

IS RELIGION GOOD FOR YOUR CAT AND DOG?

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A new research project at Oxford will examine whether animals benefit or suffer thanks to religion.

Inspired by Baptist Preacher Charles Spurgeon's claim that a person cannot be a true Christian if his dog or cat is not the better off for it, the Centre will explore whether religious traditions are animal-friendly. The questions to be addressed include whether religious people and religious institutions benefit animals? Are they more or less likely to be respectful to animals – either those kept as companions or those used for other human purposes?

The project is being organised by the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. It will be multidisciplinary, multifaith, and draw in not only theologians and religious thinkers, but also other academics including social scientists, psychologists, historians, and criminologists. "We want to know whether religion makes any difference for animals", says Oxford theologian, Professor Andrew Linzey, who is Director of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. "We often hear of how religion is detrimental to human rights, but is it also detrimental to animal protection?"

The first stage of the project will culminate in a Summer School on Religion and Animal Protection at St Stephen's House, Oxford, from 21-23rd July 2014. St Stephen's is an Anglican Theological College and a Hall of the University of Oxford.

Academics interested in contributing to the project should contact the Centre's Deputy Director, Clair Linzey, in the first instance depdirector@oxfordanimaethics.com or (+44) (0)1865 201565.

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