

The Origins of the Universe

All religions

No one saw exactly how the Earth came to be like it is... but science and religion both have their theories.

Scientific Arguments — There are Two Main Types

Cosmological Theories — How the Universe Began

Chief amongst these is the Big Bang theory. It says that the Universe began in an explosion of matter and energy. Matter from this explosion eventually formed stars, planets and everything else. The Universe still seems to be expanding — important evidence for this theory.

Evolutionary Theories — How Living Things Changed

Charles Darwin argued that life on Earth originated from simple cells. Life evolved (gradually changed) over millions of years into a huge variety of forms, and those best adapted survived — 'survival of the fittest'. According to this theory, people evolved from apes, not Adam and Eve.

Non-religious people look to science for answers. They believe that the universe and human life came about by chance. They say that since people evolved from apes, they can't have been created by God.

Religions have their own Ideas about all this...

Some religious people believe only in the stories written in scriptures. Others believe that science tells them how the world was created, but religion explains why. They believe that God caused the Big Bang, and evolution is the way he made humans.



Christian Ideas

- 1) Genesis chapter 1 says God created everything over six days. On the seventh day he rested. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 describe how God created people in his image, and made woman from man (see p.3).
- 2) Some believe the Bible gives a literal account of what happened. People who disagree with evolution claim there's a lack of proof backing up the theory — fossils don't show the full process of evolution.
- 3) However, lots of Christians view the creation story as symbolic and also believe in scientific theories. The Big Bang theory was actually first put forward by a Roman Catholic priest, Georges Lemaître, so religion and science don't have to be completely separate.
- 4) In fact, many believe that science and religious ideas can exist in harmony. Both the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church have recognised the benefits of the two working together.

"Collaboration between religion and science is mutually beneficial..." General Synod of the Church of England, 2010

"Evolution in nature does not conflict with the notion of Creation..." Pope Francis, Pontifical Academy of Sciences, October 27 2014

Jewish Ideas

- 1) The Jewish creation story is in Genesis and is the same as the Christian one (see p.3).
- 2) Jews interpret this story in different ways. Ultra-orthodox Jews believe it is literally true, and would find it difficult to accept scientific arguments.
- 3) Others would argue that the Torah account is a metaphor, and are open to scientific evidence.

"So God created mankind in his own image..." Genesis 1:27 NIV

Islamic Ideas

- 1) The Muslim creation story is similar to that in Genesis: "It is Allah who created the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them in six days" (Qur'an 32:4).
- 2) The Qur'an says Allah "began the creation of man from clay" (Qur'an 32:7) and breathed life and a soul into the first man, Adam — and all humans descend from him.
- 3) Some see the descriptions of creation in the Qur'an as agreeing with science. E.g. the Qur'an says "Have those who disbelieved not considered that the heavens and the earth were a joined entity, and We separated them..." (Qur'an 21:30) — this could be understood to support the Big Bang theory.

No monkeying around now, there's a lot to learn here...

Jot down all the beliefs you've learnt about the origins of the universe.

