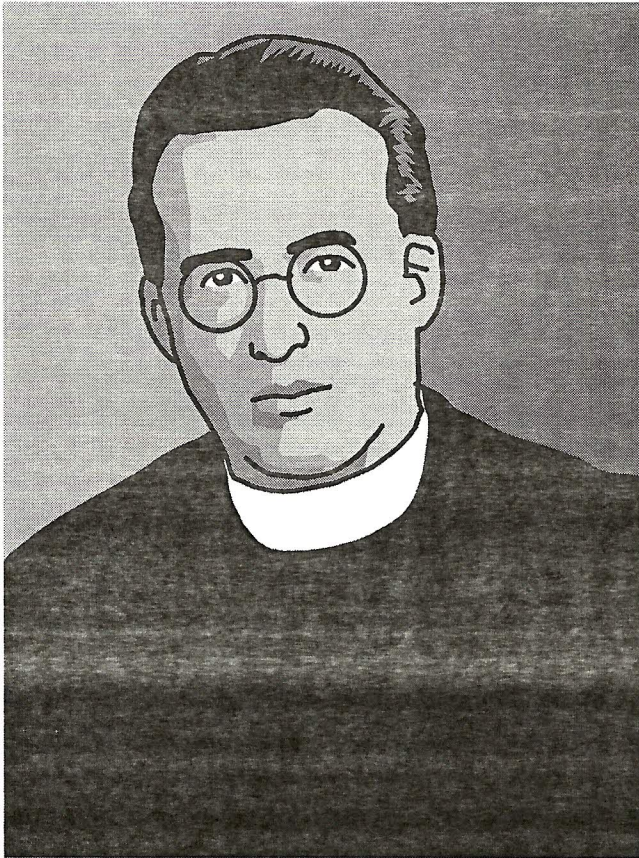


PERSONALITIES



The first person to propose the Big Bang theory was a Belgian guy named **Georges Lemaître**. Lemaître earned a doctorate in physics in the 1920s, and he also became a Roman Catholic priest!

Lemaître was one of few physicists at the time who truly understood Einstein's theories of relativity, but he disagreed with Einstein on a key point. While Einstein believed that the universe was unchanging and stable, Lemaître believed that observations of galaxies proved that the entire universe was expanding.

In 1927 Lemaître published his theory, which said that the universe had a definite beginning, in which all matter and energy were concentrated in one point, and that the whole thing has been expanding since then. Initial reaction to Lemaître's theory was lackluster. Einstein told him that while his calculations were correct, his "grasp of physics" was "abominable."

But in 1929, American astronomer Edwin Hubble confirmed that other galaxies were, in fact, moving away from each other. People began to notice and accept Lemaître's theory, most notably Einstein himself. In 1933, Einstein stood and cheered after Lemaître explained his theory at a lecture in California, and said afterward that, "this is the most beautiful and satisfactory explanation of creation to which I have ever listened."

Later, Einstein would call his belief in an unchanging universe the biggest mistake of his career.