

Religion and Life

Topics covered:

1. Origins of the universe
2. Value of the world
3. Use of resources
4. Pollution
5. Use of animals
6. Origins of human life
7. Abortion
8. Euthanasia
9. Death and afterlife

Remember: if a question is asking you for the **similarities** it means **two things the same**. If it says **contrasting** it is asking you to say **both for and against**.

6. Origins of human life

Science:

- ✓ Charles Darwin came up with the theory of evolution. He suggested that creatures appeared in the sea, which over a long period of time, evolved into other species.
- ✓ Some became able to survive on land as well as in the sea. Some then developed the ability to fly. This is called evolution.
- ✓ According to the theory of evolution, humans evolved over millions of years from other animals on land.
- ✓ Scientists have discovered bones from several extinct species, which they claim as possible ancestors of the human race.

Christianity:

- ✓ Fundamentalist Christians believe that the origin of human life was exactly as recorded in Genesis, with God creating each species separately.
- ✓ Whilst some accept adaptation in species, they do not believe there is enough evidence to prove that creatures evolve.
- ✓ Some Christians believe in God as the creator, but also accept the theory of evolution.
- ✓ They believe the Bible is concerned with 'why' it happened, rather than the 'how'.
- ✓ Some Christians say it happened because God designed and created the beginning of life and set everything in motion to develop over the course of history.
- ✓ They believe that evolution is the way God designed life to advance and evolve.

'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

Islam:

- ✓ Muslims believe that after God made the universe, he made the first human being called Adam.
- ✓ Muslims believe the whole of the human race is descended from Adam and Eve.
- ✓ Some Muslims reject the idea of evolution altogether, believe that God formed all the different species. Others accept all forms of evolution except where it applies to humans.

'You [humans] were lifeless and He gave you life'. Qur'an 2:28

10. Euthanasia

- ✓ Euthanasia means 'good death'. The intention is to end the life of someone who is in pain or has poor quality of life due to a serious illness but they can't take their own life.
- ✓ There are three types of euthanasia; voluntary – where a person asks a doctor to end their life for them, non-voluntary – where a person is too ill to request to die, but a doctor will end it because it's in their best interests and involuntary – where a person is able to consent, but does not and their life is ended anyway.
- ✓ All forms of euthanasia are currently illegal in the UK and treated as murder or manslaughter.

Christianity:

- ✓ Many believe taking a life is interfering with God's plan. They think it is comparable to murder and open to abuse.
- ✓ Most believe it goes against the sanctity of life, and only God has the right to take life away.
- ✓ Some Christians do support euthanasia and believe that it should be used if it is the most loving thing to do.
- ✓ They believe God has given people free will so they should be able to choose when to end their lives.

'Thou shall not kill'. Exodus.

'Blessed are the merciful'. Matthew 5:7

Islam:

- ✓ Muslims believe in the sanctity of life. They believe all life is a gift from God and therefore should be valued and looked after.
- ✓ No person has the right to take life away, only God decides when it will be ended.
- ✓ No one knows the plan for the person who is suffering, there may be a reason for it.
- ✓ Euthanasia is forbidden in Islam and is considered a sin against God, the community and the individual.
- ✓ To end a life prematurely is going against God, because it is interfering with God's plan.

'Do not take life, which God has made sacred, except by right'. Quran 17:33

'No soul may die except with God's permission at a predestined time'. Qur'an 3:145

8. Abortion

- ✓ Abortion is the removal of a foetus from the mother's womb.
- ✓ This can happen naturally through miscarriage, but abortion usually refers to the medical procedure of deliberately ending the pregnancy.
- ✓ Before 1967 abortion was illegal in the UK. Abortion is currently allowed up to the 24th week of a pregnancy, in a licenced clinic if two doctors agree.

Christianity:

- ✓ Christians believe in the sanctity of life. God has given each person a purpose in life therefore abortion is wrong.
- ✓ Many Christians believe that life starts at conception, abortion therefore is wrong as you are killing a life. The only time it may be acceptable is to save the mother's life.
- ✓ Others oppose abortion but believe it is acceptable in some circumstances such as the result of rape or if the child would be severely disabled.
- ✓ Some say it is the 'lesser of two evils' and the kindest thing to do, for example if the quality of life for the baby is near non-existent.

'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart'. Jeremiah 1:5

'As God's chose people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, gentleness and patience'. Colossians 3:12

Islam:

- ✓ For Muslims they are taught to value life. The Qur'an does not explicitly refer to abortion.
- ✓ It is generally forbidden, but should be allowed in particular circumstances, such as if the mother's life is at risk.
- ✓ Some believe it should be allowed if the foetus will be born with either physical or mental disabilities or if conception was a result of rape.
- ✓ The abortion should be carried out as early as possible and definitely before ensoulment (somewhere between 40-120 days of pregnancy).
- ✓ In Islam, having an abortion after ensoulment is seen as taking a life.

'Do not kill your children for fear of poverty – We shall provide for them and for you – killing them is a great sin'. Qur'an 17:31

7. Death and the afterlife

Christianity:

- ✓ Christians believe humans receive eternal life as a gift from God, and so a belief in the afterlife is dependent on a belief in God.
- ✓ The afterlife either begins upon death or at the **Day of Judgement** when Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead.

Judgement:

- ✓ Christians believe it is God who judges the fate of those who die.
- ✓ He will take into account the life of the person and the extent to which they have tried to get close to him.
- ✓ Jesus makes it clear that in serving others, they are serving him.
- ✓ Christians believe that simply treating other people well and in accordance with Christian morality is not enough to guarantee a good afterlife.
- ✓ They believe that Jesus is the Son of God and in order to gain a good afterlife you have to have faith in him and following his teaching.

'And the life everlasting'. The Apostles Creed

'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'. John 14:6

Heaven:

- ✓ Traditional paintings show it as beyond the clouds and where God sits on a huge throne watching the earth.
- ✓ It is seen as a place of peace, joy and freedom from pain. Whether it is spiritual or physical is unclear.

Hell:

- ✓ Often seen as the opposite of heaven.
- ✓ Christians understand it to be a state of existence without God.
- ✓ It is often depicted as a place of eternal suffering, terror, fire and torture ruled by the devil.
- ✓ It leaves a difficult question as to whether if heaven is reserved for Christians where do non-Christians go.
- ✓ Many believe that all those who try to follow God will be accepted by him and not be sent to hell.

The parable of the sheep and the goats indicates heaven is a reward for both faith and good actions – only one is insufficient.

Islam:

- ✓ For Muslims death isn't the end but the start of a new stage of life called Akhirah. After death you lie in the grave waiting for the day of Judgment this is called Barzakh.
- ✓ Angels are sent to question them about their life.
- ✓ If they are good and honest they will be rewarded if they are bad and untruthful they will be punished.

The Day of Judgement

- ✓ When God's purpose for the world has been fulfilled He will destroy it.
- ✓ The world will be transformed into a new world.
- ✓ Everyone who has ever lived will be resurrected and judged by God.
- ✓ If people are given the book of deeds in their right hands they will go to heaven, if it is in their left they will go to hell.

Heaven and Hell

Heaven:

- ✓ Described as the gardens of happiness
- ✓ It is a reward for faith and good deeds
- ✓

'A reward for what they used to do'. Quran 56:24

Hell:

- ✓ Described as a place of fire and great torment
- ✓ Punishment for those who reject God and do evil
- ✓

'They will dwell amid scorching wind and scalding water in the shadow of black smoke, neither cool nor refreshing'. Quran 56:42-4

Religion and Life

Topics covered:

1. Origins of the universe
2. Value of the world
3. Use of resources

4. Pollution
5. Use of animals
6. Origins of human life
7. Abortion

8. Euthanasia
9. Death and afterlife

Remember: if a question is asking you for the **similarities** it means **two things the same**. If it says **contrasting** it is asking you to say **both for and against**.

1. The origins of the universe

Christianity:

- ✓ The universe was designed and created by God.
- ✓ They believe God created the world out of nothing, 'ex-nihilo'.
- ✓ The Genesis creation story gives an account of how God created the universe.
- ✓ Christians have differing opinions on whether the creation story actually happened (see Christianity knowledge sheet and creation.)

'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth'. Genesis 1

Islam:

- ✓ Muslims also believe the world was created by God in six days.
- ✓ Most Muslims understand the original text of six days to mean six phases, or periods of time.
- ✓ Unlike the Bible, the Qur'an does not specify exactly what took place during each period.
- ✓ The Qur'an does not mention a day of rest.

'Your Lord is God, who created the heavens and earth in six Days, then established Himself on the throne'. Qur'an 7:54

Science:

- ✓ The Big Bang Theory is the leading scientific explanation for how the universe began.
- ✓ It suggests that all matter was compressed into a small hot mass. A massive expansion of space took place and the condensed matter was flung in different directions. It has been expanding ever since creating the universe.

2. The value of the world

- ✓ The world is complex and fascinating. When you look at the world you have to wonder how it was all made.

Stewardship:

- ✓ For **Christians** they believe God has given the privilege of living on the earth but with the responsibility of looking after it.
- ✓ The special responsibility to care for and protect the planet is called stewardship.
- ✓ As stewards of the earth Christians believe people have been appointed by God to respect and manage the world. In return we can use it in a sustainable way for our survival.
- ✓ In **Islam** stewardship is known as khalifah. Muslims believe that God gave humans the responsibility of looking after the planet.
- ✓ People should protect the environment. On the Day of Judgement humans will be answerable to God concerning how well they have fulfilled this role.

'It is He who has made you successors on the earth'. Qur'an 6:165

Dominion:

- ✓ In **Christianity** some believe that humans were given the power and authority to rule over the world. This is called dominion.
- ✓ A minority of Christians believe that people can do what they like with the earth and everything in it because humans are in charge.

'Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground'. Genesis 1:28

3. The use and abuse of resources

- ✓ Worldwide over 90 million barrels of oil are used a day.
- ✓ The problem of deforestation is a serious one. Around 7.3 million hectares of forest are lost each year.
- ✓ Many other non-renewable resources are being used up very quickly, and once they are gone the world will have to adapt drastically in order to live without them.

Renewable resources:

- ✓ Scientists are developing alternatives to non-renewable resources.
- ✓ While renewable resources (wind, wave power, and sunlight), can theoretically give us unlimited energy, in practice there are currently lots of problems with them, which is why conserving energy is important to people.

Christianity:

- ✓ Christians believe they should avoid waste, conserve energy and reduce the demand for natural resources.
- ✓ They believe they can do things like; walking, cycling and public transport instead of using cars, use products which don't have a lot of packaging, turn off lights which aren't being used and reusing bags when shopping, can all help to save natural resources and conserve energy.

Muslims:

- ✓ In the Hadith Muslims are advised to only take what is necessary from the world.
- ✓ Each Muslim has a responsibility to help look after the environment and not overuse the world's resources.

'Do not seek from it more than what you need'. Hadith.

4. Pollution

- ✓ Pollution puts the health of humans, animals and plants at risk.
- ✓ There are many types of pollution which include: air pollution, land pollution and water pollution.

Christianity:

- ✓ Christians believe the world is on loan to humans who have a duty to care for it.
- ✓ The **parable of the talents (Matthew 25)** warns that God will judge how responsible people have been.
- ✓ Polluting the world is not good stewardship, as God's creation is being abused.
- ✓ Pollution also harms people, so it is not **'loving one's neighbour'** or considering future generations.
- ✓ Christians believe they must help to protect the natural world from being harmed by pollution.

'The earth in the LORD'S , and everything in it'. Psalm 24:1

Islam:

- ✓ Muslims believe that the environment should be nurtured, valued and restored to what God intended it to be.
- ✓ Irresponsible behaviour that leads to pollution is seen as unacceptable.
- ✓ In cases where the consequences are fatal, particularly to human life, pollution is haram (forbidden) in Islam.

5. The use and abuse of animals

Muslims beliefs about animals:

- ✓ Muslims believe God made all living creatures and they all worship him in their own way.
- ✓ Each animal is valuable to God, has rights and should be treated with respect and compassion.
- ✓ Islam teaches that animals have been made for the benefit of humans but they are not to be used abused.
- ✓ They must not be beaten unnecessarily nor used to fight each other for human entertainment.
- ✓ All animal cruelty is to be avoided and factory farming is haram (forbidden).
- ✓ Muhammad is seen as a role model in the way he treated animals. There is a story where he cut off a part of his cloak rather than disturb a sleeping cat.
- ✓ He also told a man to return a bird's eggs when he saw the distress of the mother bird.

'All the creatures that crawl on the earth and those that fly with their wings are communities like yourselves'. Qur'an 6:38

Christian beliefs about animals:

- ✓ Christians believe animals were created by God for humans to use and care for.
- ✓ Many believe God values animals but that humans are more important because they were created in God's image and have souls.
- ✓ The Bible teaches that animals are to be treated kindly, but we have permission from God to use them as food.

'Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you'. Genesis 9:3

'The righteous care for the needs of their animals'. Proverbs 12:10

Muslim beliefs on animal experimentation:

- ✓ In Islam causing harm to an animal, doing anything that may harm an animal's life, body or genetic order is not allowed.
- ✓ Causing them stress and forcing them to do a job beyond their power is not allowed either.
- ✓ If such actions were to protect and preserve human life, such as the development of medicines, an exception may be allowed, as long as the animal is treated humanely and with care.
- ✓ All suffering must be kept to an absolute minimum.
- ✓ For example, forcing an animal to smoke to find the effects of smoking is not allowed.
- ✓ Testing cosmetics on animals is also seen as wrong.

Christian beliefs on animal experimentation:

- ✓ In modern societies Christians generally support limited animal testing.
- ✓ Christians believe that all human life is sacred, using animals to develop new drugs may benefit millions of people and save many lives.
- ✓ They believe animals can be used as long as there is no other way to safely develop medicines and it is carried out as carefully as possible.
- ✓ Testing cosmetics on animals was banned in the UK in 1998, and most Christians support the ban.

Muslim beliefs on the use of animals for meat:

- ✓ Muslims are allowed to eat meat which has been killed according to Shari'ah law.
- ✓ For food to be permissible, it must have been farmed and killed according to Muslim teaching.
- ✓ The Qur'an expressly forbids the eating of pig meat and it is also haram to eat any animal which has not been ritually slaughtered or has died in the wild.
- ✓ To provide food is an example of a just cause but hunting for entertainment and pleasure is not.

'Whoever kills a sparrow or anything bigger than that without a just cause, God will hold him accountable on the Day of Judgement'. Hadith

Christian beliefs on the use of animals for meat:

- ✓ Christians have the choice whether to eat meat or not.
- ✓ They should also be sensitive to the beliefs of others about what they wish to eat.
- ✓ Most Christians eat meat. Those who decide not to, usually do so because they are against killing animals, as they believe that animals should not be harmed.
- ✓ Others object to the animal cruelty which can occur in large factory farms.

'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, for God has accepted them'. Romans