

Topic 1: Origins and Meaning

Theme 1: Humans have always asked about their origins. Jews, Christians & Muslims all share belief in one God, creator of all life (monotheism).

Catholics believe God created the world from nothing (ex nihilo)- there were no ingredients at all. Christians believe only God can do this as he is omnipotent. **St Augustine of Hippo** explored this in his writings : God ‘..made something... out of nothing.. From nothing you then created heaven and earth.’’ (**Source of wisdom**)

Christians may interpret the Bible differently, but they all believe this together:

1. Believe in God
2. The people who wrote the bible were inspired by God
3. God makes himself known through the Bible
4. Bible = the Word of God & it helps us live our lives today

How do Catholics view the Genesis accounts?

We have studied the 2 stories in lessons. **Gen 1** = written (450BCE) as a poem and tells of the 6 days of creation, God resting on the 7th. **Gen 2**= earlier account (950BCE) & focuses on Adam & Eve's story. Catholics accept the 2 stories are myths – a story with an underlying truth. **Both stories share the same truths:**

- ✓ God made everything that exists
- ✓ everything made by God was good
- ✓ Humans were the final act of God's creation & the most important.

A Catholic would not interpret these stories literally. The main idea behind them is God created everything ex nihilo out of love & humans were made to experience the love of God & that of other humans.

Other Christians will interpret these accounts differently: Fundamentalists read them as a factual account, the world being made in 6 days. We would call these Christians 'Creationists.' This becomes important when we add it to the exploration of scientists and the world's origins.

In times past, science and religion worked alongside. In recent times, we now know the earth is much older than we first thought, as is the universe. This has impacted our understanding.

Non-religious people will look to Science to explain the questions of the origin of life.

Big Bang Theory: became widely accepted in the 1960's and was first put forward by a Catholic priest Fr Georges Lemaitre & later much built upon by Prof Stephen Hawking. At the time of the explosion of matter, both space and time were created. Elements formed as cooling occurred, galaxies could then form. This theory also says there is no need for a Creator. This could all have happened by itself.

What do Catholics think about this theory?

Just like Science, the Catholic Church is interested in the origins of the universe. (think back to your Y9 work on the Vatican observatory). Catholics would say there doesn't have to be a choice between religion and science – both are possible. The Big Bang Theory also has questions remaining:

1. Where did the matter come from to cause the Big Bang? Hawking says the universe can & will create itself because gravity exists, but for a Catholic, we will ask where did the law of gravity 'come from'?
2. Gravity and matter are not 'out of nothing', so if the universe came from these, it was not 'out of nothing' (ex nihilo)

We could say Science & Theology are answering different questions at this time. Scientists are 'how', theologians ask 'why'.

Scientific Theories of Evolution

Charles Darwin: His ideas rocked the Christian world with the publication of his book 'On the Origin of the Species' in 1859. This studied variations in finches and other species from his time on the Galapagos Islands. He concluded variations happened by chance and were useful and ensured some species better survival rates and stronger offspring (natural selection). He then posited the evolutionary theory, whereby completely new species could emerge. This was controversial, as the theory says humans descended from apes, apes from other mammals, mammals from reptiles, reptiles from fish, eventually all the way back to bacteria! Fossil remains of species no longer in existence support this, and DNA research shows many species are related to each other.

Richard Dawkins ideas: He is a British scientist and an atheist. He firmly rejects any idea of a creator God with a plan for the universe, and states humans cannot have an immortal soul given by God. He has built upon Darwin's writings. Dawkins believes each living being is a 'survival machine', with no other purpose & humans have no greater importance on earth than other animals. This would pose problems for Christians, who reject this humanistic attitude to life.

What do Catholics say about evolution?

A Catholic would believe in Theistic Evolution: Theistic evolution is a theological view in which God creates through the laws of nature. Theistic evolutionists (TEs) accept all the results of modern science, in anthropology and biology as well as in astronomy, physics, and geology. In particular, it is acceptable to TEs that one species give rise to another. However, TEs vary in whether and how much God is allowed to intervene — some believe that God created the laws of nature and allows events to occur with no further intervention. Other TEs believe that God intervenes at critical intervals during the history of life (especially in the origin of humans). TE is the position of the Catholic Church. **In 1996, Pope John Paul II (1996) reiterated the Catholic version of theistic evolution, in which God created, evolution happened, humans may indeed be descended from more primitive forms, but the hand of God was required for the production of the human soul. The creation stories show God created *with purpose*.**

What do other Christians believe?

Liberal Christians and Catholics support the Big Bang & Evolution theories, Evangelical and Fundamentalist Christians do not. They would instead view scripture literally and every word in the Bible is historically true and accurate. Anything that disputes this is therefore wrong. They would say God created all life; all these life forms appeared at the time of creation; plant & animal life was created complete, with human life created last.

Theme 2: Catholic beliefs & teachings about the origin and sanctity of human life

How is human life special? If we look at other species, we can see that potentially only humans have the capacity to make moral decisions. Christians believe we are made in God's image, that human life is special and a gift from God. Catholics believe all human life is sacred, that all people have a right to life, which should be protected and valued at every stage. Christians call this the 'sanctity of life' – all life originates from God, is to be valued, protected and respected and not destroyed.

Imago Dei: Both Gen 1 & Gen 2 show the power of God and the plan for the world. In these accounts we see 3 things about humans:

1. Humans are special – created in God's image in Gen 1 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness.' In Gen 2, Adam is formed from the earth and receives the 'breath of life' from God. Eve is made from Adam, also in God's image.
2. Humans have an immortal soul → destined to be with God for eternity.
3. Humans have the ability and freedom to make moral choices 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden..'

These ideas of being made in God's image were developed by St Catherine of Siena in the 14th century. She is a doctor of the Church. She had 3 further thoughts:

1. Humans originate from God 'Her dignity is that of creation, seeing that she is in the image of God.'
2. Conscience – it is like looking in 'God's gentle mirror' that we see ourselves. This is our conscience to direct our actions.
3. Love- the love of God made us to be like him. He created out of love.

Abortion: An abortion is the deliberate expulsion (termination) of a foetus from the womb. Before 1967 it was illegal in the UK and thousands of dangerous 'back street abortions' were performed, leading to serious injury and death of the woman. In 1967, abortion was legalised up to 28 weeks. Two doctors had to agree on the grounds of physical or mental risk to the mother or her family/ woman's life in danger/ risk of physical or mental disability of the baby. In 1990, it was lowered to 24 weeks. In rare cases, such as severe abnormality of the baby or the woman's life is at risk, then there is no time limit to abortion.

Abortion debate today is highly contentious and centres **around 3 main issues:**

1. **Preserving life:** some believe that to take a life is always wrong. However, not all people will believe life begins at conception.. some might believe when the mother feels the baby move in the womb for the first time, others when the heart beats, others when the baby can survive outside the womb, others when the baby is born.
2. **Quality of life:** some would say it is this that is important. For instance, if the mother has been raped or if the child will be severely disabled then, in those circumstances, an abortion might be the kindest thing to do.
3. **Rights & responsibilities:** some people believe every human (including embryos) have the right to life. This is '**pro-life**'. Others would say that the baby has rights, but the rights of the mother are most important – this is '**pro choice**'. In law, however, the father has no rights over the baby before birth.

What does the Catholic church teach about abortion?

Catholics are against abortion in all cases because human life is sacred. Life begins at conception & begins the person's relationship with God 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you' (Jeremiah 1:5). Abortion is viewed as murder, because life begins at conception. 'Do not kill'. Only God grants and takes away life. All life is holy & belongs to God. Every person has a 'right to life'. The Church values the

life of both mother and child. If the mother's life was in danger in the pregnancy, it supports some of the treatments which could save the life of the mother but which might kill the baby (for example chemotherapy). This is called the 'principle of double effect'. Instead of an abortion, the Church would encourage the mother to accept her responsibility or encourage adoption.

The Church also sees every person as separate and a new person from the mother and father 'It would never become human if it were not human already' (Roman Catholic Declaration on procured abortion, 1973).

Anglican Church & abortion: Abortion is wrong and a moral evil. They also encourage adoption as an alternative. They do see there are strict conditions when an abortion would be the 'lesser of two evils':

1. If the mother's life is in danger - it should be early on in pregnancy, with the mother being given full support afterwards.
2. In the case of rape because of the on-going effect to her quality of life.
3. If the child will be severely disabled and would not be expected to live very long.

Abortions should be reduced in number & there should be better sex education to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Others would say: Abortion is better than bringing unwanted babies into the world. It is the mother's right to choose. Abortion might be a loving thing to do, in the case of rape, war, handicapped babies. Some do not believe life begins at conception.

What do Humanists believe about the value of life and abortion?

Humanists will take a more 'pro-choice' approach and accept abortion as a morally acceptable choice. As they do not consider life sacred, they instead assess the 'quality of life' arguments. They do not consider an unborn baby is a person until well after conception and would seek to assess the long and short-term consequences of an abortion. Other important factors include:

1. Better sex ed & access to contraception → reduce number of abortions
2. Adoption as a way to bring happiness
3. Support legalisation of abortion for women's health

Famous Humanists: Peter Singer = agrees with Catholics that life begins at conception, but describes this as 'biological' life. He doesn't think an embryo is a person, nor a person with dementia, a person in a coma or any other person who cannot reason, feel, hope, make moral decisions. If their lives can be taken to spare suffering & bring greater happiness, then Peter Singer says this is acceptable. → **what do you think about this?**

Singer has also developed his views to the idea of 'Speciesism'. For instance, a conscious animal, such as an African grey parrot has the same cognitive ability as a 4-6 year old. He argues we cannot therefore put humans above animals such as these. This is discriminatory. Speciesism is therefore morally wrong.

A Catholic would argue humans have a soul, which separates us from the animal kingdom. Humans should care for and respect animals, treating them well and avoiding unnecessary cruelty. Catholics would agree that animals can be used for food and clothing.

Jewish views: God is the sole giver and taker of life. Psalm 139 and Jeremiah from the Tenakh demonstrate a relationship with God before birth (see refs earlier on). The Ten Commandments, given by God to Moses also say murder is wrong. Jews have different views on abortion:

1. Some would look at the Ten Commandments and see abortion as wrong and as murder.

2. Some would look at the teaching of the saving of a life (Pikuach Nefesh) 'Anyone who destroys a human life is considered as if he had destroyed an entire world.'
3. Most Jews would not consider a human foetus a person until it has been born.
4. Many reform Jews would accept abortion if the mother's life was at risk.

Theme 3: Genesis and care of the planet

Genesis 1 account : emphasis on greatness of God (Transcendence). God here is eternal and omnipotent. Creation ex nihilo.

Genesis 2 account: All of the above themes of Gen 1, but also God is omnibenevolent: makes a companion for Adam, creates everything they need to live on... Immanent: God is involved in his creation and God is omnipresent.

What do the two accounts show us about human beings?--> can you see these themes:

Sanctity of Life	stewards of God's creation	Image of God
Freewill	Male and female	

Many would say Climate change is not only an environmental issue, but an issue of justice, too. This is because of the hundreds of millions of people it affects, especially the impacts of extreme weather on the world's poorest. 90% of the people who die in natural disasters live in the poorest countries.

1. Many religions believe God created all living things (inc. people). We were given the earth by God to look after & make beautiful. We do not 'own' the earth but are its 'care takers'.

2. Laudato Si, Pope Francis' encyclical asks Catholics to consider the gift of the world and ask what they will be passing on to future generations: '...we realise the world is a gift which we have freely received and must share with others.'

4. Other ways include: Love your neighbour as you love yourself – even if they are in another faraway country → encourages us to think of those future generations – we do not own the earth but seek to look after the planet for the 'common good'. This is putting 'You shall not steal' into action from the Ten Commandments.

Relationship of human beings with the environment

3. The very first law given to humans by God was to look after the earth 'The Lord God took man and put him in the garden.. to work it and care for it.' This is called 'stewardship'. It calls us to live sustainably.

We can: use public transport, recycle, reduce consumption (inc water), care of other living beings, car-pooling, etc.

Jewish views:

God is the source of all life and humans have the responsibility of continuing the work of creation by making the world a better place. This is called 'tikkum olam' (healing the world). Many Jews will attend harvest festivals (Sukkot). They also have a festival when they plant trees (Tu B'Shvat).

What would a Humanist say about this? Differs in 3 main ways from a Catholic:

1. 'Good without God' = live a good life as it is the only life we have. We should care for the planet for future generations. We should work to preserve habitats – if they are lost, we damage ourselves.
2. Population controls = a good thing to reduce demand and pressure on natural resources.
3. Speciesism = See Peter Singer's views. Also take the example of bees – are we really superior to bees, if we depend on them for our food due to pollination? A Humanist would argue this as a valid point against speciesism.

Look back at your notes and answer these questions:

1. How is the Bible considered the 'Word of God'?
2. How is the Bible comprised?
3. What different literary forms are found in it?
4. How do Catholics interpret the Bible?
5. How do Fundamentalist Christians interpret the Bible?
6. What do Jews believe about the importance of sacred scriptures?

Theme 4: Expressing beliefs through art:



Adam – seen here. Formed 'from the dust'. Perfect human being. Reflects catholic belief that God created everything 'good'. Resembles God – same physical build, pose and shows we are made in the image of God. Adam not fully alive (looks quite laid back). Humans need God to give them life.

God: dynamic, hard at work, reaches out to Adam – he loves him. God is eternal/all-powerful. Parent-child relationship shown here. God is Father of all Creation.

The hands – reminds us of Gen 2: God breathing life into Adam. Adam's fingers are bent – not fully alive. Touch between them is representing the 'spark of life' – life is sacred and a gift from God. Close loving relationship between God and humanity.

The cloud – God is carried on a cloud (is it also a brain?) towards earth by a group of angels. If it is a brain = symbolises God is omniscient. Others say it represents a **womb** – green cloth hanging down = umbilical cord.....

Female figure under God's left arm = Eve or Mary? 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.' (Gen 2:18). This shows great care of God, that humans are made to experience the gift of love. Others say this figure is Mary, the 'New Eve' & Jesus the 'New Adam' is under her arm. This hints that Adam will soon sin (original sin) & the way back to God through Jesus & Mary is already planned.

Symbolism through art: Tree of Life mosaic in the Church of San Clemente in Rome:

Look at your work from Year 10. This mosaic from the 12th century features a wealth of Christian symbolism. Can you identify:

1. Representations of Jesus: Alpha & Omega/ Chi-Rho/ the lamb of God
2. Representation of the Apostles: 12 lambs/12 doves
3. Symbols of the cross: the cross/the tree of life/ the vine



Using your notes, try this 'c' question: 'Explain the meaning of the symbols and images in the Tree of Life mosaic.' (8)

Theme 5: Loving & serving in Catholic communities in Britain & elsewhere

All nations are required to uphold the 30 articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). These include: personal freedom, safety and life, standards of living, education, freedom of movement. It begins 'All humans are born free and equal in dignity and rights.' Christians see these as putting into practice 'loving your neighbour'.

Catholic Social Teaching has spoken out about the social issues of the ages, and Popes do this through their writings, called encyclicals. Being made in God's image is at the heart of Catholic Social Teaching. *Gaudium et Spes*, published in the 1960's after Vatican II asks Catholics to 'not rest' until there is **equality for all**. For instance, babies born into poverty, war, neglect or even slavery need our help to have a good and better and equal life.

Catholics would also work for **Peace**: not only from war, which brings destruction to life and nations, but also peace in families, peace in our interior lives too.

Catholics work for **justice**: Pope John XXIII wrote 'There will be no peace in the world until we return to a sense of our dignity as creatures and children of God.' Catholics will challenge a regime such as apartheid until discrimination is eliminated.

Catholics work for **reconciliation**: Jesus told the story of the Forgiving Father – God wants those who sin to return to him. Catholics would pray for peace, reconciliation, justice and peace.

Theme 6: To examine the role of the Catholic Church in inter-faith dialogue

What do you know about Pope Francis?

Made 266th Pope on 13th March, 2013. Pretty soon, he defied convention? How?

Place he chose to live? How does he prefer to travel? Whose feet did he wash & where?

Why do you think he did this? What was Jesus' ultimate command? How well do you think you (& we) do this today? What could we do better?

Saxons, Danes, Vikings & others have all invaded Britain and left their own culture and belief system... Britain has always provided refuge for persecuted groups e.g. French Protestants in 17th century & European Jews in 20th century... Due to the British Empire of the 19th century, citizens from these countries were allowed to settle in the UK → small communities grew. These also included freed slaves. .. After WWII, citizens from emancipated Commonwealth countries settled in the UK, due to a shortage of workers in Britain. Many of these workers fought for Britain in the war... The EU has continued this free movement of peoples.

In Britain today, **religious pluralism** & freedom are encouraged – all faiths have a right to co-exist and people to practise or change their religion.

Dialogue (two way communication) between people helps us to understand one another.

Many Christians believe this should be between different religions as well as different denominations (groups) within their religion.

For Christians within their own religion, they see themselves as one church and so work to promote unity and equality. This is called Ecumenism.

ECUMENISM = Calls for unity amongst Christian groups.



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INTER-FAITH DIALOGUE = Different religions meeting to share mutual understanding, respect, tolerance and harmony. They identify common ground. They engage in shared action for the common good of society.

Community cohesion = to establish a better society where all groups feel that they belong and can live peacefully together.

Benefits of inter-faith dialogue	Challenges of a multi-faith society
Variety of food, clothes, music and literature into our lives	Religious tensions → persecution and violence
Live and work alongside a variety of people → gain greater tolerance, respect, understanding	Racism and discrimination can be experienced
Creates a stronger society	Scapegoats are made of certain groups in times of economic hardship → intolerance and hatred
New opportunities to work with people: Interfaith Network/ The Forum of Faiths/ The Council of Christians & Jews/ The Muslim Council of Britain	Extremism can develop → innocent members of certain faith groups (e.g. Muslims) can be treated with mistrust and disrespect.

What does the Church teach about inter-faith dialogue?



Pope Benedict wrote in 2007:

'Together with all people of good will, we aspire to peace. That is why I insist once again: interreligious and intercultural research and dialogue are not an option but a vital need for our time.'

Pope Paul VI wrote in a document called 'Nostra Aetate: that Jews should not be blamed for the death of Christ. He also wrote that Muslims should be esteemed, for 'They adore the One God.. Who has spoken to men... We cannot truly call on God, the Father of all, if we refuse to treat n a brotherly way any man, created as he is in the image of God.'



Theme 7: the work of Catholic charities

In year 10, you researched either **Cafod** or the work of the **St Vincent de Paul society**... Revisit this work now. → How do these charities demonstrate love and service of their neighbours in the work they do?

Remember: in the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus tells the people to 'Go and do likewise.' This reflects Christian beliefs in the dignity of every person. Cafod help people regardless of gender, religion, race, political views. Cafod equips people with the help they need to give something back to their communities. Cafod promotes sustainable development. Their 'One climate, One world' campaign was made in response to the world's poorest communities and Pope Francis' document 'Laudato Si' (Care for our common home).

Gaudium et Spes also says 'Feed the people dying of hunger, because if you do not feed them you are killing them.'

Cafod's mission is to: **Overcome poverty/ respond/educate/campaign/fundraise**

Exam questions: Origins and Meaning

a. What do Catholics mean by 'creation Ex nihilo'? (2)

a. What is meant by the term 'abortion'? (2)

a. What is meant by the term 'Sanctity of life'? (2)

b. Describe the teaching of the Catholic Church on the theory of evolution. (5)

b. Describe Humanist views on the value of life and abortion. (5)

b. Describe the Catholic church's beliefs humans and their relationship with creation. (5)

c. Explain from Catholic Christianity and Judaism or from two Christian traditions, attitudes towards abortion. (8)

c. Explain what Catholics believe about the origin and sanctity of human life. (8)

c. Explain the views of Anglicans and Catholics to abortion. (8)

c. Explain Christian attitudes towards the environment. (8)

c. Explain the attitudes of two different religions/religious traditions towards interpreting the Bible. (8)

who? – which groups: Jews/Christians

what – are their different beliefs?

Why – do they hold these differences in belief?

How – do they practise this?

(C) Explain the meaning of the symbols and images in Christian art. (8)

d. **'The world is ours to do what we like with.'** Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer) *Marks for spelling, punctuation and the accurate use of grammar are allocated to this question.* (15+6)

d. **'Genesis helps Christians understand what God is like.'** Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer) *Marks for spelling, punctuation and the accurate use of grammar are allocated to this question.* (15+6)

d. **'In today's world there is a great need for people from different faiths to work together.'** Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer) *Marks for spelling, punctuation and the accurate use of grammar are allocated to this question.* (15+6)

d. **'Abortion is always wrong.'** Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. (You must refer to religion and belief in your answer) *Marks for spelling, punctuation and the accurate use of grammar are allocated to this question.* (15+6)

Challenge: Create some more a-d questions to trial with your partner. When you are happy with your created questions,

