

Origins and Meanings 1

Key Word	Phonics	Definition
Creation ex nihilo	Cre/a/tion ex ni/hi/lo	A Latin phrase meaning "out of nothing". For Christians this is the idea that the universe was created by God out of nothing.
Evolution	E/vol/u/tion	The gradual development of something. Darwin believed all the different species on earth developed over time from simple life forms.
Imago Dei	I/ma/go Dei	A Latin phrase meaning 'the image of God'. It is a term used to show the unique relationship between God and humanity.
Inspiration	In/spi/ra/tion	Someone or something that gives you ideas for doing something. Christians believe the ideas contained in the Bible were inspired by the Holy Spirit.
Omnipotence	Om/ni/po/tence	The idea that God is all-powerful. God is believed to have ultimate power and able to do anything.
Revelation	Rev/el/ation	The act or process of disclosing something previously secret. Christians believe God sometimes chooses to disclose Himself and His will to Humans.
Stewardship	Stew/ard/ship	Looking after something so it can be passed onto the next generation. It refers to the idea that human beings were created to look after the earth
Transcendence	Tran/scen/dence	The belief that God exists above and beyond the universe.



Differing Christian attitudes to the creation story

- 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 inspired word of God, which is never mistaken.
- Some Christians think that the creation story is not meant to be taken literally. Some try to harmonise the scientific and biblical accounts, claiming that each 'day' of the creation story is actually billions of years.
- 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. Although the two accounts of creation in Genesis have different details, they share the same truths.

Evolution

While visiting the Galapagos Islands, Charles Darwin (1809–82) noticed that there were variations in some of the characteristics found in animals of the same species on the different islands. He put this down to the variations in conditions on the different islands, saying that the animals had adapted to their different conditions.

How would a Catholic respond to this theory?

The Catholic belief is that evolution can compliment the theory of evolution. If God wanted to create human beings, who says the process he uses can not take 14 billion years and involve a Big Bang and evolution.

Several Popes beginning with Pope Pius XII in 1950 have taught that there is no conflict between Darwin's theory and the Catholic understanding of God's deliberate, purposeful creation of human beings.



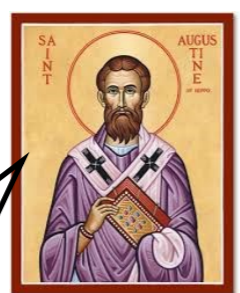
St John Paul II wrote "there is no conflict between evolution and the doctrine of the faith regarding man and his vocation"

Catholic beliefs about Creation

- Christians refer to the act of God bringing the universe into being as Creation. Nothing existed before God created it.
- Only God creates, because he is omnipotent or all powerful.
- This idea of creating out of nothing is called in Latin, creation ex nihilo.
- This belief can be found in the Bible. It can also be found in the writing of St. Augustine.

Catholic Beliefs about the Origin of the Universe and the Concept of "Creation ex nihilo"

G.K Chesterton said if we look at the world, we notice that "it seems to proceed by certain rules, in the growth of flowers a green architecture that builds itself without visible hand. There seems to be a design, a purpose, an intention to produce the flowers, plants, trees and other things in the world"



Catholic refer to the author of the story of the world as "God". God is the origin of the world, the "first cause" or Creator. Christians, Jews and Muslims all call to God the Creator, the One who gives the world its meaning.

'.... You, O Lord ...made something in the Beginning which is of yourself, in your Wisdom, which is born of your own substance, and you created this thing out of nothing ... From nothing, then. You created heaven and earth.' St Augustine

A summary of Genesis 1-2:3	
Day 1	God created light and separated it from the darkness. God
Day 2	God created the sky. God used the sky to divide the water
Day 3	God created the sky. God used the sky to divide the water that covered the earth into two halves. God created dry
Day 4	God created the sun, moon and stars to light up the sky,
Day 5	God created all the species of animals that live on earth.
Day 6	God created the human beings and put them in charge of
Day 7	God rested, blessed the seventh day and made it holy. The universe was complete.

A summary of Genesis 2:4-24	
God created a man, called Adam, out of dust and breathes life into him.	
God provides him everything he needed in the Garden of Eden, but told him not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.	
God creates all the creatures and Adam names them all but none are suitable to be his partner.	
God puts Adam to sleep and creates Eve, a woman, from his rib.	
Their lives were perfect until they disobeyed him, which led to God banishing them from the Garden of Eden forever.	

Big Bang

This idea of a unique and explosive beginning to the cosmos out of 'a singular moment' – a singular dense point containing all of the universe's matter and energy, which is then thrown outwards – is called the Big Bang theory. What a lot of people do not realise is that this theory was first put forward not by Stephen Hawking, but by a Catholic priest, Father Georges Lemaître.

Why was a Catholic priest able to come up with this theory? Catholics have a less literalist approach to reading the Bible than do some other Christian groups.

The author of Genesis is saying why things are the way they are, not how things are the way they are. Theology answers the question 'why?' Science answers the question 'how?' The author of Genesis is trying to say that this wonderful, intelligible universe, which God invites us to explore scientifically with our God-given intelligence, had a beginning – the creative act of a loving and intelligent God who created everything out of nothing. If God chose to do that through the Big Bang, all well and good!

Stephen Hawking

One thing on which Hawking and the Catholic Church would disagree with regard to the Big Bang theory concerns whether or not the theory needs to have a Creator. Hawking's believes that the universe does not need a creator. Hawking says: 'Because there is a law such as gravity, the universe can and will create itself from nothing.'

A Christian would respond by questioning what caused the Big Bang to happen? 'Why is there something rather than nothing?' is the question which ultimately led the leading atheist Anthony Flew to a belief in God.