

Key Concepts

Creation ex nihilo

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

Imago Dei

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

Omnipotent

The belief that God is all powerful.

Stewardship

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

Transcendent

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

Revelation

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

Evolution

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

Inspiration

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

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)

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)