

How christian and muslim beliefs would affect their behaviour



The way in which we choose to treat animals may hugely depend upon the significance of animals in religion. According to both Islam and Christianity animals are part of God's creation as humans are. Beliefs and teachings, which we then take from religion, would affect our behaviour and attitudes towards the treatment of animals. Islam has always viewed animals a special part of Allah's creation. The Qur'an and Hadith both contain kindness and compassion towards animals. Muslims hold the strong belief that Allah has given them the role of Khalifah.

Therefore they hold it their duty, as Muslims, to protect and cherish Allah's Earth. Muslims believe they have certain responsibility towards the Earth and the creatures on it, including animals, which Allah has given to be used appropriately and wisely. Islam teaches that mercy and compassion should be shown to every living creature that Allah has created. Muslims believe that they will be held accountable for killing unjustly on the day of judgement. The Hadith says that if a human kills anything larger than a sparrow, with unjust cause, that 'sparrow' will cry out on judgement day, saying 'O Lord!

That person killed me for nothing, and not for any useful purpose! ' Similarly in Christianity it is believed that God has made humans stewards of His creation and that they have a responsibility, as Christians, to protect his Earth. Animals, being part of God's creation, should therefore also be protected and respected as. In Christianity there has been a growing awareness in the last twenty years concerning the rights of animals. A Catholic Archbishop said that 'God has the right to have all his creatures treated with proper respect '.

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Even though the Bible does teach that humanity has a superiority over the rest of God's creation, it is still believed that a 'lack of respect for the life and welfare of animals is lowering of man's own self - respect' (Archbishop).

Islam does not completely forbid the killing of animals. However there are various rules that should be considered in the use of animals. Islam teaches that the life of an animal may only be taken for food or another useful purpose. In Islam it is therefore not required that you be a vegetarian, however there are strict guidelines which must be observed if animals are to be killed for food.

Any sort of cruelty to animals is strongly forbidden in Islam and deliberate cruelty to animals is never encouraged. The prayer which is said, in the name of Allah, whilst slaughtering animals is to show that the Muslim is taking a life for food, with Allah's permission, and not unjustly. Muslims will not eat any sort of meat unless it has been killed in the quickest and most painless way, with a prayer in the name of Allah. This is called 'halal' slaughter. The animal must have its throat cut with a sharp knife in a calm atmosphere and not in one of terror or torture for the animal.

Islam teaches that even if an animal is to be eventually slaughtered, it should still have the right to be kept under comfortable conditions with adequate food and water. This method of killing animals is regarded as the kindest and most painless way, although this could be argued. Muslims strongly disagree with cruel methods of killing animals, such as electrocution or shooting, and will refuse to eat animals that have been killed in these ways instead of by the halal method. Christianity does not have such strict rules that need to be followed as in Islam.

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However, there are various references concerning animals in the Bible. Similarly to Islam, it is not asked that Christians be vegetarians either. In Genesis it says 'eat any moving creature, including plants, but not any meat which contains blood', as blood is considered the life of the animal. In Catholicism it is acceptable to use animals to provide food or clothing. Even though specific methods of killing the animal are not mentioned, as in Islam with halal slaughter, it is taught that there should be a consideration of the suffering in slaughter and transport of the animal.

In Christianity, with its various denominations, there are differences in opinion concerning the treatment of animals within the same religion. The Quakers are known to be the pioneers of vegetarianism in Christianity. Although it is not required of them that they do not eat meat they regard it as a consideration for the rights of animals, who are as much a part of God's creation as humans are. Any kind of cruelty towards animals is forbidden in Islam. As mentioned before an animal may only be killed for food or for another useful purpose.

According to this principle, of respect for all parts of Allah's creation, experimentation is not encouraged. Muslims would prefer to look for alternative methods. Muslims believe that experiments on animals should not be carried out unless there is a very good reason. For example, if experimentation on animals is needed to progress in the medical field, and there are no possible alternatives, then it may be allowed. However, experimentation for the development of luxury and unnecessary products is forbidden.

Islam teaches that Muslims should ideally purchase products that have been manufactured by halal methods, and not by cruel methods causing the animal to suffer. Christianity permits scientific experimentation on animals, but as in Islam only with good reason. Roman Catholics believe that medical or scientific experimentation may be carried out if it 'remains within reasonable limits', and 'if it contributes to the caring for or saving of human lives'. Similarly to Islam, if such experimentation or vivisection can be beneficial to humanity, it is permitted but not encouraged.

This belief that animal lives may in some cases be taken to benefit humans, stems from the Christian belief that God has given humans dominion over His creation. This does not necessarily mean that humans have the right to disregard animals, but that they have an obligation to protect and respect God's creation. The denomination of the Quakers strongly encourage that others resist any kind of vivisection and look for alternative methods of investigating and testing.

A statement from the Methodist Church, in 1990, says that 'unnecessary and unjustifiable experiments... s of cosmetics... should not take place.' This is in agreement of what Islam teaches also, stating that experimentation for luxury products is not allowed. Both Islam and Christianity disapprove of intensive factory farming, where animals may be kept in inappropriate and confined conditions simply for the convenience of humans. Such methods of farming are considered ignorance for the rights and welfare of animals. Christianity as a whole is strongly against such establishments and says that 'every measure should be taken to preserve animal habitats'.

Pope John Paul II said that 'scientists must abandon laboratories and factories of death'. Apart from the hunting of animals for food or another useful purpose, Islam and Christianity both condemn hunting for sport. Islam teaches that Allah loves all parts of his creation, and all of it should be treated with respect and kindness. Therefore unless you are killing an animal for a useful purpose, you should never hunt for pleasure as a sport. The Hadith says that 'if someone kills a sparrow for sport, the sparrow will cry out on judgement day'.

Muslims believe that Allah will hold them accountable, on the day of judgement, for killing an animal without a useful purpose. An animal that has been given a predator instinct in it by Allah cannot be blamed for killing, but deliberate cruelty on the part of humans is strongly discouraged. Christianity teaches that the life of an animal may only be taken to provide food or for another useful purpose, as in Islam. Despite certain attitudes of the Church in the past, many Christians are known for showing their concern for the use of animals.

St Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of animals, is known to have preached to animals. He held the belief that animals had the right to be treated with respect and should not be killed unnecessarily. The Quakers are a Christian denomination known for speaking out against sports that subject animals to cruel and unjust deaths, which includes hunting for pleasure. In Islam it is taught that if hunting is to take place, for food or a useful purpose, there are certain rules to be observed.

Apart from using the method of halal slaughter, when the animal is actually hunted, any weapons used should pierce the animal such as a spear or bullet. The uses of any weapons that throttle or club animals are forbidden in Islam. Also, if other animals are to be used for hunting, they must be properly trained, under control and not savage. Islam completely forbids hunting for sport, but if it must be done to provide food Muslims should follow such guidelines.

Other sports that involve the unnecessary and cruel deaths of animals, such as blood sports, have been forbidden by the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) himself. The Prophet (pbuh) forbade any sport that made animals fight each other. Therefore Muslims would be strongly against modern blood sports such as foxhunting or fights between cockerels to death. A Church of England stressed the importance of the care of animals, saying that even though the 'value of animals has always been seen as secondary to that of human beings', 'human beings have both an affinity with, and an obligation to animals'.

In recent years Christians have become more aware of their responsibility to animals, as a part of God's creation that should be protected and respected. Following the Christian belief of stewardship, similar to the belief of khalifah in Islam, it is believed to be their duty to use their power to protect nature when it is unable to protect itself. In Islam there are various other beliefs that affect the behaviour and attitudes of Muslims towards animals. In the Qur'an, in surah 5: 2, 5: 98, it says 'O you who believe! Do not kill game while you are in the state of ihram.

The state of ihram is a state of purity, total serenity and peace for religious purposes. If a Muslim were on hajj they would be in a state of ihram, and therefore any living creature around them would be safe, as the Muslim would be forbidden to harm it. The killing of any living creature whilst in ihram is forbidden in Islam, which would include the hunting of animals for whatever reason. Both Christians and Muslims share the belief that they have a duty to God to look after His creation, and therefore animals, as they are part of that creation too.

This belief affects their attitudes and behaviour towards animals in many ways. Both Islam and Christianity permit the use of animals for food or for a useful purpose, but not simply for pleasure as a sport. Islam is specific in how the animal is killed, as the method of halal slaughter must be used. Christian views are similar to that of Muslims, saying that an animal may be used for experimentation if it will benefit humans. Islam says that animals may be used to further medicinal research, and only if there are no other possible alternatives.