

Please Leave a Message

The Big Bang and Old Phone Numbers

by Daniel J. Bressler, MD

COSMIC MICROWAVE Background Radiation (CMBR) is the presence of electromagnetic energy, mostly in the microwave frequency, that is found uniformly throughout the universe. It is thought to be the residual radiation effect of rapidly expanding primordial matter. The discovery of this radiation is an essential piece of evidence for what has become known as the Big Bang Theory. The radiation sends us information from more than 13 billion years ago. It happened “then” and we learn about it “now.”

Electromagnetic energy in all forms (radio waves, light waves, X-rays, etc.) spreads out in all directions, and, at least theoretically, it also spreads infinitely. When we say our cell phone is in or out of range of a signal (as in Verizon’s famous “Can you hear me now?” commercials), it refers to whether the antenna of the receiver has the sensitivity to pick up the information contained in the available waves. The waves are there,

however weak, in any case.

But what happens to the voicemail, telephone conversations, ringtones, and other information that are contained on a mobile phone once the owner dies? All the information that has been previously transmitted is radiating infinitely to the far ends of space-time. Meanwhile, although Sprint may reassign the number, it often remains with its earlier link on the phones of friends and family who are not yet ready to remove one more physical bond with the deceased. And so it is on my phone where I see the face and number of a dear friend who recently departed for “parts unknown.” This poem is for her. **SDP**

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Please Leave a Message

*I call you on the telephone
Expecting yet your voice
I fumble past the dial tone
But all I get is noise*

*I've called to hear your speech again
If only prerecorded
To feel you within reach again
From where you've teleported*

*Do roaming charges still apply
In the swirl of supernova?
Is your iPhone lost amidst the sky
In the cushions of God's sofa?*

*Is your number portable
To n-dimensional space?
Are galactic calls affordable
From your transcendental place?*

*I try to reach your old device
I'm waiting for the beep
I speed-dial past your death's disguise
And text you in my sleep.*