

Yr. 10 GCSE Revision guide on Religion and Animal Rights

In this module we will be exploring the following ways in which humans use animals and what Christian attitudes towards these uses might be. Humans use animals for:

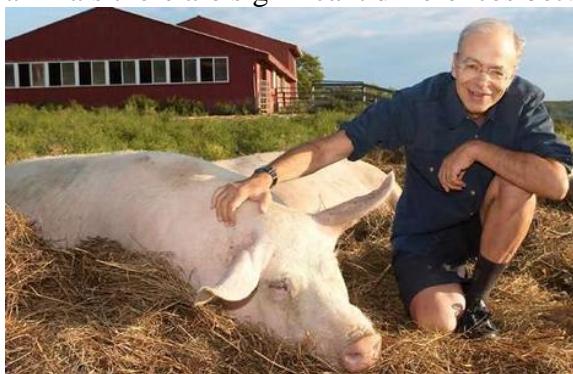
- Food
- In vivisection including medical research and product testing
- the genetic modification and cloning of animals,
- the fur and ivory trade
- bullfighting
- hunting
- zoos
- transport and work
- animals in sport
- companionship e.g. pets

We will also look at how humans treat wildlife.

The difference between human beings and animals

1) What is the difference between human beings and animals?

In one sense human beings **are** animals. The theory of **evolution** through **natural selection** most associated with the British naturalist **Charles Darwin** tells us that all life on planet earth evolved over a long period of time from a **primordial soup** (water containing molecules with the potential for life) some three and a half billion years ago. Humans, like all other animals, have evolved over millions of years from lower forms of life. We are very closely related to apes in fact we share 99% of our **DNA** make up with apes. However, although we share a common ancestry with other animals there are significant differences between human beings and animals.



2) Explain what these differences are

Animals are often driven by **instinct** where as human beings have the power to **reason** things through, to consider the future and make plans, to make **moral**

decisions between what is right and wrong, to be creative and enjoy music and art. Human beings also have a **spiritual dimension** to them which can find expression through engaging with religion and a belief that by worshipping God they can enter into a relationship with Him which will carry on after physical death. One thing that animals and humans definitely have in common is **sentience** which means the ability to feel physical and psychological pain and therefore suffer.

- 3) *So if animals have a similar capacity to suffer as humans do shouldn't they have the same rights as human beings?*

Countries belonging to the **United Nations (UN)** have to agree to certain human rights, for example, humans cannot be tortured or killed. They cannot have their freedom taken away from them without a fair trial. However, clearly animals do not enjoy such the basic rights that humans do.

- 4) *What right do animals have in our society?*

There is law to protect animals including the **Cruelty to Animals Act** so, for example, if someone was engaging in dog fighting they could be prosecuted and sent to prison. . The **RSPCA** (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) does a lot to guard animal welfare and bring prosecutions against people who are cruel to animals. The RSPCA was started by the **Reverend Arthur Broome** and other Christians in 1824. It was the first animal welfare organisation in the world. However, there are still legal practices against animals in the UK which many people consider to be cruel for example **factory** or **intensive farming**.

Using animals for food

- 5) *What is factory or intensive farming?*

This is when animals are reared in very confined spaces, for example, factory hens who are often kept three to four in very small cages for the whole of their lives, and calves and pigs who are kept in small crates. Battery hen farming will become illegal in the U.K. in 2012. Often these animals are given intensive diets and given **hormones** to make them grow much quicker. Some of these animals are reared with a minimum of light to make them less active so they will maintain their weight better. **Broiler chickens** (reared for meat) are kept crowded in large sheds with little light. They are selectively bred to put on weight far quicker than wild chickens. This can sometimes result in their legs breaking under the unnatural weight of their bodies which can make it difficult for them to drink and feed. All this is done to maximise **profits**.



- 6) Isn't this rather **hypocritical** of society? If someone were reported to the **RSPCA** (**Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals**) because they were keeping four pet budgies in a small cage without any light and giving them hormones to make them grow abnormally, they would be prosecuted. So why does society tolerate factory farming?

Many people argue that our attitudes to animals are very **hypocritical** (two faced). We seem to have emotional attachments to some animals, for example, pet budgies, but not to others like hens. Many people do not seem to get upset eating pigs (pork) who have been intensively reared on farms. These pigs are often given very little freedom and can be kept on concrete floors all of their lives in close confinement with other pigs. If a pet dog was to be kept in similar conditions the owner could be reported to the RSPCA and might very well be prosecuted.

- 7) So why, if we are a nation of animal lovers, do we tolerate factory farming?

When it comes to food many people who would normally count themselves as animal lovers seem not to have the same **compassion** for farm animals. It is scientifically proven that pigs are as intelligent as dogs. Yet society treats these two animals in completely different ways. Factory or intensive farming is all about profit – there is pressure on farmers to **exploit** animals to make as much money out of them as possible. When people are shopping in their super markets produce from factory farming tends to be cheaper than **free-range** alternatives.

- 8) Are there any organisations which draw attention to the methods of intensive farming techniques?

The **pressure group Compassion in World Farming** has campaigned for more humane animal farming. Partly thanks to this organisation, rearing hens in battery cages (for the production of eggs) will be outlawed in Europe by the year 2012. They encourage **consumers** (shoppers) to buy free-range products which are often more expensive but put **animal welfare** (caring for animals) first. Compassion in World Farming also promotes the benefits of **vegetarianism** as do the **pressure group Viva**.

- 9) What sort of things do Viva believe in?

- Viva says that eating meat is cruel. Apart from intensive farming techniques according to Viva the slaughter of animals for meat is not always done humanely (without cruelty). Most animals being slaughtered are electronically stunned which is supposed to make them unconscious before having their throats cut. Viva argues that this stunning is often not done effectively and animals can have their throats cut while still conscious which is very distressing for them.
- Animals are often transported over long distances in cramped conditions without adequate food and water before they are slaughtered. Viva argues that much live animal transportation is therefore cruel. In the UK there are guidelines about how far animals can be transported but in parts of Europe there are no such guidelines and animals can be transported vast distances.
- Viva argues that a vegetarian diet is healthier because a non meat diet contains less saturated fat which can cause heart disease and cancer.
- A vegetarian diet is cost effective and better for the environment. To eat vegetable products rather than feed cows vast amounts of vegetable products to fatten them up only to yield a relatively small amount of meat in relation to all the vegetable products which they have eaten.

10) What are Christian attitudes towards the use of animals in farming?

In class we read an interview with the Reverend Jackson. He explained that Christians generally look to the life of Jesus, which was one of love and **compassion** (loving kindness), as an inspiration for their own lives. Therefore, animals as part of God's creation should be afforded some basic rights. The book of Genesis states that God said '**I am putting you in charge (giving you dominion) of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals**'. This clearly indicates that although animals are our responsibility humans are clearly more important than them. Human beings have been given **dominion** (power and authority) over all God's creatures but have also been given the responsibility to be God's **stewards** or caretakers in looking after the world and animals. This idea is known as **stewardship**. The book of Genesis also says that God made humans in his own image or to be like him which means that human beings are sacred and holy. God did not make animals in his own image. So humans are **spiritual beings** who out of all creation have a unique relationship with God. Humans have the capacity to know what is right and wrong: they are moral creatures which makes them in the Christian religion far more valuable than animals. In fact human beings have intrinsic value before God, this means that they are valuable in themselves for being human not valuable for what they can do. In Luke's Gospel Jesus talks about how cheaply a sparrow can be bought on earth but how valuable in reality this sparrow is to God, he then goes onto say that human beings have far more value before God than any sparrow. God values us so much that he even knows how many hairs we have on our head.

Reverend Jackson felt that as a Christian that it was not wrong to eat meat; eating meat is part of the **natural order** of things and provides a healthy balanced diet. Jesus himself certainly ate fish and very probably other meat products. However, having dominion (power) over animals in no way means that we can treat animals with disrespect. Reverend Jackson argued that to be good stewards of the earth means we should be respectful to God's creation and show compassion (kindness) to animals. That is why he disagreed with intensive farming and supported the pressure group **Compassion in World Farming** which promotes free range produce. He quoted Jesus's command to 'Love our neighbours as we love ourselves'; the neighbours in this instance could be seen as the farm animals.

11) Does this mean that all Christians eat meat?

No, there is a diversity of opinion within the Christian religion about eating meat. The Christian Vegetarian Association UK (CVAUK) believes that Christianity upholds vegetarianism more than it does eating meat. CVAUK argues that we respect our bodies more and honour God's creation more by not eating meat.



Using animals for vivisection including medical research and product testing

12) *What other examples of suffering inflicted on animals do we find in this country?*

Vivisection literally means ‘the cutting up of living animals’ but usually refers to the various types of experiments that are carried out on animals. Vivisection is used for:

- **Medical research** – to test drugs on animals and to purposely give diseases to animals to monitor the effects.
- **Product testing** – it is still the case that most household products and cosmetics have been tested on live animals.

13) *Every body must agree that it is legitimate (acceptable) for vivisection to be used in medical research don’t they?*

Not everybody agrees that it is beneficial to test on animals. Although it is generally accepted that animal experimentation has helped in the development of insulin treatment for diabetes, vaccines against whooping cough, diphtheria, rubella and polio. People in favour of vivisection would argue that animal experimentation has saved human lives and therefore has been of great benefit.

14) *What are some of the arguments against vivisection?*

The **British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection** (check out the web site – www.buav.org) is campaigning for a total ban on animal experimentation. They along with other people who are against animal experimentation argue that:

- By experimenting on artificial cells and tissues including human embryos animal cruelty can be stopped.
- Some terrible mistakes have been made in animal testing. For example, last century a drug called **thalidomide** that was supposed to help pregnant mothers was tested on animals and was cleared as safe for humans. However, when pregnant mothers eventually took the drug there were many disabled babies born – a clear indication that vivisection failed.
- In 2006 Ryan Wilson, a volunteer in a drug trial, had to have all his fingers and toes amputated because he reacted so badly to a drug. It had previously been tested on animals with no ill effects pointing to the conclusion that testing drugs on animals does not make them safe.
- **The Body Shop** and **Beauty without Cruelty** are two successful businesses that do not use animal testing and have had no cases of humans being damaged by their products.



15) What are Christian attitudes towards vivisection?

We can apply the same ideas in the answer to question number 12 on animals in farming to vivisection as well. Remember that Christians believe that just because God has given us **dominion** (power and authority) over animals does not mean we can treat them how we like. So a Christian might argue that because animals are part of God's creation unnecessary animal experiments, for example, testing cosmetics on animals is wrong because we are not being good stewards and are not showing **compassion** to animals. However, because humans are made in the image of God and are sacred then some animal experiments might be necessary in order to save human lives. Human beings are intrinsically more valuable than animals, remember what Jesus said about the value of swallows compared to human beings. Vivisection might thus be seen as the lesser of two evils. Some Christians, however, might argue that it is never right to experiment on animals and they may join an animal rights organization.

16) How do animal rights organisations campaign on behalf of animals?

Some animal rights organisations campaign with in the law, for example, they write to MPs and go on peaceful marches. Some organisations like the **Animal Liberation Front** will break the law by storming factory farms and vivisection centres and freeing the animals. Some members of the Animal Liberation Front think it is morally justifiable to intimidate and threaten human beings in their quest for animal liberation. The Animal Rights activist Jon Ablewhite dug up the grave and stole the body of an elderly woman who was the mother of the Hall family who owned a guinea pig farm used for vivisection. He refused to return the body until the Hall family promised to stop using guinea pigs for vivisection. He was eventually arrested and given a long jail term. Christians would generally strongly disagree with such activities because as we have seen they value humans far above animals and this type of activity is devaluing human life.

17) So an alternative to vivisection is experimenting on human embryos. Wouldn't some Christians be concerned about this?

Yes, if we remember back to when we were studying abortion we found out that Roman Catholics believe that human life starts at conception, therefore, a human embryo to them has the value of a full human being. So many Roman Catholics might feel that it is better to experiment on a live animal than a human embryo.

We have just looked at the areas of using animals for food and vivisection. We are now going to explore the areas of:

- **the genetic modification and cloning of animals,**
- **the fur and ivory trade**
- **bullfighting**
- **hunting**
- **zoos**
- **transport and work**
- **animals in sport**
- **companionship e.g. pets**

- the treatment of wildlife.

For each of these areas we will be applying the same Christian beliefs that we did for meat farming and vivisection. These Christian beliefs include God's command in Genesis that He is putting us in 'charge (giving us dominion) of the fish, the birds, and all the wild animals'. This brings with it the idea of stewardship; just because we have dominion (power and authority) does not mean we can treat animals how we please. Stewardship means that we are God's caretakers of animals. Because we are God's stewards we have an obligation to show compassion (loving care) to God's creatures. Jesus throughout his life taught compassion – we should love our neighbours as we love ourselves. Poor stewardship means that we are sinning against God. Because human beings are 'made in the image of God' we have intrinsic value in a way that animals do not. Jesus once said that sparrows have value before God but that human beings had far more value to God. If animals can therefore serve human beings even if it means killing them then depending on the circumstances Christians may feel that this is the right thing to do.

When looking at the following ways that human beings use animals refer back to the above two paragraphs and make sure that you can apply Christian beliefs effectively.

Genetic modification and cloning

18) *What is genetic modification?*

Genetic modification means that animals have been genetically altered in a laboratory in some cases supplying the animals with human DNA. This is so scientists can study how genes work, study the effects of genetic diseases and test new drugs. Scientists are currently experimenting with a way to implant human DNA into pigs with the eventual aim of supplying organs (like hearts and kidneys) which can be transplanted into human beings.

19) *What is cloning?*

Cloning is creating an organism (living thing) that is the exact genetic copy of another. In the future if farm animals were to be cloned then this could make huge profits for meat producing farmers as they could be guaranteed to produce the very best livestock. If cloning is successful in animals then it may be possible to start cloning human organs which might be used in transplants. Critics worry where this may all end – will it be possible in the future to clone a complete human being?

Could you end up with two human beings exactly the same as each other?

20) *What are Christian attitudes towards genetic modification and cloning?*

If genetic modification and cloning can help find cures for certain human diseases then many Christians would find these practices acceptable providing that human health and safety risks are not ignored. Some Christians might worry that human cloning may follow. Because human life is sacred they may fear that scientists might end up ‘playing at being God’

The fur and ivory trade

21) What is the fur trade?

Over 55 million animals are killed each year for the fur trade. Fur farms (made illegal in England in 2000) keep animals in small individual cages all their lives. Methods of electrocution may leave some animals conscious when they are being skinned. Not all fur comes from fur farms though. It is legal in many countries (including the UK) to trap and hunt animals that are not endangered for fur. Supporters of the fur trade argue that fur is a natural, renewable resource that is worth £500 million a year to the UK economy. The British Fur Association is introducing an ‘origin assured’ label which will assure buyers that no cruelty was used against the animal in producing fur which means that the fur did not originate in fur farms or inhumane trapping was not used to catch the animals.

22) What is the ivory trade?

Ivory comes from the tusks of elephants and can be carved into ornaments or ground down to put into alternative medicines. Obviously elephants have to be killed first to get the ivory. In 1989 the United Nations (UN) made the ivory trade illegal everywhere although since then some countries are allowed to export the ivory of elephants who have died naturally or who have been culled (killed) due to the over population of elephants in certain areas. Organisations like Born Free say that there is a huge black market in killing elephants for ivory and some illegal poachers do not even ensure that elephants are completely dead before removing their tusks.

23) What are Christian attitudes to the fur and ivory trade?

For many Christians keeping animals in small cages in fur farms would mean we are being bad **stewards** and not showing **compassion**. Some Christians may feel it is acceptable to wear fur from animals which have been humanely hunted and trapped where as other Christians might argue that with good man made alternatives to fur the wearing of any animal fur means we are been bad stewards and not showing respect to God’s creatures.

Generally Christians would argue that killing an elephant for ivory is not only bad stewardship and uncompassionate, but it is also encouraging the criminal activities of illegal poachers. Why use ivory when many manmade produce is just as good?

Bullfighting

24) What is bullfighting?

Bullfighting is still popular in parts of Spain and Portugal where a **matador** provokes and teases a bull to charge and become aggressive. The matador thrusts sharp spears

into the bull's back which make the bull bleed heavily and so weaken it. Eventually when the bull is so weak it cannot fight any more it is killed with a spear. Supporters of bullfighting say it is a proud tradition which goes back many hundreds of years where the matador and bull fight with 'honour'. Opponents say the practice is not a sport in the real sense because the bull is going to die anyway in a cruel and degrading way because bulls are **sentient** creatures.



25) What are Christian attitudes to bullfighting?

Most Christians would agree that bullfighting is cruel and degrading. Because it is done to supposedly 'entertain' it devalues the life of one of God's creatures. People who engage in bullfighting are uncompassionate and poor stewards. Remember that not all Christians would adopt this view and there are certainly many Christians in Spain and Portugal who enjoy bullfighting and see the event as the bull providing happiness to human beings.

Hunting

26) Is hunting allowed in the UK?

Hunting with dogs to kill foxes was made illegal in the UK in 2004, however, this has not stopped fox hunting altogether. Some hunts go ahead illegally and some hunts can go ahead under certain exceptional circumstances. Supporters of fox hunting say foxes are a pest and hunting with dogs is the most humane (kind) way to kill them. Fishing is legal in the UK and with and it is also legal to shoot birds and rabbits with a license.

27) What are Christian attitudes to hunting?

Many Christians might argue that shooting birds to eat them is more humane than keeping birds in some intensive farms. If hunting is done humanely and the animals killed are killed for their meat then most meat eating Christians might find this acceptable. If hunting is just done for sport then many Christians would argue that this is uncompassionate and bad stewardship because it is disrespecting God's creatures. Some people argue that alternatives to hunting like trapping, gassing or poisoning might actually cause more suffering to animals than hunting. So the rights and wrongs of hunting for Christians very much depends on the situation.

Zoos

28) Are all zoos the same?

No they are not. Some zoos keep animals in small cramped conditions which can cause stress and anxiety to the animal. On the other hand zoos or wild life parks like Howletts Zoo near Canterbury provide humane conditions for the animals as well as in some circumstances actually helping to **preserve** certain species. Zoos allow people to learn about wild life and actually witness at first hand animals they would otherwise not be able to see. Some safari parks go to great lengths to keep animals in a way that resembles their wild natural habitat.

29) What are Christian attitudes to zoos.

It very much depends on the type of zoo. Badly run zoos where animals suffer would obviously show to Christians an attitude of neglect and poor stewardship. Wild life and safari parks on the other hand allow people to witness the glory of God's creation in a humane way. Wildlife and safari parks which help in the conservation of endangered animals would also be demonstrating compassion and good stewardship.

Transport and Work

30) How are animals used in transport and work?

Animals can be used in a variety of ways for transport including horses, donkeys, camels and elephants. Working animals include guide dogs for the blind, dogs used by the police and customs officers to sniff out drugs and for general law enforcement. Recently it has been discovered that animals have a healing or therapeutic effect with some sick people including people with autism and cancer patients can benefit from. In these situations contact with animals reduces stress and promotes a feeling of well being.

In countries which do not have such strict animal cruelty laws animals like donkeys can be used to carry loads that are too heavy for them and cause distress. In some countries animals like bears are made to perform dances for tourists, an activity which obviously causes them some distress. In some seaside resorts in Mediterranean countries monkeys are made to sit on tourists laps while they have their photos taken. Research has shown that animals like this will only become docile by sitting on tourists laps if they have been brutalized into submission in other words they will only do it because they are scared of being beaten.

31) What are Christian attitudes to the use of animals used in transport and work?

If we are given dominion over all animals and if we are of greater value than animals because we are made in the image of God then Christians would argue that it is acceptable to use them in order to serve human beings. However, any form of cruelty would be seen as showing a lack of compassion to God's creatures and people who do these cruel acts can be seen as bad stewards and therefore sinning against God.

Animals in Sport

32) How are animals used in sport?

Animals used in sport can cover such as activities as dog competitions and dog and horse racing. In this country there are strict guidelines protecting animals in sport and abuses can lead to prosecution. Greyhounds and horses can, however, sometimes suffer broken limbs when they fall over during races. Many greyhounds are killed when they are no longer fit to race. In this country blood sports are now against the law, however, in other countries blood sports like cock fighting are still allowed.

33) What are Christian beliefs about using animals in sport?

If God's creatures are treated with respect and compassion many Christians would not be unduly concerned about dog and horse racing. Most Christians would view blood sports like dog fighting which is against the law in this country but still illegally practiced as showing poor stewardship to animals. Even if animals are not made in the image of God like human beings are they are still valuable to God and should not be made to suffer without very good reason.



Pets and Wildlife

34) What are Christian attitudes to pets and wildlife?

If pets are properly looked for and provide good companionship then most Christians would see keeping pets as a positive thing which brings humans and God's creatures into a closer relationship. If rare pets like some tropical snakes are bought without adequate provision to look after them then this can be seen as abusive and showing bad stewardship.

Christians believe that as part of God's creation wildlife should be protected as far as possible. They would believe in the **conservation** of wildlife and may support organizations like the **World Wildlife Fund** which seek to protect some **endangered species** like polar bears and elephants because as God's stewards it is our responsibility to protect his creation. There are occasions, however, when wildlife and humans might be in competition with each other for the same land. An example of this might be alligators in places like Florida. If alligators are not culled (numbers kept down by killing) they might endanger the lives of human beings. Because human beings are intrinsically more valuable than animals then many Christians would not have a problem with such culling – it is the lesser of two evils.

