

# OUR WORLD

## KEY WORDS

<b>CREATION</b>	A unique design, planned by a creator; God's making of the world for a purpose.
<b>DOMINION</b>	Having a form of control and responsibility which was given to humans by God; being in charge of the world for God.
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	The surroundings in which we live for which religions teach we are responsible; the natural world all about us which believers see as God's creation.
<b>HUMANITY</b>	Compassion for others, e.g. giving to charity; caring for others through prayer and action.
<b>SOUL</b>	That part of human nature that is not just physical; the part of the human body that survives death; a reflection of the image of God in human beings.
<b>STEWARDSHIP</b>	To guard over something for the real owner; a God given responsibility to manage or control the earth.

## **KEY QUESTION: WHAT MAKES US HUMAN?**

All religions teach that human beings are **unique** and **different** from all other animals. Humans have:

**INTELLIGENCE** – the ability to think and reflect; to apply knowledge and learning; to reason.

**MORALITY** – a sense of right and wrong; a conscience; values.

**LANGUAGE** – the ability to write / read languages; use of learned languages.

**EMOTIONS** – love, hate, jealousy, belonging, compassion, kindness etc.

**REVELATION** – created in God's image; capable of religious behaviour and beliefs; in possession of a soul.

Christians point to Genesis 1.27 as evidence that humans are different to all other animals: *“So God created human beings, making them to be like himself.”* God breathed life directly into the first humans and made them in his own image. No other animals received this very personal treatment from God. They are therefore unique and closer to God than any other creature

## **EXAM QUESTION AND POSSIBLE ANSWER**

**“HUMAN BEINGS ARE MORE THAN JUST INTELLIGENT ANIMALS.” DO YOU AGREE? GIVE REASONS OR EVIDENCE FOR YOUR ANSWER, SHOWING THAT YOU HAVE THOUGHT ABOUT MORE THAN ONE POINT OF VIEW. [8]**

I agree that humans are more than just intelligent animals because, as well as intelligence, they have morality (a sense of right and wrong), learned language, and complex emotions. Christians would add that another importance difference is revelation, i.e. humans are created in God's image, capable of religious behaviour and beliefs, possessing a conscience and a soul. St Thomas Aquinas said that it doesn't

matter how we treat animals because they have no souls. In this respect humans are unique.

Others may disagree that there is any real difference between humans and other animals. People with no religious beliefs do not accept the idea of a soul. They may claim that humans are simply a more highly evolved biological species, with the same needs and responses as other animals. Other religious believers may claim that both humans and other animals have souls, and that they are equally important to God.

So, in conclusion, those who believe that humans are made in God's image will accept that they are more than just intelligent animals.

## KEY QUESTION: WHY ARE WE HERE?

### How would a Christian answer this question?

- To serve God and live for him – this includes telling others about and sharing your faith.

Mark 12.30 *Love God with all your heart, mind and strength.*

- To obey God – following the way of life presented in the Commandments and in Jesus' teaching.

Genesis 1.17 *You shall not eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

- To enjoy the world and its fruits or resources – they are a gift from God.

Genesis 1.16 *You are free to eat from any tree in the garden..*

- To look after the world for God (stewardship) – this includes sensible use of resources and trying to conserve nature.

Genesis 1.26 *Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea..*

- To look after and live in harmony with others – this is also a way of serving God, by serving others in a selfless, unconditional way.

Mark 12.31 *Love your neighbour as yourself.*

- To have sexual relationships and children – this is seen as natural and a God-given ability and calling.

Genesis 1.28 *Be fruitful and multiply.*

### How would a Muslim answer this question?

- To live for Allah alone – this is clearly stated in the **Shahadah**, the first Pillar.

*There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is His prophet.*

- To respect other human beings and animals – for there is one creator of all.

- To act as khalifahs or guardians of the planet – for Allah gave this responsibility to humans.

Surah 6.165 *It is He who hath made you inheritors of the Earth.*

- To have sexual relationships and children – this is a natural part of life and a gift from Allah.

Hadith *When a husband and wife share intimacy it is rewarded, and a blessing from Allah.*

## EXAM QUESTION AND POSSIBLE ANSWER

### EXPLAIN THE BELIEFS FROM TWO RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF HUMAN BEINGS IN THE WORLD. [6]

- (i) For Christians, humans' purpose in the world is to serve God and do his will. This includes following his commandments and the teachings of Jesus. This will help us to live in harmony with one another, e.g. loving our neighbour and treating others as we wish to be treated. We must also act as stewards by caring for the environment for God, in the same way that Adam was given responsibility for looking after the Garden of Eden. Another purpose is to marry and have children - God told Adam and Eve to go forth and multiply.
- (ii) For Muslims, their purpose is to live for Allah alone - as they recite in the shahadah "There is no God but Allah". They should also respect other human beings and animals, act as guardians or khalifahs of the planet, and have sexual relationships in order to have children - Muhammad taught that when a husband and wife share intimacy, they will be blessed by Allah (Hadith).

### KEY QUESTION: HOW AND WHY CAN WE USE OUR TALENTS?

Everyone has talents – things that they are good at doing, certain skills or abilities that they have, and some people like to use or demonstrate those talents. Most religious believers feel talents or skills they have should be used and developed. They often believe that such talents are given by God and so should be used for God.

Religious believers will use their talents because:

- Failure to develop them is wasteful and an insult to God.
- They could be used for the benefit of others, e.g. skills in medicine.
- They could be used to worship God, e.g. talent in music.
- They could be used as a witness to faith, e.g. talent in public speaking.

## EXAM QUESTION AND POSSIBLE ANSWER

### EXPLAIN HOW PEOPLE MIGHT USE THEIR TALENTS AS A WAY OF SHOWING THEIR LOVE FOR GOD. [4]

If they are creative, e.g. in music or art, they might write songs or create paintings to glorify God. A person who has a talent in medicine might decide to follow God's teachings to help the poor by working for a charity in a developing country or after a natural disaster. A scientist might make sure the work they do does not harm the world God has given us, perhaps by using computer simulations to test products rather than living animals. They may choose research into areas that will help others, e.g. how to grow better crops in desert areas.

### KEY QUESTION : HOW DID THE UNIVERSE BEGIN?

**How would a Christian answer this question?**

Christians share with Jews the same story of creation, found in **Genesis 1 and 2**. In this story it makes clear the belief that God created everything that is in the heavens and the earth. Look back to the stories.

Genesis has the following ideas:

### IDEAS ABOUT GOD

- God is eternal, he has no beginning and no end. He existed before the world was made.
- God is the creator, and used his creating energy to bring the world into being.
- God was pleased with his creations.

### IDEAS ABOUT HUMANS

- Humans are made in God's image. This does not refer to a physical image, but more a spiritual one – humans are different to other animals because they have a soul. They were especially chosen by God.
- Men and women were to rule over the other animals and look after them on God's behalf.

### DIFFERENT VIEWS OF GENESIS 1

Some Christians have **literalist** views, i.e. they take the biblical accounts of creation literally – they believe they describe exactly how the universe and humans were created. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century **Archbishop Ussher** even worked out the exact time when God finished creation – 9am on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 4004 BC!

Other **non-literalist** Christians regard these accounts as more like **myths** or **symbolic** accounts that tell in story form the important truth that God brought the universe and all that is in it into being. These Christians might look to science to help them understand how God did this.

*Can Christians accept scientific explanations of how the world began?*

For many Christians there isn't a conflict between the religious ideas about creation in Genesis and the findings of science.

Professor **John Pilkinghorne** is both a scientist and a priest ; he says:

*“Genesis is not there to give short, technical answers about how the world was made. It gives us the big answer that things exist because of God's will.”*

### COSMOLOGY

Cosmology is the study of the universe. One of its theories is **the Big Bang theory**. This suggests that about 15 billion years ago there was a massive explosion. This was the point at which all matter in the universe began; space and time began then too. Over time the universe that we know, and human and animal life, emerged.

If this theory is true, then it could mean that the universe just happened and that it did not emerge as a result of a creator God.

Many Christians, though, have no problem in accepting the Big Bang – it was just the mechanism that God used. There is nothing in the theory itself to prove that God doesn't exist.

### EVOLUTIONARY BIOLOGY

The idea that life might have evolved was first mentioned as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century by **St Augustine**, who wrote that God probably only created very simple life forms and that these developed over time.

Today we associate evolution with scientists like **Charles Darwin**. He upset many people with his views. Some suggested that fossils, which had been discovered in the ground, had been placed there deliberately by God to fool people!

Some Christians found Darwin's theories a threat to their faith because it seemed to challenge the authority of the Bible. If the Bible was wrong about creation, it could also be wrong about other things. These Christians preferred a literalist or creationist understanding of Genesis.

A creationist view is very strong in the US today, and has succeeded in getting the teaching of evolution in schools banned in some states.

Other Christians don't see any problem with their understanding of Genesis and evolution – they are called **believe in theistic evolution**.

In general, all Christians (and Jews) would agree that the Genesis story illustrates some important key beliefs:

- **God created everything for a purpose.**
- **The beginning of the world and of life was not accidental.**
- **Humans are different from other creatures, in being in the 'image of God' and sharing some responsibility for the world.**
- **That the world created was basically good.**

## SCIENTIFIC THEORIES OF CREATION

### THE BIG BANG THEORY

This is a scientific theory of how the world was created, most associated with the Belgian astrophysicist **Georges Lemaitre** (1894-1966). About 14-15 billion years ago, the universe was an enormously dense nucleus. An incredibly powerful explosion occurred, called a Big Bang. Within a millionth of a second after the explosion, neutrons and electrons were created.

In the explosion, enormous heat was generated, but as the universe cooled down a little, elements like helium and hydrogen were created. From these elements, stars, galaxies, planets and solar systems were formed. As the universe continued to cool, on at least one planet (which we call Earth), about 3 billion years ago, life began to develop.

### THE THEORY OF EVOLUTION

In 1859, **Charles Darwin** published his book, *On the Origin of Species*, in which he argued that animals and plants had not always looked the way we see them today. He said that species had slowly changed over thousands and thousands of years. What had made these species of plants and animals change was that they had adapted to the world around them in order to survive. This process of adaptation is called **evolution**.

Darwin argued that what drove this process was competition to survive. Rabbits with big ears and good hearing, according to Darwin, were not a clever example of God's brilliance as a designer. Instead the theory of evolution suggested that there was a battle for survival going on. This battle is called **natural selection**.

Darwin's ideas seemed to rule out any claim that God was designing animals with special features. What was happening was a slow process. God could not have created animals on the fifth and sixth days of creation, complete and as they are now. Other evidence is the geological discoveries of fossils, revealing animals no longer living (e.g. dinosaurs). Why did God create the dinosaurs only to wipe them out again?

One of Darwin's most controversial ideas was that humans themselves have evolved from a more primitive, ape-like creature. This meant that humans were no different from any other

animal, which challenged the religious idea that humans were made in God's image and put in charge of all the creatures of the world.

### EXAM QUESTION AND POSSIBLE ANSWER

**"IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BELIEVE BOTH SCIENTIFIC AND RELIGIOUS VIEWS OF CREATION." DO YOU AGREE? GIVE REASONS OR EVIDENCE FOR YOUR ANSWER, SHOWING THAT YOU HAVE THOUGHT OF MORE THAN ONE POINT OF VIEW. YOU MUST INCLUDE REFERENCE TO RELIGIOUS BELIEFS IN YOUR ANSWER. [8]**

I disagree that it is impossible to believe both scientific and religious views of creation. Many scientists also have a religious faith. Evolution provides a rational explanation for how species develop, but it could be that some time in the past God created the species that have developed. St Augustine suggested this is the 4<sup>th</sup> century, and theistic evolutionists see evolution as another of the tools God uses. Other Christians see the Genesis creation stories as myths, which try to explain *why* the world was made, not *how*. They are expressions that God is the cause of everything that happens in the world. Some scientists accept that the big bang was directed by God - the inflationary big bang theory says that the universe developed very quickly in its first moments which ties in with the Genesis account.

However, people who have a literalist view of Genesis cannot accept scientific theories like the big bang or evolution because there are differences in the order of creation, e.g. when the sun was formed. Also, Genesis rules out an accidental origin of the world - it was carried out and designed by a Creator. Darwin's suggestion that humans have evolved from apes over millions of years is not accepted because literalist Christians believe that God made every species as it was and that humans had a special relationship with God - they were formed in God's image, as it says in Genesis.

So, unless a person believes in the literal truth of Genesis, it is possible to accept both religious and scientific aspects of creation.

### How would a Muslim answer this question?

- Allah made the heaven and the earth, and all the animals, birds and fish; the sun moon and stars; the plants and rain; and the angels
- The angels were sent to bring seven handfuls of earth – each of a different colour
- From these, the first man Adam was made; and from his side, Eve, the first woman
- They lived in paradise – a beautiful garden where they could eat anything, except the fruit of one tree
- On disobeying Allah, after being tempted by the devil **Iblis** they were placed outside the garden as a punishment

Muslims believe that human beings were given the role of **khalifahs** or stewards to look after the earth and treat it with respect.

Muslims are expected to actively keep the delicate natural balance of the environment. This is considered such an important role that on the Day of Judgement all Muslims will be called into account for how they have looked after Allah's creation.

The natural balance of the world is called **fitrah**.

## EXAM QUESTION AND POSSIBLE ANSWER

### EXPLAIN, USING TWO DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS, THE TEACHINGS ABOUT CREATION. [6]

In Christianity, creation is described in the book of *Genesis*. God has no beginning and no end, and existed before the world was made. He used his creating energy to bring the world into being over a period of six days and was pleased with his creation. Men and women were created together and in God's image. This does not refer to a physical image, but more a spiritual one - humans are different to other animals because they have a soul. They were especially chosen by God. Men and women were to rule over the other animals and look after them on God's behalf. They lived in the Garden of Eden until they disobeyed God and were punished.

In Islam Allah created the heaven and earth, and all the animals, birds and fish; the sun moon and stars; the plants and the rain; and the angels. The angels were sent to bring seven handfuls of earth - each of a different colour. From these the first man and woman were made. They lived in Paradise until they disobeyed God and were punished. Humans were given the role of khalifahs to look after the earth.

### KEY QUESTION : HOW AND WHY SHOULD WE LOOK AFTER THE WORLD?

Some people have felt that to have 'dominion' over the world and animals allows them to exploit the world. For many years humans have plundered the world and the environment, and are now beginning to recognise the importance of responsible management of the earth's natural resources and its environment.

*Natural resources* = a phrase that means the products that come from the earth: all the things that grow, and the things used for food such as fruits, vegetables, etc, the minerals in the ground, the soil and rocks, and the water. All of these are the resources that exist in the world and on which humans rely a great deal.

### EXAMPLES OF HOW HAVE WE DAMAGED THE ENVIRONMENT

#### Nuclear Waste

The nuclear power industry produces large amounts of radioactive waste which is hard to get rid of. Some, like that stored at Sellafield, will stay radioactive for millions of years. Human error has always caused problems, e.g. the 1985 disaster at Chernobyl left a radioactive cloud over N. Europe and is still causing long-term health problems twenty years later.

#### Deforestation

100 acres a minute are disappearing from rainforests. If this continues, they will have disappeared within 50 years. These forests provide oxygen through photosynthesis and are rich in animal life. They provide many plants used in the production of medicines. Many rainforest countries like Brazil say they need the money from deforestation to pay off their heavy foreign debt.

#### Pollution

Air pollution—between 12,000 and 24,000 people in the UK die every year from the effects of air pollution. The main source is traffic emissions, but also residential and commercial gas use, industry and construction sites. The biggest single source of air pollution in Western Europe is Heathrow Airport.

Water pollution—the main pollutants which can get into our waterways and which threaten our health and our wildlife are pesticides. 31,000 tonnes of pesticides are used in the UK

every year. Overuse, careless use, and incorrect disposal of pesticides mean that a range of dangerous chemicals get into our rivers, lakes and canals.

Noise pollution—noise is a common problem in modern life and it represents a serious threat to our quality of life. Noise pollution comes from traffic, aircraft, neighbours, construction and railways.

Radiation pollution—radiation in the form of radio waves is an important modern issue. There is concern about the possible health effects of mobile phone masts on people nearby.

### **How would a Christian answer this question?**

#### **Why should they look after the world?**

#### **1. Humans have a responsibility to look after the environment.**

- Genesis 1:

*I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds and all the wild animals.*

- Psalm 8:

*You appointed [humankind] ruler over everything you made.*

#### **2. People and their environment are closely bound up together.**

- Genesis 9.12:

God made his covenant not just with humans but with *‘every living creature that is with you’*.

- Deuteronomy 20.19-20:

Fruit trees were to be preserved, even when wood was badly needed for war.

- Deuteronomy 22.6:

A mother bird and her eggs are to be protected.

#### **3. People must use the world’s resources to their best possible effect.**

Matthew 25.14-30:

In Jesus’ Parable of the Talents, the servant who made no use of his master’s money was criticised. Christians are often to be found involved in scientific research and technology, using the talents that God gave them.

#### **What guidance can Christians take from these teachings?**

- Humans should manage the earth’s resources. They are ultimately responsible to God as managers or **stewards**. They should work *with* nature, not *against* it.
- Christians cannot have a ‘humans only’ view of the world. Those who shrug their shoulders when they see animals suffering, forests destroyed and land spoiled, do not share God’s outlook on the rest of creation.

#### **REMEMBER:**

Jesus commanded: *“Love your neighbour as you love yourself.”* This is the guiding principle for Christians.

They feel that they should make changes in their lifestyle if it is harming other people, this includes **future generations** who will have to deal with our environmental mistakes.

## EXAM QUESTIONS AND POSSIBLE ANSWERS

### EXPLAIN THE CHRISTIAN IDEA OF STEWARDSHIP. [4]

Christians believe that humans have been given a responsibility by God to take care of the world. In *Genesis*, Adam was given responsibility over the garden which Christians believe extends to the whole world: "I am putting you in charge of the fish, the birds and all the wild animals." He had dominion over the world, which means he had control over it, but he had to use this control sensibly. God also allowed Adam to eat the fruits in the garden - we can use the earth's resources but not exploit them. Christians believe that they are partners with God in looking after the world - they are God's stewards.

**"The world is there for humans to enjoy; that's all that matters." Do you agree? Give reasons or evidence for your answer, showing that you have thought of more than one point of view. You must include reference to religious beliefs in your answer. [8]**

I do not agree that the world is only there for humans to enjoy. Christians believe that we should be good stewards of the earth, which means that we should respect and care for the world, not exploit it. The world needs looking after, and if this doesn't happen then environmental problems occur, such as pollution, extinction of animal species and global warming. One of the guiding principles for Christians is to love your neighbour as yourself. If your lifestyle harms others, including future generations, then it needs to be changed. Saying that the world is only there for humans to enjoy is very selfish, and doesn't take into account the rights and welfare of other species.

Some people might disagree, because in *Genesis* it says that humans are put in charge of the world and have dominion or control over it. Humans are special and unique and superior to all other species, because they were created in God's image and had life directly breathed into them by God. Therefore, they may think they have the right to use the world for their own benefit.

However, it is to everyone's benefit to look after the world carefully and with respect. We should enjoy the world, but be good stewards at the same time.

### How should they look after the world?

- Christians can live a 'green' lifestyle in their day-to-day lives, reducing their carbon footprint – using recycled materials, recycling paper, cardboard, glass etc, having a compost bin, using the car less, not using CFCs, conserving water etc.
- Christians can support environmental agencies such as Greenpeace.
- Churches can hold services devoted to green issues, e.g. the outdoor service at Coventry Cathedral following the launch of **Operation Noah**, a campaign by Christian churches to curb climate change.
- Christians can include prayers for the sustaining of the planet, and those people campaigning for this, in their services
- Parish councils can campaign for local green issues, e.g. traffic calming measures, better local transport and wind farms.

- Christians can act like stewards, as God commanded in Genesis-this means that, although humans have been given dominion (control) over the earth and other animals, this does not mean that they can be exploited or harmed unnecessarily.
- Christians can thank God for the resources he has provided, e.g. saying grace before meals, harvest thanksgiving.
- Christians can volunteer to help in the local environment, e.g. by litter picking.

### **CHICO MENDES - an example of a Christian steward**

Chico Mendes grew up in a family of rubber tappers in the Brazilian rainforest. Rubber tapping is a process which harmlessly extracts sap from rubber trees, which is then used in products such as car tyres and pencil erasers. Rubber tapping does not permanently harm the environment. Chico followed in his father's footsteps and eventually became a leader of the rubber tappers.

Unfortunately cattle ranchers and miners wanted to exploit the Brazilian rainforests for profit. They wanted to cut down the trees and burn vast sections of the forest for pasture and strip mines. Sadly, the ranchers and miners leave behind a shattered landscape, a ruined desert instead of a forest more than 180 million years old. The smoke from burning trees polluted the atmosphere; mercury used in mining was poisoning rivers, killing fish and wildlife.

Chico Mendes was one of many people who wanted the forest left alone. When he protested, he was jailed, fined and threatened by corrupt officials who were profiting by from the tearing down of the rainforest. Even when in 1988 a rancher, **Alves de Silva**, ordered Mendes to be killed, it only made him more determined. He urged his fellow Brazilians to **non-violent protest** against big corporations that would rob them of their livelihoods and harm the planet.

In 1988, Mendes was murdered by the powerful ranchers of the region. He was well aware of the risks he was taking, but said of his possible death: *"I don't want flowers, because I know that you are going to pull them up from the forest. The only thing I want is that my death helps to stop the murderers."*

The outcry following Chico Mendes' murder was deafening and marked a turning point in the fight to save the rainforests of the Amazon. Money and support from all over the world poured in to help complete Mendes' work.

### **How would a Muslim answer this question?**

#### **Why should they look after the world?**

Muslims believe that Allah created, owns and sustains the world and all its creatures. The creation is considered as a whole, of which plants, animals and humans are a part. This is just like the **ummah** where all Muslims, irrespective of race, age or background are seen as part of a whole. Every human is believed to have a special role as a **khalifah** or guardian to protect the environment.

Surah 6:165 *He has made you His ruling agents in the earth.*

The survival of the planet depends on maintaining the natural balance or **fitrah** and realising the interdependency on each other. Muslims consider it their duty to use their skills to help keep the balance which Allah created. This responsibility is so serious that on the Day of Judgement Muslims believe they will need to answer to Allah how they have treated the earth and all living creatures. The Prophet Muhammad set an example of the care that should be given to the natural world, showing kindness to animals was considered an important act. All animals and insects are part of Creation. Muhammad often spoke of the

importance of planting trees and gardens from which birds, animals and humans could benefit.

Examples of how Muhammad showed the importance of all creation:

He said:

- *The whole earth has been created a place of worship, pure and clean.*
- *Live in this world as if you were going to live forever.*

On a long journey, Muhammad and his companions lit a fire. The Prophet then realised that nearby was an anthill, and the ants were running in the direction of the fire. Muhammad had the fire put out immediately.

One day the Prophet passed by a camel that had been mistreated. He taught the listening people: *"Fear Allah in these beasts – ride them in good health and free them from work while they are still in good health."*

### **How should they look after the world?**

- Muslims can live a 'green' lifestyle in their day-to-day lives, reducing their carbon footprint – using recycled materials, recycling paper, cardboard, glass etc, having a compost bin, using the car less, not using CFCs, conserving water etc. This will also help to restore fitrah (balance).
- During fasting at Ramadan, Muslims can think about how precious food and water are, giving thanks to Allah after the fasting is over.
- Muslims take special care of their gardens, with mosques often having beautiful, large garden areas.
- Muslims can support environmental agencies such as Greenpeace.
- Muslims can volunteer to help in the local environment, e.g. by litter picking.
- Muslims can campaign for local green issues, e.g. traffic calming measures, better local transport and wind farms.

### **EXAM QUESTIONS AND POSSIBLE ANSWERS**

#### **EXPLAIN HOW HAVING A RELIGIOUS FAITH MIGHT ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO LOOK AFTER THE ENVIRONMENT. [4]**

Muslims might be encouraged to look after the environment because their faith teaches them that the whole of creation is part of the ummah, and that human beings have a special role as khalifahs or stewards to protect it. The survival of the planet depends on maintaining the natural balance or fitrah and realising that everything and everyone depends on each other. Muhammad set an example of care towards animals, and warned people against wasting resources: "Live in this world as if you were going to live forever."

#### **EXPLAIN FROM TWO DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS HOW BELIEVERS CARE FOR THE PLANET. (YOU MUST STATE THE RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS YOU ARE REFERRING TO.) [6]**

- (i) Christians care for the planet by trying to reduce their carbon footprint on a day to day level, for example by recycling, using less electricity and fossil fuels, driving less often etc. Some Christian Churches encourage their members to do this especially during Lent. They may also pray for the health of the environment, or use it as a theme for a Sunday service. Some Christians may

join an organization that campaigns for environmental issues, such as Greenpeace.

- (ii) Muslims will also carry out similar practical day to day measures to reduce their carbon footprint. They may be particularly concerned about water conservation and the care of animals, as Muhammad spoke out about these issues. Campaigning against deforestation is also something Muslims might feel passionate about. During Ramadan, while they are fasting, Muslims are reminded about how precious food and water are, and will give prayers thanking Allah for what he provides.

## KEY QUESTION: HOW SHOULD ANIMALS BE TREATED?

### How would a Christian answer this question?

Animals are part of God's creation and Christians believe that the exploitation of them is against the will of God. In Genesis, God made his covenant (agreement) with Noah and with all living things. However, opinions are divided about exactly how they should be treated. Although all Christians agree that unnecessary cruelty goes against the belief in the importance of life, not everyone is against the use of animals for food or scientific experiments under humane conditions. Other Christians believe that animals should have the rights of humans and actively campaign to stop such things as experimentation, blood sports, fur trading and transportation of live animals.

Some Christians choose to be vegetarians in the belief that many methods used in meat production are inhumane and cruel. They are concerned, too, that one of the reasons for deforestation is to make room for cattle to be bred for meat and that the Earth's resources are being abused for gain and greed.

Most Christians are concerned to protect vanishing and endangered species and many have involved themselves in the creation of bird and animal sanctuaries.

The image of the caring attitude towards animals is highlighted by Jesus' description of himself as the Good Shepherd. However, Jesus was not a vegetarian, eating fish and lamb at the Passover meal.

### The Assisi Declarations

On 29 September 1986 Christian leaders joined leaders from the other five major world religions at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the [World Wide Fund for Nature](#) in Assisi to declare their promise for [conservation](#). Assisi was chosen for this major event in honour of [St Francis](#), who lived there in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. He is sometimes called the Green Saint for his preaching on conservation and for his love of all creatures, whom he described as his brothers and sisters.

Here are the official teachings of two different Christian Churches on animals. They highlight some of the differences between Christians on this issue.

#### 1. THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

- ⇒ Animals have been **created by God** and so have **intrinsic value**.
- ⇒ All animals, wild and domestic, should be treated with **care** and **respect**.
- ⇒ However, the value of animals is **secondary to that of human beings who are made in God's image**.
- ⇒ Humans have been given **stewardship** and **dominion** over all animals.
- ⇒ Animals can be used for the benefit of humans and this might include farming and using them for food.
- ⇒ Research using animals is accepted to improve medical knowledge, but not to test cosmetics, cigarettes or toiletries.
- ⇒ Eating meat is not forbidden. Becoming a vegetarian or vegan is a matter of personal choice. Jesus himself ate meat and fish.
- ⇒ [Animal Christian Concern](#) is a group which campaigns for animal rights.

#### 2. THE QUAKER CHURCH

- a. Animals have been **created by God** and so have an **intrinsic value**.
- b. All animals, wild and domestic, should be treated with **care** and **respect**.
- c. While humans have been given **stewardship** over animals, they do not have **dominion**.

- d. Quakers are **pacifists** (people who believe that all violence is wrong). They cannot accept cruelty in any circumstances, including cruelty to animals.
- e. Quakers do not agree with **any** animal experiments.
- f. A large percentage of Quakers are vegetarians or vegans.
- g. **Quaker Concern For Animals** tries to influence all Churches to ban animal experiments, even those for medical reasons.

## EXAM QUESTIONS AND POSSIBLE ANSWERS

### "ANIMALS HAVE SOULS TOO." GIVE TWO REASONS WHY A RELIGIOUS BELIEVER MIGHT AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT. [4]

- (i) A Christian would disagree because, in *Genesis*, God gave human beings dominion over the other animals, allowing them to be used for their benefit.: "I am putting you in charge of the birds, the fish, and all the wild animals." This means that animals can be farmed, used for food and for scientific experimentation. If animals had souls, God wouldn't allow this.
- (ii) Also in *Genesis*, God made man and woman in his own image, which suggests a special, unique relationship between God and humans, not shared by other animals. This is marked by our soul. While Christians accept that the life of animals has intrinsic value, this is secondary to that of humans. The soul is that part of the human body that is not just physical and which marks humans as separate from all other creatures.

### "ANIMALS SHOULD HAVE RIGHTS." GIVE TWO REASONS WHY A RELIGIOUS BELIEVER MIGHT AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT. [4]

- (i) A Christian might agree with this statement because animals have been created by God and so have intrinsic value. In *Genesis*, God's covenant with Noah was also with "*all living things, all birds and animals.*" Therefore, all animals should be treated with care and respect. Some Christians view animals as part of God's family, and see their lives as important. St Francis of Assisi, for example, called animals his brothers and sisters.
- (ii) If animals don't have rights, then human beings can do anything they like to them, including hunting, experimentation and other forms of cruelty. In a civilized, Christian society, there should be no cruel behaviour of any sort. Quakers, for example, are pacifists, which means that they are against any violence, including towards animals. Many are vegetarians and belong to Quaker Concern for Animals which campaigns for animal rights.

### How would a Muslim answer this question?

In the Qur'an there are many references to the relationship between Allah and the world of birds and animals:

*Don't you see that it is Allah whose praises all beings in the heavens and on earth celebrate, and the birds of the air with wings outspread?* (Surah 24.41).

The Qur'an teaches that animals have feelings and that their lives have a purpose which, like humans', is part of Allah's plan:

*There is not an animal that lives on the Earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but [forms part of] communities like you...and they all [shall] be gathered to their Lord in the end* (Surah 6.38).

Muhammad told many stories in which he stressed the importance of caring for animals. This became an important part of Islam and, as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a Muslim scholar formed a bill of Animal Rights!

All domestic animals such as farm animals should be well cared for and not be overburdened. Owners of cows are instructed to cut their nails before milking and not to buy or sell an animal when it is still in need of its mother.

Hunting is only allowed for food and never for pleasure. The use of animals for scientific experiments is not approved of if there is known to be cruelty involved and if it is done for non-essential reasons such as the making of cosmetics.

Some Muslims are vegetarians, but most eat Halal meat, which is meat killed in a special way, designed to be as humane as possible.

### Assisi Declarations

At the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Worldwide Fund for Nature in Assisi, Islam was represented with the other five major world faiths to meditate on the theme of nature and to declare its message to the world. Part of the Muslim Declaration says:

*Allah's trustees are responsible for maintaining the unity of his creation, the integrity of the earth, its flora and fauna, its wildlife and natural environment.*