**“The claims that the universe originated in the Big Bang and that God created the world are not in direct conflict”. Polkinghorne.**

**How far could Christians agree with this view?**

Many Christians agree with the Big Bang and God as Creator. For example, Russell Stannard a prize winning physicist, holds to the Anthropic Principle which says the universe was made in order to form and sustain human life. In other words, conditions have to be just right for the Big Bang to produce a universe with the right environment for life to arise spontaneously. God ensured that all the ‘chance’ events took place at exactly the right time. Without God the chances of the Big Bang producing a universe are statistically zero.

How does this fit with Genesis? For Stannard and some other ‘theistic creationists’, Genesis is a pre-scientific, mythological account of the beginning of the universe. Religious myths are imaginative stories to explain what could not be understood, and contain important religious and theological truths. They have to be demythologised to understand the real meaning of the text and yield its message eg. God is all powerful, he is the creator and has a purpose for his creation. Stannard thus combines what he knows of the Big Bang theory with an acceptance of God as Creator.

Other theistic creationists hold to the Day Age theory, which states that each of the days of Genesis was not 24 hours but a long period of time, millions of years. The use of the word ‘day’ is part of a sophisticated literary style to show God was the Creator with no rivals, He is eternal, the universe is His work and we live in a universe of order and not chaos.

Again this view leaves the Big Bang as a possible explanation of the beginning of the universe without contradicting the Genesis account.

There are other Christians however who insist on 6 literal 24 days of creation about ten thousand years ago. They would not agree with Polkinghorne’s assertion because the Big Bang theory says the universe is billions of years old. These ‘historic creationists’ use scientific and philosophical arguments against the Big Bang theory. Like theistic creationists they say the chances of the Big Bang forming anything like our universe are practically nil. Scientists cannot probe back to point ‘zero’, the very beginning, and there is no absolute proof that the Big Bang took place at all. The evidence is contradictory for as well as red shift indicating objects travelling away from us, there is also blue shift, which indicates objects travelling towards us.

They also ask questions like, What was there in the beginning? Where did the original matter come from? What was the source of energy for the Big Bang? What was the cause of this ball of gases becoming unstable?

For some Christians the claims that the universe is a result of the Big Bang and is also God’s creation can be harmonised. They accept the latest scientific evidence for the Big Bang and interpret Genesis as mythological, or having a particular literary structure that doesn’t limit the days to twenty four hours. For others there is a direct conflict between a universe of billions of years old and one created ten thousand years ago in six literal days of twenty four hours.