1 Beliefs and teachings
1.1 The nature of God

1.7 The resurrection and ascension

Essential information

- The belief that Jesus rose from the dead is known as the resurrection and is an essential teaching in the Christian faith. For Christians, it is evidence of the divine nature of Jesus.
- Jesus appeared to several people

Theme B: Religion and life

Title: 4.1 The origins of the universe

Universe: all of time and space and its contents; includes planets, stars, galaxies, the contents of intergalactic space, the smallest subatomic articles, and all matter and energy.

Quick Facts:
- Our galaxy the Milky Way, is about 100,000 light years in diameter.
- It would take 2.5 million years to travel to the next galaxy, if travelling at the speed of light.
- Observable universe is 93 billion light years in diameter and contains more than 100 billion galaxies.
- How did nothing become something?

Christians believe that the Universe did not make itself, but that it was designed and made by God. God created ex nihilo- ‘out of nothing’.

*Genesis 1:1-2:3*
Every word is inspired by God and therefore correct. Often interpret 6 days as literal but may interpret the word ‘yom’ from Hebrew as an indefinite period of time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fundamentalist Christians:</th>
<th>Christians who believe that the statements of the Bible are literally true and believe that there are certain basic beliefs that are essential to the Christian faith.</th>
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</table>

More like parables or symbolic accounts. More likely to look to science to understand how God created the world.

**The Big Bang theory:**
- Leading scientific theory for how the universe began.
- Universe began with an incredibly small, hot, dense something - a singularity.
- Expanded over 13.8 billion years to become the cosmos.
- As the universe expanded and cooled, the matter flung in all directions become stars grouped into galaxies.
- We cannot look back at the beginning of the universe, so the Big Bang theory comes from mathematical theory and models.

“*The Big Bang, which today we hold to be the origin of the world, does not contradict the intervention of the divine creator but, rather, requires it*”. Pope Francis 2014

**4.2 The value of the world**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wonder</th>
<th>Marveling at the complexity and beauty of the universe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Awe</td>
<td>A feeling of devout respect, mixed with fear or wonder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>A duty to care for, or having control over, something or someone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>The idea that believers have a duty to look after the environment on behalf of God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominion</td>
<td>Dominance or power over something; having charge of something or ruling over it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘*When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?’*  
*Psalm 8:3-4*

‘*For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities- his eternal power and divine nature- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so the people are without excuse*’  
*Romans 1:20*

‘*God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. 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

**Religion and life**  
**4.3 The use and abuse of the environment**
God gave permission for people to rule over his creation,

Psalm 8:6 New International Version (NIV)  
6 You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet.  
(Dominion)

However, the Bible also says, in Genesis 2:15  
15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.  
(Stewardship)

### 4.4 Pollution

**Forms of pollution**

- **Air pollution**- Caused mainly by fumes from factories and vehicles. Long-term exposure can lead to asthma attacks, lung cancer and other diseases. It also causes global warming, climate change and acid rain.

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

- **Water pollution**- Caused by dumping waste into the sea. It can have a devastating effect on marine life. The Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010, for example, released over 750 million litres of oil into the sea and killed thousands of and marine life.

*Many scientists agree that drastic changes need to take place in society to reduce pollution and the effects of climate change.*

Pope Francis challenges the world to help reduce pollution

- Pope Francis challenges the world to help reduce pollution
Pope Francis in a letter entitled 'On the Care of Our Common Home', set out the need to tackle the problems of pollution, climate change and poverty.

- ‘the earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth.’
- Must tackle pollution and waste, and not just throw things away.
- Human life is grounded in human’s relationship with God, with our neighbours and the created world.
- Uses St. Francis as a role model for a ‘more compassionate concern for the protection of our world’.
- He encourages the transition from fossil fuels to using clean renewable energy.

What do Christians believe?

“The earth is the LORD’S, and everything in it.”
Psalm 24:1 [NIV]

“Every human act of irresponsibility towards creatures is an abomination [disgrace].”
Christian statement in the Assis Declarations on nature

Christians believe the world is on loan to humans and we have a responsibility to look after it. (Genesis 1:28)

God will judge how well humans have used what they have been given.

Parable of the talents
(Matthew 25).

4.5 The use and abuse of animals

- Christians and animals

Christians believe that 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 the image of God, and have souls. The story of Noah and the flood shows this. God commanded Noah to take animals into the ark so they would be safe:

‘Take with you seven 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, and also seven pairs of every kind of bird, male and female, to keep their various kinds alive throughout the earth.’ Genesis 7:2-3
However, after the flood Noah is given permission to eat meat.

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

The Bible teaches that animals are to be treated kindly

**‘Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.’ Deuteronomy 25:4 [NIV]**

**‘The righteous care for the needs of their animals...’ Proverbs 12:10**

Animals are used by humans as pets, for transport and work, for food, sport experimentation and entertainment.

**Testing cosmetics was banned in the UK in 1998,** and most Christians support this ban. Other types of animal testing have been reduced as scientists developed alternative methods using computers or cell culture, (cells that are grown artificially). Most that still occur are on mice or rats that are specially bred for the purpose.

In modern societies Christians generally support limited testing, providing there is no safe way to develop medicines and it is carried out as caringly as possible.

Christians believe 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.

Hinduism teaches that all living creatures have souls, not just humans, and all deserve to be protected. While the Hindu parents of a child may wish to benefit from animal research, this has to be balanced with the belief that some animals might contain the souls of ancestors. Many Hindus believe the cow to be a sacred animal, so no experiments would be permitted on a cow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>vegetarian</th>
<th>a person who does not eat meat or fish</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vegan</td>
<td>a person who does not eat animals or food produced by animals (such as eggs); a vegan tries not to use any products that have caused harm to animals (such as leather)</td>
</tr>
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According to Romans 14:2-3, Christians have the choice to be meat-eaters, vegetarians or vegans. They should also be sensitive to the beliefs of others about what they wish to eat.

**‘The one who eats everything (meat) 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 14:3**

- Most Christians eat meat, as do around 90% of people in the UK. Meat is a good source of protein, vitamins and minerals and the Bible does not teach that it is wrong to eat animals.
- Those who decide to be vegetarians or vegans usually do so because they are against killing animals, as they believe that animals should not be harmed.
  - Others object to the animal cruelty that can occur largely in factory farms.
    - Some think eating vegetables is healthier.
      - Some dislike the taste of meat.
  - Others argue that if the land used to raise cattle for meat was used instead to grow vegetables, much more food would be produced.
- A vegan goes a step further and refuses to use any animal product, including milk, cheese, eggs, fur and leather.
4.6 The origins of human life

Adam and Eve

“So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.”

In Genesis 2, Adam was formed by God from the soil and God breathed life into him. Adam was given the task of taking care of the Garden of Eden and was told not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. While Adam was sleeping, God took one of his ribs and formed Eve, the first woman. The intention was that they would have a close relationship with God.

Some Christians believe that this story is literally true and that the whole human race is descended from Adam and Eve. Other Christians would say that it is not meant to be a scientific account but is designed to show that humans are very special to God, created by him in his own image. Being in the image of God does not mean being physically the same as God. It means that humans have a spiritual nature like God, unlike the rest of creation, so are able to relate to God in a special way. People have a moral goodness within them which is like their creator.

Evolution:
The process by which living organisms are thought to have developed and diversified from earlier forms of life during the history of the earth.

Adaptation:
A process of change where an organism or species becomes better suited to its environment.

In 1859, the scientist Charles Darwin published a book called *The origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*. In it he explained the theory of evolution. He suggested that as the earth cooled, conditions became right for the beginning of life. Single-celled creatures appeared in the sea which, over a long period of time, evolved (changed) into other species. Some became able to survive on the land as well as in the sea. Some gradually developed the ability to fly. Individuals from the same species can still be quite different from one another because of the genes they inherit from their ancestors. Some individuals have certain genes that increase their chance of survival. This means that they are more likely to breed successfully and pass their favourable genes on to their offspring. Darwin called this ‘SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST’.

According to the theory of evolution, 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. Humans are thought to have started evolving about 2.5 million years ago, and developed into humans with the same anatomy to us about 200,000 years ago.

Generally, most atheists accept the theory of evolution because they think it best explains how life has developed on earth. Unlike Christians they do not need to worry about what the theory implies about God’s role in creation, and think that Charles Darwin was right to point out that life adapts and changes to survive in new challenging environments.

Fundamentalist Christians believe that the origin of human life was exactly as recorded in Genesis, with God creating each species separately. While some accept that adaption can occur
within a species, they do not believe that there is enough evidence to prove that creatures evolve (i.e. change from one species to another).

**Some Christians** believe in God as the creator but accept the theory of evolution. They believe the Bible is concerned with *why* it happened while scientists are concerned with *how* it happened. Some Christians say it happened because God designed and created the beginnings 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.

> ‘Science and religion are answering different questions so you can believe both accounts of the origins of life’

> ‘Religious ideas about God creating humans are nonsense.’

### 4.7 Abortion

**Abortion** - The removal of the foetus from the womb before it can survive.

**Sanctity of life:** all life is holy as it is created and loved by God; Christians believe human life should not be misused or abused.

**Quality of life:** the general well-being of a person, in relation to their health and happiness; also, the theory that the value of life depends on how good or satisfying it is.

- Abortion is the removal of a foetus from the womb to end a pregnancy before the child is born.
- This happens naturally when a woman has a miscarriage, but abortion usually refers to the deliberate termination of pregnancy through a medical procedure.
- The number of legal abortions carried out by doctors England and Wales in 2014 was 184,571.

**The Law**

Before 1967, abortion was illegal in the UK. Under the 1990 Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act, abortion is currently allowed up to the 24th week in a licensed clinic if two doctors agree that one of the following conditions applies:

- The woman’s life is in danger if the pregnancy continues
- There is a risk to the woman’s physical and mental health
- There is a significant risk that the baby will be born with severe physical or mental disabilities
- An additional child may affect the physical or mental health of existing children in the family.
- There is no time limit if the mother’s life is in danger or if the foetus is severely deformed.

Christians believe in the sanctity of life and that humans are made in the image of God. Life is sacred, precious and a God-given blessing.

> “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart”

*Jeremiah 1:5; see also Galatians 1:15*

Within Christianity there are some contrasting beliefs towards abortion. The Catholic Church and many evangelical Christians believe that life starts at **conception.** Abortion is therefore wrong and should not happen, except to save a woman’s life. This is also the belief of **Hinduism,** which strongly opposes abortion.

Other **Christian denominations oppose abortion but** believe that it is **acceptable in some circumstances**, for example if the pregnancy is the result of rape or if the child would be severely
disabled. The Church of England and Methodist churches say that sometimes it is ‘the lesser of two evils’ and the kindest thing to do, for example if the quality of life of the baby looks as though it will be extremely poor.

“It does not matter whether you take away a life that is born, or destroy one that is coming to birth. In both instances, destruction is murder.”

Tertullian, a Christian writer, 197 AD

In some countries in south and east Asia, where there is a preference for sons, there is a practice known as sex-selective abortion. Although this practice may occur among religious communities it is important to know that it is a cultural and not a religious practice, and authorities in Sikhism, Hinduism and Islam officially condemn it.

Arguments for and against abortion

**Pro-choice groups**, such as Abortion Rights, agree with legalised abortion because they argue that the woman’s life comes first. She carries the baby, goes through childbirth and looks after the child and so should have the right to choose whether she continues the pregnancy. Her life is affected and if there is a danger she might be harmed mentally or physically, then an abortion should be allowed.

**Pro-life groups**, such as the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC), argue that life begins at conception because all the DNA is present to create a unique individual, so abortion is a form of murder and therefore wrong (Exodus 20:13). The unborn child needs to be protected as stated in the UN declaration of the Rights of the Child. Pro-life groups believe that disabled children can enjoy a good quality of life, and that unwanted children could be adopted by those who are unable to have their own children. They remind people that often those who have an abortion suffer from depression and guilt as a result.

4.8 Euthanasia

**Euthanasia**: The painless killing of a patient suffering from an incurable and painful disease or irreversible coma.

The word euthanasia comes from two Greek words and means a ‘good or gentle death’.

Types of euthanasia:

- Voluntary euthanasia is when a person asks a doctor to end their life, as they do not wish to live anymore. This is their own choice.

Might involve lethal overdose or deliberately leave a large supply of drugs within easy reach of the patient. **Voluntary euthanasia is illegal in Britain and in most of Europe.**

**Christian beliefs**

- Interfering with God’s plan.
- **Murder**
- Open to abuse.
- **Against the sanctity of life**
- Suffering can bring people nearer to God and can help them to understand the suffering of Jesus.
- “**Undermines human dignity and is morally wrong.**”
  
  *The Salvation Army*

**Why some Christians support euthanasia.**

- Drugs God-given, and should be used if it is the most loving thing to do
- God has given humans **free will** so they should be able to choose when to end their lives.
• Blessed are the merciful. Matthew 5:7 [NIV]

4.9 Death and the afterlife

- The Catholic Church believes in purgatory, where souls undergo purification in order to achieve the holiness needed to approach God and enter heaven.
- Some Christians believe in immediate judgement on death and the transition to heaven or hell; others wait until the Day of Judgement and the return of Jesus.
- Some Christians believe they will be in heaven in their physical bodies, but others believe that it is their souls that live on in eternity. Christians point to the resurrection as evidence of the afterlife.

Christians believe:
  - Heaven is indescribably wonderful and is where God resides. Revelation 4:2-6 describes John's vision of the throne room of God where he sees everyone worshipping God.
  - Revelation 21:4 says that God will ‘wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’

Eternity in heaven
  - Seeking the kingdom of God is more important for Christians than other ambitions, ‘What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?’ (Mark 8:36)
  - Christians believe God sent his son to restore broken relationships.
  - Jesus death on the cross means that sin and death are conquered
  - Christians don’t have to work for their salvation in heaven but must have faith in Jesus
    ‘If you confess with your mouth that “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. ‘ Romans 10:9-10
  - Christians still believe in doing good and avoiding sin, however, salvation is not earned. (Colossians 3:5-17)