

Theme B– Religion and Life

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Key Terms

Literalist- A person who believes the Bible is 100% true and factual. They believe that the Bible is inerrant (has no mistakes in it)

Liberalist- A person who believes that the Bible's authors were guided by God, but that not everything they wrote is a literal account of what happened.

Sanctity of life- all life is sacred and created by God and therefore we should do nothing to harm it.

The origins of the Universe

Some Christians (**literalists**) believe that God created the world in 6 days and then rested on the 7th. They believe that every word in the Bible is inspired by God and this is exactly how the universe started.

The creation of the world began with '**let there be light**' and then light appeared. This story of creation highlights God's OMNIPOTENT powers.

Other Christians (**liberalists**) believe that it is not important if God literally created the world in 7 days, it is more about the symbolic meaning of this story- that God has the power to create the world.

Both views of God show his OMNIPOTENCE.

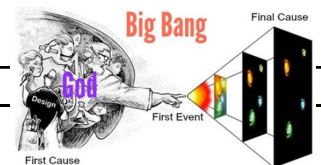
At the end of the creation God rests and says '**it was good**' showing he is pleased with his creation. God created the world 'ex nihilo' which means out of absolutely nothing.

Scientific Accounts of the origins of the Universe

The leading scientific theory on how the world was created is the Big Bang theory- this states that the world has developed and adapted over 13 billion years. The theory mainly comes from mathematical theories.

Christian response to the Big Bang

Most Christians accept scientific understandings of how the world began but simply say that the Big Bang had to start somewhere, and therefore God is the 'first cause' of this event.



The Value of the world.

God blessed them and said to them 'be fruitful and increase in number. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground' (**Genesis**)

Christians believe they should have dominion and stewardship over the planet.

Dominion- We have been given the power over creation by God so we need to rule over it responsibly. God entrusted human beings to be caretakers of the world and to look after what God has made.

Stewardship- God gave humans the privilege to live on the planet so we must take responsibility to look after it to prevent it from being ruined.

'For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities have been clearly seen' (**Romans**)

This quote shows us that we must take care of the world as God has made it beautiful for us.

What does The Bible say about the origins of human life?

'So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them' (Genesis 1: 27)

The Bible states that Adam and Eve were the first people on the earth. God created Adam from the soil in the ground and Eve from Adam's rib as a companion for Adam. The intention was that they were to live in the Garden of Eden and have a close relationship with God.

Literalist interpretation- This is literally true and all human beings are decedents of Adam and Eve.

Liberalist interpretation- It is not supposed to be a scientific account of creation but a story designed to show that God has a special relationship with humans as they are made imago dei- in the image and likeness of God.

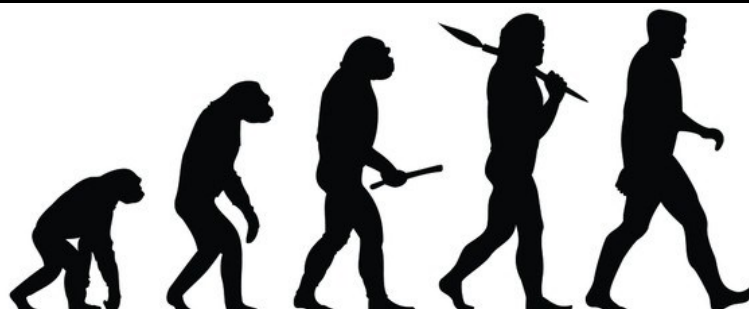
The theory of Evolution

Charles Darwin coined the term evolution. He suggested that while the earth cooled conditions became right for the beginning of life. According to his theory, humans evolved over millions of years from other animals on land. Scientists have discovered bones from several different extinct species which they claim are possible ancestors of the human race. Darwin explained that creatures show adaptation- they can change and adapt to best suit their environment over time.

Christian beliefs about evolution

Literalist interpretation- They will reject the theory of evolution as the world was created exactly as it says in Genesis- God created every species separately. Some literalists accept that adaptation can occur within a species, they do not believe there is enough evidence to prove that creatures evolve.

Liberalist interpretation- They believe that God is the creator but will also accept evolution. They believe that the Bible is the 'why' it happened and evolution is the 'how'. Some Christians say that it happened because God designed and created the beginnings of life and set everything into motion.



The use and abuse of the environment

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Key terms:

Environment- the natural world we live in

Natural resources- materials found in nature such as oil and trees that can be used by people.

Sustainable development- building and progress that try to reduce the impact on the natural world.

Non-renewable resources- things the earth provides that will eventually run out.

Renewable energy- energy that comes from sources that won't run out e.g the sun.

'And God saw that it was good' (Genesis)

The world has its own unique value in the eyes of God. God gave human beings the ability to rule over the world, but in a way that sustains and protects the environment.

You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet (Psalms, Old Testament)

- As a result, humans have to look after the planet and not abuse it or else future generations will suffer.
- Natural resources are slowly running out due to the increase in the world's population and therefore the world needs to become more involved in sustainable development.

What can we do to help protect the environment?

Use renewable energy sources:

We can now generate electricity through wind, wave and solar power. There are problems to these types of energy sources e.g. solar power (power through the sun) can only be generated if the climate conditions are right. However in theory these sources can give us unlimited energy and therefore we should try to use more of these than non-renewable resources such as oil and coal.



Reduce, reuse, recycle:

Christians believe that they should avoid waste, conserve energy and reduce the demand for natural resources by:

- Walking or cycling instead of using a car.
- Turn off lights not in use.
- Reusing bags when shopping
- Donating second hand clothes/toys/furniture to charity shops
- Recycling waste.



The Assisi and Ohito meetings:

Leaders from 5 different world religions were brought together in 1986 by the World Wildlife Fund. They met in Assisi (Italy) to discuss how their faiths could and should help to care for the environment. Another meeting in Ohito (Japan) in 1995 brought together religious leaders and scientists.

At these meetings Christians said that being in charge of creation does not give people the right to spoil what God has made, as humans are only tenants of God's world.

The use and abuse of animals

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Key teachings:

Take with you seven pairs of every kind of clean animal, a male and its mate, and one pair of every kind of unclean animal, a male and its mate, 3 and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth. (Genesis)

God values animals as he wanted humans to keep them safe in the story of Noah's Ark.

'Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you' (Genesis)

God gave humans permission to eat animals.

'The righteous care for the needs of their animals' (Proverbs)

Humans need to take care for animals.

Should humans eat meat?

'The one who eats everything must not treat with contempt the one who does not and the one who does not eat everything must not judge the one who does' (Romans)

This quote shows that Christians have a choice if they wish to eat meat or not. Most modern Christians do eat meat as it is part of a healthy and balanced diet.

People who are vegetarian or vegan usually do so because they are against the killing of animals or do not like the cruelty of some factory farms.

Muslims only eat meat which is 'halal'- it must be farmed and slaughtered according to Muslim teaching.

Christian responses to animal experiments

Testing cosmetics was banned on animals in 1998 and most Christians support this ban. However Christians generally support the use of animal testing if there are no other safe ways of developing medicines to be used on humans. Christians believe that all human life is sacred and should be treated with respect; using animals to develop new drugs may benefit millions of people and save many lives.

However, some say that testing on animals has no impact on the effects the drugs will have on humans. For example the story of Ryan Wilson shows this. Ryan was a volunteer in a drugs trial for a new medicine. The test had been used on animals with no bad effects. When he had the drugs tested on him, he reacted so badly that he was in a coma for two weeks. He also lost all his toes and the tips of his fingers. This story shows that we should not test products on animals as it caused unnecessary pain on animals, and the results gained from this sort of testing has no impact on how humans will react to the drugs.



Hindu's also believe that animals have souls, not just humans and therefore they deserve to be protected. Many Hindu's believe the cow to be a sacred animal, so no animal experiments can be taken place on a cow.

Consequences of War

Pollution puts the health of humans, animals and plants at risk. Pollution is an on going problem in our world that could have devastating effects if nothing is done to stop it.



Pope Francis challenged the world to care more about the planet in his open letter titled 'On the Care for Our Common Home'. He talked about how we must protect our earth because it is currently not a face place to live.

What should people do to help?

Christians believe the world is on loan to us and we have the responsibility to look after it.

The **Parable of the Talents** warns that when God returns to earth he will judge how responsible people have been on earth. Polluting the planet is not good stewardship as God's creation is being abused.

Pollution harms people and so is not '**loving one's neighbour**'. Christians should protect the planet from pollution.



Key terms:

Air pollution- caused by fumes from factories and vehicles. Long-term exposure can lead to asthma attacks, lung cancer and other diseases. It also can cause global warming.

Land pollution- caused by ineffective disposal of waste. When chemicals enter the earth this can poison wildlife, make farming less efficient and result in contaminated food.

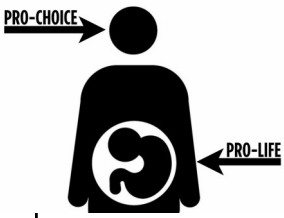
Water pollution- Caused by dumping waste in the sea. It can have a devastating effect on marine life.

'The earth is the Lord's and everything in it' (Psalm 24:1)

This quote seems to imply we can control the world how we please.

'Every human act of irresponsibility towards creatures is an abomination. (Christian statement from the Assisi Declarations on nature).

This quote implies we have a duty of care to creation.



Abortion



Key teachings:

Sanctity of Life: all life is holy and created by God and therefore nothing should be done to destroy this life.

All humans are made in the **image of God** and therefore killing any human life is going against God.

'Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born, I set you apart.' (Jeremiah 1:5) This shows that as soon as a child is conceived it is a human being.

What does the law say about abortion?

Before 1967, abortion was illegal in the UK
Now, abortion is allowed in the 24th week if:

1. 2 doctors agree that one of these conditions exist:
1. Woman's life is in danger due to the pregnancy
2. Risk to woman's physical or mental health
3. Significant risk the baby will be born with severe physical or mental disabilities
4. Any additional child may harm the physical or mental health of children who already exist in that family

Pro life- believe that the foetus has rights just as much as the mother and therefore do not agree with abortion.

Pro choice- is a term used to indicate support of the belief that women should have access to abortions and be able to make decisions about their own bodies

Christian responses to abortion

Many Catholics and Evangelical Christians:

Life starts at conception and abortion is therefore wrong. It can only be allowed to (maybe) save the woman's life if she was going to die in childbirth. **'It does not matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to the birth. In both instances, destruction is murder'** (a Christian writer).

Other Christians:

Oppose abortion BUT believe there are some circumstances when it might be ok
Example: if the pregnancy is the result of rape, if the child would be severely disabled or die at birth. They see abortion as the 'lesser of 2 evils' **'As God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, gentleness and patience'** (Colossians 3:12)

Muslim responses to abortion

- Muslims regard abortion as wrong and haram (forbidden), but many accept that it may be permitted in certain cases.
- Abortion is permitted if the pregnancy would put the mother's life in real danger.
- Some Muslim laws permit abortion in the first 16 weeks of pregnancy, while others only permit it in the first 7 weeks.

Euthanasia

In Sept 2015, British Parliament rejected plans to pass a 'right to die' law . The public opinion tends to be in favour of 'right to die'
Many feel it is acting with compassion to respect a person's wishes - if their life becomes too painful, they should have the right to ask to end their life.

Some people believe that if euthanasia was allowed, it could end up causing those who are ill to feel pressure to ask for euthanasia so that they do not burden their families.

Most modern drugs and hospices can provide the dying with the chance to end their lives with dignity and without pain. Where suffering is unavoidable some Christians say this can bring people nearer to God and can help them to understand the suffering of Jesus.

- **Active euthanasia** —Performing an action that directly causes someone to die ("mercy killing").
- **Passive euthanasia** —Allowing someone to die by not performing some life-sustaining action.

Key terms:

Euthanasia:

'a good gentle death'. It is the intention is to end the life of someone who is in pain or has poor quality of life.

Types of euthanasia:

Voluntary: a person asks a doctor to end their life (their own choice)

Non-voluntary: the person is too ill to request to die (e.g. in a coma) and the doctor ends their life for them (in their best interests)

Involuntary: when life is ended without a person's consent

Assisted suicide: when a doctor helps YOU take YOUR OWN life - e.g. at Dignitas

Christian views

- Many Christians believe that euthanasia is against God's plan for us
- It is against the 'sanctity of life' (all life is sacred)
- There are hospices and drugs to help people die with dignity
- +Some support euthanasia as it is the compassionate thing to do 'Love thy neighbour'

Islamic views

- The Qur'an says that Allah created all life and everything belongs to him: 'To Allah belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth. He creates what He pleases.'