

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.

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)