

# Teaching guide: ethical issues: Paper 2 Thematic studies

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Our GCSE Religious Studies (8062) requires students to be aware of differences within and/or between religions and beliefs.

This guide illustrates where 'differing' religious views of ethical issues might be found. It's not intended to be comprehensive and students will be rewarded for the appropriate application of all relevant knowledge.

## Relationships and families

### Contraception

#### Buddhism

Contraceptive methods such as the coil or the morning after pill breach the 1st moral precept. This is because rebirth takes place at conception. These two methods are therefore seen as destroying a living being.

The use of contraception is permissible where pregnancy would be harmful to the woman. This is in keeping with Right Intention. It is justified because it is not being done for a selfish reason but to preserve the woman's life.

#### Christianity

Many Christians think that contraception is acceptable in many circumstances, such as a couple unable to cope financially with having a child. They see this as a responsible use of the God-given autonomy that is part and parcel of being created in the image of God.

Roman Catholic teaching states that artificial contraception goes against natural law. Every sexual act should be open to the possibility of creating life. This fulfils God's command to be fruitful and multiply.

#### Hinduism

Respect for life means that Hindus should not bring a child into the world to suffer, so to prevent evils such as overpopulation and poverty, contraception is encouraged. This supports the principle of ahimsa.

Contraception should not be a means of avoiding having children at all. It is a Hindu's dharma to have children and one son is essential for the performance of religious rituals.

#### Islam

Most Muslims accept its use within marriage. It should be for a good reason, such as financial hardship. According to the Hadith, Muhammad accepted the use of contraception for this reason. The Qur'an states that Allah does not place extra burdens on his followers.

Some Muslims disagree. They see its use as going against Allah's plans and they believe that to use it shows a lack of trust in Allah. They interpret the Qur'an's teaching on infanticide as applying also to contraception: 'Do not kill your children for fear of want; we provide sustenance for them and for you'.

#### Judaism

Contraception is permissible on medical grounds. For example, the Talmud permits it for very young, pregnant or nursing mothers. It is permissible providing the couple intends to fulfil in the future the mitzvah to be fruitful and

multiply.

Methods that destroy or block the passage of the seed are not permitted (the condom is not approved of). This ban on 'wasting seed' comes from the Genesis story about Onan.

## Sikhism

Sikhs can decide for themselves. Contraception to avoid poverty or a harmful pregnancy is acceptable as this is to practise responsible parenthood. There is no guidance on this in Sikh scriptures, so it is not forbidden.

Sikhs would oppose the use of abortifacient contraception such as the coil or morning-after pill. This is because it destroys life, which is sacred, and interferes with the creative work of God.

## Sexual relationships before marriage

### Buddhism

Pre-marital sex is accepted when it takes place within a committed and caring relationship. It is a natural physical expression of spiritual closeness. It is acceptable when it promotes loving kindness (metta) and compassion (karuna). The 14th precept of Engaged Buddhism states: 'sexual expression should not take place without love and commitment'.

Casual sexual relationships arise out of lust. This means that they are based on tanha, which is the cause of dukkha and this will build up bad kamma.

### Christianity

Although he teaches that marriage is the appropriate context for sexual relationships, Pope Francis has stated that this is a matter for conscience rather than strict rules and recognised that financial and cultural issue might underlie cohabitation as opposed to marriage. In 'The Joy of Love' he said: 'In such cases, respect also can be shown for those signs of love which in some way reflect God's own love'.

Many Christians believe that sex before marriage devalues the God-given gift of sexuality. It was intended by God to be enjoyed within the context of marriage. In the New Testament Paul said that those whose sexual urges were very strong should marry.

### Hinduism

Sex before marriage devalues what is a God-given gift. Sexuality should be treated with great care and the only way to ensure it receives the right respect is to express it only within marriage.

There is a great variety of Hindu practice in India and some would argue that decisions about sex before marriage are more greatly influenced by culture than by religion. They would argue that as society develops, Hindu practice changes and adapts to expectations in society. Some Hindus think that the text Gandarva vivaha accepts it in some cases as a preliminary to marriage.

### Islam

Islam opposes sexual relationships before marriage. The Qur'an refers to it as fornication and Shari'ah law prescribes flogging as a punishment. Pre-marital sex is seen as devaluing Allah's gift of sexuality. Muhammad stated that no man should be 'in privacy with a woman who is not lawful to him'.

### Judaism

Many Jews believe that sexual relationships should be enjoyed only within marriage. Maimonides stated that whereas the mating of animals is a purely physical and temporary act, through the sanctification of marriage, husband and wife become the closest of relatives. The rabbis in Sifrei Bemidar interpreted Ruth 3:13 as instructing Jews not to engage in any potential for intimacy before marriage.

Some Jews would say that although marriage is the ideal context for sexual relationships, it might be acceptable within a loving and committed relationship. It should be a relationship that reflects qualities such as honesty, trust

and fidelity. This is justified by claiming that the Torah does not explicitly forbid or condemn it but states that a man who has sex with an unmarried woman must then support her as a wife.

## Sikhism

The divine spark is present in every human, so the body must be kept clean. Anything that might harm the body is to be avoided, so sex before marriage is unacceptable. It is seen as an expression of lust, one of the five vices.

## Homosexual relationships

### Buddhism

Homosexual relationships are accepted providing they are part of a loving relationship. It is the quality of the relationships involved rather than the genders of those involved that determines whether or not a relationship is unskillful. Ven. Master Hsing Yun states that homosexuality is neither right nor wrong but is just something that people do.

Same-sex relationships that are based on lust increase bad kamma. This is because they arise out of tanha. The Dalai Lama has said that for a Buddhist, a relationship between two men is wrong.

### Christianity

Some Christians believe that the biblical denunciation of these relationships was part of the ancient culture and was concerned with the promiscuous excesses of fertility religions. Monogamous homosexual relationships reflect the same self-giving love that is encouraged by situationists and live up to the same ideals of fidelity and commitment that are a part of Christian marriage vows.

Fundamentalist Christians believe that the biblical texts denouncing homosexual relationships are the word of God and so are valid for all time. They regard it as a form of fornication and Paul said that fornicators would not inherit the kingdom of God.

### Hinduism

One of the three key functions of Hindu marriage is procreation in order to perpetuate the family (prajaa). Homosexual relationships cannot achieve procreation, so there can be no marriage. Sexual relationships outside marriage are not acceptable.

The books giving the prajaa teaching are not binding on Hindus, so some would regard a loving and committed homosexual relationship as equivalent to marriage and one in which sexuality might therefore be expressed. The Hindu sacred texts do not confine 'romantic' love to heterosexual relationships.

### Islam

Islam condemns homosexual relationships as going against the natural order in which Allah created humans. It is therefore seen as a threat to social stability. The Qur'an describes how Allah destroyed a city for ignoring Lut's denunciation of their behavior.

Islam recognises that the diversity and richness of Allah's creation means that people are capable of different sexual orientations. The orientation in itself is not sinful. The Qur'an teaches that those with homosexual inclinations must control their instincts so as not to go against Allah's law.

### Judaism

Many Jews distinguish between inclination and practice, regarding the latter as an 'abomination'. "Do not lie with a man as with a woman" (Leviticus 18:22). Since the Torah was given by God to Moses, its teachings are valid for all times and for all situations. Homosexual relationships are therefore forbidden.

Many Reform Jews base their views on the statement in Genesis that all humanity is created in the image of God. They do not distinguish between inclination and practice, and rabbis and cantors may officiate at same-sex ceremonies. They believe that the word 'abomination' in the Torah referred to pagan-influenced cultic practices and

not to the monogamous, committed and loving same-sex relationships that are seen in the modern world.

## Sikhism

Since in the GGS marriage is between a man and a woman, same sex marriage ceremonies are not performed in gurdwaras . As it is not part of the Sikh lifestyle, which promotes monogamous marriage between a man and a woman, some Sikhs think that it is a form of selfishness (haumai).

The main concern is enlightenment, so sexuality is not a prime concern. The Sikh belief that all are children of God means that homosexual relationships are not to be condemned.

## Religion and life

### Abortion

#### Buddhism

Because a new consciousness comes into being at conception, abortion is seen as the destruction of a living being and so breaches the 1st moral precept. The Buddha stated that any monk who assisted in an abortion would no longer be a member of the monastic sangha.

Some Buddhists accept abortion if the child would be born with serious disability. This shows application of wisdom and compassion (karuna) as the child might undergo terrible suffering. The Dalai Lama said that there are cases, such as disability, when abortion might be approved.

#### Christianity

In the Old Testament life is associated with breath, so before birth the embryo/foetus is a potential person. The embryo/foetus does not therefore have a right to life.

Psalm 139 speaks of God seeing 'my unformed body', so from conception, the embryo is precious to God. Abortion is the wrongful destruction of a human being with potential.

#### Hinduism

Life is believed to start from conception and abortion prevents the reincarnated soul from reducing the bad karma that has accumulated from previous lives. It denies the respect due to a being that has within it the Supreme Spirit. 'The slayer of an embryo is like the slayer of a priest' (Krishna Yajur Veda).

Abortion is permissible when pregnancy endangers the life of the woman. In this case, her life takes priority over that of the foetus. The principle of ahimsa here applies to the woman.

#### Islam

Life is sacred because it is has been given by Allah. To take it is therefore to go against Allah's plan. The Qur'an states that no one can die without Allah's permission.

If Hadith 4 is taken as meaning that ensoulment takes place at 120 days, abortion before that point may be acceptable on certain grounds. Some Muslim scholars think that one ground for abortion is risk to the mother's life. They see abortion in this case as the lesser of two evils.

#### Judaism

If the mother's life is endangered, abortion is a requirement. This is because the foetus is seen as the cause of the woman's condition and while still in the uterus, it is not a person with rights. "As long as it did not come out into the world, it is not called a living thing and it is permissible to take its life in order to save its mother" (Rashi).

Abortion on demand or for trivial reasons is not permissible. This is because although it does not have rights, God is the author of the life that is developing. "You knit me together in my mother's womb...your eyes saw my unformed body" (Psalm 139).

## Sikhism

Human life begins at conception, so abortion is tantamount to murder. It destroys a precious life in which the divine spark is present. 'O, my body, God infused divine light in you and you were born into the world'.

In extreme situations, eg rape or risk to the woman's life, abortion is permissible. The divine spark is present in the woman's life too. It is seen as a necessary evil.

## Euthanasia

### Buddhism

Euthanasia breaches the principle of non-violence (ahimsa). It therefore builds up negative kamma. The Vinaya Pitaka states: 'A monk who intentionally deprives a human being of his life, or provides the means for suicide, or praises death, or incites one to commit suicide... commits an offence entailing loss of monkhood'.

Many Buddhists distinguish between active killing and withdrawing treatment that is simply prolonging the dying process. Withdrawing treatment and allowing the person to die might show compassion (karuna) The Dalai Lama said that it is permissible in Buddhist ethics to end the life of someone who is terminally ill with no hope of recovery.

### Christianity

The Bible tells Christians to clothe themselves with kindness and compassion, and ending a life of intolerable suffering may be the most compassionate thing to do. Scripture states that death is better than a miserable life.

Hospices enable terminally ill people to experience dignity and quality of life right to the end. They give the dying the sense that their lives are still sacred, whereas euthanasia denies that. Whatever their situation, all humans are created in the image of God.

### Hinduism

Some oppose all types of euthanasia, believing that it is tantamount to murder and that even in the case of life support, it interferes with the process of reincarnation. It damages the karma of both the doctor and the patient. According to the monastery at the Himalayan Academy 'all those involved (directly or indirectly) in euthanasia will proportionately take on the remaining prarabdha karma of the dying person'.

Some Hindus accept euthanasia in the case of those who are very old or very ill. They may choose to stop eating and drinking and this is seen as renouncing the world and putting it in perspective. It is viewed as a sign of great holiness.

### Islam

Allah has planned the course of all lives, so the suffering of someone who is terminally ill may be part of that plan. Active euthanasia is therefore to interfere with Allah's will. 'It is Allah who gives you life, then gives you death' (Qur'an).

Islam accepts passive euthanasia, which is allowing someone for whom there is no hope to die by withholding life-prolonging treatment. Such treatment would in fact be interfering with Allah's will. 'It is Allah who gives you life, then gives you death' (Qur'an).

### Judaism

Judaism opposes active euthanasia. Life is precious and God-given, so may not be deliberately terminated. A former UK chief rabbi said, "The value of human life is infinite and beyond measure, so that any part of life – even if only an hour or a second – is of precisely the same worth as seventy years of it".

Passive euthanasia may be permissible. An instance is when treatment is or would be doing no more than prolonging the dying. A commentary on the Shulchan Code states, "if there is anything which causes a hindrance to the departure of the soul...it is permissible to remove [it] from there because there is no act involved, only the removal of the impediment."

## Sikhism

Sikhs see life as a gift from God and so its ending should be left up to God. Euthanasia is seen as interfering in God's plan; Sikhs should concentrate instead on caring for the person to the end.

Sikhs believe that since it is a gift from God, life should be treated in a responsible way. They distinguish between ending life and not artificially prolonging a terminal state. It might be a responsible act to withdraw life-sustaining treatment in some situations.

## Animal experimentation

### Buddhism

Most Buddhists oppose this because the 1st precept and the principle of non-violence apply to animals as well as humans. Testing on animals inevitably entails pain and discomfort and ultimately death. The Dalai Lama stated: 'the life of all beings - human, animal, or otherwise - is precious, and all have the same right to happiness'.

Some might accept it if there were no alternative and the benefits would be huge. This might be justified as the application of skilful means. The animals should, however, be treated with compassion and preferably not be killed.

### Christianity

The Catechism of the Catholic Church accepts this 'within reasonable limits' and providing there is no cruelty. Humans alone are created in the image of God and possess sanctity of life.

The book of Proverbs teaches that a good man is kind to his animals. Some Christians believe that to inflict any suffering or discomfort on animals that is not in the animals' interests is not an act of kindness. It is exploiting animals' defencelessness for human benefit.

### Hinduism

Samsara shows that all life is interconnected and all life contains the atman. Animals must be cared for and respected in the same way as humans, which cuts out animal testing. 'By not killing any living being, one becomes fit for salvation' (Manusmriti 6.60).

### Islam

Animal testing is permitted to meet human need where there are no alternatives. The Hadith states: 'Whoever kills anything bigger than a sparrow without just cause will be accountable to Allah'. Islam teaches that human welfare takes priority. Animal testing to develop medicine is justified as being for the greater good.

Animal testing for cosmetics is not permitted. This would be purely to satisfy human vanity and would conflict with the concept of being a khalifah. Animals are created by Allah to help humanity, not satisfy trivial desires.

### Judaism

Humans take priority over animals and have dominion over them. Saving a life (pikuach nefesh) requires Jews to do everything they can to prevent someone from dying. This means that animal testing to develop vaccinations, more effective life-saving treatments is permissible.

All animals should be treated with respect as all life on earth has a purpose. The Torah teaches that animals must be treated humanely. "It is forbidden to cause pain to any animal" (Maimonides).

### Sikhism

Some Sikhs might oppose animal testing because the divine spark is present in all living beings and animals have equal rights with humans. 'The highest religion is to rise to universal brotherhood; and to consider all creatures your equals' (Guru Nanak).

Some might accept it if it advances medical science and preserves sacred human life. Animal testing, however, must be undertaken only if there is no alternative and be concerned with finding cures and effective treatments, not

with trivial issues like cosmetics.

## The existence of God and revelation

### Visions

#### Buddhism

According to Tibetan Buddhism, after death most enter an intermediate state. Here they see a series of visions that are intended to persuade them to give up earthly concerns. If they can do this, they achieve enlightenment and so are liberated from the cycle of samsara. According to the Tibetan Book of the Dead the first of these visions is 'a light of the utmost brilliance manifesting as the five Buddha(s)'.

The Buddha said: 'No one helps us but ourselves'. In other words, his followers should not try to rely on supernatural help. Each Buddhist should rely on themselves to create their path to enlightenment. So-called visions could be hallucinations.

#### Christianity

The transformation in people's lives shows that religious visions are genuine. For instance, Paul's vision on the road to Damascus transformed him from a persecutor of Christians to a Christian evangelist who died for his faith.

Because they are so personal, it cannot be proved that visions are genuine. It may be that some visions have a medical explanation, eg Hildegard's descriptions of her experience sound like the symptoms of migraine.

#### Hinduism

Meditation may lead to visions. They are temporary but arise out of devotion. Where they are spontaneous they have value.

The seeking of visions should be discouraged. This is because it distracts the mind from the true purpose of meditation and might be products of the mind.

#### Islam

Muhammad's vision in the cave is central to Islam. In this vision he received his call to become a prophet. This was something that he received from Allah, not something that he sought.

#### Judaism

An example of a vision occurs in Genesis 28: Jacob's vision of the ladder. Visions are ways in which God communicates with someone. It may be to give a message or it may be a call to a particular task, as with Isaiah.

#### Sikhism

Visions are given by God to teach important truths. They have life-changing effects both for the individual and for communities. For instance, Guru Nanak's vision of what life would be like if all people treated others equally led to him founding Sikhism.

### Miracles

#### Buddhism

Some think miracles are possible because of the stage of enlightenment that a person has reached. The power of the mind overrides physical limitations. An example is of the Buddha flying through the air.

The Buddha himself was very cautious about miracles, believing they could be trickery and he refused to perform miracles to convert people. In the Vinaya Pitaka it is an offence for monks and nuns who have such powers to display them publicly.

## Christianity

The very thorough medical and Church investigations into the claims of cures at Lourdes are strong evidence for the genuineness of those declared to be miracles. They are signs of the love of God.

Miracles are a psychological phenomenon, showing the power of mind over matter. People are sometimes cured because of their absolute conviction that they will be. Jesus said to many of those whom he cured, 'Your faith has cured you'.

## Hinduism

Hindus believe that Brahman may directly intervene in the world and that the deities may perform miracles. The miracle of statues of Ganesha drinking milk is a relatively recent example of this. It is evidence of the existence of a higher plane of reality. The Mahabharata contains miracles relating to the birth of Krishna.

## Islam

Allah alone can perform miracles. The greatest miracle is the Qur'an. This contains Allah's complete self-revelation.

## Judaism

The Jewish Scriptures show God as working miracles on behalf of Israel. They reveal God's goodness and power. Through God's power, Moses and the Israelites were liberated from slavery in Egypt.

## Sikhism

Miracles are seen as intended to help people and to teach them about God and how to live. They are never performed for selfish reasons. Miracles are recorded of Guru Nanak, eg of the spring when he visited Hassan Abdal.

## Nature as general revelation

### Buddhism

The earth can be seen as revealing the Three Jewels. When it works in harmony, it reveals the nature of enlightenment; the interdependence of everything reveals the Dhamma); the relationships between living beings reveal the sangha. Above all, nature reveals the oneness of everything as expressed in the concept of dependent arising.

Buddhists reject any concept of nature as revealing God. Buddhists rely on themselves and on Buddhist teachings for the attainment of enlightenment. Nature is not concerned with the supernatural.

### Christianity

The Old Testament says that the heavens declare the glory of God. His presence can be detected in the wonder of the world that he created. It shows his omnipotence.

God reveals himself solely through the Bible, which is the infallible word of God. Nature was corrupted by the Fall, so it does not provide a reliable guide to the nature of God.

### Hinduism

God is present in all life. All aspects of the world reveal to some extent the work of the Tri-murti 'He (God) is the Creator of all, everliving in the mystery of his creation. He is beyond beginning and end, and in his glory all things are' (Svetasvatara Upanishad 5).

### Islam

Nature is one of the ways in which Allah reveals his majesty to his creation. The beauty of the world shows the beauty of Allah. One of Allah's 99 names is 'The shaper of beauty'.



## Judaism

The Jewish Scriptures are full of examples of God's nature being revealed through the forces and the wonder of nature. They testify to God's majesty. "The heavens declare the glory of God"(Psalm 19).

## Sikhism

Creation is part of God and God is within each part of creation ' Deep within the self is the Light of God; It radiates throughout the expanse of His creation' (GGS 126).

## Religion, peace and conflict

### Violence

#### Buddhism

Most Buddhists reject all forms of violence as contrary to the 1st precept and violating the principle of ahimsa. Life is precious and always to be respected. According to the Dhammapada, a great man is one who 'hurts not any living being'.

Some Buddhists might justify limited violence used in defence of one's family. This would be seen as the application of skilful means. The Buddha's rules for monks and nuns allowed them to use violence in self-defence but forbade killing.

#### Christianity

Violence may be justified as a last resort. It may be the only way to get rid of a corrupt regime and restore justice. In protest at the misuse of the Temple, Jesus overturned the merchants' tables

Jesus taught that violence is counter-productive. Violence encourages retaliation and so makes the situation worse. At his arrest he said to his disciples, 'Put away your swords. Those who live by the sword die by the sword.'

#### Hinduism

The principle of ahimsa discourages violence. Working non-violently as Gandhi did towards peace builds up good karma. 'Do naught to others, which, if done to you, could cause you pain' (Mahabharata).

The existence of the warrior caste shows that violence is accepted in Hinduism if for good cause, e.g. in self-defence. Injustice should not be tolerated. 'May your weapons be strong to drive away the attackers' (Rig Veda).

#### Islam

Islam is a religion of peace. A Muslim's greeting is 'Peace be upon you' and so violence is to be rejected unless there is good cause for it. 'Hate your enemy mildly; for he may become your friend one day' (Hadith).

Violence is accepted in defence of oneself, one's community or Islam. In such cases war is a duty so violence is inevitable The Qur'an teaches: 'To those against whom war is made, permission is given to fight'.

#### Judaism

In situations violence may be justified as a last resort. It may be needed to restrain a persistent and evil act of aggression. King David's use of violence against the Philistines was justified by the threat they posed to Israel.

According to Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, the world is preserved on justice, truth and peace. The use of violence makes the achievement of these unlikely as violence encourages an even more violent response. The Talmud praises the person who backs down in a conflict situation.

#### Sikhism

Peace is a gift of God, so violence should be avoided if possible. 'The Lord is the haven of peace' (GGS). Sikhs are

taught in the GGS to avoid causing suffering.

Violence is permissible to defend oneself and one's family. The kirpan is a symbol of readiness to fight for religious freedom and dignity. According to Guru Gobind Singh: 'when all efforts to restore peace...are of no avail, lawful is the flash of steel'.

## Weapons of mass destruction

### Buddhism

These cause suffering and death on a colossal scale both in the short and the long term. The 1st moral precept and the principle of ahimsa are breached. The Dhammapada states: 'All living things fear being put to death. Putting oneself in the place of the other, let no one kill nor cause another to kill'.

### Christianity

The possession of nuclear weapons is justified on the grounds of deterrence and protection. Governments have a duty to keep their citizens safe. Protection of the vulnerable is a key biblical teaching

The potential for indiscriminate killing and injury to thousands of innocent people, eg at Hiroshima, can never be justified on any grounds. These weapons create terrible long-term misery and their use does not show 'love of neighbour'.

### Hinduism

The use of these goes against the principle of ahimsa. It is impossible to restrict their impact on humans, animals and the environment. Brahman dwells within all living beings.

India possesses nuclear weapons as a deterrent. It ensures its citizens' security. Some Hindus believe that it therefore actually promotes ahimsa.

### Islam

The amount and extent of destruction caused by these weapons contravene the rules of lesser jihad so their use is impermissible. They kill innocent civilians and harm the environment. Grand Ayatolla Javadi Amoli: 'Scholars believe that possession and development of atomic weapons and WMDs are not permitted'.

Pakistan is a Muslim country and possesses nuclear weapons. It sees these as a deterrent against India. It is prepared to use them in self-defence. It would then be justified as lesser jihad.

### Judaism

The Talmud prohibits waging war in a situation where the casualty rate exceeds a sixth of the population. The examples of Hiroshima and Nagasaki show the colossal destruction caused by the use of such weapons. Their use would bring short and long term suffering on an unimaginable scale.

The possession of such weapons as a deterrent might be justified. It would discourage acts of aggression from enemies and so would actually encourage peace. This might be seen as promoting the principle of the sanctity of life.

### Sikhism

Sikhs are concerned about the proliferation of WMDs and they support nuclear disarmament. Such weapons are excessive and cause terrible suffering. The just war rules (dharam yudh) states that no civilians should be harmed.

### Pacifism

### Buddhism

Most Buddhists reject all forms of violence as contrary to the 1st precept and violating the principle of ahimsa. War

creates immense suffering and death. The 12th precept of Engaged Buddhism states: 'Do not kill. Do not let others kill. Find whatever means possible to protect life and prevent war'.

Some Buddhist nations go to war because they see it as their duty to protect their citizens from attack. This is justified as the use of skilful means. The loss of life through killing enemy soldiers is outweighed by the far greater number of innocent civilian lives saved.

## Christianity

Martin Luther King taught that hatred could only be driven out by the force of love. He achieved civil rights for black Americans without ever responding to violence with violence. This refusal to use force fulfilled Jesus' command to turn the other cheek.

'Blessed are the peacemakers' does not always prohibit some use of force and a war that follows the rules of the Just War theory may result in lasting peace. Bonhoeffer accepted that sometimes regimes are so evil that only the use of violence will overthrow them and restore justice.

## Hinduism

Some Hindus believe because of the principle of ahimsa that violence can never be justified. Gandhi achieved independence for India with a pacifist stance. All life is sacred because Brahman dwells within.

Where the war is just, most Hindus believe that war is right. The warrior caste would build up bad karma if it failed to fight against injustice. 'There is no greater good for a warrior than to fight in a righteous war' (Bhagavad Gita).

## Islam

Lesser jihad is a duty for Muslims. It is wrong to allow the practice of Islam to be suppressed or injustice to prevail. The Qur'an instructs Muslims to fight in the cause of Allah and of those who are ill-treated and oppressed.

Some Muslims are pacifist. Islam is based on the principles of peace. The Qur'an teaches that reconciliation and peace are a better way of fighting than war. 'Paradise is for those who curb their anger and forgive their fellow men' (Qur'an).

## Judaism

Texts such as Isaiah 2 envisage a time when war will be no more and swords shall be beaten into ploughshares. There is a vision of all sitting in peace and security under their own fig trees. The Jewish Peace Fellowship is a small pacifist organisation committed to encouraging the realisation of this vision. They cite the words of Rabbi Yudan, "Great is Peace, for the name of the Holy One is called Shalom."

The Torah is clear that war is sometimes obligatory, eg in self-defence. The Torah teaches, "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed". The Talmud law teaches that a person is permitted to pursue an attacker to preserve his own life, and this applies also to groups.

## Sikhism

Sikhism allows for war where there is just cause. Several of the Gurus were warriors, fighting to defend the Sikh faith and against injustice. 'When all other methods have failed, it is permissible to draw the sword' (Guru Gobind Singh).

Some Sikhs are pacifist. This is out of respect for the sacredness of human life. Human life deserves respect and protection as it is a gift from God.

## Religion, crime and punishment

### Corporal punishment

### Buddhism

Cruel punishments breach the principle of ahimsa and have no benefits at all for those involved. They create

bitterness and resentment in the mind of the person being punished and encourage callousness on the part of the person administering it. According to the Buddha 'an action cannot be considered if it brings physical and mental pain to another human being'.

## Christianity

Some fundamentalist Christians might accept it on the basis of Old Testament teaching such as: 'spare the rod and spoil the child'. They might think corporal punishment has a deterrent value. Providing it is not unduly harsh, such punishment might actually benefit the offender in the long term.

Most Christians think that harsh treatment of others is shows a lack of love. It does not encourage the offender to think in terms of being forgiven and having a second chance. Moreover, Jesus' teaching that those who live by the sword die by the sword highlights its negative consequences.

## Hinduism

It goes against the principle of ahimsa which states that no living creature should be harmed. It just intensifies the violence. 'An eye for an eye and the whole world would be blind' (Gandhi).

It was used in the past where other punishments have not worked and could be seen as fulfilling the aims of retribution and deterrent. According to the Laws of Manu: 'If a man raises his hand or a stick, he should have his hand cut off'.

## Islam

This is permitted in Shari'ah law for certain crimes. It is sanctioned by the Qur'an: 'as to the thief, male or female, cut off his or her hands'. It can be seen as merciful, as punishment is being given in this life instead of in the afterlife.

Some Muslims oppose it because they think it is too harsh. It is culturally outdated, and in some Muslim countries, financial compensation is used as a substitute.

## Judaism

The Torah allowed for flogging for breaking the Torah law and showing contempt for rabbinical laws, but there were strict restrictions and Proverbs 13:24 states, "Whoever spares the rod hates his son but if you love him, you will chasten him". A minority of Jews might possibly follow these teachings.

The Talmud is opposed to corporal punishment. Modern Judaism follows suit and interprets 'rod' metaphorically. It sees corporal punishment as having no place in modern society. Punishments that aim at reparation or reformation are preferable. Hosea 11 portrays a God whose response to wayward Israel is compassion.

## Sikhism

This goes against the dignity of and respect due to all human beings. It encourages revenge and anger. Anger is one of the five vices.

## Death penalty

### Buddhism

Buddhism generally opposes the death penalty because it shows neither loving kindness nor compassion towards the offender. They believe in giving the offender the opportunity for reformation. The Dhammapada states: 'All living things fear being put to death. Putting oneself in the place of the other, let no one kill nor cause another to kill'.

Some mainly Buddhist countries use the death penalty as a way of protecting their citizens. The negative kammic effects of the execution of one offender are seen as outweighed by the security given to many people who might otherwise have been his/her victims. This could be seen as showing loving-kindness (metta) to the country's citizens.

## Christianity

Some Christians think it is the only just penalty for some acts of murder. They interpret 'an eye for an eye, a life for a life' as sanctioning strict retribution. It means that the family of the victim will feel able to move on.

Many denominations, eg the Anglican Church, oppose it as contrary to New Testament teaching to leave vengeance to God. Jesus rejected the 'eye for an eye' law with the words: If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the left also.

## Hinduism

It goes against the principle of ahimsa. The Mahabharata points to the suffering it causes for the family of the executed person. 'An eye for an eye and the whole world would be blind' (Gandhi).

The laws of Manu permit the death penalty for some crimes and in India murder and treason are capital offences. According to the Vishnu Smriti 'great criminals should all be put to death'. Retribution is important for justice to be done.

## Islam

The death penalty is sanctioned in the Qur'an: 'Take not life, which Allah has made sacred, except by way of justice'. The death penalty is seen as ensuring that justice is done. This is important for relatives

Some Muslims believe that it is important for the victim's family to show mercy and take the option of so-called 'blood money'. The Qur'an states that financial compensation may be substituted and that it should be a reasonable demand. This is seen as a form of justice.

## Judaism

The Torah prescribed the death penalty for a range of offences but in particular for murder. "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed." Those who support it see it as an expression of justice. It allows the victim's family to move on.

Jews throughout the ages have debated its value and Rabbi Akiva said, "If we had been among the Sanhedrin, no one would have been executed". Nowadays there are so many conditions to be met for the death penalty to be given that it is virtually impossible to sentence someone to death. This is because of concerns that an innocent person might be executed. The last person to be executed in Israel was Eichmann.

## Sikhism

Most oppose the death penalty as against the dignity of all human beings. It denies people the possibility of reform and develops positive attitudes. 'Executing a prisoner is without excuse and would be killing in cold blood' (Lord Indarjit Singh).

Some Sikhs accept the death penalty as a deterrent. It discourages people from destroying sacred human life and so moving further from achieving mukti.

## Forgiveness

### Buddhism

The willingness to forgive is central to Buddhism. The person who forgives practises loving-kindness and compassion, which builds up good kamma. Hatred is one of the Three Poisons and makes liberation from samsara impossible. The Buddha taught: 'Holding onto anger is like grasping a hot coal with the intent of throwing it at someone else, but you are the one that gets burned'.

### Christianity

In the Lord's Prayer, Christians say 'Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us'. When Peter asked Jesus whether it was sufficient to forgive someone seven times, Jesus replied, 'Not seven times but seventy times

seven'; there should be no limits.

Some Christians think that forgiveness can only be offered to those who are sorry for what they have done. Without repentance, forgiveness is meaningless. Jesus said, 'If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him'.

## Hinduism

Forgiveness shows righteousness, which is the highest thing. It builds up good karma. It is one of the six cardinal virtues.

## Islam

Allah is 'the Forgiving' and 'the Merciful' so Muslims should follow this. Judgement should be left to Allah. Muhammad set an example by forgiving those who had opposed him.

Some Muslims believe that certain offences cannot be forgiven because they are so bad. An example is shirk. Committing shirk is a hadud crime that merits the death penalty.

## Judaism

Before Yom Kippur Jews ask forgiveness of those whom they have wronged in the course of the year. In order for forgiveness to mean anything, offenders should seek to make things right with the victims of their crimes. Forgiveness from God requires repentance and asking for forgiveness.

If someone offends someone else, only the offended person can forgive him/her. The offender must go and ask for forgiveness. If it is withheld, he/she should go again, later, and ask. If it is withheld again, he/she must go once more to ask for forgiveness. If it is refused him a third time, then the person withholding the forgiveness bears the blame. Maimonides said, "It is forbidden for a person to be cruel and not grant pardon".

## Sikhism

Forgiveness is essential as the refusal to forgive saps one's vitality. It is to follow in the example of God who is all-forgiving. The GGS states that 'where there is forgiveness, there is God' .

## Religion, human rightsn and social justice

### Status of women in religion

#### Buddhism

The Buddha taught that women were equally capable of achieving enlightenment. Women were able to become nuns in his lifetime and in Zen Buddhism women can have positions of authority within the monastic sangha. A 12th century Zen Buddhist stated: 'In acquiring the dharma, all acquire the dharma equally... Do not make an issue of whether it is a man or a woman.'

The Buddha's initial reluctance to admit women into the monastic sangha has led to some Buddhists believing that although they are equal, men and women have different roles. In the Theravadan orders of south east Asia, women can be novices only.

#### Christianity

Some fundamentalist Christians take literally Paul's statement that women were not to speak in church, but if they had any questions, they should ask their husbands when back home. In their churches, women play no leading role in worship. They believe that Paul's teaching is valid for all ages and all situations.

In many churches today, women play a leading role in worship. They are believed to have equal status with men as both are created in God's image. Paul told the Christians in Rome to support Phoebe who was a woman deacon.

#### Hinduism

Men and women are seen as equal and interdependent but as having different roles. There are references to women teachers in the Upanishads. This equal status is mirrored in the relationships between male and female deities such as Shiva and Kali.

## Islam

Men and women have the same spiritual nature and both are expected to pray 5 times a day. The reason why women pray separately is for their protection not because they are inferior. Women may teach both men and women about Islam. 'Women are the twin halves of men' (Hadith).

## Judaism

Men and women are both created in the image of God. Therefore they are equal in his eyes, but many Jews see them as having different roles. One way in which this is seen is in synagogue worship. In Orthodox synagogues women do not play a leading part in worship; they may not be rabbis or cantors.

Men and women are both created in the image of God. In Reform Judaism, the equality of women means that in the synagogue there is no differentiation in the roles of men and women. Women may lead worship and they sit alongside men.

## Sikhism

Women have equal status to men and have the same roles in religion. Women may be members of the Khalsa. They may also be granthis.

## The uses of wealth

### Buddhism

Craving stops people from achieving enlightenment so Buddhist teaching encourages Buddhists to give away what they do not need. Generosity is one of the six perfections in the Mahayanan tradition. Giving to charity builds up good kamma and is seen as 'merit-making'.

Giving should be done only if the donor can be sure that the results will not be negative. The recipient might acquire craving for money and this would cause more suffering. This would result in negative kamma.

### Christianity

A few Christians interpret the saying in Proverbs 10 ('the blessing of the Lord brings wealth') to mean that having wealth is a sign of God's blessing. It is a reward and so the wealthy individual may spend it as he wishes, even if entirely on himself/herself.

Most Christians believe that they have the duty of stewardship. That means using what they possess responsibly, sharing their wealth with those who are less fortunate as instructed in the New Testament. Jesus told a rich man to sell all his possessions and give the proceeds to the poor.

### Hinduism

Hindus are encouraged to provide for their families first and then give to the local poor. Before the midday meal many give food to someone in need. Generosity builds up good karma.

A few might think that poverty is the result of negative karma. Therefore it is deserved and the working out of karma should not be interfered with. According to Gandhi, any giving should enable a person to be in control of his own destiny.

## Islam

Wealth is Allah's gift and its value lies in the good that it can do. Zakah is a religious duty and many Muslims give sadaqah. Muslims are encouraged to give generously to those in need. 'He who eats and drinks while his brother goes hungry is not one of us' (Hadith).

Some Muslims might restrict what they give to the poor. They might view their poverty as a test from Allah and believe that the poor should help themselves. Too much charity could make the recipient aid-dependent.

## Judaism

Money in itself is morally neutral so there is nothing wrong in being rich, so long as the wealth is used wisely and responsibly. The patriarchs were wealthy and used it well to ensure the continuing prosperity of their descendants. "When God gives any man wealth and possessions and enables him to enjoy them, this is a gift of God" (Ecclesiastes).

Judaism teaches the importance of sharing one's wealth with those who are less fortunate. Rabbinic teaching is that the best way is through loans as this enables the recipients to retain their dignity and to become independent. According to the Babylonian Talmud, "Greater is one who lends than one who gives, and greater still is one who lends and, with the loan, helps the poor person to help himself."

## Sikhism

Giving to the poor (vand chakna) is one of the three responsibilities. Sikhs are expected to give 10% of their income to the poor. According to Guru Amar Das possession of wealth is a blessing because of the charitable uses to which it can be put.

International aid is not the ultimate answer to world poverty. The poor should be enabled to take control of their own lives. Wealth should be used in such a way as to promote this.

## Freedom of religious expression

### Buddhism

Belief in the equality of all means that all have the right to practise their beliefs. The Dalai Lama stated: 'I always say that every person on this earth has the freedom to practise or not to practise religion'. Right Speech encourages the speaking of truth as someone perceives it.

Right Speech also means that there needs to be some restraint in how beliefs are expressed. The principle of not harming others covers more than physical harm. One's own freedom of religious expression should not cause hurt to another or restrict the religious freedom of someone else.

### Christianity

Some Christians think that there should be some restrictions on freedom of religious expression in order to avoid hurt or offence. Only in this way is love of neighbour shown. Paul said that all things were permissible, but not all were beneficial.

Some Christians think that all should be free to express freely their views on religion and to follow their religious practices etc. This is essential if respect for others is to be shown. Paul urged Christians to be tolerant of those who followed different food laws or who held worship on a different day.

### Islam

Muslims believe that Allah created all humanity in equality. This means people should have the right to freedom of belief. Muhammad set an example of religious tolerance in his attitude to Jews and Christians in Madinah. 'Let him (or her) who will, believe, and let him (or her) who will, reject it' (Qur'an).

Most Muslims view as apostasy the decision of a Muslim to reject Islam. They believe however that they should leave judgement for it to Allah. The Qur'an states that apostasy will not be accepted and that after death, apostates will be among the losers.

### Hinduism

The diversity of belief within Hinduism encourages tolerance towards other faiths. The right to freedom of faith is a natural entitlement of every human. 'Truth is one; sages call it by different names'.



Some Hindus in India have been concerned about what they see as proselytising by other faiths. They have therefore become active in promoting Hinduism. However this is not seen as contrary to religious freedom.

## Judaism

The belief that all humans are created in the image of God means that all have equal rights, which include the right to freedom of religious expression. In the Torah, there are many laws protecting the rights of 'resident aliens' (non-Jews living in Israel) and this is seen as supporting the right of non-Jews to religious freedom. "The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as you love yourself."

The right to freedom of religious expression should not mean the right to say or do anything at all. Mutual respect for each other's religion fulfils the mitzvah, "Love your neighbour as yourself". Many Jews are concerned at the number of Jews marrying out of the faith and might wish to see restrictions on proselytising activities by other religions. Judaism itself does not proselytise.

## Sikhism

All humans have God in them and there is only one God who is the same for all religions. Allowing freedom of religious expression is to show respect for all humanity. According to the Rahit Maryada, Sikhs must not cause offence to those of other faiths.

The only restrictions are on promoting beliefs and practices that would harm others. This would show disrespect.

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### Document URL

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/resources/religious-studies/gcse/religious-studies-a/teach/teaching-guide-ethical-issues>

**Last updated** 12 Dec 2017

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