

St. Edward the Confessor
RCIA Class on Creation, Man, & the Fall
 C. Schiff

Bible

Genesis 1:1-3 In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light.” And there was light.

Genesis 3:9,15 The Lord God then called to the man and asked him, “Where are you?”
&
I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your
offspring and hers; He will strike at your head, while you strike at his
heel. (*Protoevangelium* – see [CCC 410 & 411])

John 1:1-5 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Creed

Nicene Creed: We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all that is visible and invisible...

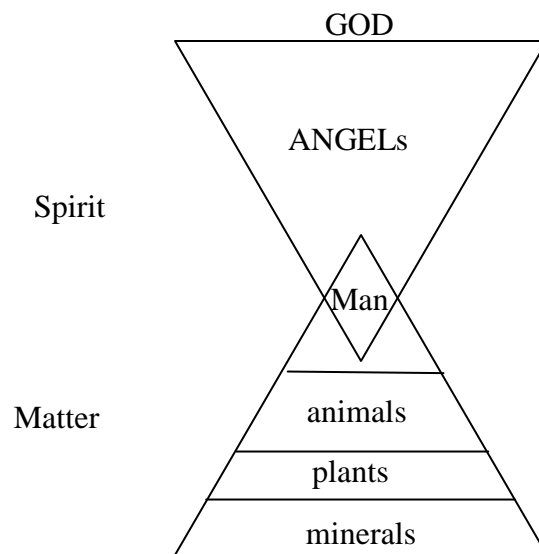
Apostles Creed: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth...

Introduction

My discussion deals, in large part, with stating the Christian answers to basic questions like “Where do we come from?”, “Why does evil exist?”, and “Where are we going?”. All cultures have produced philosophy and modes of thought to explain these questions. And no matter what answers these cultures have obtained or how they determine to view the world, the fact remains that asking and trying to answer these questions is a human activity, universal to all people, regardless of the where and the when of their existence.

To answer for the Christian, we start with the Bible. The Old Testament opens with the words “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth ...” and continues through the first three chapters of Genesis with the creation of the world, its destiny, the origin of man, his fall into sin, and the promise of salvation (*Protoevangelium*).

Let's start with the "Where do we come from?" question. As Catholics, we believe that a perfect and loving God created the world – not because he was required to but because he wanted to. In the Nicene creed, we further say that we believe in the 'visible' and 'invisible' aspects of creation. While we don't have direct access to the invisible world (at least most of us don't), it is reasonable to suppose from our experiences with the visible world that the invisible must be very rich and complex. The visible world has what is called a super-abundance of things. There are more types of plants, animals, and minerals than any one person can name or know and more are discovered each and every year. The more that is learned about the visible world, the more we seem to know that we don't know. Using these experiences as a guide, it is the Church's stated belief that the invisible world is likewise packed. Peter Kreeft, in his book *'Angels (and Demons): What Do We Really Know About Them?'*, gives the following arrangement to help us understand the visible and invisible worlds and how we fit into them:



Let us next turn to the question "Why does evil exist?". In short, the Church teaches that a loving God does not force his creations but rather gives them free will. Both Angels and Man, created in the image of God, are intelligible creatures. That is to say, both Angels and Man can make choices and can choose to not do good. Those choices that lack goodness are then evil. Evil is not a force or a thing but a lack of goodness (technical term – a depravation). The fall of Man occurred when Man choose to abandon faith in God's word.

The Lord God gave man this order: "You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except from the tree of knowledge of good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it you are surely doomed to die."
Genesis 2:5

As a consequence of the Fall, we are in a state of 'confusion'. Our relationship with God has been damaged, we understand the world incompletely, we see our choices poorly, and therefore "Where we are going?" is not exactly clear to us. What is clear is that we need

redemption. Fortunately, God loves us and has provided, provides, and will provide that redemption in the form of Jesus Christ.

These truths about creation are of major importance, serving as the foundation of human and Christian life because they tell us how the Christian should respond to the basic questions of life [CCC 282].

Essentials (adapted from [SG] and [CCC])

The catechesis comes from Section 2, Article 1, Paragraphs 4-7 of the CCC and covers God the Creator, creation, and the fall into sin from which Jesus raises us up.

- The creation of the world by a loving God is the foundation of “all God’s saving plan” that culminates in Christ [CCC 280]
- The truth about creation is so important that God reveals everything that is beneficial and healthy (salutary) to know on the subject [CCC 287]
 - Natural knowledge
 - ‘Religious’ knowledge (Patriarchs, Israel, Christ, etc.)
- First 3 chapters of Genesis teach the truths of creation [CCC 289]
 - Its origin out of nothing (ex nihilo)
 - Its purpose, order, and goodness
 - The vocation of man and woman
 - Sin and salvation
- Creation is the work of the Holy Trinity [CCC 290]
- The world was made for the glory of God [CCC 293] that his creatures should share in his truth, goodness, and beauty (unity in diversity and diversity in unity) [CCC 319, 339-342, 353]
- God created the world freely and out of love, not out of blind chance [CCC 295]
- God’s world is ordered and good [CCC 299, 339]
- God sustains the world at every moment [CCC 299-301, 319-320] and cares for all, from the least things to the great events of the world and its history [CCC 303]
- The universe was created “in a state of journeying” towards its ultimate perfection [CCC 302 & 310] and God guides it to its perfection through “divine providence” [CCC 302]
- Beings exist with spiritual and/or material aspects [CCC 327] – Angels are pure spirit [CCC 328] and man and woman, who are created as the pinnacle of creation [CCC 342-343], are created in the image of God [CCC 355] as spirit joined with a material body [CCC 362]
- God grants his creatures the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes of events for each other (interdependencies), thus of cooperating in the accomplishment of his plan [CCC 306, 334, 349, 358, 371-373] (“subduing” the earth, sub-creation)
- “Being man” or “being woman” is a reality which is good and willed by God – both possess an inalienable dignity [CCC 369] (unity of the human race)
- Physical and moral evil is a mystery [CCC 324, 385, 412]
- God can bring good from the consequences of evil [CCC 312]

- There exists physical evil as long as creation has not reached perfection [CCC 310]
- Angels and man are intelligent and free creatures who can go astray, sin, and commit moral evil [CCC 311, 330]
- Some angels have sinned and are irrevocably separated from God through their own choice [CCC 392-393]
- Original Sin is “a deprivation of original holiness and justice, but human nature is not totally corrupted but rather wounded” [CCC 405, 396-401]
- Due to Original Sin, humanity (unity of the human race – sin of the world) [CCC 408] is subject to ignorance, suffering, and the dominion of death [CCC 405] and to the “triple concupiscence” of pleasures of the sense, covetousness for earthly goods, and self-assertion [CCC 377]
- Behind the disobedient choice of our first parents lurks a seductive voice, opposed to God – Satan [CCC 391]
- Sin is present in human history [CCC 386] and is an abuse of the freedom that God gives to created persons (humanity’s rejection of God’s love) [CCC 387]
- Christ is the new (or second) Adam whose obedience makes up for the sin of Adam by providing greater blessings than those which sin had taken from us [CCC 410-412, 420]

Commentary

Some commentary on the points above:

1. Some scientists are hostile to the concept of the existence of God or the usefulness or necessity of faith. Their attitude is odd when one stops to consider that science is predicated on (at least) three fundamental tenets of faith
 - a. Objective truth exists and can be recognized
 - b. The laws of the universe are understandable
 - c. The observations, discoveries, and experiments that shape the theories of the “here & now” are applicable to the “there & then” (universality)

Once these tenets are recognized, one can see that, as the catechism states, “The existence of God the Creator can be known with certainty through his works, by the light of human reason, even if this knowledge is often obscured and disfigured by error” [CCC 286]. In fact, the conflict between science and faith is fairly new in human history.

2. There are often two scientific viewpoints advanced on the role of chance (randomness) in the world. In the first, the world is deterministic, with well-described rules that move the motion of the world forward with clockwork precision. Any randomness perceived is a product of our ignorance and can eventually be eliminated (e.g. bigger and better computers). This position leads to the blind watchmaker idea. In the second, the world is swimming in blind chance and things happen, not because of a designer, but because of happenstance. The structure of the world has come about strictly from randomness. This idea is at the heart of Darwinism and is the source of much of the hostility to religion in biology at the present. Modern science rejects both theories, showing that the

- world (and indeed God) is more clever and nuanced than that. In particular, the laws of quantum mechanics seem to strike a perfect balance between determinism and free will – just what one would expect from intelligent design.
3. There has been a lot of work in biology (selfish gene), psychology (abnormal), and economics to explain human behavior. Nonetheless, the reasons for self-destructive behavior, crime, and immoral and unethical actions (sin) remain a mystery.
 4. Despite what most scientists (and their PR people) would like you to believe, most of how the world works is a mystery. In addition, the scientific method and logic can establish that the scientific method and logic has limitations and that amongst these limitations are answers to the “why” questions, the incompleteness of logic, and an ability to even pose proper questions about much of the human condition. Most notable is the lack of consistent definitions and measures for the self-evident facts that life exists and that man is intelligent (thermodynamics and Turing test).
 5. According to Timothy B. Schutt, the ex nihilo story of creation in Genesis seems to be unique in human culture and is mirrored extraordinarily well by the concept of the Big Bang.

Q&A

51. What is the importance of affirming “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1)?
52. Who created the world?
53. Why was the world created?
54. How did God create the universe?
55. What is divine Providence?
56. How do we collaborate with divine Providence?
57. If God is omnipotent and provident, why then does evil exist?
58. Why does God permit evil?
73. How should we understand the reality of sin?
74. What was the fall of the angels?
75. What was the first human sin?
76. What is original sin?
77. What other consequences derive from original sin?
78. After the first sin, what did God do?

References

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| [CCC] | – Catechism of the Catholic Church |
| [Con] | - Compendium: Catechism of the Catholic Church |
| [USCC] | – United States Catholic Catechism for Adults |
| [SG] | - Study Guide for the USCC |