

Contents

Publisher's Note	xi
Introduction	xiii
Key to Biblical Abbreviations	xvi
Chapter 1 / God	1
Chapter 2 / Creation and Man	17
Chapter 3 / Religion and the Bible	31
Chapter 4 / Jesus Christ	51
Chapter 5 / The Catholic Faith and the Church	67
Chapter 6 / The Catholic Faith and Other Faiths	87
Chapter 7 / Catholic Living	107
Chapter 8 / Catholic Beliefs and Practices	129
Chapter 9 / Catholic Morality	199
Chapter 10 / Catholic Prayer and Worship	231
Chapter 11 / Miscellaneous Questions	249
Notes	263
Acknowledgments	265
Resources	267
Index of Questions (by Topic)	271

Chapter 2

CREATION AND MAN

Question #14

“I’ve heard there are two creation stories in Genesis. Why is this?”

A. The book of Genesis has two creation stories (or *accounts*) in order to emphasize different theological truths. While Christian tradition considers Moses the author of Genesis, some Scripture scholars believe that several “editors” contributed to the book. This may explain the different emphasis given in the two creation accounts. But remember—if you look closely, neither of the creation stories contradicts the other in any way. In fact, both offer truths about the origin of the world and of man that complement each other.

The first creation account emphasizes God’s transcendence over His creation. God alone is the supreme master of the universe. Here we learn that man is made in the “image” and “likeness” of God and is given “dominion ... over all the earth” (Gn 1:1-31). In contrast, the second creation account is more vivid, using imagery and familiar descriptions that make it easy to understand. God is described as having “formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.” He is characterized as a gardener, “And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree.” Within

this account, Adam and Eve hear “the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day” (Gn 2:7, 9; 3:8).

As the inspired word of God, the Genesis creation accounts offer us truths about God, man, and the origin of the world that are intended to help us grow in faith. Both offer different perspectives on the same truth: that God created the universe out of love for us, and that we in turn are “created to serve and love God” (CCC 358).

Question #15

“Was the world really created in six days?”

A. This question cannot be answered with a simple “yes” or “no.” To understand the Bible correctly we must always read it within the living tradition of the Church (CCC 113). Though God inspired the human authors of the Bible, we need to consider the styles of writing, literary types, and ways of speaking that they used (CCC 110). For example, some parts of the Bible are written as historical narratives (i.e., they discuss events as they actually happened), while other parts are written using a poetic or symbolic style.

With this in mind, let’s turn to the source of the creation story—the book of Genesis. Much of this book is written as a literal history and should be interpreted as such. However, parts of it—particularly its first eleven chapters—are written using symbolic and figurative language. So the author of Genesis didn’t intend to provide a detailed, scientific explanation of God’s creation of the universe. At the time Genesis was written, what is now known as scientific knowledge was extremely limited. The author’s primary purpose here is to convey

religious—not scientific—truths about the origins of the world, man, and man's relationship to God, in a poetic, symbolic way.

Because the creation story is written poetically, the human author of Genesis probably did not use the word "day" to mean a literal, 24-hour period. The word "day" may have been used to draw distinctions between the different aspects of God's creative work (e.g., man in comparison to the rest of creation). The author describes creation as taking place over six days, with God resting on the seventh (see Gn 1:1-31, 2:1-3). The six days can be understood to represent the order of God's plan for the universe, and to show a rhythm of work and rest that God inscribes in the Jewish law: a blessing of the Sabbath day—a day of rest, dedicated to the Lord.

Question #16

"What area of the world did God create first?"

A. The Bible speaks of God creating the heavens and the earth, separating light from darkness, and dividing water from dry land. And upon the earth, God "put forth vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit in which is their seed, each according to its kind, upon the earth" (Gn 1:1-11). But the Bible never tells us the exact location of where the creation of the world began.

The book of Genesis, though, does give us some interesting details about the Garden of Eden. It is described as a place with a river divided into four separate rivers: the Pishon, Gihon, Tigris, and Euphrates (see Gn 2:10-14). The Tigris and Euphrates are the names of two rivers located in present-day Iraq. The region there

has been known throughout history as *Mesopotamia* and has within it a large plain referred to as the *Fertile Crescent*. This area was the home to the world's most ancient civilizations, a number of which are mentioned in the Bible: the Babylonians, the Assyrians, and, before them, the Chaldeans (or Sumerians) who inhabited Ur, the birthplace of Abraham (see Gn 11:27-32).

Question #17

“If the Church teaches that the Bible—including Genesis—is true, then it must reject evolution, right?”

A. Actually, no. The Church does not reject the *possibility* that God could have created man and the universe through an evolutionary process. God could have infused a human soul into a pre-existent living being, thereby making it a *human* being. This possibility, however, in no way contradicts the creation accounts found in the book of Genesis, if they are correctly understood. As mentioned earlier, Genesis was not written to offer a scientific explanation of God's creation of the world and man. Instead, the author of Genesis is more interested in conveying *religious* truths that deal directly with God's purpose in creating the world, as well as man's place in it.

The Church teaches that everything owes its existence to God (CCC 338). Whether He created the universe through a process of evolution, or by some other means, is of secondary importance. Concerning the origin of the world, we must affirm the following:

1. God created the universe *ex nihilo*, “out of nothing” (CCC 296).

2. Everything He created is good (CCC 299).
3. Man was created in God's image and likeness (Gn 1:27; CCC 355).
4. Adam and Eve lost their original state of innocence and holiness through sin (CCC 399, 405). As a result, death and suffering entered creation (CCC 400).
5. All human beings inherit this state of original sin (CCC 402-406).
6. God promised a Savior who would redeem us from our fallen state and lead us to salvation (CCC 410, 411).

Remember: Evolution is a scientific *theory*. Though often taught as fact, many of its aspects have been challenged by a growing number of scientists simply because the fossil evidence is missing, or even conflicting. Because faith and science both find their origin in God, it stands to reason that scientific theories concerning the origins of the world, as well as religious truths related to them, should be compatible with one another (see CCC 159).

Question #18

“If the Church is infallible, why doesn’t it settle the question of creation and evolution?”

A. As we saw in the previous answer, the Church is mainly concerned with the *why*—not the *how*—of creation. After we acknowledge God as creator, precisely how human life came about is a matter for science to consider; the Church’s principal mission is to teach on matters of faith and morality.

While the Church is indeed infallible when teaching or clarifying the contents of God's revelation, this does not mean that the Church has the ability to make dogmatic pronouncements on every scientific theory. Infallibility does not mean the Church knows everything. There are many things Christ has not revealed to his Church, such as the exact date of his Second Coming, which the Bible says no one but the Father knows (Mt 24:36). Therefore, the Church cannot and will not teach infallibly on matters that have not been revealed to her, including those directly related to the issue of evolution.

Question #19

“Did Adam and Eve really exist? Did they really eat the forbidden fruit, or is this just symbolic?”

A. The Church has always taught that God created a first man (Adam) and a first woman (Eve) in His “image and likeness.” The name *Adam* is derived from the Hebrew word for “man,” and *Eve* comes from the Hebrew for “life,” for it is through her that all human life originates. The *Catechism* tells us that our first parents were created in an original “state of holiness and justice,” meaning that they were in friendship with God and were in harmony with each other and creation around them (CCC 375). As long as they obeyed God, they remained in friendship with Him and were free from all suffering and death.

In Genesis, we learn that God gave Adam and Eve the freedom to eat of any tree of the garden, except one—the “tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gn 2:17). Because the creation story is written using figurative language, many of its descriptions have a symbolic meaning. For example, the *Catechism* states that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil “symbolically evokes

the insurmountable limits that man, being a creature, must freely recognize and respect with trust. Man is dependent on his Creator and subject to the laws of creation and to the moral norms that govern the use of freedom" (CCC 396).

Furthermore, our first parents' eating of the forbidden fruit symbolizes humanity's disobedience to God's law and thus constitutes our first sin (Gn 3:1-11). Whether the sin of our first parents actually involved a piece of fruit taken from a forbidden tree is really not that important. What *is* important is that Adam and Eve *did* sin, and all of mankind subsequently inherits their fallen state.

You may be interested to know that Genesis never mentions the actual name of the forbidden fruit eaten by Adam and Eve, even though we often hear it was an apple. Don't worry though—I don't think anyone is going to change the name of the protruding part of your throat from "Adam's apple" to "Adam's peach" anytime soon!

Question #20

"Why are we punished for Adam and Eve's sin?"

A. As descendents of Adam and Eve, we are born into original sin. This is not through any fault of our own, but simply because we have inherited our human nature from them. The nature we have inherited is in a fallen condition, negatively affected by the absence of sanctifying grace, lost through Adam's sin. That original sin, though, is not something we have "committed"—it is a "condition" we inherit (CCC 404).

After our first parents' sin, God did not abandon us to sin and death. He sent His only Son who, through His death on the cross, not only makes amends for the sin of

Adam and of the whole world, but renews all things in Himself: "I have come that you may have life, and have it to the full" (Jn 10:10). Therefore, in a most glorious way, Christ's inexpressible grace has given us blessings better than those which sin has taken away from us (CCC 412, 420). As St. Thomas Aquinas writes, "There is nothing to prevent human nature from being raised up to something greater, even after sin."³ It is Christ who restores that which was lost through original sin and raises us up to even greater heights by inviting us to share in his very life. This is the reason why baptism is so important. It is the means by which sanctifying grace enters our souls and our friendship with God is restored.

If Adam and Eve had remained faithful to God, their children would have inherited the same nature enjoyed by their parents in the garden. However, this does not mean they had an exclusive right to that inheritance. Furthermore, if we had also gained that inheritance, I can hardly imagine that we would be complaining about having it *so good*, especially when considering we *did nothing* to deserve it. We should keep this in mind when we compare the sin of Adam and Eve with our own sins and lack of faithfulness to God.

Question #21

"Would Jesus have had to come to die for us if Adam and Eve didn't sin?"

A. The sole reason Jesus came into the world and died on the cross was because of the sin of Adam and Eve, as well as all subsequent sins of the whole world. In the words of the *Catechism*, "...his redemptive passion was the very reason for his Incarnation" (CCC 607). The *Catechism* also tells us, "we do know by Revelation that Adam had

received original holiness and justice not for himself alone, but for all human nature" (CCC 404). So, even if Adam and Eve had never sinned, we cannot assume that their offspring would not have sinned. Therefore, if Adam and Eve hadn't sinned but one of their offspring did, we still would have needed a Savior. Jesus would have carried out His saving work for even a single sinner, regardless of who it was.

Jesus Himself is the Good Shepherd who tells us He would leave His flock of ninety-nine in order to find the one who has gone astray (Lk 15:4-7). "There is not, never has been, and never will be a single human being for whom Christ did not suffer" (CCC 605). If, on the other hand, no human being ever sinned throughout the history of mankind (a pleasant thought indeed), there would have been no reason for Jesus to suffer and die.

Question #22

"Did the dinosaurs come before Adam and Eve or vice versa?"

A. There is some disagreement among scientists over the specific times when certain animals appeared and lived on the earth. Fossil records also give varied indications as to the actual age of man. However, scientists work within a generally-accepted geological dating system that divides the history of the world into *eras*: the Paleozoic, Mesozoic, and Cenozoic. According to these divisions, the dinosaurs existed during the Mesozoic era, which lasted from about 248 to 65 million years ago. (Remember the movie *Jurassic Park*? The Jurassic was a period during the Mesozoic era.) Man, on the other hand, appeared during the Cenozoic era and thus did not inhabit the earth until long after the dinosaurs became extinct.

Question #23

"Were Adam and Eve cavemen?"

If you mean, "Could Adam and Eve have lived in a cave?" The answer is, yes, they could have. After their banishment from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve certainly needed to provide shelter for themselves and later for their children. It is certainly possible they could have found a cave they particularly liked, placed a "welcome" mat out front, and called it home. On the other hand, if you're asking, "Did Adam and Eve resemble the hunched over, knuckles scraping the ground figure we picture as a 'caveman'?" the answer is certainly no.

The Church teaches that we must affirm that God created man in His own image and likeness. What does this mean? It means that God endowed man with intelligence and a free will. The *Catechism* tells us that "The human person participates in the light and power of the divine Spirit. By his reason, he is capable of understanding the order of things established by the Creator. By free will, he is capable of directing himself toward his true good" (CCC 1704). The image of God is present in every man. "Endowed with a 'spiritual and immortal' soul, the human person is 'the only creature on earth that God has willed for its own sake.' From his conception, he is destined for eternal beatitude" (CCC 1702-03). So, while Adam and Eve probably didn't have the same table manners that we have today, they were as fully human as you and me. They were not "cavemen" in the sense of being lesser developed versions of an evolving species that still had some "monkey" to evolve out of their systems!

Question #24

"If Adam and Eve were the only original people, who was Cain's wife? If he married his sister, wouldn't this have been incest and have caused genetic problems in their children?"

A. Cain would have married his sister. At the beginning of time, though, this practice was acceptable in the eyes of God for the obvious reason that the human race could not have continued without it. But we should not see this as a contradiction to God's moral law, i.e., that He makes certain exceptions merely for the sake of convenience. We know today that inbreeding can be a dangerous health hazard. When close blood relatives marry (who share a common gene pool), the chance of passing on a lethal gene combination to their children is greatly increased.

The average human being today carries four to six lethal genes. They can be caused by deletions and mutations of genes in the gene structure of the cell, and these lethal genes are what cause problems with inbreeding. However, since Adam and Eve were God's original couple, they would have had the purest genetic code possible. Without such lethal combinations, any danger of genetic mutations among their children (or their children's children) was very unlikely. This helps us understand why God would have *originally* allowed for marriage among the sons and daughters of Adam and Eve (and, indeed, for other Israelites—for example, Abraham, who married his half-sister—until the law of Moses specifically forbid it.) However, given the health dangers and the moral complications that could result within families that would form such relationships, God eventually prohibited marriage between close relatives, including other degrees

of kinship that may be called incestuous (see Lv 18:7-20; CCC 2388).

Question #25

“If Adam and Eve were the only two humans that God created at the beginning, wouldn’t that make the entire population of the world a huge extended family?”

A. You’re right—we *are* all one huge extended family! As descendants of our first parents, all human beings are related to one another. The *Catechism* tells us we are all of a “common origin ... All nations form but one community. This is so because all stem from the one stock which God created to people the entire earth” (CCC 842).

In recent years, science seems to have confirmed our common human ancestry. There have even been a number of genetic studies conducted that strongly suggest all humans are descended from a single set of parents. One of them, conducted by evolutionary biologists from Yale, Harvard, and the University of Chicago during the early 1990s, looked for genetic differences in the “Y” chromosome of 38 men of different ethnic backgrounds who were living in different parts of the world. Within their research, they discovered particular characteristics common to all the men’s “Y” chromosomes. Based on their analysis, they concluded that all 38 had descended from the same original father. This same conclusion was drawn by an American researcher in molecular evolution, Michael Hammer, in a similar research study conducted at about the same time. In addition, a British team of geneticists, while examining a much larger segment of

the human "Y" chromosome, also concluded that modern humans all descended from a common male ancestor.

In 1987, *before* the studies described above were conducted, a completely independent study by a team of molecular biologists at the University of California at Berkeley concluded that, based on the genetic evidence, all humans share a common *female* ancestor. The researchers appropriately named her "Eve." ⁴

Question #26

"If all of us came from Adam and Eve, then why are there so many different races and ethnic groups?"

A. As we saw in the answer to question #25, recent scientific evidence seems to indicate that the entire human race is descended from one man and one woman. This being so, there is a perfectly natural explanation for how different races could all have come from a single set of parents. For example, think about your own family. Do all of your brothers and sisters look exactly like your parents? Some of them probably resemble one of your parents more than the other. If you consider your extended family, e.g., grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces, etc., you will probably notice even more differences than similarities. Maybe someone in your family doesn't resemble anybody! The point here is that even within one or two generations of the same family, you will find a wide diversity of traits: different sizes and shapes, eye and hair color, facial features, skin pigment, etc.

Adam and Eve held within them the genetic material that eventually gave rise to all the various races, just as parents today have the genetic material which results

in the physical differences among their children. "The whole human race is in Adam 'as one body of one man'"⁵ (CCC 404).

There is enough scientific evidence to suggest that man, after having made his entrance into the world, spread out throughout the earth from a single geographical starting point. The Bible certainly speaks of Noah and his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, along with their wives; and "From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood" (Gn 10:32). As particular groups moved to specific regions of the world, they became acclimated to that region, settling there and populating it. Obviously, over the course of countless generations, the people of these regions would come to resemble one another in a distinctive way. Not only that, they would come to develop a common language, culture, and overall way of life. This explains the beautiful and rich diversity of the nations and peoples of the world.

Finally, we need to remember that although we represent various races, colors, and ethnicities, we are all one people. The *Catechism* reminds us that "Because of its common origin, the human race forms a unity, for 'from one ancestor [God] made all nations to inhabit the whole earth'" (Acts 17:26; Tb 8:6; CCC 360). This unity finds its fulfillment in Jesus, the "light of the nations" and the hope of salvation for all mankind (see Jn 1:4).⁶