

3.2.1.2 Theme B: Religion and life

Students should study religious teachings, and religious, philosophical and ethical arguments, relating to the issues that follow, and their impact and influence in the modern world. They should be aware of contrasting perspectives in contemporary British society on all of these issues.

They must be able to explain contrasting beliefs on the following three issues with reference to the main religious tradition in Britain (Christianity) and one or more other religious traditions:

- Abortion.
- Euthanasia.
- Animal experimentation.

The origins and value of the universe

- The origins of the universe, including:
 - religious teachings about the origins of the universe, and different interpretations of these
 - the relationship between scientific views, such as the Big Bang theory, and religious views.
- The value of the world and the duty of human beings to protect it, including religious teaching about stewardship, dominion, responsibility, awe and wonder.
- The use and abuse of the environment, including the use of natural resources, pollution.
- The use and abuse of animals, including:
 - animal experimentation
 - the use of animals for food.

The origins and value of human life

- The origins of life, including:
 - religious teachings about the origins of human life, and different interpretations of these
 - the relationship between scientific views, such as evolution, and religious views.
- The concepts of sanctity of life and the quality of life.
- Abortion, including situations when the mother's life is at risk.
- Ethical arguments related to abortion, including those based on the sanctity of life and quality of life.
- Euthanasia.
- Beliefs about death and an afterlife, and their impact on beliefs about the value of human life.

Theme B – Religion and Life

The origins of the universe and life

Scientific truth: comes from making a hypothesis, then testing it to see if it is true.

Religious truth: comes from religions and holy books.

The Big Bang theory	Charles Darwin and evolution
The Big Bang Theory is a description of how scientists believe the universe began. Scientists say the universe began about 20 billion years ago. There was nothing. Then there was a huge explosion. Evidence for this includes background radiation and the expansion theory.	The earliest signs of life appeared millions of years ago, before the land and sea settled. The Earth was very hot and covered in a primordial soup. Charles Darwin wrote the 'Origin of the Species' that explained evolution by natural selection, a process that took place over millions of years.

The origins of everything: Science vs Religion views

Science is compatible with religion	Science is not compatible with religion
Liberals believe that the Bible is true, but not word for word. The Bible could contain mistakes as it was written by humans.	Fundamentalists believe that the Bible is the Word of God. We cannot understand how God created the world like this – because we are mere humans – but it is undeniably God's Word. There is lack of proof backing the theory of evolution - fossils don't show the full process.
The 'period of time' that the earth was created is not 7 days, but longer.	
The Big Bang and evolution did happen, but it was orchestrated by God, the bible describes creation in the same order as the Big Bang does.	

Abuse of the planet

- Pollution** → Releasing toxic gases into the atmosphere/water sources.
- Deforestation** → Cutting down trees to make wood or clear land for growing crops.
- Global Warming** → The increase of temperature of the planet, causing ecosystems to change and species to die.

Solutions → finding alternatives to fossil fuels so that the fuels do not add to the problem (sustainable energy)

CHRISTIAN	MUSLIM
Christians in modern times especially, have seen the need to work to heal the world and look after the environment.	Humans are Khalifa (stewards) of the world. Looking after the world shows respect to Allah.
'Respect for life extends to the rest of creation.' – Pope John Paul II	'The world is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you His stewards over it.' (Qur'an)
Since humans must face God on the Day of Judgement , all must carry out their given duties. If humans did not look after the world, they should expect to be punished by God.	Humans are the trustees of Allah's creation. Those who do not follow their duty will be punished on Judgement Day by Allah. The Muslim community is one ummah (a brotherhood), so everyone has the duty to their peers to make sure they pass on a world fit to live in.

Creation:

Christian beliefs	Muslim beliefs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1: Light and Dark, 2: Heavens and the earth, 3: Water and Land, 4: Sun, Moon and Stars, 5: Fish and Birds, 6: Animals and humans, 7: God rested 'God was pleased with what he saw' In the beginning there was nothing, the earth was 'formless and desolate' Genesis 2 says that Adam was formed from the soil and God breathed life into him, while Adam was sleeping God took one of his ribs and formed Eve, the first woman some Christians believe that this is literally true Others say that the story is designed to show that humans are very special to God 'God created mankind in his own image' Others believe in creator but also accept evolution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'You humans were lifeless and He gave you life' (Q) The Qur'an says Allah 'began the creation of man from clay' and breathed life and soul into the first man, Adam - and all humans descend from him. The existence of the universe is proof of the existence of Allah, the Creator. The Big Bang theory doesn't include a reference to a designer and Creator. If there are any disagreements between science and religion, the teachings found in the Qur'an are always correct. The Word of Allah is superior to scientists.

The value of the world

Sanctity of life: life is special; life is created by God.

The Status of Human Life: Religious believers think that humans are the highest form of creation, so human life should be protected and cared for.

The Quality of Life: how good/comfortable life is.

Stewardship	Dominion
God has given humans the privilege of living on planet Earth but with the responsibility of looking after it.	Humans have power over nature since God gave them the right to decide what happens to the world and animals.
God made the world and gave the duty of stewardship to humans. (Genesis 1:28)	'let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air' Genesis 1:2

Animal experimentation and vegetarianism

For animal experimentation/eating meat	Against animal experimentation and for vegetarianism
Dominion – God created the world and put humans in charge so we can do what we want with it.	Animal testing takes advantage of animals inability to give consent so is exploitative and wrong
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.	Stewardship – God gave the world to man, so we have a responsibility to look after the environment. 'God loves even the sparrows'.
Some things like medical testing have a positive impact upon humans (so the benefit outweighs the harm) – 'lesser of two evils'	Many Christians do not eat red meat on Fridays out of respect for Jesus' sacrifice on Good Friday.
'Rise, Peter, kill, and eat' → Peter had a vision where he was told that all animals are clear and can be eaten as they were created by God.	'The righteous are not cruel to animals.' (Bible, proverbs)
'The weak in faith do not eat meat' (Bible, Romans 14)	Where there are alternatives, we should do those.
Cain and Abel offered gifts to the Lord, one gave vegetation and the other fat. God was not happy with Cain and his vegetables, causing Cain to kill his brother.	Cosmetic testing does not provide humans with enough benefit to make animal suffering worthwhile.
Muslims eat most meats, as long as they are ritually slaughtered (halal food) and a prayer of thanks is said before the animal is killed quickly.	Muslims believe that everyone can be challenged on Judgement Day on how they have treated animals. Should only be done for important medical research

What can a religious person do?

- Recycle household waste
- Campaign to make Government change
- Join an organisation, like Greenpeace
- Pay for a tree to be planted
- Don't waste stuff – buy what you need
- Use renewable energy
- Donate to Christian charities such as CAFOD and Christian Aid, who put pressure on governments and industry to become more aware about the abuse to the environment

Abortion

Law on abortion in the UK: the Abortion Act (1967) will not allow abortions beyond 24 weeks

Pro-life	Pro-choice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muslims believe 'Do not kill your children for fear of poverty ...We shall provide for them and for you ... killing them is a great sin' (Q) Abortion is generally haram (forbidden) Roman Catholics and many evangelical Christians believe that life starts at conception, where it is the 'side effect' of a procedure to save a woman's life, it can be accepted God created life, as stewards of this world, humans have to protect it. Murder is wrong 'Thou shalt not kill' All life is sacred and protected: Sanctity of life Christians generally oppose abortion but believe that it is acceptable in some circumstances e.g. if the pregnancy is the result of rape or if the child would be disabled God cares a lot about children. Jesus said 'Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these' The Church of England has said that abortion is a great moral evil since it interferes with God's power. 'I, your God, give life, and I take it away' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muslims believe where a mother's life is at risk, the life of the mother takes precedence. 'Do not take life – which Allah has made sacred – except for a just cause' (Q) If an abortion is seen as necessary it should take place as early as possible and before ensoulment, some Muslims say that ensoulment occurs after 120 days (having an abortion after ensoulment is seen as taking a life and a grave sin) 'whoever kills a soul...it is as if he had slain mankind entirely' (Q). The C of E and Methodists say that sometimes it is 'the lesser of two evils' and the most kind thing to do Quakers argue that the life of the unborn child cannot be valued above that of the woman. Allowing a woman to choose is a way of showing Christian compassion - whether they agree with the choice or not. The Bible doesn't actually mention abortion, but it connects life with breath - the foetus is only alive when it breathes independently
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The foetus cannot defend itself When a foetus will be born with disabilities, we cannot say what the quality of its life would be, so should not decide to forbid it that life. The foetus has a right to life and not to be discarded as if it is just waste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A woman has the right to decide what happens to her body If we banned abortions, women would still have them – but not in a safe way. We need to protect women Some foetuses are so damaged it would be cruel to let them be born Up to a certain point, the foetus cannot survive outside the womb, so it should not be thought of as a life in its own right Where a woman is pregnant as a result of rape or incest, it would be wrong not to allow her an abortion.

The Hospice

Movement

Originally, hospices were set up by Christians, places for travellers, the sick and the needy to stay.

The aims of hospices:

- Relieve physical symptoms of illness.
- Care for the emotional well-being.
- Support families of patients
- Educate carers

St Anne's Hospice

- Opened in 1971 and serves the Greater Manchester community
- In a year, the hospice treats over 3000 patients
- Has to raise over £16,000 a day
- 95% of patients are suffering from a cancer-related illness

Euthanasia

Euthanasia is mercy-killing. It is helping someone to die, who is suffering from a terminal illness or whose quality of life is less than they can bear, usually because of a degenerative disease. Euthanasia is done because of compassion or loving kindness.

The Law on Euthanasia: Euthanasia is illegal in the UK. It can be seen as assisted suicide, so breaking the Suicide Act of 1961, which forbids anyone from helping someone else to die and carries a 14-year jail sentence. It can also be viewed as manslaughter or, at worst, murder, which carries a life sentence.

Active Euthanasia: being given lethal drugs to end their life so that their illness does not kill them

Passive Euthanasia: patient allows the illness to kill them e.g. by taking away life support

Voluntary Euthanasia: when the person asks for euthanasia to end their suffering.

Involuntary Euthanasia: when the patient is unable to say what they want, and their family must decide.

Arguing for the right to die:	Arguing against the right to die:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is my body, so should be my right to make decisions about it, after all I can elect for surgery, have tattoos, and make every other major decision When you consider all human rights, the right to die naturally follows on from them. I am the only one who can really say when my life is no longer worth living We see it as compassionate to put animals in pain to sleep, so should allow the same compassion to humans 	<p>Many Christians believe suffering is part of life. Job was made to suffer but refused to end his life and persevered.</p> <p>Life does not belong to us; it belongs to God – euthanasia is playing God God created life in his own image (Genesis) I, your God, give life, and I take it away</p> <p>Roman Catholics believe that anything that intentionally causes death is wrong. So even those who are unlikely to recover consciousness should be kept alive.</p> <p>Doctors and nurses take oaths to protect lives, not to end lives. Doctors do not have an overriding obligation to prolong life by all means possible (Church of England). Do not kill (Ten commandments)</p> <p>Many Christians feel they must care for sick people, and euthanasia goes against this. Local churches often have links with hospices. Christians would argue this allows a person to feel valued as they reach the end of their life.</p>
Some Christians believe that the easing of suffering through passive euthanasia is a way of demonstrating Christian compassion.	Muslims believe in the teaching ' Neither kill nor destroy yourself ' (Qur'an). Euthanasia is also zulm – wrongdoing against Allah. Life will end when Allah wills it, so euthanasia is not acceptable because it interferes with Allah's plan.
Dutch Protestant Church in the Netherlands allow euthanasia, who see it as an act of love	Islam teaches that life on Earth is a test. Allah knows why people suffer, and they don't have good reason to end their lives, no matter how bad the suffering is. Instead, they should turn to Allah, pray and wait – Allah is merciful.

With abortion and euthanasia, many people look at the factors of each particular case – this is known as **situation ethics**. They think decisions should be made based on what is best in each situation. not by following rules that should apply to every instance.

Death and Afterlife

Christianity:

- At death, the body waits until Judgement Day.
- The **Roman Catholic Church** teaches that after death there is a state of **Purgatory**. This is a place where some people who have sinned are purified in a 'cleansing fire', after which they're accepted into Heaven.
- If they were good in life, they go to **heaven**, which is paradise. If they were bad, they go to **hell** for eternal punishment.
- 'whoever believes in him (Jesus) shall not perish, but have eternal life'
- It is claimed that Jesus rose from the dead and promised that those who follow him will enjoy the Kingdom of Heaven
- 'I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting' Apostles

Islam:

- At death, the body waits in the grave (barzakh) and sees events of its life..
- On **Judgement Day**, people are sorted according to their beliefs and actions. The wicked are cast into hell; the truly good go straight to paradise.
- All others cross **As-Sirat Bridge**, carrying the book of their deeds (sins make it heavier). The bridge is sharp and so they are purified from sin before going to paradise.
- 'garments of fire will be tailored for those who disbelieve'

Arguments to support life after death

- The **paranormal** (things science can't explain, thought to have spiritual cause) is sometimes used as evidence. Some people claim that they can talk to the dead
- Some people claim to have **evidence of reincarnation**. Lots of research has been carried out with young children who claim to remember past lives.
- People say they've had a **near-death experience** where they've spoken to long-dead family members
- Some believe there must be more after life on Earth. They might see going to heaven or paradise as a reward for people who have been good all their lives - it must exist to **compensate for the unfairness of life** on Earth

Arguments against life after death

- Many people believe that when you die, you cease to exist. There **isn't concrete evidence** that there is life after death, so the logical answer is that it doesn't exist.
- Believing in an afterlife is an illusion and a way of helping people deal with death - **provides comfort**
- The idea of an afterlife is used by **religions to put pressure on people** to follow their teachings and live their lives in a certain way.