

Theme B - Religion and life

Origin and value of the universe

The Christian creation story

Beliefs

Genesis 1:1-3 tells how God created the world in 6 days - "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

1. Light
4. Sun, moon, stars
2. Sky
5. Fish, birds
3. Seas, land, plants
6. Animals, humans

Interpretations

Fundamentalist Christians: They believe everything in the Bible is the word of God. The Bible says that he created the world from nothing in 6 days, so therefore that is how the world was created.

Liberal Christians: They believe the Bible is poetry or a metaphor, which contains the truth but it is not literally true. Therefore they believe God played a role in creation but it did not happen exactly as described. Some liberal Christians believe that it happened as described, but that God's days are much longer than 'earth days'.

Scientific explanations of creation

The Big Bang theory suggests the universe was created through the rapid expansion of a singularity 13.8 billion years ago. Stars and planets formed as a result of this, including the earth.

The earth was formed about 4.5 billion years ago. The first life appeared about 3.7 billion years ago.

Attitudes towards scientific explanations

Fundamentalist Christians: They do not accept scientific views because they believe that the world was created by God in 6 days. This is because it is what happens in the Bible, and the Bible is true because it is the word of God.

Liberal Christians: Many liberal Christians accept the scientific explanation, believing that God was the cause of the Big Bang and he created the conditions necessary to lead to the development of life on earth.

The value of the world

As God's creation

For Christians the world is incredibly valuable, as it was created by God.

It is full of examples of God's infinite power and gives a sense of amazement, awe and wonder.

The view from a high mountain, the Grand Canyon, Niagara Falls, the detail of a snowflake seen under a microscope, and the vastness of space are all examples of the awesomeness of creation - "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities - his eternal power and divine nature - have been clearly seen..."

The world is also complex and fascinating. Caterpillars turning into butterflies and trees bursting into life in springtime show the mystery and wonder of life.

As our home

Many people believe that world has value because it is our home, and it provides and sustains life. As far as we know, nowhere else in our solar system can sustain life like planet Earth.

It is a complex and fascinating place, full of great beauty and mysterious and wonderful life.

Awe

A feeling of respect

Fundamentalist

A person who believes in a strict, literal interpretation of religious scripture

Genesis

The first book of the Bible, which tells the story of the Earth's creation by God

Liberal

A person who thinks that traditional beliefs can be changed.

Numinous

An awe inspiring experience that suggests the presence of God

Wonder

Marvelling at the complexity and beauty of the universe

Theme B—Religion and life

Use of animals and the environment

Caring for creation

Stewardship

God has given humans the responsibility of caring for the planet and stopping it from being ruined. Humans are stewards, who can and should care for animals and the environment, and try to prevent their abuse.

“God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.”

“The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”

Animals are to be treated kindly and with respect.

“Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.”

“The righteous care for the needs of their animals...”

Dominion

God gave humans the power and authority to rule over the world. The majority of those who believe in dominion believe this means they are caretakers of the Earth, but that it can be used for our benefit.

A minority believe this means they are in charge and can use the environment in any way, even if it means not caring for it - “Fill the earth and subdue it.”

Use and abuse of creation

Use of natural resources

1.43 billion litres of oil are used a day world wide.

7.3 million hectares of forest are lost each year.

Other non-renewable resources are being used quickly.

Deforestation, mining, quarrying and oil drilling all damage the environment.

Pollution

Air - fumes from factories and vehicles

Land - ineffectual disposal of waste

Water - oil spills or dumping water into the sea

“The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.” - Pope Francis

Eating meat

Eating meat is not prohibited in Christianity - “Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you.”

Some Christians are vegetarian or vegan due to environmental or animal welfare concerns.

Buddhism teaches that all living creatures should be cared for and not harmed. Therefore most Buddhists are vegetarians or vegans.

Contrasting views on animal testing

Some animal experimentation is acceptable

As part of their dominion over the Earth, some Christians support limited animal experimentation if it is the only safe way to develop medicines, and the animals are treated with respect.

The Catholic Church accepts experiments on animals ‘within reasonable limits’ and only if it is ‘caring for or saving human lives’.

Animal experimentation is never acceptable

Some Christians think experiments on animals are wrong because we have stewardship over animals, and using them for experiments is not acting on our duty to look after them.

Pope John Paul II declared ‘We must abandon laboratories and factories of death.’

Christians who accept animal experimentation for the development of medicines do not accept it for the testing of non-medicinal products (e.g. make up) because it is cruel and unnecessary.

Buddhism teaches that all living creatures should be cared for and not harmed. Therefore they do not accept harming animals, even to help humans through animal experimentation.

Abuse

Misuse of the world and environment

Animal experimentation

Testing medicines and other products on animals

Deforestation

Cutting down large areas of forest

Dominion

Ruling over something

Natural resources

Materials found in nature

Stewardship

Responsibility to care for the world

Theme B—Religion and life

Origin and value of human life

Creation of humanity

Christian beliefs

Christians believe that humanity was created by God. First Adam was created from the earth and God breathed life into him. Then Eve was created from Adam's rib. "So God created mankind in his own image."

Interpretations of Christian beliefs

Fundamentalist Christians: They believe that God created humans in the way described in the Bible, as the Bible is the word of God and therefore the literal truth.

Liberal Christians: They believe that God played a role in the creation of humans (maybe by creating the beginnings of life), but not as described in the Bible. They believe that the Bible is about 'why' rather than 'how'.

Scientific views

The theory of evolution suggest that living organisms developed and diversified from earlier forms of life during the history of the earth.

Humans evolved from primates, and have a common ancestor with apes such as chimpanzees.

Evidence of evolution can be found in fossils. It can also be found by looking at examples of adaptation in birds and animals; Darwin's finches are a famous example.

Attitudes towards scientific explanations

Fundamentalist Christians: They do not accept scientific explanations because it contradicts the story in Genesis. They believe the Bible is the word of God, and therefore contains the truth.

Liberal Christians: They accept scientific explanations, but believe that God plays a role in the creation. This could be by creating the beginnings of life, or by creating the conditions for life to develop in this way. Many liberal Christians accept the theory of evolution.

Beliefs about the afterlife

Christian beliefs

Christians believe in the physical resurrection of the body. At death, the body waits until Judgement Day. At judgement, each person faces God and Jesus to evaluate their deeds. If they were good in life they do to heaven, which is paradise and wonderful forever. If they were bad, they do to hell for eternal punishment.

Christians will treat God's creation (both the environment and living creatures) with respect, as they will have to account for their actions after death.

Sikh beliefs

Sikhs believe in rebirth. The soul is born into many lifetimes, whose quality is decided by the words, thoughts and deeds of the previous lifetimes (s). The point of each life is to serve and worship God, so that eventually the soul can be reunited with God and stop being reborn.

Sikhs will treat God's creation (both the environment and living creatures) with respect, as not doing so will lead to bad karma.

Evolution	Fundamentalist	Genesis	Liberal	Rebirth	Resurrection
How living organisms developed from earlier forms of life	A person who believes in a strict, literal interpretation of religious scripture	The first book of the Bible, which tells the story of the Earth's creation by God	A person who thinks that traditional beliefs can be changed.	The return of the soul, born into a new body	Rising from the dead

Theme B—Religion and life

Medical ethics

The value of life

Sanctity of life

Christians believe that all life is special because it was created by God - "So God created man in his own image."

Buddhists believe that all life is special because it is the way we can achieve enlightenment (achieving understanding and breaking free of the cycle of rebirth).

For many religious believers it is the highest form of creation, and the value of human life cannot be measured. It deserves to be protected and cherished.

Quality of life

This is a description of how good someone's life is. It includes how comfortable the feel and how easy it is for them to live through each day.

It is also about whether or not life is worth living because of the medical situation a person finds themselves in.

Giving someone a good quality of life is part of the most basic teaching of all religions; we should treat others as we wish the be treated.

Christianity: "Treat others as you wish to be treated."

Buddhism: "Treat others in ways you would not find hurtful."

Contrasting views on abortion

Abortion is acceptable in certain cases

Some Anglican Christians believe that abortion is acceptable if the lesser of two evils For example, if the life of mother or baby is at risk, the pregnancy is the result of rape or the mother is very young. This follows Jesus' instructions to "Love your neighbour" because it is showing kindness and compassion.

Some people (including Christians and non-Christians) are 'pro-choice'. They believe that the mother's life is more valuable as her life is not dependent on anyone else, so her wishes should come first.

Some Buddhists will accept abortion depending on the situation and if it is the kindest thing

Abortion is never acceptable

Christians believe that life begins at conception, so deliberately ending it is murder. Many Christians view abortion as murder, and think it is never acceptable - "Do not murder."

The Catholic Church teaches that life is sacred because it was given by God, so should not be deliberately taken -"Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception"

Buddhists believe that life is special and must be protected. The First Precept is to not intentionally harm others or take life. Therefore for many Buddhists abortion is unacceptable.

Some people (including Christians and non-Christians) are 'pro-life'. They believe a potential life is valuable, so the rights of the unborn come first and abortion is never acceptable.

Contrasting views on euthanasia

Euthanasia is acceptable in certain cases

Some Christians believe that passive euthanasia is acceptable if it is the most loving thing to do, for example if a person is suffering, if they have a terminal disease, or are in an irreversible coma. God shows mercy and so should we, so it is acceptable to end the life of somebody who is suffering - "Blessed are the merciful."

Some Buddhists will accept passive euthanasia depending on the situation and if it is the kindest thing.

Euthanasia is never acceptable

Christians believe that taking a life is interfering with God's plan, and only God can chose when a person dies - "There is ... a time to be born, and a time to die."

Deliberately ending a life is murder, even if the person has requested it or it could be considered in their best interests - "Do not murder"

Life is sacred because it was given by God, so should not be deliberately taken.

Buddhists believe that life is special and must be protected. The First Precept is to not intentionally harm others or take life. Therefore for many Buddhists euthanasia is unacceptable.

Abortion	Ahimsa	Euthanasia	Lesser of two evils	Passive euthanasia	Sanctity of life
Medically ending a pregnancy	The Buddhist principle of not intentionally harming a living thing	Painless killing of a terminally ill patient	The less unpleasant of two choices, neither of which is good	Quickening a natural death by stopping treatment	Life is holy because it was created and loved by God