

Key Concepts

Creation ex nihilo

The belief that God created the universe 'from nothing'.

Omnipotent

The belief that God is all powerful.

Transcendent

The belief that God exists above and beyond space and time.

Evolution

The gradual change and development of species over time. Associated with Charles Darwin.

Imago Dei

The belief that humans were created in the image of God.

Stewardship

The belief that humans should protect and preserve the environment and hand more on to the next generation.

Revelation

The way in which God makes himself known to the world e.g. the Bible.

Inspiration

The belief that the writers of the Bible were guided by the Holy Spirit to write what is good and true.

Key Beliefs

Catholic beliefs about the origin of the universe

Catholic Christians believe God is an **omnipotent** and **transcendent** creator. Their beliefs are based on the teachings of **St Augustine (ex nihilo)** and the book of **Genesis**. They believe that the creation story is not meant to be taken literally. Catholics read the stories of creation in a symbolic way, believing that they reveal some important things about the nature of the world and humanity. **Pope John Paul II** stated that Catholic belief and science are compatible. The theory of evolution can be accepted as part of God's plan for the universe.

Fundamentalist Christian beliefs about the origin of the universe

Some Christians take a **fundamentalist** approach. They believe that the account of creation as it appears in the Bible is an accurate account of what happened – this belief is known as **creationism**. They believe that the creation of the world and everything in it took place in **six calendar days**, exactly as the book of Genesis says. This stems from the view that the Bible is the direct word of God, which is never mistaken.

Jewish beliefs about the origin of the universe

God is the **creator and source** of all life. This teaching comes from the book of Genesis, which is the first book of the **Torah (Jewish written law)**. Most Orthodox Jews accept the Genesis accounts of creation as the literal word of God, as was revealed to **Moses** on Mt Sinai. They celebrate the creation of the world weekly by observing the **Sabbath** and they celebrate creation through the festival of **Rosh Hashanah**.

Non-Religious views about the origin of the universe

The current scientific thinking about the creation of the world is that it was caused by the **Big Bang**. This claims that all matter was originally concentrated into a tiny point which, as a result of a massive explosion in space 13.7 billion years ago, expanded into the universe and is still expanding today. This thinking is associated with **Professor Stephen Hawking**. In addition, according to science, life came about as a result of a process known as **Evolution**. This idea was proposed by **Charles Darwin**. This is the idea that organisms gradually change and develop into new species by a process known as 'natural selection'.

Exam Practice

- b) Describe St Augustine's teaching about the origin of the universe. (5)
- c) Explain either from Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, beliefs about the origin of the universe. (8)

Origins of the Universe

Origin of the Universe

Catholic Christian, Fundamentalist Christian, Orthodox Jewish and Non-Religious views about the origin of the universe. Catholics look at ways in which science and religion can be compatible in terms of the origin of the universe.

Sources of Authority

"You, O Lord...made something in the beginning...and you created this thing out of nothing" (St Augustine Confession xii, 7)

"There is no conflict between evolution and the doctrine of faith" (Pope John Paul II's Message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences: On Evolution)

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis)

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The Bible & Genesis 1 and 2

Catholics believe that the Bible including Genesis is the word of God and a direct form of revelation. This is the way in which God makes himself known to the world. Catholics believe the Bible writers were guided by the Holy Spirit to write what is good and true. However, the Bible must be read in context of when it was written. Fundamentalist Christians read the Bible and Genesis as a literal account.

Sources of Authority

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1)

'So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them.' (Gen 1.27)

'God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number...Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Gen 1:28)

"Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils" (Gen 2)

Key Beliefs

Catholic beliefs about Genesis 1 & 2

Catholics read the stories of creation in Genesis in a **symbolic way**, believing that they reveal some important things about the nature of God and humanity. Genesis 1 reveals God to be **omnipotent** as he creates the universe from nothing. God is seen as **transcendent** as he exists in the beginning above and beyond the universe. God is also seen as **eternal** as he exists before all things. Genesis 2 shows that God is **omnibenevolent** as he creates the universe out of love. Catholics also believe that the two Genesis accounts highlight important beliefs such as the sanctity of life, the **Imago Dei** and **stewardship** (the belief that humans should protect and preserve the environment).

Fundamentalist Christian beliefs about Genesis 1 & 2

Fundamentalist Christians read the stories of Genesis **literally**. They believe that the creation of the world and everything in it took place in **six calendar days**, exactly as the book of Genesis says. This stems from the view that the **Bible is the direct word of God**, which is never mistaken. In a similar way to Catholics, Fundamentalists believe that Genesis reveals important beliefs about the nature of God and humans.

Catholic beliefs about the Bible

Catholics believe that the Bible is a direct form of **revelation**. Revelation is the way in which God has made Himself known to the world. They also believe that the Bible is the **inspired word of God**. Catholics believe the Bible writers were guided by the **Holy Spirit**. Not everything they wrote might have been historically or literally accurate. Catholics must work carefully to determine exactly what a sacred author is saying to be true. An author might write **metaphorically** to help bring out the truth more clearly. The Bible contains a variety of **different literature** and must be read in **context** of when it was written. For example, there is no problem accepting evolution and the Big Bang. The creation story in Genesis is a poetic reflection on the significance of God as creator. This links to **Pope John Paul II's** teaching on the compatibility of science and religion.

Fundamentalist beliefs about the Bible

Fundamentalist Christians believe that the Bible is the **literal word of God**. For example, they believe that God created the world in a single week and that everything was made perfectly at that time. They would reject the Theory of Evolution. They believe the Holy Spirit dictated the Bible and that **no one should question anything that the Bible teaches** because it comes from God. Where there appear to be contradictions, they think that this just shows that people do not yet have enough understanding.

Exam Practice

c) Explain either from Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, beliefs about abortion. (8)

Sanctity of Life

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Sanctity of Life, Imago Dei and Abortion

Catholic Christians, Liberal Christians and Jews believe that life is sacred and belongs to God. This teaching comes from the book of Genesis. They also believe that humans are created in God's image. Humanists, such as Peter Singer disagree with this belief and focus on the quality of life and argue that human and animal life should have equal value.

Sources of Authority

"Her dignity is that of her creation, seeing that she is the image of God" (St Catherine of Siena)

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you" (Jeremiah)

"You formed my innermost being and knitted me together in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139)

"So God created mankind in his own image" (Genesis 1:27)

"In an imperfect world the 'right' choice is sometimes the lesser of two evils." (CofE 1988)

Key Beliefs

Catholic beliefs about sanctity of life, Imago Dei and abortion

Catholics believe each person is unique because God made them. The creation of humans was unlike the rest of creation because they were made in the Image of God. The Latin term for in the Image of God is **Imago Dei**. The Catholic Church teaches that all human life is sacred (**sanctity of life**) and that everyone has a right to life which should be protected and valued at every stage. The Catholic Church is **against abortion** in all circumstances. The Catholic Church teaches that life begins at **conception**. Abortion is therefore seen as murder, a great moral evil.

Liberal Christian beliefs about sanctity of life, Imago Dei and abortion

Liberal Christians (in this case the **Church of England**) agree that life is sacred and humans are created in God's image. Abortion is not a good thing, but sometimes it is '**the lesser of two evils**'. There are some **situations** where abortion might be the best course of action such as if the pregnancy is the result of rape, continuing the pregnancy might be dangerous to the woman's physical or mental health or if the child is likely to be severely disabled and so affects its quality of life, then abortion should be allowed.

Jewish beliefs about sanctity of life, Imago Dei and abortion

God is the creator of all life and humans are made in the image of God. This teaching comes from the book of Genesis in the **Torah (Jewish written law)**. The **Tenakh** also outlines Jewish beliefs that life is sacred and belongs to God in the book of **Jeremiah** and the **Psalms**. The Ten Commandments, which form the covenant with Moses, make it clear that taking life is wrong: "**Do not kill**". Abortion is not specifically mentioned in the Torah but Exodus does imply that the life of an unborn child is of equal worth to the life of the mother. In cases such as abortion '**pikuach nefesh**' might apply.

Humanist beliefs about sanctity of life, Imago Dei and abortion

Humanists such as **Peter Singer** reject any belief in the sanctity of life. Human life does have value but it does not belong to God and humans were not created in the image of God. In terms of abortion, Humanists value **happiness and personal choice**. In making a decision they would look at the evidence, consequences and rights and wishes of everyone involved. Life is not sacred but is worthy of the highest respect. Generally they would take a **pro-choice** stance and argue that **quality of life** is more important than sanctity of life.

Exam Practice

c) Explain either from Catholic Christianity and Judaism or two Christian traditions, beliefs about abortion. (8)

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Catholic Social Teaching

At the heart of Catholic social teaching is **human dignity**. Catholics believe that humans were created in the image and likeness of God, and that each human life is sacred. **Peace and reconciliation** are at the heart of the gospel. Catholic social teaching condemns the arms trade and supports those who refuse to take up arms on grounds of conscience. Catholic social teaching also means caring for the **common good** and inspires interfaith dialogue and Catholic charities.

Interfaith Dialogue

Catholics believe they have a duty to put across the Gospel message. They believe non-Christian religions have some truth, but only Christianity has the whole truth. Other religions should be **respected**. All people are created in the **image of God**. The Popes have spoken out about the importance of **respect and tolerance** between different faiths. For example, Pope Benedict said. The Vatican II Council stressed the importance of **dialogue** with Jews and Muslims.

CAFOD: Catholic Agency for Overseas Development

It was started by the Catholic bishops of England and Wales in 1962 and tries to help those in need. It promotes **long-term development** so that less-developed countries can support themselves. CAFOD also has a **disaster fund** to help natural disasters and refugees. **Emergency aid** might mean sending food, medicines and shelters to victims of a disaster, or sending blankets and food to war refugees. About 5 per cent of CAFOD's budget is spent on **educating** the people and churches of England and Wales about the need for development and the ways in which Catholics can help less-developed countries. CAFOD works for **social justice** challenging unfairness and tries to bring an end to poverty.

SVP: St Vincent de Paul Society

The St Vincent de Paul Society is an **organisation of Catholics** who try to help those in need in the UK. Their activities include helping the lonely or bereaved and the housebound. **Visits** to individuals and families, to the sick at home or in hospitals and hospices, to residential homes and to offenders' institutions. Visiting **housebound** elderly people to prevent them from feeling isolated. **Organising** children's camps for children from poor groups such as the mini-Vinnies.

Exam Practice

b) Describe two ways in which the work of CAFOD reflects Catholic teaching about human dignity. (5)

Catholic Social Teaching

Catholic Social Teaching, Interfaith Dialogue & Catholic Charities

Catholic Social Teaching is a set of principles about building a just and fair society. It is linked to the concept of the Imago Dei. Catholic Social teaching led to Catholic beliefs about interfaith dialogue which means treating people of other faiths with respect. Catholic Charities try to reflect Catholic beliefs that humans were created in the image and likeness of God, and that each human life is sacred. This is linked to Jesus' teaching that we must 'love our neighbour, as we love ourselves.'

Sources of Authority

"All men possess a rational soul and are created in God's likeness" (Gaudium et spes)

"Every type of discrimination...is to be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent" (Gaudium et spes)

"Her dignity is that of her creation, seeing that she is the image of God" (St Catherine of Siena)

"So God created mankind in his own image" (Genesis 1:27)

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Stewardship & Environment

Catholic Christians, Jews and Humanists all believe that protecting and preserving the environment for future generations is important. For Catholics and Jews this belief is based on the biblical belief that God has created humans as stewards to rule the earth. Humanists believe that we should take care of creation and everything within it, but reject belief in God.

Sources of Authority

"Each community...has the duty to protect the earth and ensure its fruitfulness for coming generations" (Laudato si)

'God blessed them and said to them, "Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." (Gen 1:28)

"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it." (Gen 2:15)

Key Belief

Catholic beliefs about stewardship & environment

Catholics believe that both stories of creation in Genesis show that human beings are the most important part of creation. God made humans superior to the rest of creation by giving them reason and free will. This is the reason why God made humans stewards of the world. Catholics should be concerned about looking after the environment and the planet. Catholics need to work to protect the planet, cutting down on pollution, caring for animals and making sure that the world is in the best shape to pass on to future generations. Pope Francis wrote an Encyclical letter called 'Laudato si' in 2015 which means 'Care for our Common Home'. This letter inspires Catholics to protect the earth and take part in Catholic Social Teaching. The two greatest commandments are to love God and to love their neighbour. The idea of neighbour means not just those close to us, but people in different countries. Catholics should be concerned about those who suffer badly from climate change.

Jewish beliefs about stewardship & environment

The book of Genesis (the first book of the Torah) states that God created the universe and everything in it. Jews believe God is both a lawgiver and a judge. The Torah gives clear rules on being stewards of the earth and Jews believe God will judge them on how well they follow the Torah. As part of the covenant Moses made with God at Mt Sinai, Jews aim to follow the 613 mitzvot. A covenant is a promise or an agreement and Jews are told that they must never destroy things on the land that are useful and give the land a rest from growing crops every 5 years.

Humanist beliefs about stewardship & environment

Humanists agree with Catholics and Jews that we should look after the environment. However, they believe the universe was created by the Big Bang and has developed through the process of evolution. They reject belief in God and do not believe that God created the universe. Humanists like Peter Singer believe we have to protect and preserve the environment and that includes all life including animal life. Humanists believe we should control population through the use of contraception which is in direct contrast to Catholic beliefs.

Exam Practice

d) Only Humanists have a duty to care for the environment. (15 + 6spag)

Forms of Expression

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Michelangelo's Creation of Adam: Beliefs about God

God is presented as a **dynamic and active** figure. He is hard at work at His greatest creation. God reaches out to the more passive figure of Adam. God is shown as older than Adam, with **grey hair and a beard**. God has a **muscular physique**. These show that God is a creator as revealed in the book of Genesis. It also highlights that God is **omnipotent (all-powerful)** as God created the universe. God's age highlights that God is **omniscient (all-knowing)** showing that he has wisdom. His hand stretching out symbolises giving Adam the spark of life. God is also shown on a cloud surrounded by angels. This highlights that God is **transcendent**. Some people believe the cloud represents a brain highlighting omniscience.

Michelangelo's Creation of Adam: Beliefs about Humans

Adam is on the left of the painting, lying back on the earth from which he has been formed as described in Genesis. This links to the idea of **stewardship** as humans have been created to protect and preserve the environment for future generations. Adam is a perfect human being; young, handsome, strong and resembles God. **Adam mirrors the pose of God**. This is linked to the belief of the **imago dei** which comes from the book of Genesis and the teachings of **Catherine of Siena**.

Symbols on the Tree of Life Mosaic Apse in San Clemente

The Tree of Life Mosaic can be found in the Apse of the Church of San Clemente in Rome. An apse is a semi-circular dome which is positioned above the altar in a church. It dates to the 12th century. The mosaic is filled with **symbolism**. The central image is a cross which merges with many other important symbols. The **twelve lambs** represent the twelve disciples who were given the task of passing on Jesus' message. The lamb in the centre with a halo represents Jesus who is known as the lamb of God who sacrificed his life. The **tree and vines** are symbolic of how the message of Christianity will grow and spread throughout the world. The tree is the tree of life and vines/branches will grow as Jesus' message is passed on. The **hand** represents God reaching out to his son Jesus and taking him to heaven. Following Jesus' death on the cross it is believed that Jesus rose again. The hand shows God's power to overcome death. The **Alpha and Omega** are the first and last Greek letters of the alphabet. They symbolise the Christian belief that God is eternal. This means that God has always existed and will always exist. He has no beginning or end. This **Chi-Rho** is a Greek term for Christ. It is one of the earliest Christian symbols and links to the belief that Jesus is a saviour.

Exam Practice

b) Describe 2 symbols in the Tree of Life mosaic and what they represent. (5)

Forms of Expression: Michelangelo's Creation of Adam & The Tree of Life Mosaic

Christianity has a long tradition of sacred art using themes and images from Christian belief. The use of art goes back to the time when people could not read or write. Learning about Jesus or the Bible was made easier by looking at pictures, images, symbols and statues. The artist would use their artwork to express different beliefs about God, humans and the world.

