

Theme 2 - Origin and Value of Human Life

- † Origin and sanctity of human life
- † Non-religious beliefs about evolution and importance of human and animal life and the Dignity in Dying movement
- † Christian attitudes towards abortion, organ donation and euthanasia.

Key Concepts

Afterlife	Life after death; belief existence continues after death	Euthanasia	'Mercy killing'; allowing the death of someone suffering from a terminal illness
Environmental Responsibility	Duty of humans to respect, care for and preserve the natural environment	Evolution	Process by which different creatures are believed to have developed from earlier, less complex forms
Abortion	When a pregnancy is ended so there is no birth	Soul	Spiritual aspect of a being that connects someone with God
Quality of Life	Extent to which life is meaningful	Sanctity of Life	Belief that life is precious or sacred

Christian beliefs on the origin and value of human life

Genesis tells of **God's creation** of humans and animal life. Some Christians believe this **literally** and others interpret the accounts as life being God-given, **sacred** and that it should be preserved. Due to this, some Christians, e.g. **Quakers**, argue against the death penalty. **Jesus's practices** and teachings (e.g. being a **Good Samaritan**) show that all life should be valued as life is God-given so only God should take life away.

Christian attitudes towards abortion, organ transplants and euthanasia

Many Christians refer to God's creation of human life to argue that all life should be preserved and that it is wrong to **'play God'**. They use teachings from the Bible to argue against abortion, euthanasia and the death penalty. Some Christians, e.g. **Anglicans**, believe some abortions are acceptable. However, many Christians, e.g. **Catholics**, refer to Jeremiah 1:5 to argue that God knows each individual before they are born. The teachings of the **Catholic Catechism** show the importance of respecting all life. Humanists lobby for a choice regarding issues of death and provide advice to those thinking of assisted dying. The Bible makes no reference to organ donation so there are different views amongst Christians. Many refer to it as 'love in action' and follows Jesus's teachings regarding compassion to all.

Humanist Dying in Dignity movement

Non-religious views on human and animal life

Humanists value human life but they do not believe it is God-given. They would consider the situations behind life and death issues such as abortion and euthanasia. **Peter Singer** believes that **quality of life** is more important than **sanctity of life** and argues that because of this, not all human life is equal.

Key Sources of Authority

'God created human and animal life' - Genesis 1

Jesus's teachings and actions

'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you' - Jeremiah 1:5

Views of Peter Singer

Key Quotes

'You are not a God that has pleasure in wickedness'

Psalm 5:4

'In the beginning God created heaven and earth'

Genesis 1:1

'In the image of God, He created him, male and female He created them' Genesis 1:27

Exam Practice

Describe religious teachings about the value of human life. (5)

'Euthanasia is always wrong.' Discuss this statement showing that you have considered more than one point of view. You must refer to religious and non-religious beliefs in your answer. (15)

Key Connections

Each area of study will connect with other areas in Christianity and other philosophical and ethical issues.

Consider how beliefs about the origin and value of human life relate **to the dignity of human life**.

Consider how beliefs about the origin and value of human life relate **to the death penalty**.