not saying Christ started things and stepped back; he is saying the cohesion of everything is a present, continuous act of the Son. This is the verse that decides how a Christian should think about physical law in the first place. Laws are not a rival explanation to God — they are the *description* of how God ordinarily and faithfully upholds what he made. That is why discovering a deeper law has never once, in the history of the church, been a defeat for the doctrine of creation.

## καθορᾶται

*kathoratai* — "are clearly perceived," *Romans 1:20*

Paul builds a deliberate paradox: the ἀόρατα ("invisible things") of God are καθορᾶται ("clearly seen"). The compound verb intensifies — seen *right down*, perceived thoroughly. And note his epistemology: it is τοῖς ποιήμασιν νοούμενα, "being understood *by means of the things that have been made*." Paul expects the creation to be *reasoned about*. He is not asking anyone to stop looking through the telescope. He is saying that what you find there, when you reason honestly about it, does not terminate in itself.

## κενόν / κατοικεῖσθαι

*kenon / katoikeisthai* — "empty" / "to be inhabited," *Isaiah 45:18*

Isaiah's God says he did not make the earth εἰς κενόν — "for emptiness," "to no purpose" — but κατοικεῖσθαι, "to be inhabited." The Hebrew behind "empty" is תהו (*tohu*), the same word as Genesis 1:2. This is the sharpest scriptural contrast to the multiverse's implied picture. In an anthropic ensemble, habitability is a filter we passed through by accident, and the overwhelming majority of reality is waste. In Isaiah, habitability is the *stated intention* of the one who made it. Those are two genuinely different accounts of why anyone is here.

## κόσμος

*kosmos* — "world," "ordered arrangement"

The Greek word the New Testament uses for the world means, at root, *order* — the same root that gives us "cosmetic," something arranged well. It was the philosophers' word before it was the apostles': to call the universe a κόσμος at all was already to claim it is ordered rather than chaotic. Paul stands in Athens and takes the word over: "The God who made the world (τὸν κόσμον) and everything in it... he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything" (Acts 17:24–25). He is speaking to Stoics and Epicureans — the ancient world's own naturalists — and he does not begin by attacking their observations. He begins by naming who stands behind them.

## בָּרָא

*bara'* — "created," *Genesis 1:1*

In the Hebrew Bible this verb takes *only God* as its subject — never a human craftsman. It is not the ordinary word for making or shaping something out of available material; it marks a divine act in a class of its own. This word will matter directly in Part Nine, because Joseph Smith staked a central doctrinal claim on the assertion that בָּרָא means "to organise" pre-existing matter rather than to create. Note also the LXX's choice: ἐποίησεν, from ποιέω — and it is the cognate noun ποιήματα, "the things made," that Paul reaches for in Romans 1:20.

## PART NINE • DOES THE MULTIVERSE ARGUE FOR MORMONISM?

This question comes up often enough to deserve a direct answer, and the answer requires care and courtesy. Latter-day Saints are our neighbours in this county, and a great many of them are people of real personal devotion. Misrepresenting what they believe would be both a sin and a tactical blunder. So let us do what we always do: read their texts, ask who wrote them and to whom, and then ask what the physics actually bears on.

**First, a fact worth stating plainly:** the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not teach the physics multiverse. It has never issued a doctrinal statement about eternal inflation or the string landscape. The parallel is drawn by popular writers on both sides, not by the Church. We are examining an argument that circulates informally, not an official position.

## THE TEXTS · WHAT IS ACTUALLY CLAIMED

### "Worlds without number"

Moses 1:33, 35; 7:30 (*Pearl of Great Price*); Doctrine and Covenants 76:24; Abraham 3:2–4, 9

The Latter-day Saint scriptures do teach a plurality of worlds, and they teach it vividly. In the Book of Moses, God tells Moses that "worlds without number have I created... and by the Son I created them," while adding that only "an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof" is given (Moses 1:33, 35). Doctrine and Covenants 76:24 says that "by him, and through him, and of him, the worlds are and were created, and the inhabitants thereof are begotten sons and daughters unto God." The Book of Abraham describes *Kolob*, a great star "nearest unto the throne of God," governing time (Abraham 3:2–4, 9).

**Now read what that says.** These are *many inhabited worlds within one created order*, all made by the same God, through the same Son, populated by his offspring, and located in a single reckoning of time and space that Kolob governs. That is a claim about how much God has made — and it stands in a long tradition. Christians have debated the "plurality of worlds" since at least the sixteenth century, and long before Joseph Smith: Giordano Bruno argued for it in 1584, and Fontenelle popularised it for European drawing rooms in 1686.

#### THE DECISIVE POINT

A physics multiverse is not many planets. It is many universes *with different physical constants and different laws*, causally disconnected, most of them sterile. Moses 1:33 describes the opposite: one order, one Creator, one Son, worlds full of inhabitants. Confirming Level II would not confirm Moses 1; the two are describing different things.

**This is the concordist error, and it is not a Mormon error only.** Reading modern physics back into an ancient text — "see, it predicted this all along" — is a method, and the method is bad wherever it appears. Evangelicals do it with Genesis 1 and the Big Bang. Others do it with Isaiah 40:22 and the curvature of the earth. It always feels like a win and it always costs more than it gains, because a text made to prove today's cosmology will have to be re-made when the cosmology changes. Ask what the author meant and what his audience could have understood. That question has an answer; the concordist question does not.

## AUTHOR & AUDIENCE

### Who wrote these texts, and for whom

Our standard method applies here as everywhere. The Book of Moses came through Joseph Smith in 1830–31 as part of his revision of Genesis; the Book of Abraham was published in 1842; the relevant sections of the Doctrine and Covenants date from the 1830s and 1840s. The audience was a young American religious movement under intense pressure, in a nation then gripped by revival, restorationist fervour, and popular fascination with astronomy and the plurality of worlds — a subject that filled the lecture halls and periodicals of the 1830s.

That context does not settle whether the texts are true. It does establish what questions they were engaging: they are speaking into a nineteenth-century conversation about the extent of God's creation and the destiny of human beings. They are not addressing a twentieth-century argument about vacuum states in a string landscape, and reading that argument into them tells you nothing about either.

## THE REAL DIFFERENCE

### Where Latter-day Saint theology genuinely departs — and why the physics does not help

*D&C 93:29, 33; 130:22; 132:20; the King Follett Discourse (7 April 1844)*

The distinctive claims are not about how many worlds there are. They are about *what God is*, and there are three:

**1. Matter and intelligence are eternal and uncreated.** "Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be" (D&C 93:29); "The elements are eternal" (93:33). In the King Follett Discourse of April 1844, Joseph Smith argued this from the Hebrew directly, holding that the word behind "created" means to *organise* pre-existing material, so that God did not create matter but organised chaotic matter that always existed.

**2. God is embodied and located.** "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's" (D&C 130:22).

**3. God was once a man, and men may become gods.** Lorenzo Snow's couplet of 1840 — as man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may be — and the promise of D&C 132:20, "then shall they be gods." *In fairness*: the Church's own Gospel Topics essay "Becoming Like God" (2014) treats the first half of that couplet cautiously, noting how little is claimed to be known about it. It should not be presented as though every Latter-day Saint holds it in the same form.

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#### NOTE ON THE SOURCE

The King Follett Discourse was delivered orally and survives through the notes of several scribes, later amalgamated. Its authority is not uncontested within the Latter-day Saint tradition itself — a genuine author-and-audience consideration that fairness requires us to state.

## Why the multiverse cuts against this rather than for it

Now put the physics next to those three claims, and watch which direction the evidence actually runs.

**Against claim 1.** The Borde–Guth–Vilenkin theorem is a problem specifically for eternally existing matter. It says that an expanding cosmos — a single universe or an inflating multiverse — cannot be extended infinitely into the past. A theology built on matter that always existed and was merely organised is in *more* difficulty after 2003, not less. Classical Christian theism, which has taught creation out of nothing since the second century, is in none.

**Against claims 2 and 3 — and this is the heart of it.** Ask what kind of being could explain a multiverse. It would have to be something that is not itself one more item inside the ensemble; something not made of the matter whose existence is in question; something that does not depend on space and time, because space and time are precisely what needs accounting for. A God who has a physical body, who occupies a location near a particular star, who was once a mortal man in an earlier world and progressed to divinity, is *a being within the system*. He is part of the thing that requires explanation. He cannot ground it.

So the inference runs backwards from the popular intuition. If a multiverse were ever confirmed, it would press *harder* on a finite, embodied, once-mortal God — because it would enlarge, enormously, the contingent reality that such a God is himself embedded in and cannot account for. The God who can answer the question is the God of Colossians 1:17: the one who is *before all things*, in whom all things hold together.

**The plain answer to the question, then:** no. A multiverse would not be evidence for Mormonism. Its scriptures describe many inhabited worlds in one creation, not many creations with different laws; the parallel is a concordist reading rather than a prediction; and on the points where Latter-day Saint theology is genuinely distinctive — eternal uncreated matter, an embodied and exalted God — the cosmology tells against it. Note carefully that *this is not an argument against Latter-day Saints*. It is an argument about which doctrine of God can carry the weight the question puts on it. Those conversations are worth having with our neighbours, in person, kindly, and from the texts.

- 1 **On the evidence: no.** There is no direct evidence for a multiverse. Level I is a modest extrapolation that does no theological work; Level II depends on unconfirmed physics; Level III is an interpretation; Level IV is untestable. Three observational searches have returned nothing, and the measure problem means the theory currently makes no predictions. Anyone who tells you the evidence is mounting is telling you about a mood in the culture, not a result in the journals.
- 2 **On God — against:** a confirmed multiverse would weaken the fine-tuning argument. That is real and we should say so. Fine-tuning is one argument among many, and it would take a hit.
- 3 **On God — for:** and yet not much of one, because the machine would still be tuned, the entropy problem would remain, and the ensemble would still be a contingent thing with a beginning, requiring an explanation it cannot supply. Meanwhile every other line of the case — the existence of anything at all, the reality of moral obligation, the fact of consciousness, and above all the historical evidence for the resurrection of Jesus — would stand exactly where it stood before. A multiverse is not an argument against God. It is at most a complication for one argument for God.
- 4 **And it is not evidence for atheism either.** Some of the most capable theistic physicists alive accept a multiverse without difficulty; some atheist cosmologists reject it as unscientific. It simply is not the dividing line people assume. If you are a Christian who finds the idea interesting, you are in respectable company. If you find it extravagant, so do George Ellis and Paul Steinhardt.
- 5 **What we should actually do with all this.** Refuse to be stampeded in either direction. Do not stake your faith on a cosmological argument that a future paper could weaken, and do not lose it over a headline about parallel worlds. The Christian claim was never that the universe is inexplicable without God. It is that the universe, and everything else, is *held together* by the Son who died and rose — and that claim rests on an empty tomb in Jerusalem, which is a matter of history and testimony, not of cosmology.

*The heavens declare the glory of God — and they would go on declaring it if there were one of them or ten to the five hundredth. What Psalm 19 asserts is not a count. It is an Author.*

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

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1. Before this lesson, which of the four levels did you have in mind when you heard the word "multiverse"? Does sorting them change how the argument feels?
2. Why is it significant that the level with the best evidence (Level I) is also the level that does *no* work against fine-tuning?
3. Read Hebrews 11:3 in both columns. Why will "the worlds" not stretch to mean a physics multiverse — and what is the verse actually claiming?
4. The lesson names three places where Christian apologetics overstates fine-tuning. Why does padding a good argument make it weaker rather than stronger?
5. Isaiah 45:18 says God formed the earth "to be inhabited," not "for emptiness." How is that a different account of habitability than an anthropic selection effect?
6. Explain the concordist error in your own words. Can you think of a time you have heard a sermon commit it — in our own tradition?
7. Why can a God who has a physical body and a location in space not serve as the explanation of a multiverse? What does Colossians 1:17 claim instead?
8. If a bubble-collision signature *were* found tomorrow, what in your faith would change? Sit with that honestly. What does your answer tell you about where your confidence is actually resting?

*Father, you made what we can see and everything we cannot, and you were not diminished by the size of it. Forgive us for the smallness of the God we sometimes defend — a God who fits in the gaps of what we do not yet understand, and who shrinks every time a scientist explains something. Give us the courage to look honestly at the evidence, to say "we do not know" without fear, and to refuse arguments we know are weak even when they are on our side. Keep us from despising the people who study your world; many of them see more of your handiwork in a day than we do in a year. Where our neighbours believe differently than we do, make us patient, accurate, and kind — more interested in them than in winning. And hold us, Lord Jesus, in the only place that is finally secure: not in a cosmological argument, but in you, before all things, in whom all things hold together, who died and rose and is not a theory. Amen.*

**Pleasant Springs Church · Pinson, Tennessee**

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Scripture set in the Septuagint (LXX) and the ESV, per the practice of Pleasant Springs Church. Cosmology from Tegmark, *Scientific American* (May 2003); Planck Collaboration 2018 results VI and 2013 results XXVI; Feeney, Johnson, Mortlock & Peiris, *PRL* 107 (2011); Kashlinsky et al., *ApJL* 686 (2008); Weinberg, *PRL* 59 (1987); Bousso & Polchinski (2000); Borde, Guth & Vilenkin, *PRL* 90 (2003); Penrose, *The Emperor's New Mind* (1989); Ellis & Silk, *Nature* 516 (2014); Steinhardt, *Nature* 510 (2014). Philosophy from Hacking, *Mind* 96 (1987); White, *Noûs* 34 (2000); Manson & Thrush (2003); Juhl (2005); Bradley (2009); Friederich, *Multiverse Theories* (Cambridge, 2021); Collins in *The Blackwell Companion to Natural Theology* (2009); Kraay, ed., *God and the Multiverse* (Routledge, 2014). Latter-day Saint teaching quoted from its own scriptures and from the Church's Gospel Topics essay "Becoming Like God" (2014).