

Religious Studies

Themes Revision Guide



Name: _____



Issues of relationships topics

Section 1: Relationships

- Family life
- The role of men and women in Christianity
- The role of men and women in Islam
- Christian marriage
- Muslim marriage
- Interfaith marriage
- Cohabitation
- Adultery
- Christian views on adultery
- Muslim views on adultery
- Divorce and separation
- Christian views on divorce
- Muslim views on divorce

Section 2: Sexual relationships

- The purpose of sex for Christians
- The purpose of sex for Muslims
- Contraception and family planning
- Christian views on contraception
- Muslim views on contraception

- Same-sex relationships
- Christian views on same-sex relationships
- Muslim views on same-sex relationships

Section 3: Gender prejudice and discrimination

- Gender prejudice and discrimination
- Gender prejudice and discrimination in Christianity
- Gender prejudice and discrimination in Islam

Key Concepts



Adultery Voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a person who is not their spouse.



Divorce To legally end a marriage.



Cohabitation To live together in a sexual relationship without being married or in a civil partnership.



Commitment A sense of dedication and obligation to someone or something.



Contraception Methods used to prevent a woman from becoming pregnant during or following sexual intercourse.



Gender equality People of all genders enjoying the same rights and opportunities in all aspects of their lives.



Responsibilities Actions/duties you are expected to carry out.



Roles Position, status or function of a person in society, as well as the characteristics and social behaviour expected of them.

Family life

The family is the foundation for all human activity. It is where all human relationships begin and are developed. Within each family the norms and values of society are lived out in practice and a new generation of children are brought up into adulthood. There are many different types of family. The traditional form of the family, an extended family, has been replaced by a variety of family forms.

The most common types of family are:

➤ Nuclear family

Two parents and one or more child(ren) all living in the same house.

➤ Extended family

A number of adults and children who are related living in the same home. This may include many relatives living together in close proximity; for example, cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents all living together and sharing in family roles.

➤ Reconstituted family

Some divorced adults choose to remarry or live in a co-habiting relationship. This may lead to the creation of a reconstituted family. This type of family structure is made up of a mix of step-parents and step-children.

➤ Single parent family

Where one parent raises one or more children alone. The number of single parent families has continued to rise in modern Britain as a result of an increasing rate of divorce.

➤ Childless family

Where a married or co-habiting couple are either unable to have children naturally or decide not to have children. Same-sex couples are often a childless family.

Roles of men and women in the family

Within a family the members have different **roles** and **responsibilities**. These could include:

- caring for children
- caring for other family members, for example looking after elderly relatives
- maintaining the family home
- earning money to support the family.

Both women and men aim to provide love, comfort, protection and support for each other and for any children. Both have a role to play in the education of children to become responsible adults and future parents. They should show mutual support of each other. Men and women are both important role models for children.

Traditional views

In the past Christianity, Islam and Judaism all held a very traditional view of the role of women and men in family

life. The man was responsible for providing for the family through work and the mother was responsible for domestic life. The views of the three religions were '**patriarchal**' (the opposite of **matriarchal**) in the sense that the man was seen very much as the leader of the family.

These traditional views are changing. Women and men are now often regarded as much more of a partnership in family life with shared responsibilities. It is now much more common for women to go on working when they get married and have a family, and increasing numbers of men are taking on the role of 'house-husband' while their wives or partners go out to work. The law is also changing to reflect this. In 2015 it became possible for men and women to share parental leave. Parents can decide who takes leave to care for the baby, rather than it automatically being the mother.

Patriarchal a family or society controlled by men.

Matriarchal a family or society controlled by women.

What have families got to do with religion?

Religion and the family are interlinked in many ways. Family life is where religion is experienced by young children and young adults through the example of their parents. Most religious believers think it is a religious duty for parents to bring up their children to share in their faith and teach the values which are important to them, such as the Ten Commandments. These basic values, or attitudes to living, are shared by Christians, Muslims and Jews: respect your parents, no killing or murder, no adultery, no stealing, no lies and no envy or greed.

Many people today, such as humanists, think that children should make up their own ideas about religion or that parents should not share their religious beliefs and faith with their children. Humanists believe all people should be able to make a free choice about accepting or rejecting religious beliefs.

In terms of religious practice, parents:

- are expected to take their children to a place of worship
- teach them how to read and understand sacred texts
- teach them how and when to pray
- join in the celebration of festivals
- understand the importance of rites of passage.



Muslims celebrating the festival of Eid.



Christian family baptising their child.

For many religious believers, those who share in their faith are regarded as an extended family. Christians use the phrase, 'People of God' for all Christians, and Muslims use the word 'ummah' for the worldwide community of Islam.

The nature and purpose of marriage

The traditional teaching of Christianity, Islam and Judaism has been that marriage is the basis of family life. Marriage is regarded as:

- God given
- the best basis for creating an environment into which children should be born
- a lifelong commitment.



A wedding ceremony is an important rite of passage in many religious traditions. It is a celebration that recognises the importance of marriage, and it includes ritual and symbolism, which often reflect the purposes of marriage.

Christian views on marriage

- Some Christians regard marriage as a gift given to humanity by God – a sacrament.
- In the Christian wedding service, the phrase 'ordained by God' is used giving marriage a very special significance for all Christians. The vows exchanged reflect this.
- The phrase from the marriage service 'what God has joined together, let no man put asunder' is interpreted to mean marriage should be a lifelong union.
- In the Gospels Jesus teaches about the importance of marriage. This refers back to the idea in Genesis that, as part of God's creation, God made man and woman. Jesus uses powerful language to convey the meaning that marriage is the complete joining together of two people in a very special way.

'But at the beginning of creation God "made them male and female". "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh". So they are no longer two, but one flesh'. Mark 10:6-8

Muslim views on marriage

- In the Qur'an there are a number of references to the importance of marriage and how it is the basis of family life.
- All Muslims are encouraged to marry in order to have a companion and, although divorce is permitted, the ideal is that marriage is for life. The following quote from the Qur'an shows that Muslims believe marriage is a gift from God and that people should marry. It says that within this relationship the couple are able to show affection towards one another and are able to support each other in their religious faith.

'And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquillity in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.' Qur'an 30:21

The Christian wedding ceremony

A typical wedding ceremony in the Church of England is performed by a vicar and would be as follows:

- The vicar welcomes everyone and gives a short sermon on the nature and purpose of marriage.
- The couple exchange their vows which reflect the main Christian beliefs about marriage:

*To have and to hold
From this day forward
For better for worse
For richer for poorer
In sickness and in health
To love and to cherish
Till death do us part
According to God's holy law
And this is my solemn vow*

Different denominations have different names for the member of the clergy who carries out the wedding ceremony:

- minister (Baptist Church)
- pastor (Evangelical Churches)
- priest (Catholic Church)
- vicar (Church of England)

- The couple exchange rings as a sign of commitment and say:

With my body I honour you,
all that I am I give to you,
and all that I have I share with you,
within the love of God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- The vicar declares the couple married.
- There are prayers and Bible readings, and the priest gives a sermon. There may also be hymns with an appropriate theme.
- The legal requirement in Britain is for the newly married couple to sign the register, witnessed by a registrar and witnesses, which makes the marriage ceremony legal.

The Muslim wedding ceremony

The nikah is a simple marriage ceremony in which a man and woman declare their commitment to one another as husband and wife. It might take place in a mosque, where it could be led by an imam. However, it may also be at the bride's home.

- The wali or woman's guardian in marriage offers the bride to the groom.
- There must be two witnesses who have attained adulthood and are good Muslims.
- There is the payment of mahr (dowry or marriage gift) by the groom to the bride.
- A marriage contract is signed by the bride and groom and witnesses. For the nikah there must be the consent of both parties.
- A sermon is given to bless the marriage.
- Vows are not necessary but may be exchanged if the bride and groom choose to do so. Traditionally the bride would vow to be honest, obedient and faithful and the husband would vow to be helpful and faithful.
- The wedding ceremony ends with prayers for the bride and groom, their families, the local Muslim community and the worldwide Muslim community.
- The wedding banquet or walima is traditionally held by the groom after the nikah has taken place. It may take place immediately following the nikah or on the following day but the purpose of the banquet is for family and friends to share in the groom's happiness on the occasion of his marriage and to give thanks to God.

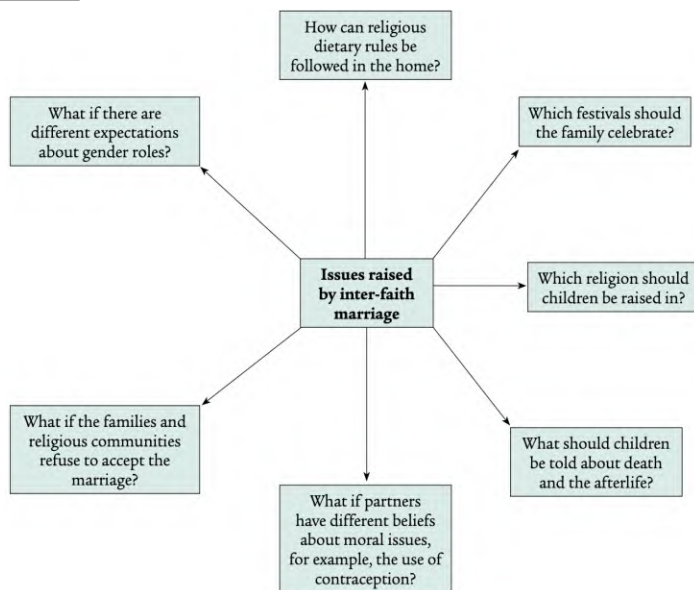
A separate civil ceremony must also take place to make the marriage legal.

Marriage outside religious traditions

Examples of issues raised by inter-faith marriages are:

- In the Christian Orthodox tradition, a marriage in church only takes place if an Orthodox Christian is marrying a baptised Christian.
- In the Catholic tradition the partner who is not Catholic must agree to any children of the marriage being allowed to follow the Catholic faith.
- In the Jewish Orthodox tradition only, Jews may marry each other in a synagogue.

Where there is an issue about people marrying in a place of worship because of different religious beliefs, it is possible to have a civil ceremony followed, for example, by a religious blessing.



Themes – Issues of Relationships

Cohabitation

Cohabitation is where two people who are not married live in a romantic partnership which may involve an intimate and sexual relationship. Some couples choose to cohabit and never marry, while some couples will marry after a period of cohabitation. In 2012 there were 5.9 million people cohabiting in the UK and it was the fastest growing family type.

Muslim views on cohabitation

- Although in practice some Muslims may choose to cohabit, according to the teachings of Islam it is always wrong. Muslims believe that for a couple to live together in a sexual relationship they must first be married.

Christian views on cohabitation

- Although Christian doctrines have traditionally prohibited cohabitation there has been an increasingly more tolerant line taken in some denominations towards couples who cohabit.
- Liberal Anglicans, for example, accept cohabitation where it is part of a committed relationship, although they still believe that marriage would be the ideal.
- Some denominations disagree with cohabitation as they believe it devalues the special and sacred nature of sex, which should only take place within marriage.
- The Catholic Church and more conservative Anglicans do not accept cohabitation and expect a couple to not have sex before marriage.
- Some Baptist Churches may refuse to marry a couple who are cohabiting.

Adultery

Extra-marital sex or adultery is when a married person has a sexual relationship with someone other than their husband or wife. In Britain the vast majority of people disapprove of adultery on moral and social grounds and the law recognises adultery as a justifiable reason for the granting of a divorce. Christianity, Islam and Judaism all consider adultery a great sin. Adultery is clearly forbidden in the Ten Commandments.

Christian views on adultery

Christianity teaches that adultery is wrong for the following reasons:

- Marriage is sexually exclusive and should not be shared with anyone else.
- The Ten Commandments forbid adultery: *'You shall not commit adultery.'* Exodus 20:14
- Marriage is a sacrament – a gift from God – and adultery goes against this.
- Committing adultery destroys the special relationship between a husband and wife.
- Committing adultery can harm the family unit and cause the partner to feel cheated and betrayed.

Muslim views on adultery

Islam teaches that adultery is wrong for the following reasons:

- Sex outside of marriage is generally strongly disapproved of.
- Marriage is a life-long union based on trust, morality and devotion.
- Vows promising to be faithful to one another might be exchanged in the marriage ceremony.
- Adultery is seen as harmful to society, so against the unity and peace of the ummah (brotherhood).
- Adultery is seen as a form of theft of the worst possible sort.
- The Qur'an teaches that adultery is wrong: *'And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way.'* Qur'an 17:32

Why do some marriages fail?

All religions understand that there is conflict in human relationships, including within marriages. Within a marriage there are many things that may cause conflict as the diagram shows.

If a couple cannot reconcile, they might decide they no longer wish to be married and set about ending their relationship. This might involve:

- **divorce** – the legal ending of marriage
- **separation** – deciding to live separately
- **annulment** – a legal way of cancelling a marriage in the Catholic Church.



Divorce and separation

When a couple's married relationship breaks down they are likely to separate and decide to live apart. Separation may only be for a short period until they can get a divorce or some couples may not get a divorce and just remain separated.

For example, the Catholic Church does not permit divorce. So, some Catholics may remain separated rather than divorce. If one of the partners wants to remarry, they need to have a divorce first; marriage to someone else while still married is known as bigamy and is illegal. Divorce is the legal ending of a marriage, and couples need to apply via the court system.

Bigamy entering into a marriage with someone while still being legally married to another person.



Christian views on divorce and separation

The Catholic Church



- The Catholic Church does not recognise divorce and regards marriage as a lifelong commitment.
- In the situation where a marriage breaks down and there is no chance of a reconciliation the two options for a Catholic are either an annulment or separation.
- Catholics base this belief on teachings of the Bible, for example: attitudes towards divorce. *'Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery."'* **Matthew 19:8–9**
- *'Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.'* **Mark 10:9**
- Catholics who are separated are expected not to cohabit with anyone else and if they do this, they are not allowed to receive Holy Communion during mass. Of course, some Catholics do get divorced, however, this would not be recognised by the Catholic Church.

Other Christian traditions



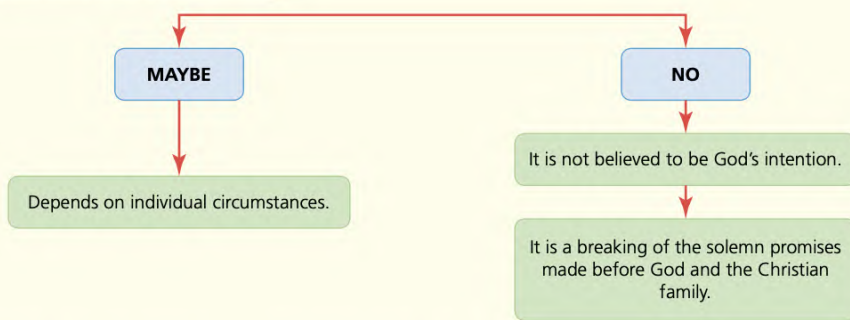
- In other Christian traditions there is diversity of viewpoints.

Because divorce is the legal ending of a marriage by the state, all other Christian denominations accept divorce but the issue becomes complicated if a divorced Christian wants to remarry. For example, in the Anglican church divorce is accepted but remarriage of a divorced person is left to the personal decision of a minister. The diagram on the next page outlines some of the different denominations' attitudes towards divorce.

Annulment

An annulment (or 'nullity of marriage' or 'nullity of domestic partnership') is when a court says your marriage or domestic partnership is not legally valid. The Catholic Church teaches that annulment is the only acceptable way a marriage can be dissolved. An annulment may be granted for the non-consummation of marriage, which means a married couple have not had sex, or where it is proved the marriage should not have taken place.

Is divorce acceptable?



Anglicans

- accept divorce, as UK law allows it
- discourages remarriage (but if chosen a non-church wedding is preferred): some vicars will agree to a service of prayer and dedication.

Non-conformists (e.g. Methodist/United Reformed)

- divorce best avoided
- remarriage permitted if it seems suitable or acceptable to all concerned
- no minister can be forced to conduct a remarriage against their will.

Catholics:

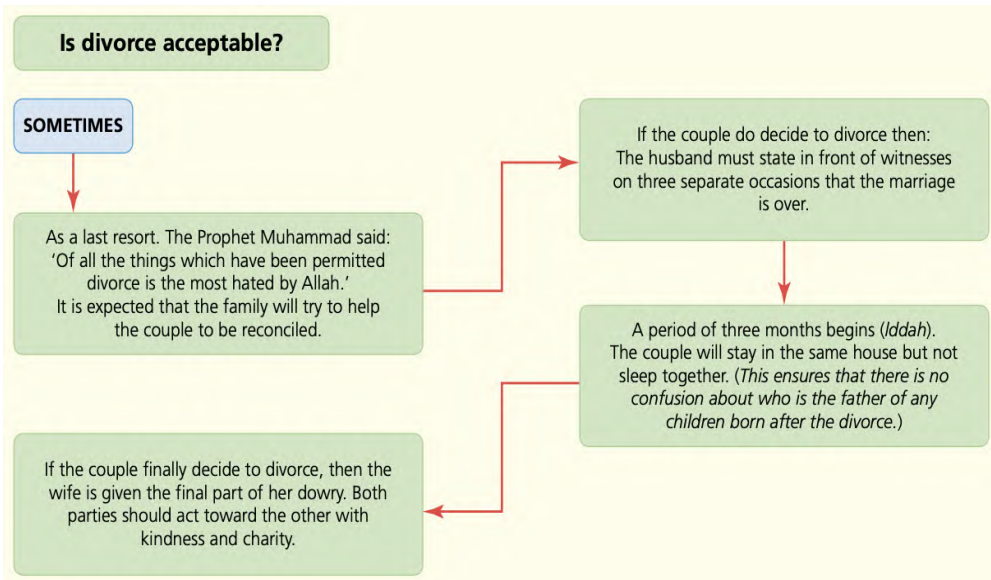
- do not recognise divorce
- marriage is a sacrament that cannot be dissolved except for special reasons (such as one partner not freely choosing to marry)
- some marriages can be annulled, where there are good reasons (such as the marriage never having been consummated)
- if a Catholic remarries without an annulment they can attend Mass but cannot receive Holy Communion.

Muslim views on divorce and separation



- Muslims believe that married couples experiencing conflict should try to reconcile. Before a divorce takes place an imam and the Muslim community would seek to try and help a couple.
- The idea of reconciliation before divorce is referred to in this passage from the Qur'an. *'And if you fear dissention between the two, send an arbitrator from his people and an arbitrator from her people. If they both desire reconciliation, God will cause it between them. Indeed, God is ever Knowing and Aware.'* **Qur'an 4:35**
- However, Muslims reluctantly accept that reconciliation is not always possible, so do accept divorce.
- When divorce does occur Muslims believe each partner should be free to remarry in the future.
- As well as a civil divorce, which legally ends the marriage, Muslims believe that the marriage must also be ended in the eyes of God. They can apply to a Shari'ah council to obtain an Islamic divorce.
- There is a period of three months after they apply to the council, to give the couple time to reconcile and to ensure the woman is not pregnant (as the quote below from the Qur'an explains). At the end of this period a religious divorce is granted.

'Divorce is twice. Then, either keep [her] in an acceptable manner or release [her] with good treatment. And it is not lawful for you to take anything of what you have given them unless both fear that they will not be able to keep [within] the limits of Allah . But if you fear that they will not keep [within] the limits of Allah , then there is no blame upon either of them concerning that by which she ransoms herself. These are the limits of Allah , so do not transgress them. And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah – it is those who are the wrongdoers.' **Qur'an 2:229**



Humanist views on divorce and separation || Remarriage

- Humanists believe that marriage and family breakdown is best avoided and would say that couples should try to work through their difficulties.
- This is particularly important when there are children involved. However, humanists recognise that this is sometimes not possible and believe people only have this life so it is important this life is enjoyed and lived to the full.
- When people are unhappy it is acceptable for them to separate and divorce.

Different religious traditions have different viewpoints about remarriage and there are often differences of opinion within traditions.

- Catholics, for example, who decide to go against Church teachings and get a civil divorce may not remarry in a Catholic church. Divorced Catholics may choose to remarry in a different place of worship or in a civil ceremony. In the Anglican tradition, a minister may exercise personal judgement in deciding to remarry a divorcee depending on the circumstances of a divorce.
- Some Anglican ministers will not marry a divorced person but may perform a church blessing ceremony after a registry office wedding.
- In Islam, remarriage is not an issue, because divorce is accepted. Remarriage is encouraged because there is no idea of celibacy in Islam. In Judaism remarriage is also encouraged.

Sexual relationships

Promiscuity having a number of casual sexual relationships.
Fidelity two people being sexually faithful to each other.
Procreation reproduction.

All religions regard sexual relationships as an important part of being human. Sex is regarded as a gift from God and part of God’s creation. It allows for the continuation of the human race and is an important part of human identity. It is also a physical way in which people may express love to each other. Promiscuity is regarded as something which is always wrong, or a sin, because religions teach that sex should only be part of a committed relationship between two people who have deep feelings for each other. As sex can result in children, fidelity in sexual relationships is really important for the upbringing of children by two parents.

Chastity

Chastity is the state in which a person does not have sexual relationships until married. In the traditional teachings of Christianity, Judaism and Islam a person would remain chaste until marriage. In America the ‘silver ring thing’ was promoted as a physical expression of this viewpoint. Unmarried Christian teenagers and young adults wear a silver ring on their ‘wedding finger’ to show they will remain chaste until they are married, when married, they will replace the silver ring with a wedding ring.

Celibacy

Celibacy is when a person decides never to have a sexual relationship. In the Catholic faith, for example, there has been a tradition of celibacy. Monks, nuns and priests take a vow of celibacy. This is a decision not to marry or to have any sexual relationships. It is made as a positive choice of lifestyle in order to dedicate one’s life to the service of God. Islam and Judaism teach that an adult should marry in order to have a companion in life and that no one needs to live a celibate life.

Christian attitudes to sex

Christians believe that sex should generally take place within marriage. It is viewed as a gift from God and is holy and sacred. This is why it should be something that you only do with the person you love. Casual sex (promiscuity) is seen as devaluing both people and sex itself and is unacceptable. There is concern that children may be born outside of a stable home environment.

Muslim attitudes to sex

Muslims believe that sex should happen within marriage – married partners are expected to meet each other’s needs, including their sexual needs. It is considered an act of worship. For a Muslim, sex outside of marriage is wrong as shown in the following quotation from the Qur’an: *‘And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way.’ Qur’an 17:32* Because Muslims believe sex is an act of worship this means it may only take place within marriage. To have sex outside of marriage is simply wrong because it may lead to promiscuity.

Contraception

Contraception means deliberately using methods to prevent pregnancy. There are two types: artificial and natural. Natural contraception is where a person abstains from sex during the time of the month when a woman is most likely to conceive. Artificial contraception methods include the use of the contraceptive pill or injection and barrier methods to prevent conception. Religious attitudes towards contraception are very varied.

Contraception methods



There are many types of contraception available, some types (like condoms) act as a barrier to stop the sperm reaching the egg. Other types, for example the contraceptive pill, may prevent an egg from being released or prevent fertilised eggs from implanting in the womb.

Christian views on contraception

Most Protestants believe in the use of different forms of contraception for family planning purposes, but the Catholic Church has opposed artificial methods of contraception. In the current debate about the effects of population growth on the planet, many Catholics find this particular teaching difficult to follow and will instead follow their conscience. Many Catholics also want to enjoy sex without the worry of having more children than they can look after or afford.

Thomas Aquinas and Natural Law

Natural Law is an ethical theory associated mainly with Thomas Aquinas. An ethical theory tries to help guide humans on how to live and how to make moral decisions.

Aquinas thought there were some fundamental laws which were laid down by God and are the basis of how humans should live their lives. He set out five primary precepts:

1. Self-preservation/preservation of the innocent
2. Continuation of the species through reproduction
3. Education of children
4. To live in society
5. To worship God

From these he set out secondary precepts or rules which help us fulfil the primary precepts. For example, the second primary precept says that humans must reproduce, so a secondary precept might be that contraception is wrong as that would prevent reproduction.

The Catholic Church takes an absolutist view of Aquinas's Natural Law, which means it believes that the rules he laid down should always be followed. Therefore, it states that contraception should not be used because it goes against Natural Law.

However, other Christians and some Catholics believe that Natural Law shouldn't be seen as an absolute set of rules that should never be broken. Instead, God gave humans intelligence and creativity in order that they should use their conscience to decide what is right in a given situation. There may be some circumstances where using contraception is the responsible and moral thing to do. For example, many Christians are concerned about the overpopulation of the planet and contraception is a way of controlling this. Similarly, contraception doesn't just prevent pregnancy but also stops the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, so is a good thing for this reason.



St Thomas Aquinas was a Dominican friar who was a leading theologian and philosopher of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages.

Muslim views on contraception

The Qur'an does not make any explicit references to contraception, although it is generally accepted that a form of contraception was used during the time of the Prophet Muhammad. As a result Muslims believe in the use of contraception, but certain criteria must be met. These are:

- that it must not harm the body
- that it only should be used if both the husband and wife consent to its use.

Most Muslims accept the use of contraception to limit the size of families but would not generally accept permanent forms of contraception, such as sterilisation.

Humanist views on contraception

The humanist viewpoint is that contraception is permissible in order to help people to enjoy their lives and limit the size of families. Sex is regarded as an expression of human affection and love between two people and it has no religious or sacred aspect.

Science should be used to improve the quality of life for human beings, therefore if the use of contraception limits the size of families and leads to an improvement in the quality of life it should be used.

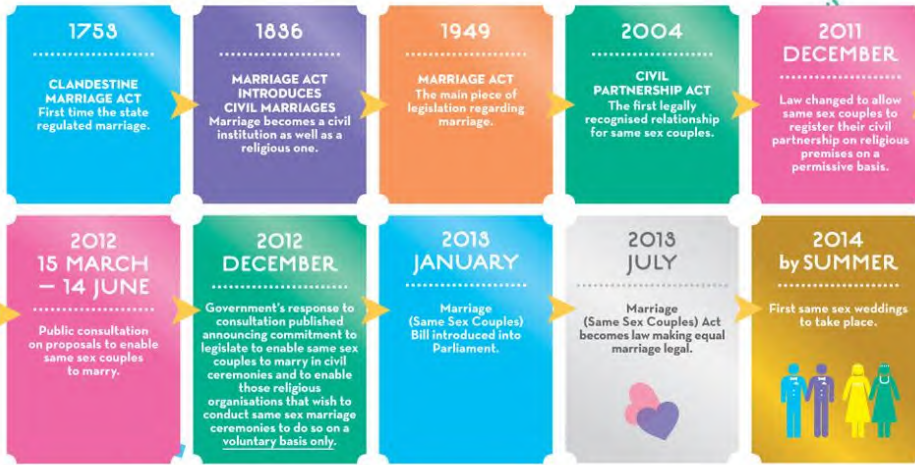
Same-sex relationships

In the past romantic relationships have been seen as a relationship between a man and a woman rather than between two men or between two women. It was only in 1967 that homosexuality was decriminalised in the UK. As British society has changed, many people’s attitudes to same -sex relationships have also changed. The Civil Partnership Act in 2004 enabled same-sex partners to have essentially the same legal rights and responsibilities as married couples. This was followed by the Marriage (same-sex couples) Act in 2013, which legalised same-sex marriage in England and Wales. So now same-sex couples who wish to be legally joined have two routes they can take.

Same-sex relationships divide people’s opinions, both for those with religious faith and those without. The three monotheistic religions of Christianity, Judaism and Islam have traditionally taught that same -sex relationships are wrong. However, within individual religions there is sometimes disagreement about these teachings.

MARRIAGE TIMELINE

#equalmarriage



Where Gay Marriage Is Legal

Countries with national laws allowing same-sex couples to marry*



EQUAL MARRIAGE

The key proposals at a glance

* As of June 22, 2020 - also legal in some jurisdictions in Mexico
Source: Pew Research Center



statista

EQUAL MARRIAGE

PROTECTIONS FOR RELIGIONS

CIVIL PARTNERSHIPS

CHANGING GENDER

#equalmarriage

Same sex couples will be able to marry in civil ceremonies. Religious organisations that wish to conduct marriages for same sex couples will be able to do so, if they have explicitly 'opted in'.

Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights already guarantees the right to freedom of religion. A 'quadruple lock' of protections will be built in to primary legislation to protect those religious organisations and ministers who do not wish to marry same sex couples.

Couples who wish to convert their civil partnership to marriage will be able to do so. The operation and future of the Civil Partnership Act 2004, in England and Wales, will be reviewed.

Individuals who wish to change their legal gender will be able to do so without first having to end their marriage.

Christian views on same-sex relationships

Many Christians oppose same-sex marriage on biblical grounds, quoting a number of verses from both the Old and New Testaments:

'If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads.' **Leviticus 20:13**

'We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine.' **1 Timothy 1: 8–10**

However, other Christians believe that these passages reflect the cultural and social values of the time they were written in and that they don't apply in today's society. They might point to the fact that there are lots of things condemned in the Bible that would be seen as perfectly acceptable today.

The Catholic Church

The doctrine and teachings of the Catholic Church prohibit same-sex marriage as it believes that sexual relationships should only exist between a man and a woman in a marriage.

In April 2010, Pope Francis wrote,

'A marriage [made up of man and woman] is not the same as the union of two people of the same sex. To distinguish is not to discriminate but to respect differences At a time when we place emphasis on the richness of pluralism and social and cultural diversity, it is a contradiction to minimise fundamental human differences. A father is not the same as a mother. We cannot teach future generations that preparing yourself for planning a family based on the stable relationship between a man and a woman is the same as living with a person of the same sex.'



Other Christian Churches

- At the moment the Anglican Church does not believe same-sex marriages should take place in church. There are some individual clergy who do not agree with this decision and might decide to perform a church blessing.
- Other Christian denominations, such as Quakers, will conduct a same-sex service but a same-sex couple will still need a civil ceremony as well in order to be legally married.
- The United Reform Church has recently decided to allow same-sex marriages to take place in their churches.



Muslim views on same-sex relationships

Islam forbids same-sex marriages and homosexual and lesbian relationships, believing that sex should only take place between a husband and wife. Muslims regard marriage as the only place where sexual relationships should take place and regard marriage as a sacred contract between only a man and a woman.

The quotation to the right from the Qur'an is used by Muslims who view homosexuality as immoral. Muslims interpret this to mean that same-sex relationships are wrong.

'And [We had sent] Lot when he said to his people, "Do you commit such immorality as no one has preceded you with from among the worlds? Indeed, you approach men with desire, instead of women. Rather, you are a transgressing people.' **Qur'an 7:80-81**



Humanist views on same-sex relationships

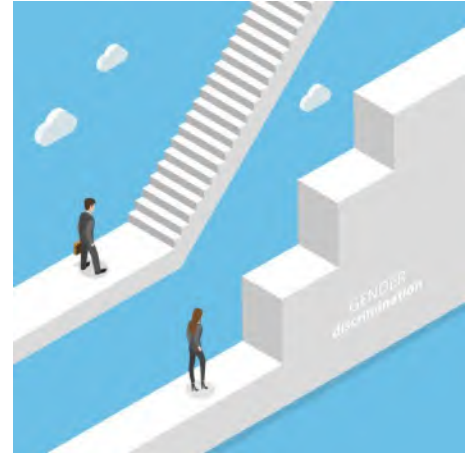
The humanist approach is that human beings should find personal happiness in this lifetime and same-sex relationships are a positive expression of this view.



Issues of equality – Gender prejudice and discrimination

One of the most significant changes in society in recent times is the changing relationships between women and men around issues of equality, not only in this country but across the world. Gender equality aims to stop any form of gender discrimination.

In UK law, men and women have equal rights in employment and discrimination on the basis of gender is illegal. The 2010 Equality Act simplified previous laws to protect people from discrimination on the basis of several protected characteristics, including sex. However, traditionally women and men had different roles in religions particularly in relation to their role in authority (leadership) and worship. These traditional roles have been debated in recent years as the role of women has changed in society to become more equal to that of men.



Muslim attitudes to the roles of women in worship and authority

- For most Muslim groups women cannot be imams and lead men in prayer. Some Muslims scholars claim that having a female imam would invalidate men's prayers.
- Some Sunni groups allow women to act as imams and lead prayers if the congregation is made up of other women or close family. However, she will not lead the prayers by standing in front of the congregation as a man would, instead she would stand in the congregation.
- Women and men are also usually separated during worship. However, there is increasing pressure from some within the Muslim community for women to be allowed to lead mixed sex congregations and worship together with men.

The quote below describes how Allah creates all people from the same soul and so Muslims are against discrimination:

'O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear God, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs. Indeed God is ever, over you, an Observer.'

Qur'an 4:1



In the Hadith there are mentions of two of Muhammad's wives, Aisha and Umm Salamah, leading prayers.

The Qur'an does not mention whether females can act as an imam and lead prayers, although traditionally it has been a male role.



■ A male imam leads prayer in a UK mosque

An imam must be a good Muslim to lead a community in prayer. The quote from the Qur'an below says that gender is irrelevant to whether a person can be a good Muslim:

'Whoever does an evil deed will not be recompensed except by the like thereof; but whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer – those will enter Paradise, being given provision therein without account.'

Qur'an 40:40

The quote from the Qur'an below indicates that men should have authority over women in the event of a divorce, so is the same true in worship?

Divorced women remain in waiting for three periods, and it is not lawful for them to conceal what God has created in their wombs if they believe in God and the Last Day. And their husbands have more right to take them back in this [period] if they want reconciliation. And due to the wives is similar to what is expected of them, according to what is reasonable. But the men have a degree over them [in responsibility and authority]. And God is Exalted in Might and Wise.'

Qur'an 2:228

Some high profile female imams have led mixed congregations in countries like Canada and the UK such. In Britain, Raheel Raza became the first Muslim-born woman to lead a mixed gender British congregation through Friday prayers at a small prayer session in Oxford. Raheel argues that nowhere in the Qur'an are female imams forbidden. Raheel received death threats when she led a mixed-gender prayer session in Canada but she believes what she is doing is important for all women.

'It's not just about taking the job of an imam. It's about reminding the Muslim community that 50 per cent of its adherents are women who are equal to men. Women are equally observant, practising Muslims who deserve to be heard.'

^ This also comes up in the Issues of Human Rights section

Themes – Issues of Relationships

Christian attitudes to the roles of women in worship and authority

In Jesus' time it was normal for men to take up positions of authority. Society is different now and men and women are more equal.

In the early Christian Church the original disciples were all men.

Jesus' actions showed that he respected women and he had women amongst his closest followers, which would have been very unusual at the time.

Quotes like the one below from Galatians indicate that gender is irrelevant as long as you have faith in Jesus:

'For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'

Galatians 3:27–29



■ Reverend Angela Berners-Wilson was one of the first Christian female priests

In the Parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus taught that you should not discriminate.

Christians believe that all humans are created in the image of God, so each human life is equal and sacred.

Biblical teachings like the one below indicate that women are different to men and that women should not have authority over men:

'A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.'

1 Timothy 2:11–12

The Catholic and Orthodox Churches



- In the Catholic and Orthodox Churches women can take up active roles in worship and authority. They can become a nun or 'sister', taking vows to devote their life to God.
- They are equal members of Church congregations with men and can support the Church in a number of ways, from administrative functions like serving on Church finance committees to helping ministers lead worship.
- However, women are always lay people in these Churches, they cannot be ordained. Ordination is the process where people are granted religious authority, so women cannot become priests for example. One reason for this is that these Churches believe that while men and women are equal they have different strengths and contributions to make to society.
- Men take more religious leadership roles, while women have an equally important role to play in their families and communities.
- Pope Francis has praised the role women play in the Church and expressed the hope that women can play a bigger part in Church life, but in a way that allows them to continue to do their important work supporting their families.

The Anglican Church



- There have been significant changes in the role of women in worship in the Anglican Church to allow men and women to take up equal roles in Church leadership and worship.
- Thirty-two female ministers were ordained in 1994 and the first female bishop was ordained in 2014. This means that women can become ministers and lead Christian congregations in worship.
- When the Church of England voted to allow women to become Bishops the Archbishop of Canterbury, **Justin Welby**, said that the Church was entering a '*completely new phase of our existence*'. However, he warned that it might take up to ten years before there were even numbers of male and female bishops.



Justin Welby The Archbishop of Canterbury, and the most senior bishop in the Church of England.

Other Protestant denominations women play an important role in worship, working as ministers and leading acts of worship and reading in services.



Issues of life after death topics

Section 1: The world

- How did the world begin?
- Scientific and non-religious views on the beginning of the world
- The Big Bang Theory
- Evolution
- Christian views on creation
- Muslim views on creation
- Christian views on Stewardship
- Muslim views on Stewardship

Section 2: Medical Ethics

- Christian and Muslim views on the sanctity of life
- The Quality of life
- Abortion
- Christian views on abortion
- Muslim views on abortion
- Euthanasia
- Christian views on euthanasia
- Muslim views on euthanasia

Section 3: Life after death

- What happens when we die?
- The soul
- Christian views on the soul
- Muslim views on the soul
- Christian views on life after death
- Muslim views on life after death
- Christian views on heaven/hell and judgement
- Muslim views on heaven/hell and judgement
- Christian funerals
- Muslim funerals
- Humanist/non-religious funerals

Key Concepts



Afterlife Life after death; the belief that existence continues after physical death.



Environmental sustainability Ensuring that the demands placed on natural resources can be met without reducing capacity to allow all people and other species of animals, as well as plant life, to live well, now and in the future.



Euthanasia From Greek, *eu* 'good' and *thanatos* 'death'. Sometimes referred to as 'mercy killing'. The act of killing or permitting the death of a person who is suffering from a serious illness.



Evolution The process by which different living creatures are believed to have developed from earlier less complex forms during the history of the earth.



Abortion When a pregnancy is ended so that it does not result in the birth of a child.



Quality of life The extent to which life is meaningful and pleasurable.



Sanctity of life The belief that life is precious, or sacred. For many religious believers, only human life holds this special status.



Soul The spiritual aspect of a being; that which connects someone to God. The soul is often regarded as non-physical and as living on after physical death, in an afterlife.

How did the world begin?

Many of the world religions have important beliefs about how the world came into being. The monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are based on the belief that there is one, all-powerful creator God who is the source of all life. Their creation stories, which are found in their holy books, all tell of a unique creation event at the beginning of time, when life sprang into existence from nothing at the command of God. Hindus also have important creation stories, but they are not usually understood as historical events. Hinduism and Buddhism do not teach the existence of a single monotheistic creator God at their centre.

Religious views

The sacred texts of Christianity, Islam and Judaism all contain accounts of the creation of the world. These three religions all share common roots, so it is unsurprising that there are elements of the Genesis creation stories in the Bible which also appear in the Qur'anic version. However, within these religions different believers hold different **interpretations** of these accounts:

Interpretation the way we make sense of a piece of writing. Different believers interpret passages from the holy books in different ways.

Literal understanding something exactly as it is written.

Liberal free thinking.

► **Literal** interpretation

Some religious believers are literalists. They believe that their holy text, whether it's the Bible, the Torah or the Qur'an should be understood word for word. Creationists are literalists: for them the creation of the world happened exactly as it is described in sacred texts.

'All scripture is God-breathed.'

2 Timothy 3:16

This statement, from Timothy, suggests that the Bible was inspired by God.

► **Liberal** interpretation

Other religious people take a liberal view. They believe that people should be free to understand the holy books in any way they choose. They say that the stories they contain should be understood more like parables or symbolic stories. They are true because the stories carry real meaning, even if they don't refer to actual historical events.

Life: chance or God's plan?

Most religious believers say that there is a divine mind behind all life. The Bible tells us that God knows all people before their birth and has a plan and a purpose for all living beings.

'For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.'

Psalm 139:13,16

Atheists and humanists believe that life is a result of blind chance.

'Man at last knows that he is alone in the unfeeling immensity of the universe, out of which he emerged only by chance. Neither his destiny nor his duty have been written down.'

Jacques Monod

'Natural selection ... has no purpose in mind. It has no vision, no foresight.'

Richard Dawkins

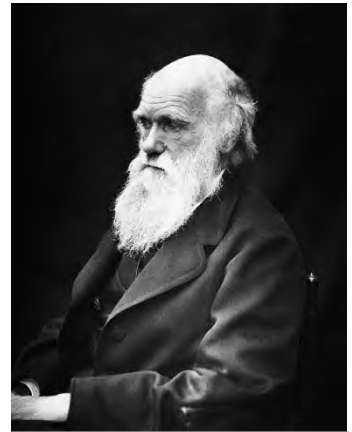


Science

Since the sixteenth century there has been a massive shift in the way people in Western Europe understand the natural world.

Until the rise of scientific thinking there was an acceptance within Christian society that the Bible was the absolute, unchanging word of God. The traditional Christian view was that the earth had been created by God, as described in the Book of Genesis.

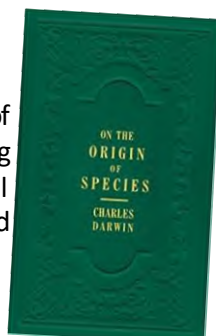
However, as more and more evidence built up in the fields of geology and biology it became clear that the earth is far older than had previously been understood. It was Charles Darwin who was the first person to show convincingly that life had arisen through the slow, natural process of evolution and therefore the earth must be many millions of years old.



Charles Darwin 1809-1882

They theory of evolution

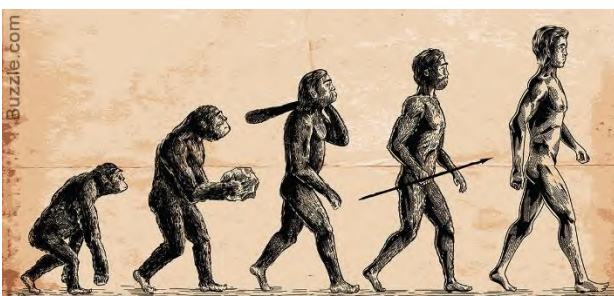
In 1859 Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*. This controversial book set out his Theory of **Evolution** by Natural Selection, explaining how living creatures have evolved through a process of gradual change over millions of years. His ideas were backed by the detailed evidence which he had gathered through over 30 years of scientific research.



On the Galapagos Islands, off the coast of South America, Darwin had observed birds (finches) on the different islands.

He noticed that different types of finches lived on different islands. Some had fat beaks; they tended to be found on islands where seeds were the main food-source. On other islands, where fleshy cactus fruits were abundant, the finches had thin, pointed beaks.

His theory suggests that characteristics like these happened by chance as natural variety in an animal's offspring (just like you might be brown eyed and your brother might be blue eyed). However, sometimes these characteristics were actually very useful, so long pointed beaks gave those finches an advantage in eating the cactus. So animals with these characteristics were more likely to survive and breed, and pass the characteristic on to their offspring. This became known as the 'survival of the fittest'. Darwin put forward the idea that this process had repeated itself over and over again, over very long periods of time, leading to completely new species of animals emerging.



The crux of **Darwin's Theory of Evolution** focuses on the elimination of inferior species gradually over time, through a process called '**Natural Selection**'.



The theory of whale evolution

Religious reaction to Darwin (evolution)

Today, there are many religious believers who welcome Darwin's theories. Liberal Christians accept the idea that science can teach us things that the writers of the Bible had no understanding of. Most Jewish people have no problem in accepting the theory of evolution.

However, some Evangelical Christians and many mainstream Muslims see Darwinian evolution as an attack on their beliefs:

- ▶ Evolution implies that life has developed by chance, whereas religious scriptures (for example the Bible, the Torah and the Qur'an) teach that God is the creator.
- ▶ Undermining the Bible, the Torah or the Qur'an risks undermining the morals we share as human beings, leading to crime and disorder.
- ▶ Religious scriptures teach that humans alone have a God-given soul, but if we have evolved from animals, there is no special place for the human soul.
- ▶ Evolution challenges the teachings of the Bible, because Genesis says that each species was made 'according to its kind' (i.e. species don't change, they are fixed for all time).



This 'Jesus fish' is a Christian symbol which was used by the early church.



This is a 'Darwin fish'. Do you think it is a symbol used by Christians who believe in evolution or a symbol used to mock Christian beliefs about creation?

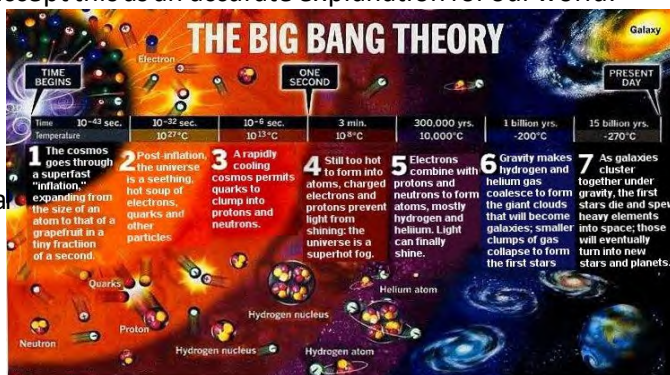
The Big Bang Theory

The study of the origins of the universe is called cosmology. Throughout history, some thinkers have argued about whether the universe had an origin or whether it has always existed; whether it is expanding or whether it is static (at rest). In 1965 cosmologists published conclusive evidence to show that the universe did in fact have a beginning. This theory, that time and space began around 15 billion years ago, became known as the Big Bang theory.

According to the Big Bang theory the universe began from a ‘singularity’, an infinitely tiny point. This ‘singularity’ was infinitely hot and infinitely dense and, as it expanded, sub-atomic particles and then atoms began to appear. This led to the formation of stars and planets, which make up the universe as we know it today. Most physicists believe that the universe will continue expanding for countless billions of years to come, becoming bigger and colder.

Today most scientists accept this as an accurate explanation for our world.

The evidence for the Big Bang theory comes from the discovery of background radiation, which is thought to be left over from the initial expansion at the start of the universe. This can be detected with powerful telescopes.



Stephen Hawking

One of the physicists who have made the biggest contributions to the field of cosmology for over half a century is Stephen Hawking. Hawking's story is all the more remarkable because he has been confined to a wheelchair for much of his adult life, suffering from motor neurone disease that is slowly paralyzing him. For many years now he has only been able to speak with the aid of a computerized voice synthesizer. In the late 1960s his ground-breaking research showed that, at the birth of the universe, the cosmos must have emerged from a singularity. His studies demonstrated that the universe may look as if it is static, but it is actually expanding at an astonishing rate and that this expansion can be traced back to an initial event: the Big Bang.

Religious reaction to the Big Bang theory

Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs tend to be quite accepting of the Big Bang theory. They believe that the world has been formed, destroyed and re-formed countless times and so this fits well with the idea that the universe is in a state of development.

Liberal Christians, Jews and Muslims find no problem in accepting the Big Bang theory. They have no reason to question the evidence on which it is based and accept that this is a way that God may have chosen to allow the universe to create intelligent life. Religious creationists are very critical of these ideas. For them it contradicts the truth that God has formed all life through his own power.

Even if scientists are correct in saying that the universe began with a 'Big Bang', have they really solved the question 'Where does the universe come from?'. We are still left with the question of what caused the Big Bang. Some Christians have argued that it was God.

Christian attitudes to the creation

Genesis: There are two stories which describe God's creation of the world, found in the Book of Genesis.

Genesis 1:1–2:3

The first creation story describes how God created the earth over six days: from the creation of earth and sky, through the making of the sun, stars, plants, animals and then finally human beings. Humans are the peak of God's creation, made in his image, giving them a unique status as God's stewards of the earth. On the seventh day God rested.

'And God said: "Let there be light", and there was light.'

Genesis 1:3

'Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness..."' **Genesis 1:26**

Genesis 2:4–2:25

The second creation story teaches that God made Adam first, before the animals, and placed him in the Garden of Eden to live in paradise. Adam was formed from the dust of the ground and the breath of God (symbolising the human soul), making him the son of the earth, but also a child of God. To give Adam a partner and a companion, God created Eve out of one of Adam's ribs.

Christian attitudes to creation

Christian sacred writings and science

For Christians the Bible has a unique status as the inspired ‘word of God’; it is unlike any other piece of human writing. However, the way in which Christians interpret the Bible varies considerably.

Evangelical Christians

Many Evangelical Christians are creationists. They refer to the Bible as ‘God-breathed’, meaning that it has come directly from the mouth of God: every word is true and accurate. They say that scientific theories of evolution and the Big Bang must be false, because they contradict the literal understanding of the creation stories. However, there are different ways of understanding **creationism**:

- **Young Earth creationism** is the view that the world was created by God, in seven actual days, and this happened less than 10,000 years ago.
- **Old Earth creationism** agrees that God must have created the world, but it accepts the idea that creation took place millions of years ago. The seven days of creation refer to long eras of time, rather than 24-hour periods.

Creationism the belief that all life was made by God.

Liberal Christians

They say that it makes more sense to understand the Bible accounts as myths; they should not be understood as historical events. The very fact that the two creation narratives in Genesis seem to contradict each other is evidence that these are stories, not factual accounts.

Liberal Christians accept that scientific thinking gives us an accurate picture of reality. They say that the Christian scriptures were written thousands of years ago by people living in a pre-scientific age and are better understood as a metaphor. Liberal Christians tend to agree with evolution, but they may disagree on the way God was actually involved in bringing life into being:

- **Theistic guided evolution.** The belief that life came about through evolution, but this process was guided by the direct intervention of God.
- **Natural evolution.** Many Christians accept the evidence put forward by science, which says that evolution is the natural process through which life has emerged. However, they would say that God set down these laws of nature before the universe existed.

Muslim attitudes to creation

The Qur’an teaches that God is the Creator and Sustainer of all life, but, unlike the Bible, there is no one single creation story. Passages about the creation are scattered throughout the Qur’an. Muslims believe that God created the heavens and the earth from formless matter over six long periods of time. He created humans out of clay, molding Adam and breathing life and power into him. He took Adam to paradise and made a wife for him.

Islamic sacred writings and science

Islam teaches that the Qur’an is a sacred text and that the words it contains are the actual word of God. Most Muslims believe that the Qur’an must be understood literally, not metaphorically. Because of this, many Muslims are creationists: they say it was God who made the earth; it could not possibly have come about by itself. Islam tends to teach Old Earth creationism, the idea that God created the world over six long periods of time.

Some Muslims will criticise the theory of evolution because ideas about evolution are often linked to atheism. The Qur’an makes specific reference to Adam’s creation by God, so many Muslims, even if they accept most aspects of evolution, refuse to accept the idea of human evolution.

However, there are also many Muslims who have no difficulty with accepting scientific explanations of the world while also believing in the Qur’an. They have no major disagreement with science and they accept evolution, because they say that scientific ideas cannot disprove the existence of God. An important part of being a Muslim is to strive for better understanding of the world, so greater scientific knowledge gives a deeper awareness of the way God has created the world.

‘Indeed, your Lord is God who created the heavens and earth in six days and then established Himself above the Throne. He covers the night with the day, [another night] chasing it rapidly; and [He created] the sun, the moon, and the stars, subjected by His command. Unquestionably, His is the creation and the command; blessed is God, Lord of the worlds.’

Qur’an 7:54

Humanist attitudes to the creation of the world

Humanists believe that we can understand the world through science and that religious explanations of the world are unreliable. They say that there are no good reasons for believing in the existence of God and there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the world formed by itself, through slow gradual processes over billions of years. Evolution can help us to understand the way species are related to each other today, rather than relying on the religious belief that the creation of life is a 'mystery'.



'The humanist perspective places a strong emphasis on personal responsibility for our actions and the importance of social co-operation, and we very much hope that Humanists for a Better World can build upon this tradition.'

Andrew Copson, Chief Executive of the BHA

Humanists for a better world (H4BW) is a humanist group which was set up in 2011. It aims to create networks for Humanists to share ideas about the need to be active in campaigning on issues such as peace and international co-operation, global justice, climate change and the environment. They argue that the future of the world is in our hands and if we do not act now we will do irreparable damage to the planet.

Was the world designed?

The design argument

Many religious believers say that the fact that the world is so beautiful and well ordered gives us strong evidence for the existence of a creator God. They argue that the complex

and interconnectedness of nature could not have come about by itself.

There must be a divine mind behind creation.

Intelligent design

Intelligent design is a popular belief in the USA

today among some

Christians. The theory states that there are some organisms alive today that cannot have come about through the process of slow, random evolution.

Michael Behe is a creation scientist who argues for intelligent design. He uses the example of a mousetrap. He says that a mousetrap depends on five parts and if

one of the parts was not there it would not work. The function of the mousetrap requires all the pieces. He argues that the same is true for life: the individual parts cannot have come together by chance; they must have all been designed together.

The illusion of design

The biologist **Richard Dawkins** argues that the theory of evolution is the best explanation of how life has come about. He argues that the world might appear to have been designed, but that raises the question: who designed the designer? Dawkins believes that natural selection gives the solution to the question 'Where do we come from?'. As an atheist, he argues that evolution needs no help from God.

'The illusion of design in the living world is explained with far greater economy... by Darwinian natural selection.'

Richard Dawkins



Richard Dawkins argues that evolution is the best explanation of how life has developed on Earth.



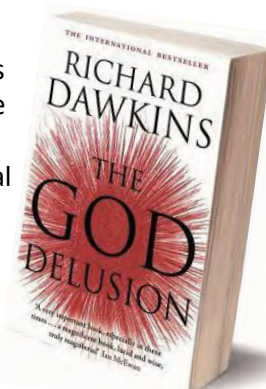
William Paley

In 1802 the theologian William Paley put forward the famous watch analogy. If you were to find a watch, by accident, you would think that it must have been designed by a watch-maker.

In the same way, when looking at the world with its complex patterns and structures, you would come to the conclusion that there must be a cosmic world-maker, a designer God.

William Paley argued that the human eye must have been created through God's design. He tried to show that it could not have come about through gradual change and progression from simpler light-sensitive organs. However, evolutionary biologists today believe that there is good evidence to show how the human eye has evolved from

other, less complex eyes in earlier species.



Dawkins most famous book published in 2006.

What is stewardship?

Stewardship means caring for the planet and managing its resources. A steward is like a trustee or a caretaker; they are responsible for looking after someone's property while that person is away. Many believers say that God has given humans the special duty to care for the world in his place, as his precious possession.

Key Concept



Environmental sustainability Ensuring that the demands placed on natural resources can be met without reducing capacity to allow all people and other species of animals, as well as plant life, to live well, now and in the future.

Responsibility humans have a responsibility to care for the planet.

Global citizenship the idea that we should see ourselves as part of a world community. We should view the whole world as our home, not just the town where we live or our country of birth. We have a responsibility to care for the Amazonian rainforests and for global climate change as much as for pollution in our own local communities.

Christian attitudes to stewardship

Christians believe that life is a gift from God and that God has given humans the role of stewards in the world.

Genesis 1:26 teaches that God made men and women in his own image, meaning that humans have a soul which is unique. **Genesis 2:7** says that God formed Adam from the dust and breathed his divine life into him. Both these passages imply that humans were created with a special status above the rest of nature. However, this leads to a disagreement among Christians about how we should treat the environment.

'You have made them (humans) a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honour. You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet.'

Psalm 8:5–6

Dominion: to rule over nature

Evangelical Christians tend to take the Bible literally, so, when it says, in **Genesis 1:28**, that God created humans to 'rule over' nature, they believe that this gives us the right to utilise the world's natural resources. In other words they believe they have 'dominion' over nature.

Stewardship: to live in harmony with nature

More Liberal Christians, however, argue that humans should be stewards of the earth, rather than exploiters. **Genesis 2:15** speaks of God placing Adam in the Garden of Eden to 'cultivate and care for it'. They say that humans have a **responsibility** towards the environment, looking after the planet's precious resources. God has entrusted us to live as stewards and we should be responsible **global citizens**, using the earth's resources in a sustainable manner.

Some 'Green Christians' are environmental activists who promote awareness and action at church, community and national levels. What did Jesus mean when he taught his followers to 'love your neighbour' (**Matthew 5:43**)? Some Christians argue that in this statement Jesus is referring to our fellow humans and it is therefore acceptable to kill animals and eat their meat, since they are not our equals. Other more liberal believers would say that when interpreting this passage today it should teach us that we need to have respect for all living beings.

Muslim attitudes to stewardship

Islam teaches that animals must be respected, but, unlike human beings, they are not uniquely sacred. Muslims, like Christians, believe that God is the all-powerful creator of all life and that humans have been created with particular responsibilities. We are His trustees (**khalifahs**), appointed to care for the world and rule it as God would wish. It is not ours to waste or spoil; it must be safeguarded for future generations.

'The earth is green and beautiful. God has appointed you his stewards over it.'

Hadith

Islam teaches that there is a pattern and balance in the universe, known as **fitrah**. The survival and continuation of the planet relies on this balance being maintained. It is the role of humans, as **khalifahs**, to work to maintain this fitrah (balance) by being aware of the need to use the earth's resources fairly.

Muhammad said animals must be treated with care and he told a story about how, on a very hot day, a prostitute took water from a well to give water to a dog. He pronounced that, for this act of kindness, all her sins would be forgiven by God

Many Muslims say that this means that they should act as global citizens, living sustainable lifestyles. Others argue that the reason Muslims should treat the earth with care is because we will be judged by God on the way they have looked after the natural world.

The sanctity of life

Most people, whether they hold a religious belief or not, would accept that human life is special and worthy of being preserved. For religious believers, life is special because it comes ultimately from God. Life is a gift and is unique and priceless. For those without a religious faith, life is no less precious, but its importance does not hail from God. Life is priceless because it is the only life we have.

This belief leads us to go to extraordinary lengths to protect and preserve human life. It also has a huge impact on various **medical ethics** issues, especially those which relate to life-creating or life-ending procedures.

Christian attitudes to the sanctity of life:

Christians believe life is sacred because:

- Life is created by God, protected by God and valued by God. In the Bible it says; *'You created every part of me; you put me together in my mother's womb'* **Psalm 139:13.**
- God is interested and involved in each human's life.
- God has created each individual person, and made them unique in their own right, just as he made Adam and Eve. **Genesis 1:27** states that God created *humankind in his own image.*
- Life is a gift from God.
- Many Christians accept that only God should take life away.
- Catholics believe that only God should choose when life begins. Therefore, they disagree in practice with artificial methods of contraception and with IVF.
- Jesus also showed through his teachings and practice that all life should be valued. The way he helped the leper, visited the sick and spoke to the Samaritan woman demonstrated that all lives are worthy of respect and compassion.

Muslim attitudes to the sanctity of life:

Muslims believe life is sacred because:

- All life is created by God, and only he has the right to take it away.
- Every soul has been created by God. God has a plan for each life, written before each person is 'planted as a seed in your mothers' womb'.
- Murder is explicitly forbidden in the Qur'an: *'And do not kill the soul which God has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right.'* **Qur'an 6:151**
- No one has the right to take their own or anyone else's life. This is discussed in the **Qur'an.** *'whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely'*
- Killing of just one soul carries the sin of killing all of humanity. Those who commit such crimes will face a severe punishment by God on the Day of Judgement.

The quality of life

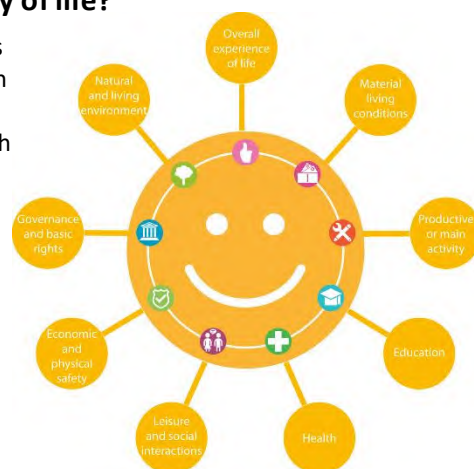
Many people believe that the quality of our life is more important than whether it is special or sacred. If our life is relatively free from pain and anxiety and if we live with freedom and dignity, then we have what is considered a good **quality of life**. If the degree of pain and suffering that we endure exceeds the pleasure that we gain from other areas of our life, then we would be considered to have a **poor quality of life**.

How do we measure someone's quality of life?

Assessing the extent to which a life has quality is a difficult philosophical problem. One person can no more appreciate how another experiences and tolerates pain than they can guess how much pleasure they might get from eating a bar of chocolate. As such, measuring the quality of a person's life is incredibly difficult.

Quality of life indicators are used by governments across the world. They look at material living conditions, health and education provision, leisure and social interactions, as well as economic factors and the extent to which human rights are granted.

Doctors and clinicians also have tools to measure the quality of life of their patients, looking at levels of pain, the extent of disability, the ability to feed and toilet oneself, among other indicators. Most doctors, however, understand that there are real limits to how accurate these measurements can be. They similarly appreciate that there are genuine ethical problems with trying to evaluate quality of life. If a person's life has insufficient quality, some would argue that they should have the right to die. Some would also say that attempts to treat a person's illness should be weighed against the extent to which they are going to live a life free from pain and suffering afterwards.



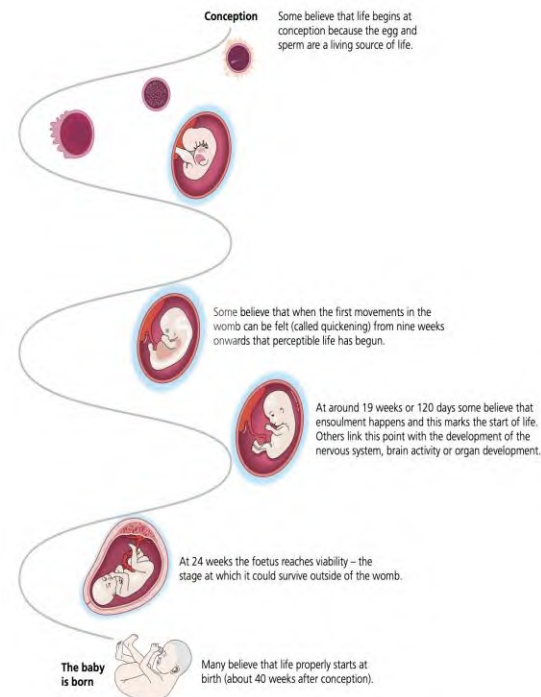
Themes – Issues of Life after Death

Abortion

When does life begin?

Although it seems obvious to state that life begins at birth and ends at death, there are real questions as to when a 'person' is first created. When does a person actually become a person?

Some would argue that a person 'begins' when they are first aware of their own existence; others when independent life is possible. Some would claim that from the point a foetus can feel pain, they are a person in their own right. Many religious believers would assert that from the moment of conception, a life and therefore a person has been created. There are no definitive or clear answers to this question, and any answers offered are affected by what we think being a 'person' is all about.



The great abortion debate



The ethics of **abortion** have been widely debated since it was first legalised in Britain in 1967. Those against abortion claim that it is simply immoral to kill unborn babies,

irrespective of the circumstances of the mother. Others argue that it is the quality of life that matters, and that sometimes in modern society procedures like abortion are necessary. If a baby is going to be born severely disabled or with a terminal or life-limiting condition, if the mother is going to suffer mentally or physically as the result of the pregnancy, or even if the pregnancy was the result of rape, some people feel that it is kinder to permit an abortion so that quality of life is maintained. For reasons such as these, abortion has become a massively controversial issue.

'Pro-life' is a term used to talk about people who believe that abortion is always wrong and that every human being has a right to life (even tiny embryos).

'Pro-choice' is a term used to talk about people who believe that every woman should be able to choose what happens to her body. That right includes choosing whether or not to continue with a pregnancy and have a baby. This does not mean that a pro-choice advocate is necessarily in favour of abortion absolutely – there may well be some situations in which they would morally disagree with abortion. Rather, it means that they support a woman's right to choose for herself.

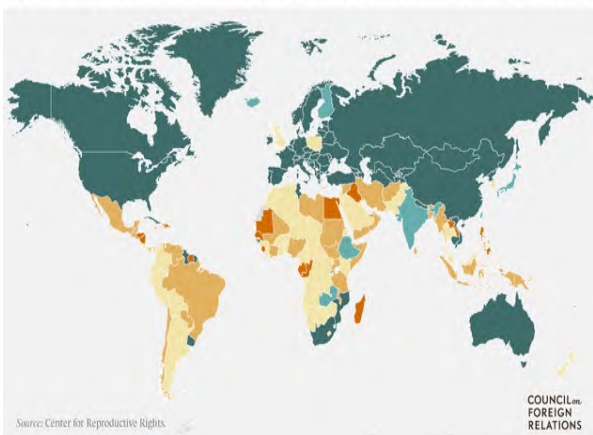


The rights of the unborn child

Many people (religious and not religious) who oppose abortion argue that the unborn child has rights – most specifically a right to life. The law, however, is unclear about the rights of the unborn child, and in practice their rights are not distinguishable from those of the mother. In December 2014, as part of a court case not related to abortion, the Court of Appeal ruled that an unborn child 'was not a person'.

Abortion Access Around the World

● Prohibited ● To save the woman's life ● To preserve health ● On social or economic grounds ● On request



Life in twenty-first-century Britain

Abortion is legal in Britain before 24 weeks of pregnancy. Two doctors must consent to the procedure, and decide whether there will be a risk to the mother's physical or mental health if the pregnancy were to continue. In very rare cases, such as severe foetal abnormality or grave risk to the life of the mother, an abortion can be performed after 24 weeks.

It is estimated that one in three women will, at some point in their life, have an abortion. At the moment, the father of the foetus has no legal rights – even if the couple are married.

Christian views on abortion

There is no single view on abortion in Christianity. Views differ due to the different priority given to concerns over the sanctity of life and the teaching of Jesus to act with compassion.



Agree

Liberal Christians The Church of England

- The Church of England has a slightly different view, as represented in this resolution from its governing body:



Disagree

'The Church of England combines strong opposition to abortion with a recognition that there can be – strictly limited – conditions under which it may be morally preferable to any available alternative.'

General Synod

They do hold that all life is precious as it is made by God.

- Abortion is not allowed for social reasons. However, if the mother's life is in danger, abortion is permitted but not encouraged.
- Similarly, for 'quality of life' reasons and out of compassion, abortion is permitted if the female has been raped. Taking all of this into consideration, they also believe that the law in Britain has been interpreted too liberally and that this has resulted in the performance of an excessive number of abortions.



Disagree

Conservative Christians Catholics

- Catholics and other orthodox denominations agree that abortion is forbidden in all circumstances as life is sacred and God given.
- From the moment of conception a new and unique life begins. This is not a potential life, but rather a human being with potential. Abortion is therefore murder and against the **Ten Commandments** *'thou shalt not kill'*
- Catholics believe that the foetus has a right to live and develop, and that terminating this life is a great moral evil.
- The Catholic Church condemned abortion as early as the second century CE. The Didache, written in the second century, states: *'You shall not kill the embryo by abortion and shall not cause the newborn to perish'*

Muslim views on abortion

The Qur'an does not explicitly refer to abortion but offers guidance on related matters.



Agree

- While many Muslims believe that abortion is wrong and haram (forbidden) some also accept that there are situations in which an abortion can be permitted.

- Many will allow abortion if the mother's life is in danger or if the child is likely to be seriously deformed or diseased. However, such decisions should not be entered into lightly. The taking of the life of a child is a sin, and on the Day of Judgement a child will have the right to ask why it was killed.

- There exists real debate about the acceptability of abortion and the conditions under which it should be permitted:

- Some schools of Muslim law permit abortion in the first 16 weeks of pregnancy.
- Others only permit it in the first seven weeks.

These differing interpretations exist because each sets a different 'point' at which the embryo or foetus becomes a person.

- Even those scholars who permit early abortion in certain cases still regard abortion as wrong, but do not regard it as a punishable wrong. They would argue that the more advanced the pregnancy, the greater the wrong.

- The mother's rights are greater than the child's until 120 days after conception, which is when ensoulment happens (the foetus gets its soul). Islam allows abortion to save the life of the mother because it sees this as the 'lesser of two evils' and there is a general principle in Shari'ah (Muslim law) of choosing the lesser of two evils.



Disagree

- Muslims believe that God creates life and only he can end it (sanctity of life).
- Abortion for purely economic reasons is forbidden in the Qur'an:

'do not kill your children out of poverty; We will provide for you and them.'

Qur'an 6:151

Humanist views on abortion

Humanist attitudes to abortion

In considering abortion, a humanist would consider the evidence, the probable consequences, and the rights and wishes of everyone involved. They would do this with the aim of trying to find the kindest course of action or the one that would do the least harm. Because of this **'situation ethics'** approach, there is not one single humanist view on abortion, but humanists tend to take on a liberal, pro-choice stance. Humanists value happiness and personal choice, and many actively campaigned for legalised abortion in the 1960s. As life is not sacred, the debate hinges on when one thinks human life begins, and a foetus does not become a person, with its own feelings and rights, until well after conception. As humanists take happiness and suffering as foremost moral considerations, quality of life will often outweigh the preservation of life at all costs. They believe that abortion is often a morally acceptable choice to make. It is, however, a personal choice which should be made in an informed fashion which considers both the long- and short-term effects.

Situation ethics judging the rightness or wrongness of an act on a case-by-case basis.



Agree

Euthanasia

Also known as mercy killing or assisted suicide, **euthanasia** comes from the Greek word for ‘quiet death’. It is usually when a peaceful and pain-free end is brought to a person’s life.

There are technically four different types of euthanasia.

- ▶ **Voluntary euthanasia** (or assisted suicide as it is known in law) is when a person explicitly asks for help to die. Often this would be due to a life-limiting or terminal illness.
- ▶ **Active euthanasia** is when a person takes a specific course of action to end their own life, for example by taking an overdose.
- ▶ **Passive euthanasia** is when life-sustaining treatment is removed, for example a feeding tube or respirator. Often this would be because it is believed that the patient would have wished for a ‘dignified death’ or if there is no hope of recovery.
- ▶ **Involuntary euthanasia** is where death is forced upon a person, for example during ethnic cleansing or the death penalty.

The issue of euthanasia calls into question many different religious, philosophical and ethical issues; such as whether we have the right to end our own lives.

Peter Singer

Peter Singer is an atheist philosopher and utilitarian. He argues that euthanasia is morally acceptable and that it should be legalised with proper safeguards put in place to protect vulnerable people. He believes that not legalising euthanasia harms more than it protects, and that legalising euthanasia would benefit more people than it would harm.

Singer believes that the Quality of Life ethic is more important and relevant in the modern world than the traditional (religious) Sanctity of Life belief. He argues that even though all human life has value, it is not all of equal value. People must possess the qualities of being a person (what Singer calls ‘personhood’) to count as being fully alive and he believes that if a person has no real ability to think, experience life or relate to others, then their life has limited value and euthanasia in these circumstances is acceptable. For example, if a person is brain dead, unconscious or in a ‘persistent vegetative state’, their life has no real value and non-voluntary (or passive) euthanasia should be permitted.

Singer also believes that a person who is fully conscious and rational has the freedom to choose whether or not they want to live, and their desire to die should be respected. This means that if a person who suffers “an irreversible condition causing protracted physical or mental suffering” chooses to waive the right to life, they should be permitted to end their life or be assisted in ending their life.

Living wills



Do not resuscitate wrist bands are used to show medical professionals that a patient does not want medical treatments to be used to revive them.

Why might people want to end their own life?

People suffering from incurable chronic degenerative diseases (illnesses that steadily grow worse over time for which there are no known cures) like motor neurone disease might choose to end their own lives before their illness reaches its final stages and they are unable to communicate with others. Some people, for example those suffering from terminal cancer, want to choose to end their lives before the most painful and life-limiting phase of their illness sets in. For others, living with constant and unmanageable pain (maybe linked to an injury, disability or side-effect from previous illnesses) is reason enough to consider seeking euthanasia.

A living will is a legal document. It outlines for medical professionals and next of kin (close relatives) what a person wants to happen if they find themselves critically or terminally ill. It normally instructs doctors and other medical professionals not to resuscitate (revive once the heart has stopped) or intubate (insert a breathing tube) or use artificial means to keep a person alive. Sometimes living wills are very detailed, and specify exactly what point in a person’s illness to stop life-preserving or life-saving treatment. Sometimes this is for religious reasons; sometimes it is for ‘quality of life’ considerations. A DNR, or Do Not Resuscitate order, is a type of living will.

Life in twenty-first-century Britain

Euthanasia is currently illegal in the UK. Depending on the circumstances, euthanasia is regarded as either manslaughter or murder and is punishable by law, with a maximum penalty of life imprisonment. Assisted suicide (where for example you help to procure drugs for someone, knowing that they intend to commit suicide) is illegal under the terms of the Suicide Act (1961) and is punishable by up to 14 years’ imprisonment. Attempting to kill yourself is not a criminal act in itself.

In reality, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) has to decide whether taking someone to court for assisting suicide is ‘in the public interest’. In 2010 the DPP said it was unlikely that someone who helped someone else to commit suicide would be prosecuted if:

- the victim had reached a voluntary, clear, settled and informed decision to commit suicide
- the suspect was wholly motivated by compassion.

Euthanasia - Hospices

In 1967, St Christopher's was opened in Sydenham, London. It was the first **hospice** in Britain and was opened by Dame Cicely Saunders. Her aim was to provide physical, spiritual, emotional and psychological support to those in the final period of their illnesses/lives. She wanted to offer care that considered all elements of a patient's needs rather than simply treating the physical symptoms of a patient. The Hospice Movement, as it has since become known, was born.

Although hospices are not specifically religious places, Dame Cicely did acknowledge that her Christian beliefs were the main motivation for her work. Similarly, many hospices are supported or sponsored by religious institutions. They fulfil the Christian desire to support the suffering of both patients and family in the final moments of life, as well enabling believers to preserve the sanctity of life rather than resorting to euthanasia. Many people believe that hospices provide a real alternative to euthanasia. They allow people to die with their dignity intact in a loving, caring environment, surrounded by family if desired. Patients need not feel a burden and can still benefit from a quality of life as pain relief is **palliative** and focused on managing symptoms while

'We should concern ourselves with the quality of life as well as its length.'

Dame Cicely Saunders

Hospice a place where people with terminal illnesses can go to die with dignity. A hospice focuses on relieving the symptoms and pain of a terminal illness. Unlike a hospital, a hospice does not try to treat an illness or cure a patient. Hospices also offer a type of pastoral care, for both the patient and their family, not available in a standard hospital.

Palliative care care that focuses on relieving pain and suffering.



A Katharine House Hospice

Hospices in twenty-first-century Britain

There are currently over 260 inpatient hospices in Britain. Some are dedicated entirely to the care of children and infants, and offer invaluable support to both patient and family – providing respite care and end-of-life palliative treatment. Others focus purely on adult end-of-life care, with some specialising in specific diseases such as cancer.

The myth that people only go into hospices to die is slowly being dispelled, as more and more patients are admitted for short periods of time (between 12 and 14 days is the average stay) to help manage pain and relieve other symptoms of their illness.

Upwards of 4 per cent of deaths occur in a hospice setting, with many more patients and their families benefiting from time spent in a hospice before their death.

The 'right to die' debate



Campaigners supporting the 'right to die'

For many people with chronic degenerative diseases, they want to control when and how they die. For them it is not just a matter of free will but rather a matter of maintaining human dignity. Dr Anne Turner, who suffered from a fatal degenerative nerve disease, decided to end her own life before she reached a point when she could not walk, feed, dress or speak for herself.

Free will

Daniel James was paralysed in a rugby accident at the age of 22. He was in constant pain, had no movement in any limbs, and felt his body was a prison. He decided to go to the Dignitas clinic in Switzerland to end his life. He was assisted by his parents. Despite being investigated they were not charged for helping him. The Crown Prosecution Service has now said that families who help relatives die in this way are unlikely to be prosecuted.

Those who believe in free will think it is ethically wrong to keep someone with no hope of recovery on expensive life-support treatment.

Stephen Hawking

In 2013, Stephen Hawking offered his public support to the argument for assisted dying, saying: 'We don't let animals suffer, so why humans?' He said that he would consider euthanasia if he reached a point where he felt he had nothing left to offer or was a burden to others.



Stephen Hawking is a supporter of assisted dying

Baby RB

In November 2009, the father of a severely disabled baby boy, known as Baby RB, went to court to fight the hospital's decision to turn off his son's life-support machine. At 13 months old, Baby RB was incapable of moving his limbs, breathing or swallowing on his own. He had a severe and incurable neuromuscular disorder and had been on a respirator since an hour after his birth. His mother supported the hospital's decision, as she felt that her son had no quality of life.

The father eventually agreed with the hospital's doctors and both parents were present when Baby RB's life support was turned off.

The 'right to die' debate

Harold Shipman (1946–2004) was a British doctor and one of the most prolific serial killers in recorded history. On 31 January 2000, a jury found Shipman guilty of 15 murders. He was sentenced to life imprisonment and the judge recommended that he never be released.

After his trial, the Shipman Inquiry began. Lasting almost two years, it was an investigation into all deaths certified by Shipman. About 80 per cent of his victims were women. His youngest victim was a 41-year-old man. They died as the result of being given lethal injections of morphine. Much of Britain's legal structure concerning health care and medicine was reviewed and modified as a direct and indirect result of Shipman's crimes. Shipman is the only British doctor to have been found guilty of murdering his patients.

Legalising doctor-assisted euthanasia would make it easier for people like Shipman to commit horrific crimes.



Harold Shipman was convicted of murder in 2000



The slippery-slope argument

The slippery-slope argument claims that the acceptance of certain practices, such as physician-assisted suicide or voluntary euthanasia, will invariably lead to the acceptance or practice of concepts which are currently deemed unacceptable, such as involuntary euthanasia. In order to prevent these undesirable practices from occurring, we need to resist taking the first step.



Those who suffer with mental health conditions may choose to end their life instead of receiving treatment.



Legalising euthanasia could lead to those in the latter stages of life feeling that they are a burden or, even worse, feeling obliged to consider ending their life.



If euthanasia is legalised, the stimulus or drive to research into terminal illnesses lessens.



It's murder



All life is special and worthy of protection.



Hospices provide a real alternative to those feeling unable to deal with the symptoms of terminal illnesses.

Christian views on euthanasia

Liberal Christians

- Some Liberal Christians believe that it is acceptable to turn off life-support if there is medical evidence that a person is brain-dead. This is because they believe that the person has already died, and that the machine is just performing bodily functions.
- They would also consider withholding treatment which prolongs a painful illness as they follow Jesus' teaching of acting in the most loving and compassionate way towards another person.



Conservative Christians

Most Christians agree that euthanasia is not acceptable because:

- All life is sacred (sanctity of life) and taking any life is wrong.
- Those who assist are involved in murder, which is against the **Ten Commandments** 'thou shalt not kill'
- Life is a gift from God and therefore is precious.
- Suffering can have a purpose and should be endured, as God will not give us more suffering than we are truly able to cope with.
- Hospices also offer an alternative where care and support can be given to the patient. This allows patients to die with dignity while their pain is managed



Muslim views on euthanasia

- Muslim lawyers have recently agreed that it is acceptable for a person who is in a coma, being kept alive by machines and who has no hope of recovery to have the machines turned off. This is because their life has already ended and the machine is of no real use as treatment.



- It is important to show compassion to those who are in pain or are suffering. When this happens there should be no need for euthanasia. No matter what state the body is in, the soul is still perfect and that is what matters to God.
- 'All life is made by God (sanctity of life) so taking any life is wrong. Only God can decide when a person dies. Suffering has a purpose and is part of God's plan for you.'



Humanist views on euthanasia

Humanists have supported attempts to legalise assisted dying, assisted suicide and voluntary euthanasia across the UK.

- They believe that assistance should not be limited to terminally ill people alone and want to see reform of the law that considers the needs of other people who are 'permanently and incurably suffering', for example people who are paralysed.
- Humanists uphold the right to life but don't believe that life should be prolonged in the face of pointless suffering. Being able to die, with dignity, in a manner of our choosing must be understood to be a fundamental human right.



Christian views on abortion

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Situation ethics judging the rightness or wrongness of an act on a case-by-case basis.



Agree

What happens when we die?

There are three main types of belief about what happens after death:

- 1 Atheists and humanists** believe that nothing survives death. They are certain that humans do not have a soul; we are just physical, material beings, so when we die that is the end. Nothing exists beyond the grave – the chemicals of our bodies are recycled into the environment.
- 2 Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs** share a belief that life is a cycle of birth, death and rebirth (samsara), with the form of our next life being determined by our karma (good or bad actions). The aim of every living being is to escape from the cycle of samsara by gaining enlightenment. However, most of us will be reborn again and again countless times on the way. Hindus and Sikhs believe in reincarnation or the transmigration of the soul, where, at death, the soul passes into a new body. Buddhists believe in rebirth; after death the mental energy of our previous life will be transmitted into a new body.
- 3 Jews, Christians and Muslims** believe that, as humans, we only live one earthly existence, followed by eternal life in the world to come. Many traditional believers hold that after death we will rise from the dead to be judged by God, with those who God deems worthy (good) being raised to eternal life. There is less agreement amongst Jewish, Christian and Muslim believers about the existence of hell.

The soul

Belief in the existence of a **soul** is a central feature of many religious and philosophical traditions.

Key Concept

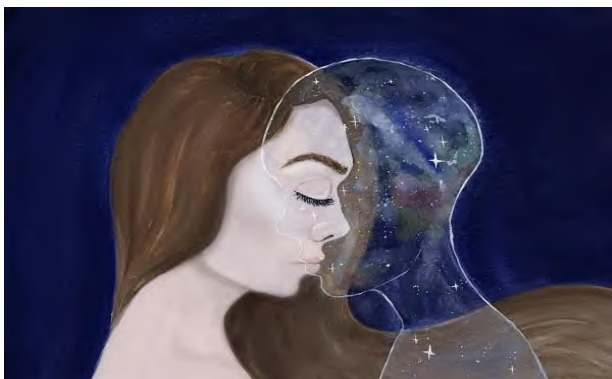


Soul The spiritual aspect of a being; that which connects someone to God. The soul is often regarded as non-physical and as living on after physical death, in an afterlife.

According to Christianity, Islam and Judaism, only human beings have immortal souls, other species do not.

Humanists deny the existence of a soul. There are two distinct views about the soul and its relationship with our physical body:

- **Dualism** is the belief that we are made of two separate parts: a physical body and a spiritual soul. Dualists believe that our soul (or spirit) lives in our physical body. This soul is the true, inner part of us and it will live on after our material body dies.
- **Materialism** is the view that nothing else exists apart from matter. All we have, as human beings, is a physical body; there is no soul or spirit.



Christian views on the soul and life after death

- Christians believe that the soul is the inner part of our being, and the body is the home of the soul.
- It is the soul which gives us our sense of 'aliveness'; it forms our personality and individuality.
- **Genesis 2:7** says that, after God had formed the body of Adam, the first human being, from the dust of the earth, he breathed life (soul) into him. In the same way, God creates a soul in each one of us. It is through our soul that we can connect to God.
- **Ensoulement** is the moment when the soul is believed to enter the body. St Thomas Aquinas taught that this happens while the foetus is developing in the womb.
- Some Christians are **dualists**. They believe that we are made from two distinctive parts: body and soul. They say that the soul is the true, inner part of us; it is eternal and will continue to live on, even after the death of our material body. It is our soul that will rise to everlasting life in heaven.
- Other Christians are **non-dualists**. They say that the body and soul are one and they cannot be separated. They agree that we have a soul, but believe it is an integral part of us, which is indistinguishable from the body. After death the soul is temporarily apart from the body, but body and soul will be reunited on Judgement Day. At the resurrection we will rise bodily from the dead, just as Jesus rose from the dead and ascended into heaven as a physical being.

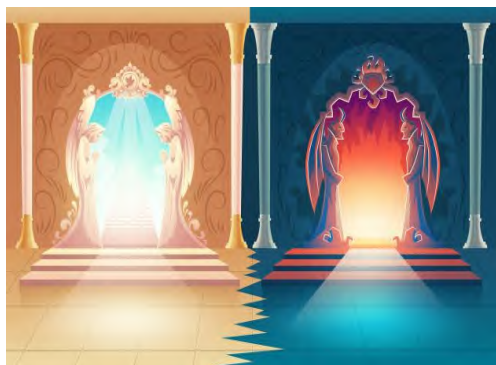
Muslim views on the soul and life after death

- Islam teaches that, as humans, we have both physical and non-physical aspects.
- The soul is an invisible part of an individual's existence which is 'pure' at birth.
- According to the Qur'an, God made Adam from the 'earth', so we have a physical body. We are also blessed with a soul (ruh); this is the non-physical part of our being which makes us a real person.
- The Qur'an teaches that humans are created when God 'breathes' a soul into them. In the Hadith there is a passage that says that this ensoulment happens in the womb at 120 days after conception.
- Islam teaches that when a child is born, its soul is imprinted with a belief in God. This natural belief in God is called **fitrah**. For Muslims, the idea of fitrah describes our human nature: we are born in a state of purity, with an inbuilt, natural instinct to submit to God and live by his laws. So, according to Islam, this means that the true nature of our soul is for us to grow up as a Muslim and submit our lives to God.

Humanist views on the soul and life after death

Humanists are materialists, so they dismiss any suggestion that we have a soul. They believe in a scientific description of human life and they reject beliefs about our spiritual existence. We are physical beings who will decompose when we die. No eternal, supernatural part of us will live on.

Concepts of heaven and hell: Are they real places?



A simple view of heaven pictures it located in the clouds, where angels drift around and God sits on a golden throne. It is a 'place' where the souls of people go to be rewarded for living a good life.

However, we know enough about the universe today to be certain that heaven is not a place just above the earth. For this reason, many religious people say that the concept of heaven is better understood as a metaphor representing the peace and harmony to be found when we are in a relationship with God.

Is hell really a fiery place of everlasting torment, deep beneath the earth? Could the concept of hell be a description of a state of mind when someone is full of hatred, anger and resentment, rejecting all kindness and love and cut off from God/goodness?

Christian attitudes to judgement, heaven and hell

- Christians believe in resurrection and eternal life; death is not the end, but a gateway to a perfect existence. Some Christians believe that heaven is our true home and our lives here on earth are the testing ground for a life in eternity.
- Christians believe that just as Jesus rose again after death, so will we.
- The Bible teaches that God is the Divine Judge and on Judgement Day he will decide who will be rewarded with eternal life in paradise and who will be punished. Those who believe in Jesus and have lived a good life will be taken to heaven. Those who have rejected God's love and caused harm to others will be sent to hell. The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats teaches Christians how to live their lives in preparation for Judgement Day.
- Some Christians are dualists. They believe that at the moment of death our soul separates and leaves the body. The body will decay while the immortal soul is united with God in heaven.
- Other Christians (for example, Evangelicals) say that after death we will experience a 'bodily resurrection', like Jesus, who came back to life in physical form. In his letter to the Corinthians, St Paul says that, after our deaths, we will be raised as spiritual bodies, not just disembodied souls.

'So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.'

1 Corinthians 15:42–44

What does St Paul mean when he talks about a 'spiritual body'? Probably the closest we can get to understanding this idea is to picture an angel. Angels are thought to be physical, but they are also spiritual and immortal. They can be seen, but they are not of this world. Is St Paul saying that we will exist for eternity like angels?

Christian attitudes to judgement, heaven and hell

Heaven and hell

Christians believe that to be in heaven is to be in God's presence, existing in a state of pure beauty and kindness. To be in hell is to be in constant torment, cut off from all that is good and loving.

Many Evangelical Christians refer to heaven and hell as if they are real places where humans will spend eternity. Liberal Christians say these ideas are symbolic. They remind us that there are consequences to our thoughts and actions.

One question which troubles many Christians is: How can a loving God condemn people to hell? Some reply that it is not God, but us, as individuals, who send ourselves to hell.

- Islam teaches that on the Day of Judgement the dead will be raised from their graves and all people will stand before God to be sentenced according to the way they have lived their lives.
- A book, which represents everything an individual has done, is presented to each of them. If the person's good deeds outweigh the bad, then they will receive the book in their right hand and pass into heaven. If it is placed into their left hand, they will be among the damned.

'And everything they did is in written records.'

Qur'an 54:52

'Fear God and know that God sees well what you do.'

Qur'an 2:233

'Every soul will taste death.'

Qur'an 3:185

The coming of the Mahdi

Muslims believe that the Mahdi (the 'guided one') will come on the Day of Judgement. He is the long-awaited saviour who will come to rescue the world. Sunnis believe that he will appear in the End Times, with Isa (Jesus). Shi'as too are awaiting the Mahdi, but they believe his identity will be revealed as the Hidden (or 12th) Imam.

Muslim attitudes to judgement, heaven and hell

- For Muslims, this world is not all that there is. Our human existence will continue after death; our earthly life is just a preparation for the eternal life to come (**akhirah**).
- Muslims believe that at the end of the world there will be a Day of Judgement. Only God knows when the Day of Judgement will come.
- Muslims believe that, for those who die before that day, the archangel of death, Azrail, will come to take their souls to await the day. They will be kept in a state of **barzakh** (waiting) until the archangel Israfil blows his trumpet to announce the resurrection of all from the dead.

Akhirah the Islamic term for the afterlife. There are many references to it, and warnings about it, in the Qur'an.

Barzakh a place of waiting, after death, before Judgement Day comes.

Heaven and hell

Most Muslims understand accounts of the afterlife in a very literal way. In the Qur'an, heaven (Janna) and hell (Jahannan) are described in very physical terms. Heaven is a garden of contentment, full of flowers, fruits and fountains. Hell is a state of torment and terror, where the damned are separated from God; they face boiling water, scorching fire and black smoke. There are some Muslims who do interpret these descriptions symbolically.

Humanist attitudes to judgement, heaven and hell

Humanists believe that, as far as we know, we are unlike any other creatures in that we are able to reflect on our own lives. One of the questions which has concerned humans since the dawn of time is what happens after death. The humanist answer is:

- nothing; we only live once and there is no second chance.
- There is no soul or immortal consciousness, no cosmic judge, divine paradise or fiery hell.

Because of this we should mark the most of our existence while we can, living moral lives, not because God will judge us, but because it shows compassion for others and respect for ourselves. Most humanists are materialists; they believe that we are nothing more than matter. There is no spiritual or supernatural aspect to life.

Christian funeral rites

1 When someone is close to death, if it is possible, a priest is called to say the last rites. Prayers are said for the dying person and they can ask God for forgiveness of their sins. The last rites is a Catholic practice, which might also involve the priest giving Holy Communion.

Meaning: *This helps to ease the dying person into the afterlife, enabling them to die at peace, having asked for God's forgiveness.*

2 The funeral itself is usually held in a church. The coffin is carried to the front of the church and a service is held in honour of the dead person: flowers are displayed, prayers said and candles may be lit. The minister reads the words of Jesus: 'I am the resurrection and the life.'

John 11:25

Meaning: *The candles represent Jesus as the 'light of the world', because he guides a path into heaven. The passage 'I am the resurrection' reminds the congregation that those who believe in Jesus will be resurrected, to spend eternity with God.*

3 Psalm 23, 'The Lord is my shepherd', is often read at funerals. It says that even when I am 'in the valley of the shadow of death', God is still by my side. Catholics may hold a mass (communion service) with bread and wine at a funeral.

Meaning: *We are not forgotten by God; he will comfort those who mourn and accompany those who have died.*

4 After this the person is buried, with the words 'ashes to ashes, dust to dust'. Today, many Christians prefer to be cremated, but traditionally the dead had to be buried.

Meaning: *Christianity used to teach that the bones of the dead must be left intact, so that on the Day of Judgement they could reform, rising to bodily resurrection with God in heaven. Some Christians today believe that only the soul goes to heaven, so it is acceptable to cremate the body.*

Non-religious funeral services

Many people today are uncomfortable with religious ceremonies and, as a result, non-religious funeral services are becoming increasingly popular.

Many people want a more informal, personal ceremony, where they can choose the songs and readings and where there is no mention of God.

At a humanist funeral those present will remember the life of the person who has died, reflecting on their contribution to the world and to others. It may include:

- ▶ music
- ▶ a non-religious reflection on death
- ▶ readings of poetry
- ▶ reminiscences about the person
- ▶ a eulogy (a description of why they were special)
- ▶ lighting candles
- ▶ moments of quiet reflection.

Muslim funeral rites

1 When a Muslim is close to death they try to repeat the final words of Prophet Muhammad: 'God, help me through the hardship and agony of death'. Those around the person will respond: 'To God we belong and to God we return'.

2 The **Kalimah** (often referred to as the shahadah) is whispered into their ears, just as these words were whispered into their ears as a new-born baby.

Meaning: *This emphasises the belief that, at death, we are returning to our creator (God).*

3 If possible, funerals take place within 24 hours of death. The dead person's body is washed: this is called ghusl. The body is then wrapped in a white shroud. In Britain it will be put into a coffin, but in some Islamic countries Muslims prefer to be buried without one.

Meaning: *The simple white shroud represents purity and equality: all are equal before God in death.*

4 Muslims do not approve of cremation. Bodies are buried facing Makkah.

Meaning: *Muslims believe that the body must remain intact, facing the Holy City. This will allow the person to be resurrected on the Day of Judgement.*

5 At the graveside they recite the first chapter (Surah) of the Qur'an, (**the al-Fatihah**):

'In the name of God, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Praise be to God, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds...'

When the body has been lowered into the grave, the following words are spoken:

'From the earth We created you. And into it We shall cause you to return and from it We shall bring you forth once more.' **Qur'an 20:55**

Meaning: *These prayers emphasise the greatness of God and the belief that he will bring people back to life.*

6 Muslims do not usually have gravestones, but the site of the grave is often raised in a mound, above the level of the ground.

• **Meaning:** *everyone is equal in death.*

The service will be led by a humanist celebrant. The service will try to show respect for the dead person without suggesting that they are going to a better place. They will be remembered for their special, unique qualities, the life they led and the achievements they made.



Issues of good and evil topics

Section 1: Crime and punishment

- How do we make moral decisions?
- Ethical theories
- Morality
- Crime and sin
- Causes of crime
- The aim of punishment
- Christian views on punishment and justice
- Muslim views on punishment and justice
- Prison reform
- Prison chaplains
- The death penalty
- Christian views on the death penalty
- Muslim views on the death penalty
- Human/non-religious views on the death penalty

Section 2: Forgiveness

- Christian views on forgiveness
- Muslim views on forgiveness

Section 3: Good, evil and suffering

- What is good?
- Christian views on good
- Muslim views on good
- The origin of evil
- Christian views on evil
- Muslim views on evil
- Christian views on suffering
- Muslim views on suffering
- Humanist/non-religious views on suffering
- Does suffering and evil cause a problem for religion?
- Freewill
- Christian views on freewill
- Muslim views on freewill

Key Concepts



Good That which is considered morally right, beneficial and to our advantage.



Evil That which is considered extremely immoral, wicked and wrong.



Forgiveness To grant pardon for a wrongdoing; to give up resentment and the desire to seek revenge against a wrongdoer.



Free will The ability to make choices voluntarily and independently. The belief that nothing is pre-determined.



Justice Fairness; where everyone has equal provisions and opportunity.



Morality Principles and standards determining which actions are right or wrong.



Punishment A penalty given to someone for a crime or wrong they have done.



Sin Deliberate immoral action, breaking a religious or moral law.



Suffering Pain or distress caused by injury, illness or loss. Suffering can be physical, emotional/psychological or spiritual.

How do people make moral decisions?

Making **moral** decisions is not a straightforward, risk-free process. We all have a **conscience**, which helps us to assess the right choice to make when reviewing a situation. Some believe that our conscience develops as we grow older, and that it grows through the process of making right decisions. It also grows through the guilt felt when making the wrong decisions. Some people also believe that our conscience gives us advance warning of whether the decision we are about to make is right or wrong. We then choose. It is our **free will** which enables us to make decisions and choices that are genuinely our own.

Some people may make moral decisions through:

- **Past experiences:** Our past experiences allow us to learn the rightness and wrongness of our actions, partially through the responses of others to our behaviour and choices. The human brain has evolved to learn from previous experiences and use these reflections to help us to make decisions in the future.
- **The Law:** The law offers us strict guidance for our behaviour. Laws are made by our elected representatives in government, and exist to help maintain order, peace and harmony. Breaking these laws is met with punishments such as fines, community service and prison.
- **Other people:** Many people (both religious believers and those without a religious belief) consult either religious leaders or community elders for advice and guidance before making difficult moral decisions. It is widely accepted that these individuals have the wisdom, experience and knowledge to offer counselling. They have usually received special training to understand and interpret holy scriptures and teachings, and many are seen to be God's representatives on earth.
- **Sacred texts:** Religious believers also look towards their religious teachings before making moral decisions. These are found within the sacred texts of each tradition: the Bible, the Qur'an and Hadith, and the Torah. In the modern world, there are many moral decisions for which ancient sacred texts are unable to provide specific guidance. In situations like these, believers look to religious leaders to interpret and attempt to apply teachings. They also look towards the example of prophets such as Muhammad or other notable individuals from within the religious tradition such as Martin Luther King or Archbishop Desmond Tutu.

Free will is a human's ability to make free choices in life.

Conscience an inner voice which keeps a person on the right track; a sense of right and wrong; an instinct (some think given by God) to help us to make the right choices.



Ethical theories

Other forms of belief which sit outside of strict moral codes and religious beliefs can also guide decision-making. For example, many people, such as humanists, may look to ethical theories such as ‘**Situation Ethics**’ and ‘**Utilitarianism**’.



Utilitarianism

By John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham

When choices are made based on the principle of creating the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people – is another example.

Finally, some people look to reason and logic to guide their moral decision-making. This is when decisions are made according to strict principles. In practice, it means looking at the moral dilemma away from our emotions and ideas from religion, law or accepted codes of moral behaviour, and making a decision rationally – according to a set of agreed principles.

Situation Ethics

By Joseph Fletcher

There are no universal moral rules or rights - each case is unique and deserves a unique solution. Every single instance of moral decision-making is viewed as totally unique (because the circumstances of each case are always different) and choices are made with the guiding principle that the well-being of people is the most important thing.

Types of morality

There are two common forms of **morality**:

- ▶ **Absolute morality** is when a person has a principle such as ‘it is wrong to kill’ and never alters it. They apply this principle or moral standard to all situations, no matter what the context or circumstance. This person might believe that all killing, including in war, is wrong. Within both the Islamic and Christian traditions there are examples of groups who traditionally adopt an absolute moralist approach, for example Catholics and Quaker Christians.
- ▶ **Relative morality** is when a person holds a moral principle but is prepared to adapt or adjust it in certain situations. This person might believe that, if it reduces suffering in the future, killing in war might be necessary. Buddhists and many Protestant Christian denominations like the Church of England would be considered relative moralists. Similarly, humanists follow a relative moral approach to judging situations and moral dilemmas.

What is crime?

Crime can be defined as any offence that is punishable by law. The government makes laws which govern our behaviour, the police force prevents and detects crime, and the principal job of the criminal justice system (including courts and judges) is to enforce these laws and punish crime. Throughout the course of history, what constitutes a crime, ideas about the causes of crime and how criminals should be punished have changed.

What is the difference between a crime and a sin?

- || Although there are many **sins** that can be punished by law, a great many sins are not considered crimes in modern society. For example, while it goes against the Ten Commandments to commit adultery (to have an affair) and to work on a Sunday, neither are crimes according to the law.
- || The consequences of committing a sin are critically different. For Christians, sinful behaviour can lead to personal suffering, offending God, excommunication (being cut off from the Church) or even exclusion from heaven.
- || **Jews** believe that, while to sin is part of human life, those who sin will suffer in this life in order to atone for their behaviour.
- || For **Hindus, Sikhs and Buddhists**, sinful behaviour affects **karma**, leading to negative consequences either in this life or the next.
- || Through **Shari’ah law**, **Muslims** who openly go against accepted religious codes can receive specified punishments.

Examples of sins

Most religions agree on the main sins of humanity. These are sometimes referred to as the Seven Deadly Sins, and are believed to be the source of all other vices:

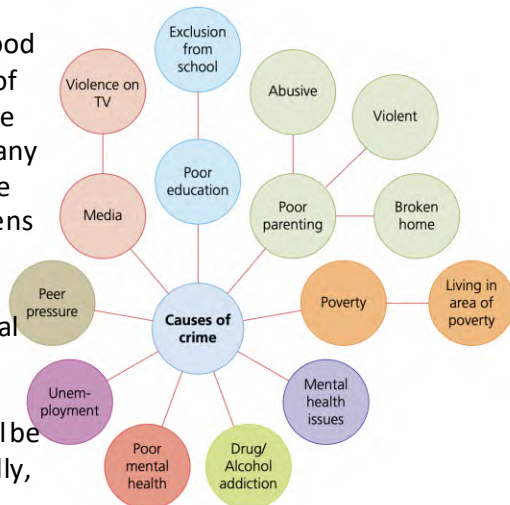
- Pride
- Greed
- Lust
- Envy
- Gluttony
- Wrath
- Sloth

Shari’ah law Muslim law based upon the Qur’an.

Causes of crime

The causes of crime are complex. Most people today accept that poverty, parental neglect, low self-esteem, and alcohol and drug abuse are all connected in explaining why people commit crimes. Some people are simply at greater risk of becoming offenders because of the circumstances into which they are born.

In society, it is important that people are brought up with a good understanding of the concepts of good and bad and the difference between the two. Members of any society have a duty to follow the laws of the country. When citizens choose not to be law-abiding, chaos ensues. Because of this, parents and schools have a moral responsibility to teach the difference between right and wrong so that young people will be respectful of others and, critically, not commit crime.



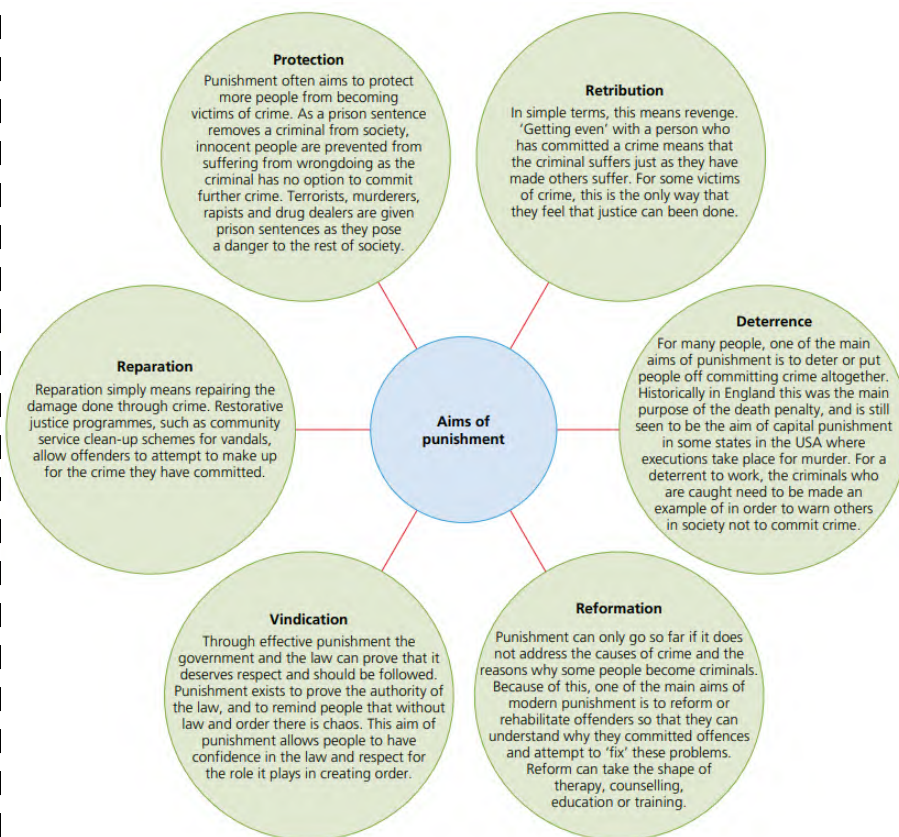
Christian attitudes to punishment and justice

- Christianity is a religion of forgiveness, and as such Christians do not support the idea of retribution (revenge) as a purpose of punishment.
- Christians do, however, believe in justice, which means that forgiveness and punishment should go together.
- Christians should try to follow the example of Jesus who forgave those who betrayed him. Because of this, many support punishment practices which lead to forgiveness, for example restorative justice programmes in prisons.

Restorative justice a system of justice that enables criminals to make amends for their behaviour by meeting with their victim and apologising.

Aims of punishment

When detected and prosecuted, criminal behaviour results in punishment. There are a number of different punishment options available to judges (such as community service, fines and prison terms). Often, a judge will consider several different purposes when sentencing a person for committing a crime.



- Jesus taught compassion and not revenge and because of this many Christians have been actively involved in prison reform to ensure that people are treated humanely in prison.
- They also believe that it is important to recognise and address the causes of criminal behaviour, such as poverty, unemployment and poor social conditions as a means of restoring social justice and preventing crime.
- Most Christians also firmly believe that punishment should enable a person to reform – to change their ways on release from prison and add value to the community. Some Christians have become prison chaplains so that they can help prisoners to reform effectively.

In the Bible it says:

'But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.'

Muslim attitudes to punishment and justice

- Although forgiveness is very important in Islam, so is the need to protect society (called the ummah) and keep law and order.
- Punishment is therefore seen as central to justice and essential in keeping people from straying from what is good and just. 'Shari'ah' translates as 'straight path' and Shari'ah law outlines both the rules to live by and the punishments if these laws are broken.
- Many Shari'ah law punishments are designed to deter as well as protect society from further wrongdoing, for example: cutting off a hand for theft, or a receiving a beating in full view of the local community.
- For Muslims, punishment has nothing to do with removing sin as only God can forgive – it is a way of keeping law and order. Muslims do hope, however, that offenders will repent, reform and seek forgiveness both from God and their victims.

'Indeed, God orders justice and good conduct and giving [help] to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded.'

Qur'an 16:90

How are criminals treated in modern prisons?



Since prisons were first built there has been concern about how the prisoners within them are treated.

There are many different opinions about what prison should achieve, and because of this there are a great many opinions about the kind of treatment prisoners should receive. Some feel that prison should be a place of isolation and punishment, and that prisoners should have few if any privileges, such as access to television or computers. Many others, however, see prisons as a place of rehabilitation and reform. Because of this they believe that the treatment that prisoners receive should enable them to address the root cause of their criminality and equip them for life as a responsible citizen.

The treatment of prisoners is a carefully monitored thing. Prisoners are entitled to humane treatment which shows respect for their human rights. No matter what the arguments about prison regimes, the fact remains that many prisoners continue to complain about overcrowding, poor treatment and a lack of access to important services. Many argue that the impact of poor prison conditions can be seen in rising rates of assault, self-harm and suicide among inmates.

Prison Reform

Why the need for change?

The prison population of England and Wales is 85,641, compared to 44,246 in 1993. Reoffending rates are high. According to the National Audit Office, reoffending costs us the equivalent of staging another Olympic Games every year. In light of these figures, many again are calling for a reform of prisons and prison regimes.

According to Government statistics, only 53 per cent of the prison population have any qualifications, compared to 85 per cent of the working age population.

The key focus of current discussions about prison reform are therefore focussed on education. The Government recently announced plans to overhaul the prison system in Britain, calling for prisoners to be viewed and treated as 'potential assets, not liabilities.'

Reformers:

Britain has a proud history of prison reformers, many of whom were inspired by their religious beliefs to lobby for change. Howard and Fry contributed greatly to the treatment of prisoners. By the 1870s ideas both about prison and prisons themselves had changed dramatically. Purpose-built institutions (like Pentonville Prison in London) were to be found across the country, and a lively debate about how to treat prisoners once in jail had been born.

Finally, real thought was being given to how we should approach the reform of individuals once in prison.



John Howard was a committed Calvinist (Protestant Christian) and inspected prisons in the late eighteenth century. He found them to be diseased, dirty and corrupt, and gave evidence to Parliament with recommendations that conditions and practices be improved. He called for basic but essential provisions such as clean running water, separate cells for men and women, access to doctors, and greater numbers of prison officers to support and ensure the safety of inmates. This was at a time when the majority of prisons were privately run for profit.



Elizabeth Fry was a nineteenth-century Quaker prison reformer, who dedicated her life to improving the state of British prisons after visiting Newgate Prison in London in 1813. She was a passionate advocate of education in prisons and looked towards reforming prisoners as opposed to simply isolating them from society. She is most famous for teaching female prisoners to read and write and holding Bible readings for inmates.

Chaplains

What is a chaplain?

For many of us, our only experience of chaplains is through movies or television. Here they are often portrayed as people on the side-lines, without a uniform or an easily defined role, who give out quick slices of advice. Traditionally, a chaplain is a minister, such as a priest, pastor, rabbi, imam or community member of a religious tradition. They are attached to nonreligious institutions such as hospitals, prisons, schools or universities. Their job is to provide 'pastoral' care for patients, pupils, or in this case, prisoners.



What is their role?

Prison chaplains have a demanding and essential job, providing counselling to inmates, supporting them through their rehabilitation and seeing to their spiritual (and often religious) needs. Prisoners have to deal with a complex mixture of emotions and needs during their sentence, and they often need someone who is not a prison officer or warden to offer support. Fear, loneliness, guilt, concerns about family or children on the outside – all of these become the concern of the prison chaplain. In addition to this, chaplains often help prisoners re-enter the community, working with parole officers and other volunteers. Families of inmates also have access to prison chaplains. Family members can be the victims of the inmates' crimes and require the care of the chaplain just as much as the inmate. Chaplains do not have to be religious, and it is documented that 32 per cent of the prison population have no religious faith.

Since 2011 the British Humanist Society has been running a project with Humanist Pastoral Support Volunteers at Winchester Prison. This includes meeting inmates with 'nil' religion on admission, holding discussion groups and providing counselling, such as bereavement support, for inmates. This is especially important as often prisoners are unable to attend funerals of loved ones or benefit from the type of community support offered to those who have suffered the loss of family or friends.

What Chaplains Do

<i>% saying they perform each of the following</i>	%
Administer/organize religious programs	93
Personally lead worship and other services	92
Work with external faith-based groups	92
Advise correctional staff on religious issues	92
Supervise/train volunteers	91
Provide support/counseling for staff	85
Supervise inmates to help maintain safety and security	78
Facilitate interfaith dialogue	74
Administer educational or other secular rehabilitation services	42
Follow up with former inmates after release	33

Q6a-j. Percentage saying no and no answer not shown.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S FORUM ON RELIGION & PUBLIC LIFE

Death Penalty



Worldwide use of the death penalty

Methods of execution have changed over the past century as governments look for cheaper but more humane ways to end the life of convicts. In America, executions can take the form of lethal injection, electric chair, gas chamber, firing squad or hanging (although in practice lethal injection is most widely used). Other less humane methods still in use include decapitation (North Korea and Saudi Arabia), shooting under anaesthetic (Taiwan) and stoning (Sudan).

The death penalty has been a feature of punishment practices for thousands of years. It has been used by societies across the world to deter crime and to punish the very worst criminal behaviours. Also referred to as capital punishment or execution, the death penalty is still legal in over 80 different countries (although 50 of these countries have not used execution as a punishment in the last ten years). The majority of the countries that retain the death penalty are African or Asian-Pacific nations like China, Afghanistan and Iran. The greatest exception to this is the United States of America. Of the 50 states in America, 31 allow execution in both law and practice for the crimes of murder and treason. Death row, the name given to the area where death penalty convicts reside in prison, has now become a popular feature of film, TV programmes and documentaries.

Life in twenty-first-century Britain

The UK parliament abolished the death penalty in 1969. Although public opinion has at times been in favour of reinstating execution for the worst criminals, all attempts to bring it back have failed. Some of the last people to be executed, including Derek Bentley, who was convicted of being involved in the killing of a policeman, have since received pardons after their death. Essentially this means that they should not have been convicted in the first place.

Last discussed in parliament in 1998 during the passage of the Human Rights Act, the death penalty has always been hotly debated. The British Social Attitudes survey has recorded popular attitudes to the death penalty since 1983. Since then, the number of those in favour of execution has fallen from 75 per cent to 48 per cent in 2015. The UK is now among the 82 per cent of global nations that do not use the death penalty.

Arguing for the death penalty



For those arguing from outside a strict religious belief, views about the death penalty are affected by a number of factors. Some people argue that there needs to be an ultimate punishment to act as a deterrent, and feel that for the greater good of society the death penalty is necessary. Some religious believers agree with these arguments and believe that religious teachings on justice allow for the use of the death penalty.

'I believe that people who go out prepared to take the lives of other people forfeit their own right to live. I believe that that death penalty should be used only very rarely, but I believe that no-one should go out certain that no matter how cruel, how vicious, how hideous their murder, they themselves will not suffer the death penalty.'

Margaret Thatcher, Former British Prime Minister, 1984

'While the evidence tells me that the death penalty does little to deter crime, I believe there are some crimes – mass murder, the rape and murder of a child – so heinous, so beyond the pale, that the community is justified in expressing the full measure of its outrage by meting out the ultimate punishment.'

Barack Obama, President of the USA, 2006

- Life terms in prison are very expensive – £40,000 per year.
- Some people – such as the criminally insane – cannot be reformed.



- It is the only way that victims can experience closure.
- There has to be an ultimate punishment for the very worst crimes.
- In Britain, life sentences amount to 15 years.
- Execution is the only way to truly protect society from very dangerous murderers and terrorists.

Arguments for Britain using the death penalty

In the last ten years, there have been plenty of examples of the system of justice and punishment in the UK failing to work, and many more examples of dangerous criminals who need to be permanently removed from society. Here are some examples of those cases, and sadly of the victims who paid the price:

- In July 2010 Jonathan Vass, 30, murdered his ex-girlfriend Jane Clough, 26, after he had been released on bail for raping her. He was jailed for 30 years.

- Myles Williams, 19, from East London, was convicted for the murder of his girlfriend Kirsty Treloar who was 20. He had previously been arrested for violently dragging her along the street, but was released on bail (on the condition that he did not contact her).
- Nathan McLeod, 16, murdered Temidayo Ogunneye, 15, for a mobile phone in May 2011. Earlier that day he had been granted bail at Camberwell Youth Court in London after being accused of attacking a gas man with a bread knife.



'You have to kill me. I am evil. If you don't I'll just kill again.' Aileen Wuornos, convicted serial killer, Florida. Executed 2002

Arguing against the death penalty



Some people see execution of any form as morally wrong, and might argue that there is little evidence that the death penalty works as a deterrent. Religious people might agree with these views and also believe that life is sacred and shouldn't be ended by human beings.

- The death penalty disproportionately affects members of racial, ethnic and religious minorities, as well as those living in poverty.
- The death penalty is just state-sanctioned murder.
- There is evidence that innocent people have been executed.
- The death penalty does not deter murderers.
- Only God has the right to end a life.
- Two wrongs do not make a right.
- The state should be a moral force for good.
- Forgiveness is important.



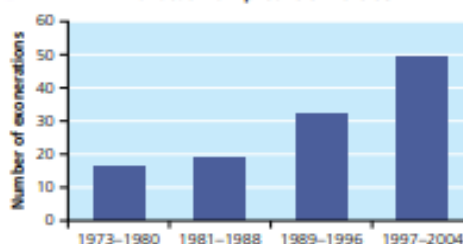
'My objection to the death penalty is based on the idea that this is a democracy, and in a democracy the government is me, and if the government kills somebody then I'm killing somebody.'

Steve Earle, musician

'I do not think that God approves the death penalty for any crime, rape and murder included. Capital punishment is against the better judgment of modern criminology, and, above all, against the highest expression of love in the nature of God.'

Martin Luther King Jr

Increasing number of exonerations of death row prisoners in the USA



Exoneration means that a conviction for a crime is reversed, either because the prisoner is innocent or there was an error with the trial that led to conviction.

Amnesty International

Amnesty opposes the death penalty absolutely – for all crimes without exception. They believe that:

- The death penalty violates basic human rights in every case.
- Evidence shows that it doesn't deter crime. It is often used within skewed or unfair and corrupt justice systems.
- It discriminates. Statistics show that the death penalty is used disproportionately against the poor, minorities and members of racial, ethnic and religious communities. It also discriminates based on the race of the victim – in the USA you are several times more likely to receive the death penalty if the victim was white than if the victim was African-American.
- It can be used as a political tool. In the USA, many state governors have fast-tracked the executions of inmates during re-election time to prove that they are 'tough on crime'. Similarly, many politicians use the issue of the death penalty to prove that they prioritise protection and justice.



'You can't have a penalty that isn't reversible – that you can't take back later and say "I'm sorry, we got it wrong"... It is given out by human beings, and human beings make mistakes'. Ray Krone, former death row inmate

Christian views on the death penalty

Christian attitudes to the death penalty vary. This is due to different interpretations of the Bible (specifically the Old Testament) and the extent to which teachings about the sanctity of life and Jesus' examples of compassion and forgiveness over-rule early biblical teachings about justice.



Liberal Christians

- Most Christians believe that only God has the right to take a life.
- Execution goes against the sanctity of life, as all life is precious and only God should end it.

- Christians believe that God commanded *'Thou shalt not kill'* (**Exodus 20:13**), and that this is a clear instruction.
- Christians should also follow the teachings of Jesus to be compassionate and forgiving. Jesus was openly forgiving to the adulterous woman (**John 8**) and also pleaded with God for his executioners to be forgiven when he was on the cross *'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do'* (**Luke 23:33-34**)
- Many Christians favour reform over execution, and because of this many have been involved in prison reform and continue to work in prisons as chaplains.
- Jesus also taught us to *'turn the other cheek'* (**Matthew 5:38-39**), to *'love our enemies'* and to *forgive* (**Matthew 5:43-47**). Execution makes all of these impossible.
- The Golden rule of *'do to others what you want them to do to you'* also compels us to treat others as we would wish to be treated.
- **Quakers** have campaigned against the death penalty since 1818. All human life should be respected as every person is a reflection of God/contains a little of God. Quakers firmly believe that punishments should be used to reform. Some of the first prison reformers were Quakers who worked to maintain the dignity and humanity of prisoners.

'Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.'

Romans 12:17-18



Conservative Christians

- Some Christians advocate the death penalty, seeing it as following the Old Testament law of *'an eye for an eye'*.
- In the Old Testament it states: *'Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed'* **Genesis 9:6**

- In total, the Old Testament specifies 36 capital offences including crimes such as idolatry, magic and blasphemy, as well as murder. Some Christians would therefore argue that the death penalty was not only approved, but created by God.
- Some Christians also argue that capital punishment upholds the commandment *'thou shalt not kill'* by showing the seriousness of the crime of murder.
- **Catholic Christians** are also divided. Traditionally the Catholic Church has allowed (but not encouraged) capital punishment.
- In 1997, the Vatican issued a statement saying that execution was acceptable where the identity of the criminal was absolutely confirmed and where execution was the only means to protect society from the aggressor. It did, however, state that non-lethal means of punishment were:

'more in keeping with the concrete conditions of the common good and... the dignity of the human person.'

Pope John Paul II – The Gospel of Life

Muslim views on the death penalty



- Islam as a whole accepts capital punishment. Muslims believe that capital punishment is a severe sentence but one that can be issued for the most severe crimes.
- While criminals will be punished by God on the Day of Judgement, Muslims also believe that they should be punished on earth.

- Forgiveness is important (and is preferred if possible) but so is the need to protect the ummah (Muslim community). Islam sees punishment as being central to justice. This means that all punishment is part of justice and stops people from straying down the wrong path.
- The **Qur'an 17:33** forbids the taking of life: *'Nor take life – which God has made sacred, except for just cause'*.
- Most Muslims agree that this 'just cause', for which the death penalty is permitted, is the crimes of murder and openly attacking Islam.
- Most Muslim countries (for example, Saudi Arabia and Iran) retain the death penalty. Methods of execution in Islamic countries vary and can include beheading, firing squad, hanging and stoning. In some countries public executions are carried out to provide a deterrent. Islamic countries that practise very strict Shari'ah law are associated with the use of capital punishment as punishment for the largest variety of crimes; for example for adultery, homosexuality, terrorism and treason.



- There is a small but growing number of Muslims who disagree with the death penalty and call for it to be abolished. They argue that Shari'ah law is often used by repressive governments that attack women and the poor. In addition, there are examples of these countries executing the accused while denying them access to a lawyer or a proper trial. These acts are totally against the concept of Islamic justice.

Humanist views on the death penalty

- Capital punishment is generally opposed by humanists because they think premeditated killing is wrong, even when carried out by the state. The death penalty raises the possibility of error and an irreversible failure of justice by issuing a sentence that cannot be reversed. Humanists believe treating criminals fairly also helps to ensure that innocent suspects are treated fairly.



Forgiveness

When working for peace and harmony, when trying to rebuild relationships after a wrongdoing, or when differences of opinion and hostility arise, **forgiveness** is essential. Forgiveness enables wrongs to be acknowledged and relationships to be rebuilt.

Reconciliation accepting an apology, forgiving and moving forward together in harmony.



Christian attitudes to forgiveness

Forgiveness is a prominent theme within Christianity and within the Bible as a whole. Christianity is known as a religion of forgiveness, love and compassion, and these themes are evident in religious teachings and the example of Jesus and other leaders within the faith such as Martin Luther King. Some of the reasons why Christians have such strong views on forgiveness are:

- In the Bible Jesus clearly instructs Christians to forgive: *'Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.'* **Luke 6:37**
- The importance of forgiveness is emphasised in the Lord's Prayer. Christians ask God to *'forgive their sins, as they forgive those who have sinned against them'*. This means that Christians can only expect to receive forgiveness from God if they are forgiving towards others.
- Jesus taught the importance of forgiveness, which is seen in his teaching in the **Beatitudes**: *'Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.'* **Matthew 5:7**
- His words from the cross demonstrate how central forgiveness is to the Christian tradition: *'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.'* **Luke 23:35**
- The actions of Jesus offer a further example for Christians to follow, and they are expected to do so. He visited the tax collector Zacchaeus despite his cheating and selfishness and, in doing so, enabled Zacchaeus to make amends and reform (**Luke 19:2–10**). He similarly forgave the adulterous woman (**John 8:1–11**) imploring her to 'go and sin no more'.
- Bible stories clearly demonstrate the importance of forgiveness. The story in the Bible of the prodigal son teaches explicitly about forgiveness and repentance. Sometimes known as the **Parable of the Forgiving Father (Luke 15:11–24)**. Also **The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21–22)** reinforces the teaching that we must forgive others in order to be forgiven ourselves and that forgiveness is something which should have no limits.



How to get forgiveness

For Catholics, forgiveness is supported through confession and religious acts of atonement, for example saying specific prayers. **The Catholic Church** teaches that Christ instituted the sacrament of penance, and they believe that God's forgiveness is granted through the priest's pardon after confession. Evangelical Christians, however, believe that forgiveness of sins is granted by God and reliant upon faith. Here, confession is not accepted as a route to forgiveness.

Muslim attitudes to forgiveness

- The Qur'an states that those who forgive others will be rewarded by God and that forgiveness is the path to peace.
- Islam accepts that human beings are not perfect and that everybody makes mistakes in life and unknowingly sins.
- Within Islam there are two kinds of forgiveness: **God's forgiveness** and **human forgiveness**. Human beings are in need of both as they make mistakes in their actions towards each other and their actions towards God.
- According to the Qur'an, there is no limit to God's forgiveness. The words *'God is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful'* are repeated many times throughout the Qur'an.
- In Islam, individuals who commit a sin ask for forgiveness directly from God; there is no intermediary. They believe that God will forgive all those who are truly repentant.
- In the Qur'an it says: *'God loves those who turn unto Him in repentance and He loves those who keep themselves pure'*
- Muslims are to follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad, who helped the old woman who became sick even though she had regularly brushed dirt in his direction.

Humanist attitude to forgiveness

- Humanists believe that forgiveness is crucial for human relationships. We all make mistakes and are all capable of selfish behaviour, but we are also capable of understanding and forgiveness.
- The Golden Rule to treat others as we would hope to be treated ourselves requires us to forgive mistakes and selfish behaviour and to accept different views.
- Humanists also believe that the existence of human compassion and common sense compels us to forgive.
- They recognise that it is not easy to forgive, and sometimes behaviour is so inhuman that forgiveness seems impossible, so the best we can do is work to make sure that whatever needs forgiving does not happen again.

'Everyone says forgiveness is a lovely idea, until they have something to forgive.'

C.S. Lewis

▶ Examples of forgiveness



■ Mahatma Gandhi – Hindu leader of the Independence Movement in British-run India, 1869–1948

'The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.'



■ Gee Walker – practising Christian and mother of Anthony Walker, who was murdered during a racially motivated attack in Liverpool in 2005

'Unforgiveness makes you a victim and why should I be a victim? Anthony spent his life forgiving. His life stood for peace, love and forgiveness and I brought them all up that way. 'I have to forgive them. I cannot hate. Hate is what killed Anthony.'



Victims' relatives and members of the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, speaking after the South Carolina Church shooting, where nine people were killed in a racially motivated shooting by Dylann Roof

in progress and I acknowledge that I'm very angry. But ... DePayne always taught me we are the family that love built.'

'I thank you on the behalf of my family for not allowing hate to win. For me, I'm a work

'We have no room for hate. We have to forgive. I pray God on his soul. And I also thank God I won't be around when his judgment day comes.'



■ Martin Luther King, Baptist Minister and American civil rights protestor, 1929–68

'Forgiveness is not an occasional act, it is a constant attitude.'



■ Nelson Mandela, South African anti-apartheid protestor and the first black President of South Africa, 1918–2013

'Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies.'

As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison.'

What is 'good'?

'Good' means different things to different people. Do your ideas about good depend upon the life that you have lived, the experiences you have had, and the things that you have seen?

It is a relative term – which means that it really is different things to different people. One person's good could quite easily be another person's evil.

The nature of good

Some might say that good is just when there is no evil or 'badness'. Others would argue that it is something which is approved of or desired. Either way, most people would agree that good is something which is morally right.

Good qualities tend to be linked to empathy. Caring, selfless, charitable, kind and giving people are generally seen to be good. Those people who sacrifice themselves for others, who are compassionate, and who treat all people equally as human beings are also considered good. If we think of the people throughout history who we consider worthy of respect, from Mahatma Ghandi and Martin Luther King to Mother Teresa, they all possessed these qualities of compassion for others and selflessness.

Key Concepts



Good That which is considered morally right, beneficial and to our advantage.



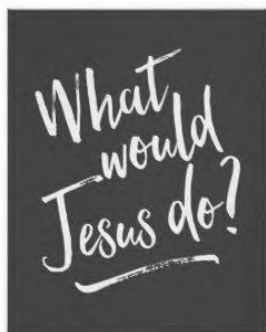
Free will The ability to make choices voluntarily and independently. The belief that nothing is pre-determined.

Life in twenty-first-century Britain

In modern Britain, good behaviour is often judged in terms of the moral values that are seen as underpinning British society: tolerance; respect; democracy; the defence of individual liberty; mutual respect for different religions, faiths and beliefs and those with no faith at all. As such, any act which goes against these values is generally accepted to be wrong.

Christian attitudes to good

- In Genesis it says that God made the earth '*and it was good*'. The world that God has created is basically good.
- God has, however, given people free will – the ability to choose between right and wrong for themselves.
- The story of humanity's battle with good and evil is told in the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). Adam and Eve chose to disobey God by eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge. This is called the Fall, and explains how free will can be used to stray from what is good.
- God has shown people how they should live a good life through both rules of behaviour found in the Bible, for example the Ten Commandments (a list of religious and moral rules that were given by God to Moses on Mount Sinai) and through religious teachings.
- Jesus' life and example also show Christians the ways to lead a moral, good and righteous life. It is up to individuals to decide whether or not to follow God's instructions.
- Christianity is a religion which places 'good' qualities at its core – tolerance, compassion and love. Jesus demonstrated all of these qualities through his life, and it is considered a Christian duty to treat others with kindness, humanity and genuine acceptance.



Muslim attitudes to good

- Everyone is born with a natural instinct to understand the difference between right and wrong (fitrah). All humans have free will, and they must choose between right and wrong.
- Some say this means choosing between the path of God and the temptations of **Shaytan** (the devil).
- Doing good and having the right belief go hand in hand in Islam.
- The Qur'an speaks of true Muslims very often as '*those who believe and do good deeds*'. Doing the will of God is indistinguishable from doing good.
- The Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad outline the qualities required for good, including truthfulness, patience, humility and kindness to others.
- Muslims are expected to follow this example to guide their actions and choices in everyday life, for example, by doing **sadaqah**.
- God will judge each person individually, according to their faith and their good actions. God will show mercy and fairness in his judgement. According to Islamic teachings, those who believe in God and perform good deeds will be eternally rewarded in heaven.

Shaytan Satan or the devil.

Sadaqah voluntary charity given out of kindness. The Prophet Muhammad said that every act done to please God or make life more pleasant was sadaqah.

What is 'evil'?

People talk about evil in different ways: evil people, evil deeds and evil as a force that somehow makes people do wrong. The question of evil is an example of an ultimate question (a question about the fundamental principles in life). There are many different answers to why evil exists in the world, and none of them are necessarily wrong. It is up to each individual to decide which is right based upon their religious beliefs, their own experiences, their own reasoning and upbringing.

There are two different types of evil in the world: moral and natural.

Key Concepts



Evil That which is considered extremely immoral, wicked and wrong.

Moral evil



These are all examples of moral evils

Moral evil is the result of human actions and is often caused by humans acting in a way that is considered morally wrong.

Natural evil



Weather events, like hurricanes, that cause suffering are a natural evil.

Events that have nothing to do with humans, and which are to do with the way the world is, for example natural disasters such as volcanic eruptions, floods or earthquakes, are examples of natural evil. These events cannot be stopped or affected by human action. Natural evil can also include disease and illness.

Christian attitudes to evil

Christians believe in an all powerful and all loving God. Some may say why is there evil in the world if God loves us or if he can stop it why doesn't he. Therefore, Christians have different viewpoints about the causes of evil and suffering and the origin or source of evil within the world. These are called **theodicies**:

Satan/The Devil

Some people see evil as a work of a person – the Devil, or Satan. Satan appears at various times through the Bible as the opposite to God. Satan, in the form of the snake, tempts Eve to eat the fruit. Satan also tempts Jesus to abandon his ministry. Many would say suffering happens from giving into the desires we are tempted by because of the devil.



Original Sin

Catholics believe that evil comes from human beings. Adam and Eve introduced sin to the world (known as original sin) when, in the Garden of Eden, they chose to disobey God and eat from the tree of knowledge. This act brought sin into humanity. Since then, people have been born with the ability to commit acts of evil. Within the Catholic tradition, every baby is born with 'original sin' as it is inherited from Adam.

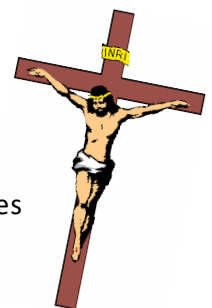


Free Will

Christians believe God gives people free will. They live their lives as they choose. If God interfered every time people did something that would cause harm to themselves or others, then people would be puppets of God.

Struggle of good and evil

Some may argue that without evil we cannot truly understand what good is. This also is explained in the balance of nature. The world is a carefully balanced whole. Natural processes can produce good and bad effects. The flood which kills some people, waters the land which allows others to live. Some may say that this means good cannot exist without evil.



Suffering of Christ

Christians point to the example of Jesus as a way of explaining suffering and its purpose. Jesus chose to endure suffering and pain in order to achieve greater good. His death and resurrection were to bring an end to death and suffering forever, with the promise of everlasting life and a new heaven and earth. For many Christians, suffering is both a way to bring them closer to an understanding of Jesus and his suffering and a way to bring about a greater good. During his life Jesus suffered greatly. Some may say that it confirms that suffering is a necessary part of being human. Just before he died, he said **'It is accomplished!' (John 19.30)**, suggesting that his suffering had a purpose.



Christian attitudes to evil

Suffering as punishment

Some may argue that God uses suffering to punish us for wrong that we have done. There are many examples in the Bible, such as Noah's arch and the plagues of Egypt where God allows people to suffer because they were not following him or had done evil themselves.



To educate and test us

Many Christians also believe that life is a test. Part of this test is whether or not an individual will tolerate suffering and keep their faith. The way people react to suffering and evil determines whether they go to heaven or hell in the afterlife. The story of Job in the Bible gives Christians an example of how suffering can come to anyone, even the most holy and good-living, and that we will be judged on how we behaved throughout our suffering. Job suffers greatly and is taken from great success to tragedy. His friends try to convince him that he is suffering due to his own past sins. Job questions God on this but is given no direct answers. He somehow maintains his faith in God and is rewarded when his suffering is brought to an end.

St Irenaeus and John Hicks 'Soul Making' argument



God put evil in the world for a reason, to enable us to exercise our free will and develop as human beings.

Irenaeus (125-202) Born in France



Evil and suffering bring out the best in people and they are necessary if people are to develop the qualities of courage, love, selflessness, generosity and compassion.

John Hick (1922-) Born in England.

Gods plan

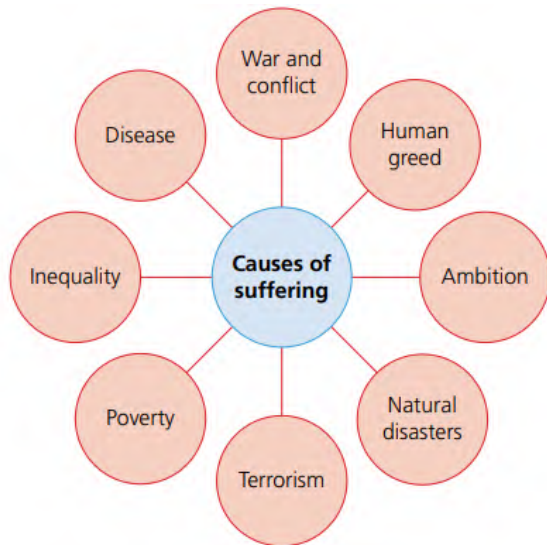
The story of Job also reveals to Christians that we should not question why we suffer, but simply accept that we do. Many say that 'God works in mysterious ways' and he has reasons for letting evil and suffering happen, but humans will never be able to understand the mind of God. We have to accept that God has chosen suffering for us, and that he has a purpose. We can be reassured with the knowledge that God is compassionate and understanding and will never give us more suffering than we are truly able to cope with.

Muslim attitudes to evil

- Within Islam it is believed that everything happens because it is the will and the plan of God. This is known as **al-Qadr**, and means that suffering and hardship are part of God's greater plan for humanity.
- Even though people may be unable to appreciate the value or purpose of suffering, they must accept that suffering exists and that they will never be able to truly understand God's will and purpose.
- Muslims believe that all life is a test. Humans are given life as a gift by God, and throughout their life their good and evil acts are noted down by two angels. Muslims will have to answer to these at Judgement Day, and these will determine whether they will enter paradise or be sent to hell – a blazing fire that never ends.
- Good can come from suffering and evil. It is a greater good when people resist temptation and follow the right path and the example set by the Prophet Muhammad.
- God is also known as Ar-Rahman (The Merciful), Ar-Rahim (The Compassionate) and Al-Karim (The Generous). Because of this, those who resist Shaytan and follow the straight path will be rewarded in the afterlife.
- Many Muslims believe that evil comes from Shaytan. The Qur'an explains how he refused God's command to bow down before Adam. As a result of pride and disobedience, God banished him from heaven. He now exists to tempt people to turn from God and to do wrong.
- The following teaching from the Qur'an directs Muslims to beware those who might be corrupting, and to resist temptation and follow the path laid down: *'O you who have believed, indeed, among your wives and your children are enemies to you, so beware of them. But if you pardon and overlook and forgive – then indeed, God is Forgiving and Merciful.'* **Qur'an 64:14**

Suffering

We simply need to turn on the news or glance at the front cover of a newspaper to see suffering in the world. Suffering, it seems, is an inevitable part of living. Why people suffer is one of the greatest of all ultimate questions (questions about the fundamental principles in life). There are many different beliefs linked with the causes of suffering, some of which we have already looked at in the previous section on evil.



Types of suffering

- **Natural suffering** is caused by events beyond human control – by natural disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis and floods, as well as disease.
- **Human suffering** is caused by the actions of human beings – murder, rape, terrorism and so on.

Humanist attitudes to suffering

- Humanists do not believe that suffering is punishment or a test or see evil and suffering as part of a divine plan.
- Human beings have a degree of choice and control over their lives and must take some responsibility for the way they turn out. Some evils, for example war, famine and poverty, are caused or made worse by human greed and folly. Some forms of suffering like illness, floods, or earthquakes, may have natural causes or happen by chance, just because the world is the way it is.
- Often those who suffer the most are not to blame.
- Humanists see the concept of original sin as cruel and unjust.
- They do not believe that all human beings are innately flawed and 'sinful' or that suffering and evil are inevitable.
- They believe that it is up to human beings to fight evil and suffering in the world.

Christian attitudes to suffering

Christians might view suffering in the following ways:

- Within the Christian tradition, suffering is seen to be a test.
- Suffering is a punishment for sin and for Catholics is the result of original sin.
- Suffering is also part of God's plan – we might not understand it but should know God will never make us suffer beyond our ability to cope.
- Suffering enables us to appreciate what is good in the world and allows us to grow closer to Jesus, who also suffered.
- Stories from the Bible, such as that of Job in the Old Testament, teach Christians that anyone can suffer and that persevering with suffering can strengthen faith in God.

Muslim attitudes to suffering

Muslims might view suffering in the following ways:

- Islam teaches that everything that happens is part of the will and plan of God (al-Qadr).
- Life is a test and therefore so is suffering.
- Suffering enables Muslims to prove their faith by resisting temptation. Those who resist Shaytan and follow the straight path will be rewarded in the afterlife.
- Good can come from suffering, both because it leads to personal spiritual development and because it allows us the opportunity to support others.
- Muslims should follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad.

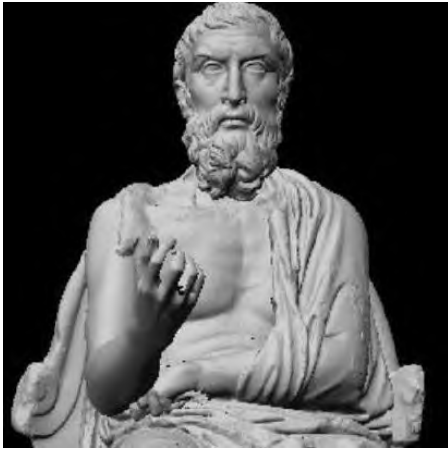
Holocaust

The Holocaust can be used as an example of evil and suffering that has occurred in history that can cause a problem for the belief in God. For some Jews, their experiences during the Holocaust – especially in the camps – were so hideous and impossible to understand that they ceased to believe in God. Many questioned how a loving, just and righteous God could allow such senseless tragedy. A great many Holocaust survivors could not reconcile their terrific suffering and personal loss with the God that they had believed in before the war. They felt abandoned by the God who they had believed was their protector and provider.



The problem with evil and suffering

Many philosophers have argued that evil and suffering causes a problem for the belief in God. It is also a reason why many people are turning away from religion and secularism is on the increase.



Epicurus – Greek (341–270 B.C.)

'Is God willing to prevent evil, but not able to?
Then he is not omnipotent

If God is able to prevent evil, but not willing to?
Then he is malevolent (evil)

Is God able to prevent evil and willing to?
Then why is there evil?'

If a belief system suggests that the universe was created deliberately, out of nothing, by God that is all powerful, all knowing and all-loving, the how is it possible that things within that universe can go wrong?

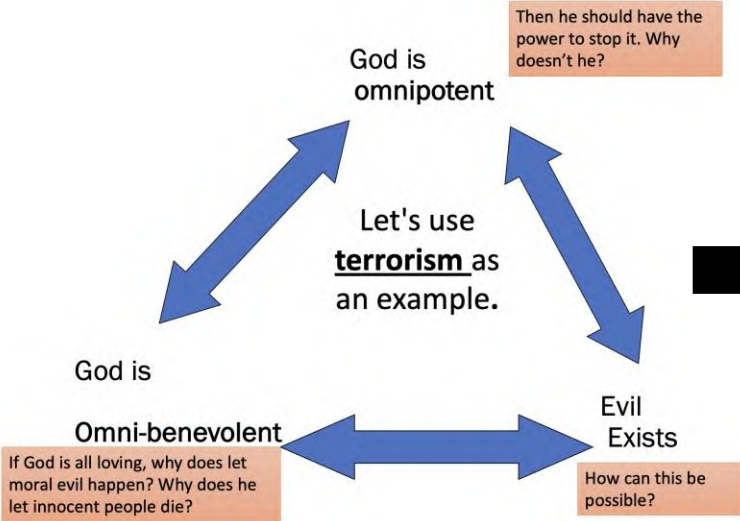
J. L. MACKIE (1917 – 1981) – Australian Philosopher

The most famous version and clearest version of the Problem of Evil from recent times was put forward by Mackie. He was a compatibilist about free will, arguing that we are both determined and have free will. He was an outspoken atheist and his Inconsistent Triad was designed show the position of the main monotheistic position untenable...

→ God could have given us Free-will and made us morally perfect so that we freely choose good every time, but he didn't.



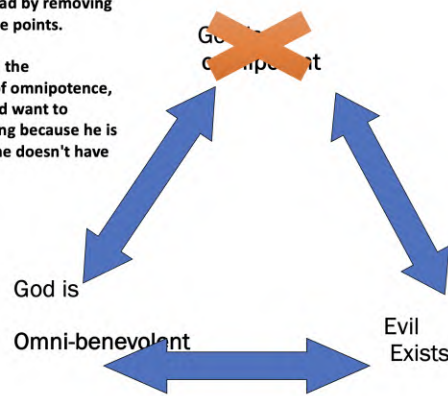
This causes a problem called the - **INCONSISTENT TRIAD**



Whitehead tried to solve this theory:



You can resolve the inconsistent triad by removing one of the three points. If you removed the characteristic of omnipotence, then God would want to prevent suffering because he is all loving, but he doesn't have that power.



Key word: *ex nihilo*: Latin word, meaning 'out of nothing'

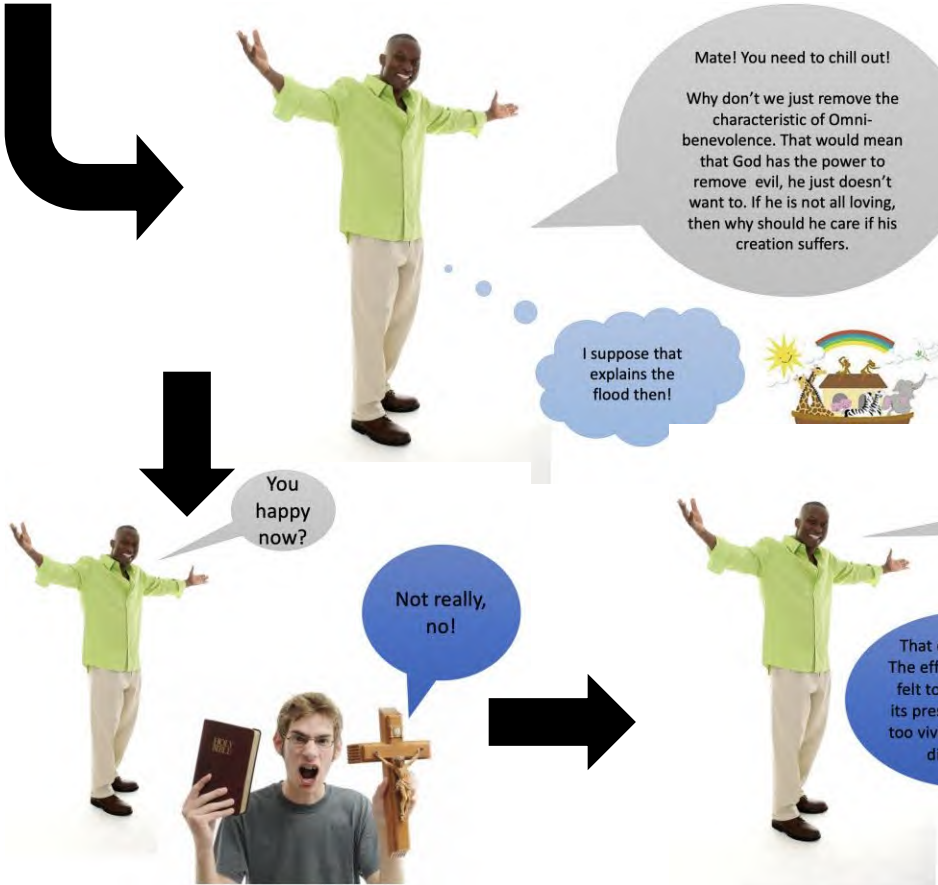
I am not happy with that!!

I believe that God was responsible for creating the world *ex nihilo*. He is so powerful; he is greater than anything that exists!



However, Christians were still not happy with this theory

The problem with evil and suffering



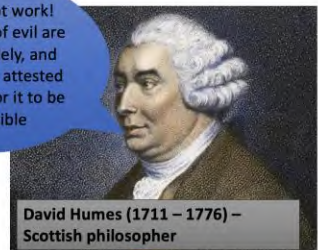
Job's sufferings begin

- Job loses everything he owns.
- His children are killed by a typhoon like wind.
- "At this, Job got up and tore his robe and shaved his head. Then he fell to the ground in worship and said: "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I will depart. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." In all this, Job did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing." (Job 1:20-22, TNIV)



Why would an all loving God allow his followers to suffer purposely?

Lets just remove 'evil exists' then. Surely this will keep you happy. That way God isn't losing any characteristics



Freewill

Religious believers would argue that there is genuine purpose to life, and many would say that God has a plan for everyone. The dilemma here is that, if this is really true, then human beings are not free to make their own decisions and forge their own path in life.

Whether we call it **fate** or **predetermination**, the idea of humans having a purpose and plan means that their lives are planned out in advance for them.

In some ways, modern science supports this argument. How a person looks and even what illnesses they might suffer from in later life is determined by their genes (passed from their parents). Experts can predict with a high degree of accuracy weather systems, eclipses, tides and what times the sun will rise and set. Natural and human laws combine to make people behave in a certain way in societv.



Fate
A power or force that determines the future. The idea that the outcome is predetermined or unchangeable – inevitable and irresistible.

vs

Free will
The belief that humans have free choices in life. The belief that humans were created with the ability to obey God or not according to their own choice.

Fate a power or force that determines the future. The idea that the outcome is predetermined or unchangeable – inevitable and irresistible.
Predetermination the belief that all events have been willed by God. The idea that God has already chosen who will receive salvation and enter heaven.

Christian views on freewill

- Christians believe that free will is given by God to human beings. Humans therefore have the ability to choose to do good and the ability to choose to do evil.
- Catholics believe that as a result of original sin, humans find it easier to choose to do wrong, but with the help of God can choose to do good.
- Those who do sin can attempt to atone and gain forgiveness through prayer and, for Catholics, confession and penance.
- Fate is not a Christian idea, and the vast majority of Christians do not believe that their life is totally planned out for them.
- Some denominations (for example Lutheran and Calvinist Christians) believe in predestination – that God has already chosen who is to reach salvation. Predestination, here, is subtly different to fate, as it particularly focuses on the notion of salvation after life on earth and not on the decisions that we make during earthly life.



Muslim views on freewill

Teachings on free will and predestination in Islam are not straightforward. For Muslims, free will must exist as without it humans are simply puppets – unable to truly take responsibility for themselves or offer genuine faith and submission to God. Similarly, though, predestination must exist as without it, God is not ultimately powerful and omniscient:

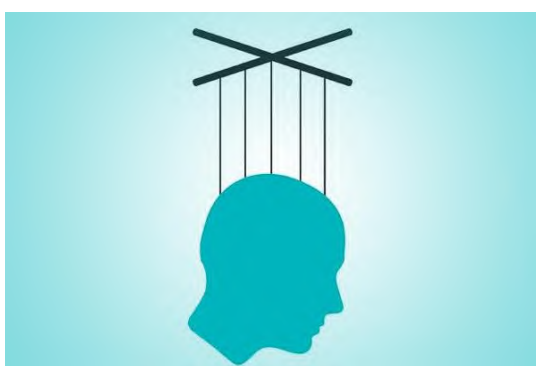
'God has power over all things.'

Qur'an 3:159

Islam teaches that every person is free to choose whether or not to follow God. As some do not, suffering occurs.

Al-Qadr

Al-Qadr is the will of God and translates literally as 'fate' or 'pre-ordainment'. It is one of Islam's six articles of faith. In the Qur'an this is also referred to as God's 'decree'. Some Muslims believe God wrote down all that has happened and will happen (on the 'Preserved Tablet'). God has measured out the span of every person's life, their lot of good or bad fortune, and the fruits of their efforts. Again, God does not need to force anyone to do good or evil. Although many Muslims believe in predestination they also believe that we have free will. It is granted by God so that people are not puppets.



The idea of **iktisab** means that while God knows the final outcome, a person must 'acquire' or 'merit' responsibility for their own actions. These Muslims believe there is no fate in Islam as this infers surrendering yourself helplessly. Instead there is the idea of working to understand and cooperate with God, and bringing oneself to a unity with his will.

Sunni and Shi'a differences in beliefs

- **Sunni** Muslims believe in the concept of the 'Preserved Tablet' and that God has written down all that has happened and will happen. An individual has power to choose, but since God created time and space he knows what will happen.
- **Shi'a** Muslims reject the idea of predestination. They firmly believe in the concept of 'Bada', which states that God has not set a definite course for human history. Instead, God may alter the course of human history as is seen to be fit. Shi'a Muslims believe that God has definite power over the whole of the universe, however, whenever he wills, he can replace a given destiny with another one (effectively changing the course of fate). Some of these changes of destiny are brought about by man himself, who can through his free will, his decisions, and his way of life, lay the foundations for change.

Themes – Issues of Human Rights



Issues of human rights topics

Section 1: Human rights and social justice

- What are human rights?
- What is social justice?
- Personal conviction
- Christian views on human rights and social justice
- Muslim views on human rights and social justice
- Censorship
- Freedom of religious expression
- Religious extremism

Section 2: Prejudice and discrimination

- What is prejudice and discrimination?
- Christian views on prejudice and discrimination
- Muslim views on prejudice and discrimination
- Christian views on women in worship
- Muslim views on women in worship
- Christian views on racism
- Muslim views on racism

Section 3: Wealth and poverty

- The acquisition of wealth
- The use of wealth
- Poverty in the UK
- Christian views on wealth and poverty
- Muslim views on wealth and poverty

Key Concepts



Censorship The practice of suppressing and limiting access to materials considered obscene, offensive or a threat to security. People may also be restricted in their speech by censorship laws.



Discrimination Acts of treating groups of people, or individuals differently, based on prejudice.



Extremism Believing in and supporting ideas that are very far from what most people consider correct or reasonable.



Human rights The basic entitlements of all human beings, afforded to them simply because they are human. An example of human rights as stated in the Declaration of Human Rights is that all people should receive an education.



Personal conviction Something a person strongly feels or believes in.



Prejudice Pre-judging; judging people to be inferior or superior without cause.



Relative poverty A standard of poverty measured in relation to the standards of a society in which a person lives, for example, living on less than x per cent of average UK income.



Absolute poverty An acute state of deprivation, whereby a person cannot access the most basic of their human needs.



Social justice Promoting a fair society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity. Ensuring that everyone has equal access to provisions, equal opportunities and rights.

Human Rights

Human rights are universal moral rights that apply to all people at all times in all situations, regardless of gender, race, religious or non-religious beliefs and age.

In 1948 the United Nations issued the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This contained a set of articles, which are statements listing rights that all human beings should be granted. The declaration includes 30 articles, but all are based on the first article, 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights'. Many countries have formally agreed to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and are expected to maintain each of the rights in their country. When any of the articles are broken then other countries and international agencies step in to try to persuade the country to restore basic human rights



Amnesty International

Action groups such as Amnesty International continually monitor situations where human rights are not being upheld. Their work continues to be important. Although it was written in 1948, many people today still don't have the rights identified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Amnesty International

Set up in 1960 by Peter Benenson, Amnesty International works worldwide to protect and campaign for men, women and children whose basic human rights are denied.

Amnesty International uses a range of nonviolent methods to raise awareness and protest against human rights abuses:

- Forming protest marches
- Writing letters to governments, campaigning for justice
- Raising awareness, through the media, of people whose rights have been abused
- Running schools programmes and events to educate about human rights abuses

In 1977 Amnesty International were given a Nobel Peace Prize for the impact their work has had worldwide.



■ Article 4: No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms

Social Justice

Today many agencies and individuals actively support people's entitlement to human rights in an attempt to create social justice – a fair and just relation between the individual and society.

Social justice often involves governments and agencies working together to try and help developing countries. They might try to make less of a divide between rich and poor or make sure environments are clean and safe so that societies are not affected by pollution or risks to their health.

Key Concept



Social justice Promoting a fair society by challenging injustice and valuing diversity. Ensuring that everyone has equal access to provisions, equal opportunities and rights.

'Social justice is an underlying principle for peaceful and prosperous coexistence within and among nations. We uphold the principles of social justice when we promote gender equality or the rights of indigenous peoples and migrants. We advance social justice when we remove barriers that people face because of gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture or disability.'

United Nations

'Circumstances such as where a person is born, where they live or their gender and ethnicity should never determine their income or their opportunities for quality education, basic healthcare, decent work, adequate shelter, access to drinking water, political participation or living free from threatened, or actual, physical violence.'

Ban Ki-Moon, Eighth Secretary General of the United Nations

Personal Conviction - Individuals who campaign for human rights

Throughout history individuals and religious people have campaigned for human rights and social justice by putting their own lives at risk. Their actions and commitment result from a belief in trying to create a world that is more socially just. Some examples you could use in your exam are:

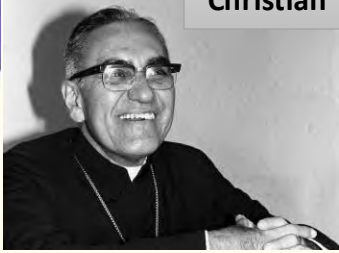
Key Concept



Personal conviction Something a person strongly feels or believes in.

Oscar Romero

Christian



Oscar Romero was born in El Salvador in 1917. After training to be a carpenter he decided to become a priest and was ordained in 1942. He became Archbishop of El Salvador in 1977. In the 1960s there was much crime and corruption in El Salvador. Some people were very wealthy, but many people were very poor. To begin with, Romero decided not to speak out against all the corruption that he saw. His views changed after a close friend of his was murdered. He knew that he had to speak out against the injustices, and openly criticised the government. He held meetings, which had been banned by the government. Protestors in the Church became targets of violence. Government slogans included 'Be a patriot – kill a priest'. After many threats, on 24 March 1980, soldiers burst into the chapel and gunned down Romero while he was celebrating mass.

Malala Yousafzai

Muslim

Malala Yousafzai is an example of a human rights campaigner who wanted to create a more socially just society. Malala campaigned against the lack of education for girls in the Swat area of northwest Pakistan where she lived.

'I raise up my voice – not so I can shout but so that those without a voice can be heard... we cannot succeed when half of us are held back.'

The Taliban were a powerful force in the Swat Valley, and had banned girls from attending school. For Malala, girls not being allowed an education went against Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to education.

Malala knew that her campaigning would put her life at risk, as the Taliban had issued death threats against her. When she was 11 she began a blog detailing her views on promoting education for girls and this led to her giving interviews for the media. On the afternoon of 9 October 2012, she was boarding her school bus when a gunman asked for her by name, then pointed a pistol at her and fired three shots. Malala survived the attack and, despite severe injuries, continues to campaign for issues of social justice.



Malala Yousafzai is a campaigner for education for girls

Martin Luther King

Christian



For many Christians the teachings and actions of Martin Luther King continue to act as an inspiration in their fight against racism. As a Baptist Minister, Martin Luther King was influenced by Jesus' teachings on love. In his campaign against the racism in the United States he adopted nonviolent protests to support civil rights for black Americans. People of all races and religions joined his protests and staged sit-ins and marches. Despite being imprisoned and suffering violence, Martin Luther King knew that retaliation with violence wasn't the answer. He followed Jesus' teachings to turn the other cheek and not return hate for hate. Martin made many inspirational speeches, the nature of which he demonstrated through his actions.

Although many individuals and organisations actively support human rights and social justice there are many questions and problems that are raised. What happens if a person's belief in a human right conflicts with the law of the country? This results in choices having to be made: either to obey the law or to act from their personal conscience and risk punishment. Groups may protest for their personal conviction that conflict with the law: Here so some other example:



A protest against same-sex marriage



Pro-life campaigners



Supporters of euthanasia

Christian attitudes to human rights and social justice

➤ **Imago Dei (Made in the image of God)**

For many Christians, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflects the main principles of Christianity. For Christians, all people are children of God and created in God's image. In the bible it says *"Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness,"* Genesis 1:26. This means that the characteristics of God are reflected in all human beings, and for this reason they believe each individual has worth and value. So human life should not be destroyed or maltreated.

➤ **Agape in action**

The belief that each person is sacred and worthy of respect is a core Christian belief, so it is expected that each person will be treated with unconditional love – agape. Agape is the foundation of all the principles of Christian social teaching and campaigns for social justice, and follows the example set by Jesus. It is a selfless, unconditional love that voluntarily suffers inconvenience, discomfort, and even death for the benefit of another without expecting anything in return. So following the example of Jesus, the work of many Christian charities and individuals expresses agape.

➤ **Liberation Theology**

Within Christianity there is the concept of liberation theology, which is based on the teachings and actions of Jesus. During Jesus' life his actions helped to liberate people from unjust economic, political or social conditions. Jesus is often depicted as a freedom fighter. Liberation theology is the Christian idea that God has the power to change situations in the world that are unjust. Some Christians have taken this belief to mean that it is right to stand up against governments that oppress their people or to challenge abuses of power. As part of their commitment to liberation theology, Christians may take part in peaceful protests or actively take part in supporting those harmed by injustice, for example people who are imprisoned for political reasons and without a trial. Some supporters of liberation theology have been killed for speaking out against injustice. Among them was Oscar Romero.

Muslim attitudes to human rights and social justice

The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights

The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (CDHRI) is a declaration of the member states of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) adopted in Cairo, Egypt, on 5 August 1990. Muslim countries do not use the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Instead they use the Cairo Declaration on Human Rights.

➤ **Human dignity**

A Muslim is not just expected but obliged to oppose injustice and oppression no matter who the victim happens to be. The Qur'an teaches the equality of all humans and the special duties that humans have in creating a just and fair society. For Muslims, the worth and dignity of each human is a natural and absolute right. It is given by God and cannot be taken away by individuals or the state. Even criminals, although they may be punished, should not be mistreated.

➤ **Ummah in action**

A bond between Muslims is expressed through the term ummah. It refers to the unity of Muslims all over the world. As Muslims believe all people were created by God so therefore each human life should be respected and treated with dignity. Within the ummah all Muslims are equal – rich or poor. The ummah promotes the welfare of the whole Muslim community in supporting human rights and trying to create a just society:

- They support each other through the giving of zakah and Sadaqah.
- They encourage people to live a good life and oppose inequalities. This might include being a member of organisations such as the London-based Islamic Human Rights Commission.



Islamic Human Rights Commission

The stated mission of the Islamic Human Rights Commission is to 'work with different organisations from Muslim and non-Muslim backgrounds, to campaign for justice for all peoples regardless of their racial, confessional or political background'. The group is based in London and was established in 1997. Its activities include raising awareness and protesting against human rights abuses worldwide.

Censorship

In the UK, the law is designed to balance the desire for freedom of religious expression with the requirement to control extremism. Part of creating that balance involves placing restrictions on what people can say and when or how they say it.

Censorship involves suppressing or controlling materials and information that some people may find offensive or which might be dangerous. This might mean restricting people's access to certain books or films, or regulating what they say publicly. Some social media platforms remove images that they think may be offensive. UK laws punish speech that is designed to stir up violence. This is censorship.

Censorship can be useful when it protects society against the spread of racist or sexist violence. Censorship can be harmful when it takes away people's freedom to express their desires for political, religious and moral change. As a consequence censorship has become a controversial topic.

Key Concept



Censorship The practice of suppressing and limiting access to materials considered obscene, offensive or a threat to security. People may also be restricted in their speech by censorship laws.

The debate

Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights States:

'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.'

However, this can raise many different views.

I believe in the freedom of speech. We should be allowed to say what we want and express our religious and non-religious views in public.

We should be able to talk about our beliefs in public but not if it going to offend others or encourage hatred against people.

No views should be allowed to be stated in public that are going to offend or harm others. Religious beliefs should only be expressed in the home.



In class we were discussing the Charlie Hebdo case, when people working for a magazine were murdered just because of the drawings they published.

Jamal

Hold on now. Those weren't any old drawings. Those were drawings of the Prophet Muhammad which could be considered really offensive. They shouldn't have been allowed to publish any material that is going to offend people.

Sian



But it is all relative. What might offend you may not offend me. In Denmark when pictures of the Prophet were published some countries allowed them to be seen but some censored them. Do you want to live in a country where no one can speak their minds? In some countries all the media is censored so only the view of the government can be expressed. Up until 2008 there was a blasphemy law in England, which censored things in the media which were offensive in Christianity.

Tom



Censorship



I am not saying that but when I look at some websites and I see the **anti-Semitic** and **Islamophobic** statements I know they have only been written to offend . . . and that can't be right.

Sian



Anti-Semitic hostile towards or prejudiced against Jews.
Islamophobic hostile or prejudiced against Muslims.

In the UK and Europe people are free to express their views about any religion unless the content is likely to incite violence or discrimination against its followers.

Jamal



But surely that's really hard to prove. Anyway some of the offensive comments come from religious people themselves. Those comments that come from the Westboro Baptist Church in the US about gay people and Jewish people really offend me.

Sian



But their views aren't reflecting the majority of Christians. They are just examples of extremist views and you get those in every religion. Extremism is when people state extreme political or religious views. If people weren't allowed to express offensive views then they would still hold them.

Jamal



I think for all of us it's a personal decision that often relates to the context. I am not sure we can ever get a balance between free speech and censorship.

Tom



I suppose it does depend on the individual. I get really fed up when people come to my door and talk to me about religion.

Sian



Now that leads us to a really difficult question. How far should there be freedom of religious expression?

Jamal



Muslim views on censorship

Shariah Law means that in some Muslim countries there is a censorship of materials that are deemed offensive to Islam. Some Hadiths prohibit the use of visual images of the prophet Muhammad. Therefore some countries ban films or images that depict him.

In the UK, Muslims must navigate both Shariah Law and the law of the country. This means there may be times when they come across materials offensive to Islam. For example, UK law requires sex education to be taught in schools but in 2019 some Muslim families protested outside their children's primary school in Birmingham because they were concerned the lessons went against Islamic teachings about homosexuality.

Freedom of religious expression

Religion is expressed in many different ways. Often in the media we read of situations in which one person's desire to express their faith has led to others complaining or being offended. One way religion can be expressed is in the clothes or symbols we wear. In some countries it is illegal to wear religious symbols to school. In France, for example, any 'overtly' religious symbol cannot be worn or displayed in school.

Freedom of religious expression is the ability of a religious person or organisation to share what they believe in public. This means that a Christian could wear a cross as a sign of faith, or a church could advertise their faith on posters in the street. Some countries prefer society to be secular. Others have a religious government that wishes for the whole society to observe their religious laws. In some cases, religious expression may sometimes be restricted by laws that ban religious advertising or the wearing of religious symbols.



Freedom of religious expression in Islam

Shariah Law allows non-Muslims who live in Muslim countries to be protected from abuse or ridicule, and to follow their own religion within the laws of the country. No one should ever be forced to believe in Allah. This is confirmed in the Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam, which prohibits any use of force to change a person's faith. However, Muslims believe that while other religions are to be tolerated, they are not correct. Muslims want to encourage non-Muslims to revert to Islam and so they share their beliefs with other people. This requires freedom of religious expression.

In Islam, apostasy (renouncing your faith) is a sin that Allah will punish in the afterlife. However, there is disagreement over whether there should be a punishment for it in this life too. Some Muslims argue that people should be free to leave Islam if they wish. Others point out that some hadiths say an apostate should receive the death penalty.

In the UK, religious belief is a protected characteristic. This means that no one should suffer discrimination for their religion so Muslims should be able to follow their faith freely. In practice, many Muslims do experience abuse from people who do not understand their faith or are fearful of it.

Secular non-religious; having no relationship with religion.

Head coverings worn by Muslim women



Burka

Full body, covers entire face, a mesh screen covers the eyes



Niqab

Veil for the face, eyes remain visible



Hijab

Square scarf covers head and neck



Chador

Full-body cloak



Shayla

Long scarf, wrapped around the head



Al-Amira

Two-piece headscarf



Khimar

Cape-like, covering hair, neck and shoulders

- Freedom of religious expression can be helpful when it allows individuals the freedom to choose from a variety of options concerning their own beliefs, or helps give people a sense of belonging to their faith.
- It can be unhelpful when it upsets others. For instance, Christians protesting outside abortion clinics have been accused of upsetting vulnerable women who need help.

Evangelism

For some religious people, for example Christians and Muslims, it is important to tell other people about their faith. This could involve inviting friends to religious activities in the hope they will join the faith community. It could also be as part of a mission where a person (missionary) is sent out from the faith tradition to evangelise to try to convert people to join their tradition. There are very many different views within religious traditions to mission and conversion. For some Christians it is a duty to tell others about the Gospel in the hope of converting them. This might be through pamphlets, door-to-door visits or preaching in public places. Their activities are driven by their interpretation of passages in the Bible such as: *'He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation".'* **Mark 16:15**. Other people think that trying to convert people from other faiths (or people of no faith) is disrespectful towards their beliefs.

Mission calling of a religious organisation, especially a Christian one, to go out into the world and spread its faith.

Evangelise to try to convert someone to a different religion (usually Christianity)

Conversion changing one's religion or beliefs.

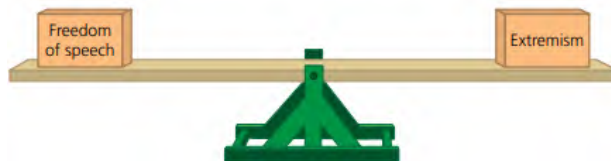
Religious extremism

There are many ways that people might show the importance of their beliefs. For some it is important to join organisations and activities where people can share similar views and beliefs. For others it is important to try and persuade people to have the same beliefs. There are many ethical questions concerning what activities people should engage in because of their beliefs. There is a fine balance between freedom of speech and action, and actions and speech that are considered extreme.

Key Concept



Extremism Believing in and supporting ideas that are very far from what most people consider correct or reasonable.



Anti-abortion extremism

Sanctity of life is an important belief in Christianity. For many this belief guides personal considerations and actions on issues such as medical ethics, family planning, euthanasia, capital punishment and abortion. However, some people hold very extreme views on the issue and believe that procedures like abortion are wrong and that they must act to stop them. This can lead to acts of violence.

In 2015 Robert Lewis Dear shot and killed three and injured nine more at the Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado. Planned Parenthood advises people on contraception and other issues of sexual health as well as abortion. He believed that the Bible condemns abortions and by attacking people who worked in abortion clinics he was doing 'God's work'.

For some religious believers their beliefs and faith are so important to them that they may feel justified in acting in certain extreme ways to uphold the belief or to try and make others believe it too. These actions can cause harm to themselves or other people. Such actions might occur because the individuals:

- interpret the religious scripture in such a way that they believe this is the way to behave or react
- that through such actions they will be rewarded in this life or an after-life
- are influenced by friends and family who act in similar ways
- believe that they are doing the work of God.

There are many different types of religious extremism. The one factor they have in common is that the individuals involved are all acting because of a belief that they hold to be true.

The rise of jihadist groups

There are a number of groups who have labelled themselves as jihadists in recent years (for example, Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, Islamic State/Daesh). They are prepared to use violence in order to create an Islamic State that would be governed in accordance with Islamic (Shari'ah) law. Western governments regard these groups as terrorist organisations and moderate Muslims reject this form of extreme Islam. In 2014 jihadi

fighters, saying they were loyal to Islam, captured large areas of Northern Syria and Iraq, setting up what they called a 'caliphate'. This is a state governed in accordance with Islamic (Shari'ah) law. Islamic State (IS) say they want to restore God's rule on earth and defend the ummah (Muslim community) against infidels (non-believers).

The Muslim Council of Britain (MCB) speaks on behalf of British Muslims. The MCB have strongly condemned the actions of IS, saying that they are 'horrified' by the group's 'twisted message' and 'barbarous' behaviour. The '#notinmyname' hashtag has been widely used to make it clear that IS does not represent the views of British Muslims. Find out more about this campaign from <http://isisnotinmyname.com>



Jihadi fighters, from Islamic State in Northern Syria and Iraq



Islamophobia

After the 9/11 attacks and the rise in Jihadist groups there has been a significant increase in Islamophobia and misunderstanding of the religion. Islamophobia is a term often used to describe a distrust or dislike of Muslims. It can include stereotyped views, which are presented as if they are truthful about all Muslims. As a result Muslims have felt their human rights have been affected. For example, Westerners have questioned laws in Muslim countries regarding the treatment of women. Women may be attacked in some countries or imprisoned for not wearing a hijab or may be attacked in some countries or imprisoned for not wearing a hijab or burqa.

However, in the West, many have been attacked or arrested for wearing it. Many people believe that, as with all forms of prejudice and discrimination, greater education is the key to a greater understanding.

Prejudice and discrimination

Prejudice

- Believing some people are inferior or superior without even knowing them.
- Pre-judge someone based on an initial first impression.
- It is a THOUGHT OR ATTITUDE

Discrimination

- Is when you ACT on a prejudice thought.
- Treating people unfairly because of their race, colour, gender, class, age, etc.

-It is also illegal!

Goes against the first 2 articles of the Human Rights Declaration e.g. Article 1: all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.



Key Concepts



Discrimination Acts of treating groups of people, or individuals differently, based on prejudice.



Prejudice Pre-judging; judging people to be inferior or superior without cause.

Prejudice is about what we think, but discrimination involves those pre-judgements being put into action. Individuals, organisations and governments can all be guilty of discrimination. Throughout history, governments have discriminated against certain groups of people, for example by preventing them from:

- being able to take certain jobs
- marrying who they want
- attending their places of worship
- living in certain areas
- voting
- driving a car

In Britain there are many laws to protect people who in the past have been discriminated against. However, many people would say that discrimination still exists, for example:

- Some buildings do not allow access for all the people who want to use them.
- In certain firms there is an expectation that particular types of people won't become leaders. This is known as a 'glass ceiling' and is a term commonly used to explain the difficulties women can experience when trying to become leaders and managers.
- The interpretation of religious texts can result in actions that are considered discriminatory. One such example is the role of women in worship in Christianity. In some Christian denominations, such as Catholic and Greek Orthodox, although women can take many important roles, they are not allowed to become priests. For some, this is considered an act of discrimination.

Religious discrimination

Religious discrimination is the unequal treatment of an individual or group based on their beliefs. Like all discrimination, it is often based on prejudices, which have been formed by ignorance.

Across the world, people are being discriminated against for their religious and non-religious beliefs.

Actions can include:

- name-calling and ridicule
- attacks on places of worship
- burning of sacred texts
- not being allowed to wear symbols of religion in public
- acts of violence.

Speaking out – Isra Mohammed

After the Paris terrorist attacks in 2016, a 15-year-old Newcastle schoolgirl, Isra Mohammed, decided to speak out in a school assembly. Because Isra is Muslim some people had called her a terrorist but she told her classmates that terrorism has no religion and it does not represent Islam. Isra described how her seven-year-old sister had come home crying from school because she had been called a terrorist. She did not want to return to school. Isra told her classmates that they should not always believe what other people or the headlines in some newspapers said, and that Islamophobia can only be tackled by people learning more about each other's religions and beliefs. Isra's speech has now been downloaded many times from YouTube and she has been asked to speak to pupils in other schools.



■ Isra Mohammed spoke out against Islamophobia following the 2016 Paris attacks

Anti-Semitic hostile towards or prejudiced against Jews.

Islamophobic hostile or prejudiced against Muslims.

How can we stop religious discrimination?

Religious discrimination is a worldwide problem. There has recently been an increase in Anti-Semitic discrimination in the UK due to lack of understanding about the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine. In the UK Islamophobia is also an ongoing issue. Some of the ways we can tackle religious discrimination is through education and learning about religion. Today in the United Kingdom activities are organised by Muslim individuals and communities to try to inform and educate about Muslim beliefs and practices and counter harmful stereotypes.

Visit My Mosque day

Each year a mosque open day is organised by the Muslim Council of Britain. The aims of the day are to counter the negative attitudes to Islam and Muslims, which are often shown in the media. Over 80 mosques are open throughout the day and many activities take place. The open day gives opportunities to ask questions and to understand the role that the mosque plays in local communities, and national charity and welfare activities.

Christian attitudes to prejudice and discrimination

Marginalised put in a place of little importance.

- Christians believe all human life was created by God and therefore each person is equal and sacred.
- The many laws which Moses received from God gave guidance for people to live in harmony with each other and support and protect those people who may be **marginalised**. In Leviticus 19: 33–34 it is stated that strangers must be accepted. And in Deuteronomy it says: *‘Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge.’ Deuteronomy 24:17*
- Jesus’ example and teaching reflects the importance for Christians of treating all people as created by God. Jesus’ ministry extended to many people who were marginalised and discriminated against. He healed women and lepers. He befriended Zacchaeus, a tax collector, even though tax collectors were shunned by other Jews.
- In the later writings of the New Testament there are many references to the importance of recognising equality of all people. St Paul wrote in his letter to the Galatians:

For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise’

Galatians 3:27–29

- Being ‘baptised into Christ’ suggests having a close personal relationship with him.
- Clothing ‘yourself’ with Christ is like being adopted, taking on his appearance.
- ‘All’ Christians are given this gift, no matter their race, social status or gender.
- To be ‘one’ is to be like a single person. There is no distinction between people in the Christian faith.
- To be ‘heirs’ is to take a privileged position, but this is available to everyone who accepts Christ.

Christian beliefs about women in worship

In Christianity a central belief is that all people are part of God’s creation and should be treated with dignity and respect. There are many different views, however, as to whether men and women should have the same roles in worship.

In the Catholic tradition women cannot be ordained as priests. The basis for this decision can be found in the New Testament:

- which shows that while women could publicly pray and prophesy in church (**1 Corinthians 11:1–16**),
- *In a letter written by St Paul when discussing women in worship he stated they could not teach or have authority over a man (1 Timothy 2:11–14)*. However, the context behind this letter can be debated.
- In 1994 Pope John Paul II confirmed that this would remain the case *‘I declare that the Church has no authority whatsoever to confer priestly ordination on women and that this judgment is to be definitively held by all the Church’s faithful.’ Ordinatio Sacerdotalis 4*
- Jesus only choose male disciples.

However, Some Christian churches have recently begun to allow women to be priests or ministers (for example the Methodist church). In the Church of England the first woman to be ordained as a bishop was Libby Lane in 2015.



Muslim attitudes to prejudice and discrimination

- Islam teaches that God created everyone as equal but different. As all are created by God, discrimination against any human is unjustified. Hadiths suggest that Allah instructed angels to collect different types of soil to create humans, implying that diversity was part of Allah’s plan.
- The ummah crosses all gender, race and wealth boundaries.
- When Muslims go on pilgrimage to Makkah they all wear simple white garments, showing they are equal before God. These garments are often used to cover their bodies when dead for the same reason.
- The Qur’an teaches that men and women have equal religious and ethical rights however, they are given different roles.

‘O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of God is the most righteous of you. Indeed, God is Knowing and Acquainted.’

Qur’an 49:13

Muslim beliefs about women in worship

There is currently some different opinions among Muslims regarding the circumstances in which women may act as imams to lead a congregation in salat (prayer). The Qur'an does not mention whether females can lead prayers although historically it has been a male role. Many scholars look at interpretations of the Hadith. In several passages there are mentions of two of Muhammad's wives, Aisha and Umm Salamah, leading prayers.

In some Sunni sects woman may be imam (leader) of a congregational prayer if the congregation consists of women alone. When this is allowed the woman stands among the congregation in the front row, instead of alone in front of the congregation as a male imam would do. In China there are nusi, which are mosques only for women, and men are not allowed to enter.

In many countries, Muslims have been active in campaigning for a woman-led prayer movement. In Britain, Raheel Raza became the first Muslim-born woman to lead a mixedgender British congregation through Friday prayers at a small prayer session in Oxford. Raheel argues that nowhere in the Qur'an are female imams forbidden.

Raheel received death threats when she led a mixed-gender prayer session in Canada but she believes what she is doing is important for all women.

'It's not just about taking the job of an imam. It's about reminding the Muslim community that 50 per cent of its adherents are women who are equal to men. Women are equally observant, practising Muslims who deserve to be heard.'



Humanist attitudes to prejudice and discrimination



Stephen Fry supporting a campaign to counter negative attitudes towards mental health

Humanists accept the theory of evolution. They believe that all human beings are part of the same species 'Homo Sapiens' and share the same ancestors. Humanists recognise that there may be differences between people but they all share a common bond. They believe in treating people as individuals, not in stereotyping and not in discriminating against groups of people because of differences such as age, race or sex. The actor and humanist Stephen Fry has spoken out against the damage that prejudice and discrimination can create. He has campaigned to counter the prejudice which often exists in society regarding mental illness. For Fry, like many other people, the key to countering prejudice is through education.

Racism

Racism is discrimination against people on the basis of their race. Throughout history people from religious and non-religious beliefs have worked together to try to stop racism. Campaigns have successfully changed the practices in many countries, making it illegal for people to discriminate against others because of their race.

There are many education

programmes in Britain which focus on explaining to students the dangers of racism and what to do if they see any racist actions. One such programme aims to tackle racism at football matches.

Show Racism the Red Card

Show Racism the Red Card is an anti-racist charity that has been growing from 1995, when Shaka Hislop donated £50 to a local anti-racism campaign in Newcastle upon Tyne. Show Racism the Red Card is now present in the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Ireland. The charity in Ireland was formally launched in 2006. It combats racism through using high profile sports stars to present an anti-racist message to young people and others. It works with schools and provides resources to help educate young people against racism and contribute towards integration.



www.theredcard.ie

Christian attitudes towards racial prejudice

Christian teachings promote the equality of all races, such as in the story of the good Samaritan. Jesus' own actions also showed how important it was to treat all races as equal, healing men and women from different races. The words and actions of Jesus have influenced many Christians throughout history to campaign against race discrimination.

Today there are many different Christian organisations in Britain that continue to work against race discrimination and support racial and religious harmony:

The Church of England's Committee for Minority and Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC)

- ▶ encourages minority ethnic people to become part of the ministry of the Church
- ▶ supports race awareness initiatives throughout society
- ▶ creates links with other faiths and cultures through inter-faith dialogue.

Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ)

The Catholic Church works to oppose racism and to raise awareness of the importance of cultural diversity. This is led by the Catholic Association for Racial Justice (CARJ). Through its work it seeks 'to value, respect and celebrate the equality and dignity of all God's people'.

Martin Luther King

Is also an example of a Christian who worked to fight against racism. MLK was influenced by Christian teachings such as the words of Jesus; *'But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'*

Matthew 5:43

Some of the ways he fought against racism was by:



A dream and inspiration

'I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.'

For King, his dream and motivation was that one day people would not be discriminated against because of their race.

Acting on convictions

'I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law.'

King showed this in practice when he was imprisoned for leading nonviolent protests.

Use of nonviolence

'Nonviolence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time; the need for mankind to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence. Mankind must evolve for all human conflict a method

which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.'

Despite being threatened and physically attacked, King only ever used peaceful protest in his campaigns for equality. He led many nonviolent protest marches.

Forming a community

'We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.'

King organised groups of protestors, inspiring many through his ministry in churches.

Muslim attitudes towards racial prejudice

The Islamic creation story describes how God sent angels to earth to collect different types of soil in order to create the first man – Adam. The soil was of different colours, different strengths and from different parts of the earth. For many Muslims this shows that the descendants of Adam were destined to be as diverse as the handful of soil; to have different appearances, attributes and qualities. The Qur'an teaches that such diversity was all a part of God's plan for the world:

'And of His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of knowledge.' Qur'an 30:22



Muslim attitudes towards racial prejudice

- There has been a long tradition of race equality in Islam, dating back to the actions and words of the Prophet Muhammad. When it was decided that a muezzin was to be established to recite the call to prayer, the Prophet Muhammad selected a former black slave Bilal ibn Rabah and called a close friend (Abu Dhar) out for a racist comment.
- The Prophet's last sermon showed how important the brotherhood (ummah) of Muslims is: *'All mankind is descended from Adam and Eve, an Arab is not better than a non-Arab and a non-Arab is not better than an Arab; a white person is not better than a black person, nor is a black person better than a white person except by piety and good actions. Learn that every Muslim is the brother of every other Muslim and that Muslims form one brotherhood.'*
- For many Muslims it has been important to challenge racism, even at a risk to their own lives. For example, Farid Esack, a Muslim university teacher was involved in the fight against the apartheid system in South Africa. Apartheid was the systematic discrimination against the black population of South Africa. Esack established a Muslim anti-apartheid group and spoke at meetings against apartheid.

Apartheid a system of segregating people by races, which was used in South Africa.
Muezzin the person who calls Muslims to the mosque to pray.

Malcolm X



Malcolm X was an African American civil rights leader in 1950s and 60s. He originally promoted black supremacy and even urged his followers to use violent resistance (disagreeing with Martin Luther King's pacifist ideas about how to get racial equality). However, he experienced a change of outlook while on Hajj, when he felt able to share his thoughts and ideas with Muslims of all races. This caused him to campaign for integration as a solution to racial problems in America. He founded the Organisation of Afro-American Unity to help highlight the importance of human rights for black people all over the world and respect between people regardless of skin colour.



Christian Muslim Forum



The Christian/Muslim Forum

The Christian/Muslim Forum is an organisation that works to promote inter-faith dialogue, sharing their views with people of different beliefs to try and create a more just and tolerant society. They have been doing that since 2006. Based in London, it brings together Christians and Muslims from around the country to build good relationships. It has four Christian ministers who are selected from different Christian Churches (Anglican, Catholic, Free Churches, Minority Traditions) and four Muslim Presidents who represent the different Sunni and Shi'a traditions. Through creating safe spaces, discussions are held which explore differences between and within Islam and Christianity. Through inter-faith dialogue and activities, the Forum seeks to educate and campaign for a greater understanding between religions.

The acquisition of wealth

Wealth is not evenly spread out across society. Some people are much richer than others. There are many ways in which people might get their wealth:

- Through working for a business and receiving an income. Some jobs have fantastically high salaries, for example sports stars and TV presenters. Other workers receive much lower pay.
- Some people start their own business. Some of these grow and become extremely profitable.
- Some people inherit wealth, maybe on the death of a relative.
- A few people get their wealth through criminal means, for example, fraud or burglary.
- Some people get wealth through activities such as gambling.

Income and wealth in the UK

- The bottom fifth of the UK population have 8 per cent of the UK's total income; the top fifth have 40 per cent.
- Income and wealth in London and the South East is considerably higher than in other areas of the country, for example the North East.
- The top 10 per cent of the population hold 45 per cent of the wealth and the bottom 50 per cent have 8.7 per cent.
- In 2014 it was reported that the five richest families in the UK were worth more than the bottom 20 per cent of the whole population.

Source: Figures from The Equality Trust and other news sources

Poverty

We often use the term 'poverty' to refer to someone who is living in extremely poor circumstances. There are two levels of poverty:

Absolute poverty – a set standard which is consistent over time and between countries. It usually includes having no access to basic services, such as medicine or shelter.



Relative poverty – a level of income below the majority of one particular country.



We often don't think of people in the UK living in poverty as most people have access to accommodation and the state should provide some support for people who really need it, for example, council houses and monetary benefits. The UK is a very wealthy country compared to many others. However, Oxfam indicates that there are 2 million malnourished people in the UK, with a further 3 million at risk of malnourishment. They state that food poverty is on the rise with increasing numbers of people relying on services like food banks, where they can get parcels of food and other essentials. The charity Barnardo's suggests that there are 3.7 million children living in poverty in the UK. Worryingly, children who are born into poor families are more likely to develop chronic illnesses and less likely to do well in education than those children who are not. This means that they are more likely to continue to live in poverty as an adult. Throughout the centuries, people have tried to support those who are living in poverty. Sometimes this has been through voluntary work, giving donations of money or making people aware of those who are living in absolute and relative poverty who often have no voice to speak out.

The use of wealth

Britain is often described as being a materialistic society, which values money and the possessions that money can buy. Newspaper headlines often describe people rushing out to buy the latest mobile phone or designer handbag. However, people don't only use their wealth to buy material goods and holidays. A report by the Charities Aid Foundation in 2015 found that the UK was Europe's most generous nation in terms of charitable giving. In 2015 75 per cent of UK adults donated to charity, and that was compared to a worldwide average of 31.5 per cent. As well as giving to charities, people might use their wealth to help family and friends. For example, as property in the UK becomes more expensive compared to average wages, many parents are lending their children money so that they can buy a home.

Key Concepts



Relative poverty A standard of poverty measured in relation to the standards of a society in which a person lives, for example, living on less than x per cent of average UK income.



Absolute poverty An acute state of deprivation, whereby a person cannot access the most basic of their human needs.

'Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man-made and can be removed by the actions of human beings.'

Nelson Mandela

Christian attitudes to wealth and poverty

- Christianity teaches that a person's value should be judged by their actions and not by what they possess or how much money they have.
- Having wealth is not necessarily bad or wrong but there are ethical considerations about how Christians gain their wealth and how it is used.
- Christianity does not state whether certain jobs should or should not be allowed. Rather, Christians need to ask themselves: 'Is the job exploiting or helping people?'
- Many Christians are against gambling because it encourages a love of money for its own sake. They also believe that gambling and lotteries encourage greed. Some denominations refuse to take part in any form of gambling. The Society of Friends (Quakers) and Methodists, for example, are opposed to gambling as they believe it is gaining at the expense of others. They also believe that it promotes the view that having lots of money automatically produces happiness.
- Jesus taught that wealth doesn't make people happy and can lead to greed. In Matthew 6, Jesus warns his disciples that money can take the place of God in their lives and that they must be careful to remain faithful to him. When a rich young ruler wanted to follow Jesus he was told that to do so he should sell his possessions and give his money to the poor. Today, members of some religious orders take a vow of poverty to give up everything they possess.

Helping those in need

All of the Gospels show that Jesus taught about the care of the poor:



The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25)

teaches that God will judge people not on how much wealth they have gained but on their treatment of the poor.

The Parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16)

In Luke 16 Jesus tells a story about a man who lived in great luxury. At his gate lay a poor beggar called Lazarus who was covered in sores but he took no notice of him. Eventually, they both died. Lazarus went to heaven but the rich man went to hell. The rich man asked that Lazarus should come to hell to cool his tongue with a drop of water. He also asked that Lazarus be sent back to earth to warn his brothers to repent so that they would never join him in hell. Both requests were denied by Abraham who told the rich man that if his brothers did not believe the Scripture, neither would they believe a messenger, even if he came straight from heaven.

Christian Charity



What is Christian Aid?

Christian Aid is a Christian charity working in partnership with local organisations in over 60 countries to help those in need – regardless of religion, ethnicity or nationality. It aims to stop poverty and challenge systems that favour the rich over the poor and marginalised. It does this by organising projects run by partners in the different countries and educating people about the causes of poverty through running campaigns and Fairtrade activities.

How does the work of Christian Aid reflect Christian teachings and values? It works on the basis of a belief in one God who loves all and the dignity of all human life. Its values include:

- **Love and solidarity:** We are called to love and care for one another in compassion and humility, as we stand alongside all those who struggle against poverty, powerlessness and injustice.
- **Dignity and respect:** We are convinced that every human being has innate dignity. All people are of equal worth, which is why we place honesty and respect for others at the heart of what we do.
- **Justice and equality:** We understand that where people lack power, poverty prevails, so we support work that empowers individuals and communities. We fight injustice and inequality with courage, hope and determination, challenging the structures and systems that prevent people from rising out of poverty.
- **Cooperation and partnership:** Our work is rooted in a spirit of cooperation and we affirm the value of acting in partnership with others. We work with and for the churches, as well as with other faith and secular groups. We also engage with other key actors, including civil society, government and the private sector, in various ways and on various levels.
- **Accountability and stewardship:** We are accountable for how we use the resources entrusted to us, ensuring that our decision-making is open and transparent. We measure our impact and are always striving to improve our performance. We are committed to being effective stewards of the planet's scarce resources and caring for the earth for the sake of future generations.

Muslim attitudes to wealth and poverty

- In Islam, all wealth is a gift from God – humans are caretakers of God’s wealth, and will be judged by their use of it. Muslims have a duty to support others and care for the poor and those in need. It is important that a family’s needs are met first and that Zakah is collected on surplus money.
- Muslims are required to live according to the Qur’an and therefore some occupations are forbidden. As receiving interest (riba) on any loans is forbidden, Muslims should not become money lenders. Islamic banks set up ways that people are able to borrow money without the bank making interest on the loan.
- The Qur’an forbids gambling (qimar) or any way of gaining money through chance: *‘O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than God], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful.’ Qur’an 5:90*
- The fact that the Qur’an forbids doing any work connected with gambling has caused difficulties when the money made from lotteries is used to support charitable causes. For many Muslims it would be wrong to accept this money because of the quote in **Qur’an 2:177** where it tells those living in poverty to be patient.

‘Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in God, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and who gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveller, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives Zakah; [those who] fulfil their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous’

Qur’an 2:177

Helping those in need

Charity is an important part of Muslim life. Although it is one of the Five Pillars of Islam it should be given through love and not through a sense of duty. There are different types of giving:

- **Zakah:** Both Sunni and Shi’a Muslims make a charity (Zakah) payment of 2.5 per cent of their wealth every year. This goes to support the poor and those in need.
- **Khums:** In addition to Zakah, Shi’a Muslims are expected to pay Khums, a wealth tax of 20 per cent of their savings. This money is paid to Muslim scholars and community leaders for the welfare of the community.
- **Sadaqah:** It is a duty for all Muslims to pay Zakah once a year, but Islam also teaches that voluntary giving is important too. Sadaqah is any good deed done out of compassion or generosity; it could be a gift of time, helping others or a donation to a charity.
- **Zakat-ul-Fitr:** This additional donation, given at the end of Ramadan, goes to the poor. It allows everyone, even those in poverty, to eat a generous meal at Id-ul-Fitr

Muslim Charity



What is Islamic Relief?

Islamic Relief aims to help those in need by upholding the principles of Islam. Founded in Britain in 1984, Islamic Relief now works in over 40 countries. It responds to disasters and emergencies as well as providing long-term support with sustainable economic and social development such as providing shelter, healthcare and education.

How does the work of Islamic Relief reflect Muslim teachings and values?

‘Our Vision Inspired by our Islamic faith and guided by our values, we envisage a caring world where communities are empowered, social obligations are fulfilled and people respond as one to the suffering of others’

Working with those in need reflects the teachings from the Qur’an:

‘Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely. And our messengers had certainly come to them with clear proofs. Then indeed many of them, [even] after that, throughout the land, were transgressors.’

Qur’an 5:32

The work of Islamic Relief reflects the key values of Islam:

- **Compassion** – giving support in disasters
- **Justice** – raising awareness of marginalised voices through the media
- **Custodianship** – recycling and selling donated clothes in the UK
- **Sincerity** – sponsoring over 30,000 orphans in one year
- **Excellence** – signing the Red Cross Code of Conduct, an international set of standards on working in disaster zones.