

The Great Oxidation Event: A Parable for Our Times

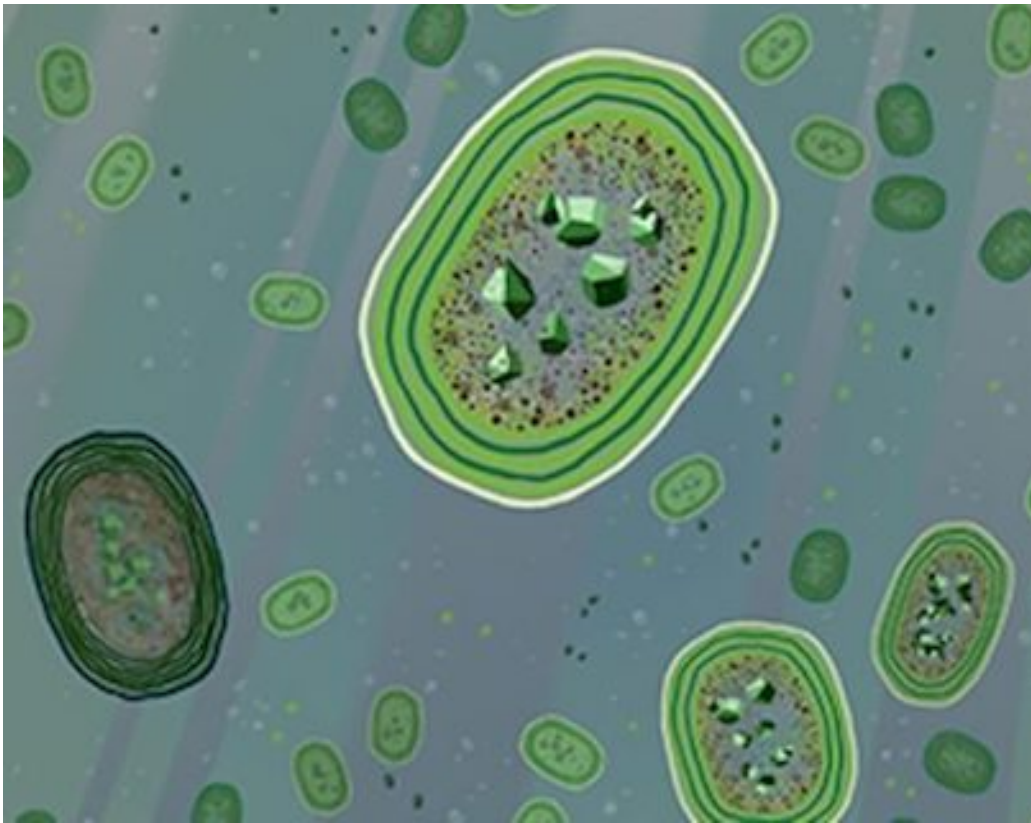


Illustration of Cyanobacteria, Prochlorococcus spp. Source: Derek Tan/flickr.com.

2,400,000,001 BCE

Cyano1: Whatya mean we're destroying our planet with climate change?

Cyano2: Isn't it obvious? Look at what Big Nitro is doing! Spewing out oxygen faster than it can be absorbed by our earth's crust!

Cyano1: Yeah, okay. But we still have plenty of methane in our atmosphere, and I'm sure that they'll figure out a way to get rid of that pesky oxygen.

And, besides, look at what Big Nitro has done for us. Ever since they figured out how to get energy from photosynthesizing water millions of years ago, we Prochlorococcus have expanded all across the globe.

Cyano2: But, but Look at all that oxygen in the air! And it's getting into our water, and now there are huge parts of the seas where we Procholos can't live. If this goes on much longer, only those slimy Aerobs will be left around.

Cyano1: Oh, you're just being an alarmist. I'm sure everything will work out.