

God Behind the Big Bang, Pope Says

The Big Bang was an act of God, with divine will bringing the universe into being, Pope Benedict XVI told a gathering of Catholics at the Vatican.

"The universe is not the result of chance, as some would want to make us believe," Benedict said Thursday, according to Reuters.

"Contemplating it [the universe], we are invited to read something profound into it: the wisdom of the creator, the inexhaustible creativity of God," Benedict told some 10,000 people gathered to celebrate the feast of the Epiphany.

Benedict has worked to integrate modern scientific theories into religious teaching, saying that God is responsible for evolution and that the Bible story of the world's creation in six days is an allegory.

Benedict rarely delves into scientific concepts such as the Big Bang, which scientists believed created the universe more than 13 billion years ago.

Benedict argued that science alone cannot explain the nature of the universe. Scientific theories can be "mind limiting. They do not explain the ultimate reality," the pope said, according to The Daily Mirror.

Benedict has argued against the idea that scientific theories such as evolution are evidence for atheism.

Reaction to Benedict's comments have been mixed. An MSNBC poll showed 40.7 percent of respondents agreeing that "there is no God and the Big Bang was probably responsible for all creation." Nearly 30 percent responded, "I agree with the pope. If there was a Big Bang, it was God's work."

PZ Myers, an associate professor of biology at the University of Minnesota Morris, was unimpressed by Benedict's scientific qualifications to discuss the Big Bang.

"The Pope has announced that God was the cause behind the Big Bang, which is nice," Myers wrote on his blog. "Unfortunately, he hasn't shown any data, nor has he published in any of the physics journals."